

Handbook for Women's Resource Centres



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Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully

Fully revised third edition

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Abbreviations

AA – Association Agreement

BSR – Baltic Sea Region

DCFTA – Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas

EaP – Eastern Partnership

EED – European Endowment for Democracy

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

ESF – European Social Fund

EU – European Union

Euronest PA – EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GBV – Gender-based violence

IDP – Internally Displaced Person

IPC – International Patent Classification

I(C)T – Information (Communication) Technologies

NRC – Swedish National Association of Women’s Resource Centers

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

RPO – Research Performing Organisations

RFO – Research Funding Organisations

SME – Small and medium-sized enterprises

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UN SCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution

WRC – Women’s Resource Center

Winnet – Women in Network

WCE – Winnet Centre of Excellence

WDRCF – Women’s Development Resource Center Foundation

WEF – World Economic Forum

Foreword

Svenska Riksförbundet Nationellt ResursCentrum för kvinnor, NRC or the Swedish National Resource Centre for Women is an association of Women's Resource Centers, founded on 16 December, 1999. In 2010, NRC changed its name to Winnet Sverige. For about two decades Winnet Sverige has enhanced women's knowledge on how to start, run and develop a Women's Resource Centre through offering numerous capacity building opportunities to Women's Resource Centres in this associations.

Winnet Sverige emphasises the role of Women's Resource Centres as key actors in regional growth and development. We have always regarded equity and equality as a necessary prerequisite for development at any level, and these values underlie all our actions targeting empowerment of women.

The training courses the association offers provide knowledge and skills on what is needed to start and run, and above all, develop a local and/or regional Resource Centre for women, since these centers have proven to be a significant driving force for women's active participation in local and regional growth and development.

Knowledge and experience from these training courses were collated into a Handbook on how to start and run a WRC for women in Sweden, while always bearing in mind the perspective of development both in the EU and beyond. The Handbook was first published in 2006, and it focused on the following objectives and aspects of starting and running a WRC:

- making women's knowledge and competence visible;
- marketing arguments and rhetoric concerning work in Resource Centres for women;
- voicing women's perspectives on what should and can be developed in a region;
- enhancing competitiveness of the region through active involvement of both women and men in its development;
- promoting actions that lead to sustainable and equal growth and development;
- creating legitimacy for Women's Resource Centres.

This updated version of the Handbook is to be used in the Eastern Partnership countries as a tool for women's participation in the development at all levels in the society. The updates are available in English, Armenian and Russian languages.

It is with pride and sense of accomplishment that we acknowledge the power, creativity and potential of Women's Resource Centres, which have become a hub of democratic dialogue that enhance the construction of a society with a competitive advantage. In various ways, through collaboration with regional and local actors, and with the help of men who sympathise with the fight for equality, these Resource Centres for women have changed a one-sided growth to a two-sided approach for equal and sustainable growth.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the momentum of WRCs' success has spread across Europe and the world, which has triggered a demand for a Handbook in English to offer advice on setting up, running and developing a similar resource centers. To ensure a possibly wide access to the Handbook, we have made it available online on Winnet Sverige's and Winnet Europe's websites.

The individual's power, belief in knowledge, potential to influence their situation in the society, as well as social empowerment are the key characteristics of the work that goes on in our Resource Centres for women. If you like what we have been doing, you can turn to this Handbook to learn how to designed and establish a Women's Resource Centre in your own community, region and country. The WRC is an actor within the Winnet Model for cooperation, networking and partnership for regional innovation in a chosen thematic area, which stresses the importance of gender equal sustainable growth.

Use it well! We wish you success!

Gävle, Sweden

September 2016

Britt-Marie Söderberg Torstensson

President

Winnet Sverige and Winnet Europe

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Introduction

*What are Women's
Resource Centres?*

By women for women

*Equality between women
and men*



PHOTO: LANI NOREKE

What are Women's Resource Centres?

The model of Resource Centres for Women is the most effective base for engaging women in sustainable regional and local development.

The primary task and mission of Women's Resource Centres is to increase the number of women participating in economic development and growth on both regional and local levels.

A fundamental principle of Women's Resource Centres is that they should develop on the basis of local needs and conditions.

The Function of a Women's Resource Centre is:

- To empower women
- To be a neutral meeting place for networking groups of women
- To be a centre for information and documentation
- To give women advice (counselling and mentorship) as to the way of proceeding with their projects or business ideas
- To mediate contacts with women's networks

Running a Women's Resource Centre is based on five key categories of criteria which at the same time can form the basis for the quality certification of WRCs:

1. Legitimacy
2. Continuity
3. Organisation
4. Competences
5. Financing

By women for women

Work in a Women's Resource Centre makes use of the driving forces women possess and takes a grassroots perspective as its starting point. It provides women with the opportunity to design activities based on women's needs, resulting in activities designed by women for women. A Women's Resource Centre gives women a chance to use their knowledge and competence and represent women's interests in regional and local development work.

In all work in a WRC the principles – grassroots perspective, empowerment, management by demand, and respect for the individual and the individual's needs and wishes – that are fundamental to a WRC, have to be kept in mind.

Equality between women and men

In order for a country to grow and develop it is essential to utilise the entire population's knowledge and competence. This means that all individuals, both men and women, are allowed the possibility to develop their talents within those particular areas where they have the best prerequisites. Equality between women and men is therefore an important factor in ensuring a good life and growth in society.

Women's Resource Centres give women the possibility to use their knowledge and competence and represent women's interests in regional and local development work.

Chapter 1: Why and how WRCs can contribute to change



PHOTO: LANI NOREKE

A gender (un)equal labour market and growth: why and how Women's Resource Centres can contribute to change the status quo

Employment

Reconciliation between work, private and family life

Education and research

Entrepreneurship

Conclusion: gendered regional development policies

Cross-border cooperation projects in Europe and neighbouring countries

A gender (un)equal labour market and growth: why and how Women's Resource Centres can contribute to change the status quo

The following chapter is aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of social and economic challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality. The evidence and analysis offer women's organizations, such as Women's Resource Centres, a baseline to design effective strategies for interventions in this area.

Data and analysis primarily reflect the situation and trends in EU 28 Member States and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. They also provide reference to policies and programmes of the European Union in the area of non-discrimination, employment, social inclusion and growth. Women's Resource Centres, deeply rooted within the European culture and practices, and recently having expanded to Armenia and other EaP countries, may become an open and flexible model for effective gender equality interventions in the EU, EaP countries, Europe's neighbours and worldwide.¹

Interlinked dimensions of employment, work-life balance, education and research, entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as cross-cutting issues, such as conflicts and migration, are addressed in this chapter. Gender inequality is deeply entrenched in these dimensions exposing a frontline for WRCs to intervene. Following the description of the situation and trends, the chapter offers a few questions and entry points for WRCs' interventions in the field.

The final section focuses on gender sensitive policies for regional growth in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Employment

Europe 2020, the European Union's ten-year jobs and growth strategy aimed at creating conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, targets 75% employment rate for 20-64 year-olds.² In 2015, women's employment for this age group reached an all-time high of 64.5%. However, this is well below the rate for men (75.6%), and women are still more likely than men to work part time or not work at all. In 2015, 32.8% of working women were in part-time work (as compared with 9.9% of men) in the EU 28 Member States, and the gender gap

is even wider in case of households with children.³ Thus, in the EU 28 Member States in 2015, the employment rate for women (age 25-54) without children was 76.0%, and it showed a decreasing pattern for those with one child (72.3%), with two children (71.1%) and three children or more (55.4%).⁴

Indeed, the recent moderate economic recovery in the EU has improved the situation slightly: 97.8 million women were in paid work in June 2015 (3.5 million more than in January 2010, of whom 1.8 million were in full time and 1.7 million in part-time employment). The growth in part-time work has been most significant in lower paid jobs (retail sales, cleaning and helping), so the workers in question have to contend with the dual disadvantages of low hourly pay and few hours worked.⁵ Part-time employment is more and more frequently involuntary.⁶

With or without children, women are more likely to work part-time, than men in almost all the EU Member States. However, the gap widens with the number of children. In other words, at the EU level, the more children a woman has, the more likely she is to work part-time, while the opposite is true for men, at least up to 2 children. This general trend is observed in an overwhelming majority of Member States.

The situation is substantially different in the European Neighbourhood Eastern Partnership countries. The levels of employment are essentially lower both for women and men across EaP countries. The average gender gap for EaP is more or less of the same scale as in the EU. Thus, in 2015, women's employment in Armenia was as low as 43.8%, slightly higher than in 2010. This is one third less than the rate for men (59.8%).⁷ In 2014, employment rate for women in Georgia was 47% (53% for men)⁸, in Moldova 45.9% (48.8% for men)⁹. In Ukraine, the employment rate was estimated as 51.7% for women and 62.2% for men in 2015.¹⁰ In Azerbaijan, the female employment rate was reported 69.5% (77% for men) in 2014. In Belarus, the reported employment rates are the highest in the EaP area. Actually, Belarus is the only EaP country where the employment rate for women (84.6%) was higher than that for men (78.4%) in 2015.¹¹

The gender gap in part-time employment for the EU and EaP is also akin. While only 22.7% of employed men worked part-time in Armenia, more than 41.7% of women worked part-time in 2015.¹² Half of employed women and every third men (36%) worked part time in Georgia in 2014. The part-time employment gender gap is the lowest in Moldova where 26% of women and 28% of men worked part-time in 2014.¹³

Overall, despite a moderate economic recovery in the EU and EaP states, part-time employment has increased and women remain underrepresented in the labour market and they take on the bulk of unpaid work.

Open questions

- How is it possible to concretely foster women's employment at the national, regional, the EU and EaP levels?
- Is part-time a free choice for women or a forced solution?
- Which negative effects does part-time prove to have in terms of income and pensions?
- How can the rate of unemployed women be reduced?

WRCs' role for change

- Women's Resource Centres can be useful tools to support women in finding jobs by offering a wide range of gender sensitive counselling and support services to individual women looking for jobs;
- WRCs actively link with employment services for matching demand/offer valuing women's skills and competences in the labour market;
- WRCs can actively raise women's awareness about the limits of part-time employment and support them in negotiating with employers the opportunity of reversible part-time schemes to be endorsed in periods in life when care duties are more demanding.

Reconciliation between work, private and family life

Parenthood and the care of children, elderly and/or people with disabilities have traditionally been considered a women's task. This is why care activities widely impact on women's participation in the labour market. In 2015, working women still took on three quarters of household tasks and two thirds of parental care.¹⁴ Statistics have proved that about 30% of working-age women having care responsibilities are inactive or work part-time (but would like to work more hours) due to the lack of care services for children, elderly people and/or people with disabilities. Work-life balance is also an important factor in people's well-being. Gender gap is prevalent in subjective well-being, with depression being twice as common among women as among men. Meanwhile, evidence proves that a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work reduces stress and is conducive to happiness for both men and women.¹⁵

Work-life balance policies can make it easier to combine work with care responsibilities, but only if men and women make use of them, so that women do not continue to bear the burden of household chores, childcare and care of ageing parents.¹⁶ Such policies can help address the barriers to women's participation in the labour market. These policies are a key dimension in a modern growing economy, as recognised by the EC in its Annual Growth Survey 2016.¹⁷

The EU set the Barcelona target of 33% of all children aged 0-3 to be offered available care services, and the proportion of children cared for in formal structures that once increased from 25% (2005) to 30% (2007) has stagnated since 2010 at the EU and national levels. The availability, affordability and quality of childcare have been shown to be obstacles to the use of these services¹⁸ and only six Member States reached the Barcelona targets in 2013, a decade after their adoption: Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Sweden and Slovenia. The availability of child care services in the EaP countries is very diverse. Thus, in Armenia no public childcare services are available for children aged 0-3, with relevant data substantially lacking on availability of private services. Preschool enrolment was 28.6% (30.3% of girls and 27.2% of boys aged 3-6) in 2015.¹⁹ Meanwhile, in Belarus 97% of children aged 3-5 and 29.4% of children aged 1-2 were enrolled in preschool institutions in 2015.²⁰

Women's labour market participation is known to respond to fiscal (dis)incentives, so their relatively higher tax burden²¹ may have a disproportionately negative impact on their employment outcomes. Out-of-pocket childcare expenses further aggravate the financial disincentives to work faced by women with children, and these have not decreased in recent years in the EU.²² The 2015 European Working Conditions Survey shows that family-friendly practices have not become more common. A majority of employees have their working schedules decided by employers. In most cases, working hours are regular, but 31% of employees are affected by changes, often at short notice, and this complicates childcare arrangements. Also, 35% of employees in EU Member States are unable to take an hour or two off to attend to personal or family matters.²³

A more positive development is the introduction of paid leave for fathers in some countries and longer parental leave in others. However, in most Member States very few men actually take paternity/parental leave and periods of leave are usually short; the meagre leave allowances have a limited impact in terms of encouraging gender equality.²⁴ As a result, policies tend to reinforce (rather than

challenge) traditional stereotypes as regards gender roles at work and at home and consequently to hinder greater involvement of women in the labour market.²⁵

In August 2015 the European Commission announced a new initiative for work-life balance, aiming to remove obstacles to the labour market for parents and others with caring responsibilities, particularly women, and to strengthen gender equality.²⁶ In parallel, the EC is monitoring the implementation of the directives on equal treatment by the Member States,²⁷ maternity leave²⁸ and parental leave.²⁹ The Commission is also monitoring the Member States' performance in the framework of economic policy coordination.³⁰ In 2015, eight Member States received a recommendation³¹ relating to female labour-market participation.

Migration and conflicts, both global and regional, also affected employment of women in the EU and EaP

areas. The situation of third-country nationals across the EU with respect to employment, education and social inclusion is distinctly less favourable than that of host-country nationals. Only around 53 % of them were employed last year, as compared with 65 % of citizens living in their home country.³² Migrant women have even fewer opportunities and resources than male migrants and are more likely to face multiple discrimination. Both male and female immigrants are twice as likely to be unemployed as those born in the EU. Immigrant women tend to be significantly overrepresented among the economically inactive and are an under-utilised source of skills.³³ Basic inequalities are amplified by displacement, when women are more vulnerable and are exposed to risks of violence, exploitation and slavery. Such risks came to the fore in 2015, as the EU faced a surge in the number of asylum seekers, including a growing number of women and children. About 33 % of first time applicants registered in January 2016 were women. Humanitarian actors confirm that there is a trend of more women refugees and unaccompanied children making the journey to Europe.³⁴ According to the UNHCR initial assessment report "Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migratory Crisis",³⁵ conditions in the reception sites fail to meet minimum standards for the mitigation of gender-based violence.

ICHD's research on this issue concludes that this statement is also true in Europe's neighbourhood affected by the regional conflicts.³⁶ Specifically, conflicts in the region and in the Middle East have resulted in particularly vulnerable groups, such as refugees and IDPs, majority of whom are women. The Amnesty International reports that

Armenia has taken in nearly as many Syrian refugees as the European Union and more than France, Italy, the UK, Spain, and Germany combined in 2013.³⁷ In Georgia, the half of about quarter-million IDPs have less access to formal employment than the local population due to lack of information, established networks and marginalization. The conflict in the east and south of Ukraine has led to about 1,5 million IDPs of which 66% are women and 23.7% are of working age, who are still struggling to access employment. IDPs do not usually have the relevant skills. Their limited access to land also means they are less able to cultivate products for sale or for their own consumption. Their limited funds also prevent them from buying agricultural inputs, such as equipment and livestock.³⁸ In addition, a large number of women and men in EaP countries have left the country in search of better job opportunities.

Additionally, increased labour force participation of women along with better work-life balance could substantially address root causes of non-medical gender-biased sex selection, which is rampant in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.³⁹

Open Questions

- The recent and ongoing economic and financial crisis has led to further cuts in national budgets for public care services and has fostered the 'subsidiarity' approach in welfare policies calling for communities' and families' involvement and active participation in being responsible for care activities for the youngest, the elderly and disabled people. How is it possible to counteract potential unequal gendered effects of this trend? Which precautions may be taken to avoid increasing women's burden of care activities?
- How to stress the need for public, affordable and high quality care services as tools for improving women's employment rates and therefore the national/European growth?
- How to continue promoting change in culture and opinions about women being the main carers within families?
- How to help women and families for a better management of their work-life balance?
- How to support women's businesses in the care sector so that they can offer high quality services?
- How to improve access of migrant women to the labour market and to decent jobs?
- Can Women Resource Centres support in selecting a female interviewer and interpreter for female asylum seeking applicants, if the latter so requests?

- How to enhance employability of women refugees and IDPs in the EaP countries affected by conflicts?
- How to contribute towards implementation of the UN SCR 1325 in the EaP countries and relevant National Action Plans?
- How to contribute towards preventing gender-biased sex selection in the South Caucasus countries through fostering female labour force participation and improving work-life balance in these societies?

WRCs' role for change

- WRCs may be among the actors that lobby supranational, national and regional institutions and increase awareness in order to mobilise support for welfare state services and to be aware of potential gendered side effects of privatising processes;
- Women's Resource Centres can be active both in raising awareness among couples and families to promote an equal share of care tasks between men and women and to integrate these specific issues in their counselling activities for women looking for a job, women already employed and/or entrepreneurs;
- WRCs can sensitise young people and students by cooperating with schools and educational institutions to promote change on gender stereotypes and care work;
- WRCs have the capacities to work in cooperation with regional and local governments, trade unions and employers' organizations to counsel and support women entrepreneurs active in the care sector and raise their awareness on quality standards in care services.

Education and research

For the past two decades, women have outnumbered men among new graduates and, as a consequence, female employees are now generally more educated than male employees.

On average, 85% of young women (20-24) reached at least upper secondary school in the EU 28 Member States in 2015, vis-à-vis 80.4% of young men.⁴⁰ In Armenia over 80% of young women aged 15-24 attained at least upper secondary education.⁴¹ In other EaP countries the education attainment of women is also high: on average 83.3% of women aged 20-24 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine attained at least an upper secondary education in 2015.⁴²

Women constituted more than half of all university students (54.1%) and 57.9% of university graduates in the EU 28 Member States in 2014.⁴³ In Armenia nearly half of university students (54.6%) and 50% of graduates

were women in 2015.⁴⁴ Enrolment rate for women (49.4%) in Armenia was higher than for men (44.2%) in 2014.⁴⁵ In 2014 the enrolment of women in tertiary education was 31% in Georgia (25% for men) and 64% in Moldova (36% for men). In Ukraine the enrolment rate in 2014 was reported to be very high (85% for women and 74% for men).⁴⁶

Indeed, women are reaping the benefits of education: employment rates of recent graduates for women was 75.3% and 78.6% for men in 2015.⁴⁷ However, women are still paid 16% less than men per hour of work: in 2014, the gender pay gap was at 16.1% in the EU. In other words, women earned on average 84 cents for every euro a man makes per hour.⁴⁸

Obviously, without the above mentioned educational achievements, the gender pay gap would be even wider. However, women tend to go into sectors that are relatively less well paid and they pay a high price for part-time work, which is less well remunerated than full time jobs per hour of work.⁴⁹ Thus, in the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction nearly quarter of students (25.3%) were women in the EU 28 Member States in 2014. In the fields of science, mathematics and computing women were 38.6%. Only 15.5% of all female university students are studying in these two mainly male-populated fields in the EU 28 Member States.⁵⁰ The average enrolment of women in university studies in the fields of engineering, manufacturing, construction, science, mathematics and computing in the EaP countries is higher than in the EU 28 Member States on average. Thus, 47.3% of students in the field of science, mathematics and computing in Armenia were women in 2015. However, women's enrolment in engineering, manufacturing and construction in Armenia is much lower than in the EU (10%).⁵¹ In 2014, among graduates in science, technology, engineering and maths women were 30% in Ukraine, 42% in Georgia and nearly 70% in Moldova.⁵²

Whilst women were once under-represented at doctoral level, in 2014 they made up 47.7% of PhD graduates in the EU 28 Member States. At the same time, there are marked differences by sex when it comes to the most popular subjects and educational pathways. For instance, men are more than two times more likely than women to choose engineering, manufacturing and construction, whereas women are twice as likely to pursue an education degree. In 2014, women accounted for just a quarter (25.7%) of PhD graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction, and 41 % of those graduated from science, mathematics and computing.⁵³ In Armenia

56% of postdoctoral students and 37% of graduates were women in 2015.⁵⁴ In 2014, 64% of post-doctoral graduates in Georgia and 60% in Moldova were women.⁵⁵

Amongst researchers the representation of women and men also remains uneven. In 2013, women in the EU 28 Member States accounted for only 33% of researchers.⁵⁶ Women in the EU have a stronger presence amongst researchers in the private non-profit (45% of researchers in the sector in 2013), higher education and government sectors (41% in 2013). In business enterprises, they make up close to one in five researchers (20%).⁵⁷

Across the EaP region women constituted about 50% of researchers in 2014.⁵⁸ In 2014 women across EaP countries were over the half of researchers in humanities (66%), medical and health sciences (58.5%), social sciences (57.7%), agricultural sciences (53.7%), government (51.9%) and higher education (50.3%).⁵⁹ Women researchers are under-represented in natural sciences (48.5%), business enterprises (42.7%) and engineering and technology (35.8%). In the EaP region the highest representation of women researchers is in Armenia in the field of humanities (79.3%) and the lowest is in Moldova in the fields of engineering and technology.⁶⁰

Gender differences are evident in the working conditions of researchers in the higher education sector. Women researchers are generally more likely than men to work part-time and/or to have 'precarious contractual arrangements'. In the EU in 2012, 13.5 % of women in research were in part-time employment (versus 8.5 % of men) and 10.8 % had precarious contracts (versus 7.3 % of men). However, the gender gap in part-time employment rates is far lower amongst researchers in the higher education sector than it is in the economy as a whole.⁶¹

Furthermore, persistent gender pay gaps within sectors and occupations cannot be explained by differences in qualifications - a difference of 10.9 percentage points remains as the unexplained gap. Across the EU 28 Member States, the gender pay gap in 2014 ranged from less than 5% in Slovenia and Malta to more than 20% in Estonia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Slovakia.⁶² In the EaP region the gender pay gap in 2014 was the highest in Azerbaijan, 46%,⁶³ followed by 34% in Armenia⁶⁴ and 36% in Georgia (43% in 2010),⁶⁵ 24% in Belarus (2015),⁶⁶ and 23% in Ukraine (22% in 2010), and the lowest in Moldova - 12% (24% in 2010)⁶⁷. The highest wage gap in the EaP countries is in financial services, which nevertheless tends to have a majority of female employees. The agricultural sector

is among the most equitable, yet it presents the highest degree of vulnerable employment and working poor. Manufacturing presents a range of gaps, as does the services sector.⁶⁸ The gender pay gap persists in research: in 2010, women's average gross hourly earnings (EU-28) were 17.9 % lower than those of men in scientific research and development.⁶⁹

Being highly skilled did not help women in improving their employment patterns. The gender gap in employment rates is lower among women and men having tertiary education, than for lower levels of education. Still, the level of education seems to have a limited influence on gender gaps: gender gaps in employment, part-time work and pay tend to rise between the age of 25 and the age of 35, reflecting the high impact of family responsibilities on female employment.⁷⁰

As a result of significant inequalities in pay, hours worked and employment, average labour market outcomes for women are much worse than those for men. This threatens women's economic independence and can lead families into poverty, especially (but not only) if the woman is the sole breadwinner. Single-parent households, which represent a tenth of households with children, are particularly vulnerable: almost 50 % of lone parents are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which is twice the rate for the population as a whole.⁷¹

Lower earnings, lower employment rates, and high rates of part-time work and career breaks due to care responsibilities reduce women's pension contributions and, thus, pension entitlements both in the EU and EaP countries. In particular, gender gap in pensions stood at 40 % in the EU in 2014 and shows no sign of narrowing. Older women face a substantially higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than older men and this is especially pronounced for those aged 75+. Across the EU and EaP, elderly women are more likely than men to be overburdened with housing costs.⁷²

Despite their high performance in education, barriers to women's advancement through the corporate ranks remain across Europe and neighbourhood and take many forms.⁷³ These barriers include persistent stereotypical perceptions of gender roles in work and family life, failure to manage and retain talent properly or to communicate and implement gender diversity priorities throughout an organisation, and a lack of suitable role models, mentors, sponsors and networking opportunities.⁷⁴

Although the level of female representation in the economic decision-making is still low, progress has been recorded since 2010: the proportion of women on the

boards of large, publicly listed companies increased from 11.9 % in 2010 to 22.7 % in 2015.⁷⁵ The improvement is largely attributable to important changes where governments have intervened legislatively and thus spurred public debate on the issue or by implementing a voluntary, business-led framework with clearly defined targets and regular monitoring.

Climbing the economic decision-making ladder is even more challenging for women in the EaP countries. Thus, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) survey, the ability of women to rise to senior positions in business is scored 4.9-5 in Georgia and Moldova. Less than one third of firms in these countries had female top managers in 2014 (32% in Georgia and 26% in Moldova).⁷⁶

Striking gender inequalities persist when it comes to career advancement and participation in academic decision-making. In 2013, women made up only 21% of the top-level researchers (grade A). Despite significant progress in their level of education relative to men over the last few decades, women are increasingly under-represented as they move up the stages of an academic career. At grade C level, the difference with men stands at 10 percentage points, while at grade A level it reaches 58 percentage points. This effect is even more pronounced in the field of science and engineering, where women represented only 13% of grade A staff in 2013. In 2014, the proportion of women among heads of higher education institutions in the EU 28 Member States rose to 20 % from 15.5 % in the EU-27 in 2010. Across the EU 28 Member States, women make up 28% of scientific and administrative board members and only 22% of board leaders.

The European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020 pays special attention to the under-representation of women as heads of higher-education institutions.⁷⁷ In implementing Horizon 2020 (the EU's framework programme for research and innovation), the Commission has set a target of 40 % of members of the under-represented gender on its evaluation panels and in expert groups and 50 % in its advisory groups. The proportion of women in Horizon 2020 advisory groups in 2014-2015 was 52 %. In addition, the EC's conclusions⁷⁸ on advancing gender equality in the European Research Area, invite Member States and institutions to achieve indicative targets for a more even gender balance for professors.

In the past decade, the EU has developed an arsenal of measures to address the gender pay gap. Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment in the area of employment and occupation prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of gender in relation to pay.

However, the implementation remains an issue. In particular, the Commission's Recommendation on pay transparency⁷⁹ provides a toolkit of concrete measures to improve pay transparency, e.g. pay audits, regular reporting by employers and an employee entitlement to information on pay. In addition, the EU provides funding for eight transnational projects aimed at understanding and reducing the gender pay gap.⁸⁰ In Sweden, the 2016 Budget Bill will tentatively improve gender equality and support more vulnerable women through a series of changes in the tax-benefit system. A number of Member States have taken initiatives to promote gender balance on boards through the regular monitoring and dissemination of results to raise awareness; these are crucial ingredients for progress.⁸¹

Open Questions

- How to tackle and transform gender stereotypes and discrimination in education from kindergarten to university, involving the institutions, students and their parents?
- How to deconstruct the myth of hard sciences and technologies as masculine domains?
- How to raise awareness of employers and their organizations on lost talents and potentials of highly skilled girls who are not employed due to gender discrimination in recruitment processes?
- How to attract more girls to scientific and technological curricula and how to support them in their school-employment transition?
- How to attract more boys to care professions and related studies?
- How to contribute to closing the gender pay gap by supporting businesses in reviewing their evaluation criteria, promotion policies and organisational factors, and by ensuring that workers are paid according to the hours they actually work?
- How to contribute to implementation of policies in the EU and EaP countries to tackle the gender pay gap?

WRCs' role for change

- Women's Resource Centres can run specific projects on gender in education at various levels and together with institutional actors from the education sectors (ministerial agencies, universities, schools).
- Women's Resource Centres can counsel girls and boys on their study choices and perspective careers;
- Women's Resource Centres dedicated to educational matters and gender pedagogies may be set up to support schools and teachers in tackling gender stereotypes and discriminations.

Entrepreneurship

In the EU 28 Member states women constituted about 32% of the self-employed in 2015. In other words, every third self-employed in the EU is a woman. Every tenth employed woman (11%) and every fifth employed man (19%) were self-employed in the EU 28 Member States in 2015.⁸²

According to the 2012 Flash Eurobarometer, women are more likely than men to prefer to work as an employee (by a margin of 63% to 53%), while men are more likely to favour self-employment (42% vs. 33%).⁸³

Not surprisingly, men are more inclined than women to regard self-employment as a feasible alternative, by a margin of 35% to 26%. Moreover, women are more likely than men (36% vs. 28%) to have started a business that was subsequently sold, transferred or closed, whereas men are more likely to have started a business which is still operational. Further, women are more likely than men to say that it has never crossed their mind to start a business, by a margin of 63% to 52%. Men are more likely than women to say they would use the money to start a business (20% vs. 14%), while women are more likely to use the money to buy a house (36% vs. 31%). Men (29%) are more likely than women (17%) to have either started a business or to have taken over one, or to be planning to start one.⁸⁴

Men are more likely than women to say that their main source of income is their business (79% vs. 66%), and also that their business is their only source of income (70% vs. 57%). Women are more likely to say that part-time work is their main source of income (14% vs. 7%) and that they make their money from another source of income only (31% vs. 18%).⁸⁵

Women are more likely than men (65% vs. 58%) to say that addressing an unmet social or ecological need was important in their decision to start a business. Women are somewhat more inclined than men to agree that one should not start a business if there is a risk of failure, by a margin of 53% to 46%. Men are somewhat more likely to take a favourable view of entrepreneurs than women, by a margin of 56% to 50%. Men (26%) are somewhat more likely than women (21%) to have taken part in an entrepreneurship course.⁸⁶

Men are slightly more likely than women to favour a non-family-owned company (51% vs. 46%), while women are slightly more likely to prefer a family company (43% vs. 39%). Men are somewhat more likely than women to say that faster career progression, higher wages, and the

long-term view of the owners are reasons for preferring publicly owned or family businesses, while women are more likely to say that their stronger commitment to the local community is one of their reasons.⁸⁷

In the EU 28 Member States the most remarkable sectors of women's entrepreneurship include wholesale and retail trade; agriculture, forestry and fishing; professional, scientific and technical activities; human health and social work activities; accommodation and food service activities; other service activities; education; manufacturing; administrative and support service activities; and arts, entertainment and recreation. These nine sectors absorb more than 90% of women entrepreneurs. In these sectors women are about 42% of the self-employed on average (with the highest being 67% in other service activities, 63% in human health and social work activities, and 55% in education, and the lowest 20.6% in manufacturing).

While every fifth self-employed in information and communication sector (19.1%), every fourth in financial and insurance activities and every third in real estate activities (36.8%) is a woman, these sectors absorb only 5% of self-employed women.

Less than 3.6% of women entrepreneurs are operational in the sectors of construction, transportation and storage, public administration and defence, compulsory social security, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, mining and quarrying, activities of households as employers, water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities.

In the EaP countries women constituted about 19.7% of the self-employed in Azerbaijan (2016),⁸⁸ 39.3% in Georgia⁸⁹ 42.1% in Moldova⁹⁰ and 47.7% in Armenia⁹¹ in 2014. The self-employed women constituted about a third of employed women in Armenia (35%)⁹² and 28% in Moldova⁹³ in 2014.

As in the EU Member States, women entrepreneurs in the EaP countries are mostly operating in trade, agriculture, forestry and fishing, accommodation and food service activities, activity of households, professional, scientific and technical activities, real estate activities, education, manufacturing, human health and social work and other service activities. Thus, over 95% of women entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan (2016)⁹⁴ and 90% of self-employed women in Georgia (2014)⁹⁵ were operating businesses in these sectors. Women ran three of four businesses in education, as well as health and social work sectors in Georgia (2014).⁹⁶ Similarity, in Azerbaijan (2016) two of three self-employed in education sector were women, while in health and social work only one of three self-employed

was a woman.⁹⁷ In Ukraine women entrepreneurs also populate the above-mentioned sectors.⁹⁸

In Moldova, only 14% of women-led agri-businesses are formal, and thus are less likely to benefit from export-support programmes (support programmes reach just 30% of such businesses). They are also smaller and less capital-intensive: about 9% own tractors and 8% have irrigation systems. Women comprise 36% of agricultural landholders, but own only 19% of agricultural land.⁹⁹

Top five obstacles reported as ‘particularly limiting’ for women entrepreneurs across the EaP countries include access to external financing; social, cultural and particularly gender-related obstacles; lack of sufficient business skills and of qualified business trainings; absence of qualified and affordable business development and support services; and, troublesome regulations and legislations and their frequent changes.

Other obstacles reported in various countries include market-related problems, including low demand for products and services, corruption, monopoly domination, and non-supportive government. There are considerable differences in the ranking of obstacles between the six countries.

Moreover, while many SME obstacles are similar for women and men entrepreneurs, women perceive several of these as more severe. Women entrepreneurs also encounter pronounced gender discrimination. Even if women and men have equal rights according to the law, structural discrimination and negative stereotypes make women less likely to get access to finance, business networks and information. Inequalities mean women entrepreneurs face greater challenges than men in access to land, credit, basic infrastructure, quality infrastructure, market and product information, technology, skills, technical support, and business networks.¹⁰⁰

In the South Caucasus women’s right to own land is protected by law. However, the right to inherit land and access to property other than land for young girls and women are not equally exercised, and discrimination is prevalent in these societies. Thus, in Georgia women held only 20% of land in 2012.¹⁰¹

The World Bank Enterprise Surveys have revealed that SMEs managed by women tend to perform better on a variety of basic business indicators. While female-run businesses tend to be smaller than those of men, they often employ proportionally more women. Thus, encouraging women’s entrepreneurship may have an impact on female employment, as well on SME competitiveness as a whole.¹⁰²

The regional integration agenda of EaP and the diverse paths the EaP countries have chosen may transform the landscape for entrepreneurship in general, and opportunities and challenges women in business may face, in particular. Thus, implementation of the DCFTA approximation/harmonisation agenda in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia will be expensive and complex, both for the government and the private companies. The anticipated effects of DCFTAs may worsen gender inequalities. Women entrepreneurs, who tend to be more concentrated at the lower end of the value chain, may face more challenges to cope with the increased costs of complying with stricter standards. They also have less leverage in terms of access to finance, technology, infrastructure, and expertise. Thus, women entrepreneurs might be left behind in the battle for competitiveness. Certain segments where women entrepreneurs are particularly engaged, including segments of food, apparel, vehicles, machinery, chemicals, plastics, building materials, consumer goods may face challenges. Some uncompetitive segments may close. Thus, SMEs will need the consistent and substantial help to take advantage of the DCFTAs, and women entrepreneurs will need more assistance than men in these countries.

Open questions

- How to make the EU, national and regional policies supportive of women’s entrepreneurship, targeting both prospective women’s start-ups and the existing women-led businesses?
- How to enhance gender sensitivity of the main regional development actors, such as regional development agencies, employer organizations, chambers of commerce, banks and the credit system?
- Which support services are the most useful in order to support and/or give visibility to women entrepreneurs?
- How to improve competitiveness of women entrepreneurs? How to design capacity building on entrepreneurship, management, finance, law, IT and export readiness support interventions? How to identify and meet women entrepreneurs’ needs for specific trainings, mentoring and networking?
- How to counsel women who want to start their own businesses and those who are already running one?
- Which interventions could facilitate women’s and men’s mobility across sectors and occupations effectively?
- How to support to established women entrepreneurs to facilitate innovation, increased profitability and growth?
- How to improve access of women entrepreneurs to external financing? Is it possible to train financial intermediaries on gender for eliminating discrimination risks?

- How to improve the use of sex-disaggregated data? How to consider the gender perspective in SME assessment and policy frameworks? Can agricultural and industrial extension services address specific challenges women in business face?
- How to initiate research on SME interventions with a gender perspective and women entrepreneurship in the EaP region, as a common mechanism in collaboration with the EU-led initiatives?

WRCs' role for change

- WRCs are constantly raising awareness on these issues at supranational and regional levels through their networks and associations. By developing regional and European projects they can promote measures such as financial support to women's start-ups, incubators for women's enterprises, favourable credit conditions, based on agreements or codes of conduct undersigned by banks;
- Entrepreneurship is actually one of the most advanced and successful activities of Women's Resource Centres in Europe and the EaP area, which offers qualified services and support to women's start-ups and businesswomen;
- WRCs have and can transfer their expertise in organizing training, mentoring sessions and networking activities for women entrepreneurs, such as cross-border study visits;
- WRCs encourage girls and young women to engage in entrepreneurship, and promote early entrepreneurial learning and youth entrepreneurship with a gender perspective. WRCs also promote adult women's access to entrepreneurship and provide support to experienced women entrepreneurs;
- WRCs can become a key player in sharing good practices on women's entrepreneurship across the EaP region.
- WRCs and their centres of excellence can promote research on women's entrepreneurship in the EaP countries in cooperation with the EU.

Innovation

A modern view of innovation is considered a new or significantly improved product (good or service) introduced to the market or the introduction within an enterprise of a new or significantly improved process. Turnover from innovation - products new to the enterprise and new to the market - reached 11.9% on average in EU 28 Member States in 2012.¹⁰³ In 2015, expenditure on research and development in EaP countries varied from 0.2% of GDP in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on average to 0.52% in Belarus.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, women in the EU have been significantly under-represented in innovation outputs. Thus, women are less likely than men to hold the corresponding author role in scientific publications or to apply for patents. Overall, men figure much more prominently than women as patent inventors: between 2010 and 2013, just 9% of patent applications in the EU registered a woman as the inventor. Nevertheless, the gap in inventorship is more pronounced than would be expected based on the under-representation of women researchers in the business enterprise sector. This may suggest that besides being under-represented amongst business enterprise sector researchers, women author, on average, fewer inventions than their men colleagues.¹⁰⁵

For some sections of the International Patent Classification (IPC), chemistry and metallurgy and human necessities, the severe under-representation of women inventors is a general phenomenon, observed across all IPC sections, for all countries, and across time periods. Across the region, women's inventorship is quite dynamic, indicating that women are adapting to opportunities and challenges emerging in environments vying for innovation. For example, a very high growth of women inventorship in the domains of mechanical engineering, lighting, heating, weapons and blasting is observed on the background of general decrease of women inventorship in Hungary.¹⁰⁶

As corresponding authors, women and men appear to have relatively similar scores when it comes to the expected impact of their papers and their propensity to co-author papers with international partners. The proportion of scientific publications by women corresponding authors slowly increased in the EU 28 Member States in the past decade, including in engineering and technology. A similar increase was observed for inventorship, with an increase of 2.2 % from 2002 to 2013.¹⁰⁷

In the EU 28 Member States, women and men corresponding authors participate with similar frequency in international scientific co-publications, although women corresponding authors account for fewer scientific publications than men. Women and men corresponding authors publish their scientific papers in comparably influential journals. This means that even though women corresponding authors account for fewer scientific publications than men, on average they publish their results in journals of equivalent prestige. The proportion of scientific publications with a gender dimension ranged from virtually zero in agricultural sciences, engineering and technology, and natural sciences to 6.2% in the

social sciences in the EU (2010-2013). The propensity to integrate a gender dimension in research content increased faster in the EU than worldwide during the period from 2002 to 2013. Compared to other countries, the Nordic countries often have higher shares of research output with a gender dimension.¹⁰⁸

The innovation related financial profile also indicates that women are significantly under-represented in the innovation domain. Thus, men in the EU tended to have greater success in funding applications in national programmes, outstripping women by 4.4 percentage points in 2013 (success rate for men = 31.8 %; rate for women = 27.4 %). The success rate for men is higher than that for women in 70 % of countries for which data are available.¹⁰⁹ Just 20.3% of businesses started with venture capital belong to female entrepreneurs.

Women also score less than men when assessing the level of innovation of their own business. Only 5%-15% of high-tech business is owned by women.¹¹⁰ In EU 28 Member States just 16.1% of the employed ICT specialists were women.¹¹¹

This situation is perhaps a reflection of traditional identification of innovation with technology and science and this has led to gender bias and has added a male connotation to its meaning, excluding from its definition sectors and fields where women have given and are still giving a major contribution, like the third sector economy and the services market.¹¹²

Gender horizontal and vertical segregation in ICT, science, technologies and mathematics is definitely a serious problem of wasted talent and dispersed human capital with enormous negative impact on innovation itself. This is particularly concerning if Europe has to build its future as one of the major competitive players in a globalized economy of knowledge. There are enormous opportunities to be caught within innovative sectors of the economy, such as the green jobs in renewable energy sources and in general within businesses and services aimed at making the economic system more sustainable and less polluting: women have always showed an emphatic sensitivity towards these issues and have a lot to contribute.¹¹³

Policies and studies at all levels often assume a gender-biased perspective on innovation, and women's actual and potential contributions to innovation processes are often concealed. The issue is both one of valuing women researchers' and innovators' contribution and of considering women's needs and interests when supporting innovation processes and/or designing innovative

products. Innovation in organizational cultures and patterns would also benefit from paying attention to work-life balance issues, and gender/diversity in human resources management.

Fostering gender equality in innovation processes means that new approaches have to be thought of when supporting changes in economic and social systems.

Luleå University together with Winnet Sweden and Resource Centres for Women has proposed the 'Quadruple Helix model' in the process of raising national support for women's contribution to innovation on a regional level. This vision requires that civil society and women leaders be included in innovation policies. The ideas have been tested through the INTERREG IVC project Winnet8.¹¹⁴

In Horizon 2020, the biggest EU Research and Innovation (R&I) programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020), gender is a cross-cutting issue. Under this Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness, three objectives underpin the strategy on gender equality. It aims at fostering gender balance in research teams, in order to close the gaps in the participation of women. The program strives for gender balance in decision-making, in order to reach the target of 40% of the under-represented sex in panels and groups and of 50% in advisory groups. Horizon 2020 envisages integrating the gender dimension in R&I content, helps improve the scientific quality and societal relevance of the produced knowledge, technology and/or innovation. In many topics across the work programme, it is explicitly requested that applicants take into account women, as well as men's needs and behaviours. Additionally, grant beneficiaries commit to promoting equal opportunities and a balanced participation of women and men at all levels in research and innovation teams and in management structures.¹¹⁵

The EC's 'Science with and for Society' Work Programme funds specific initiatives in support of the gender equality strategy. Support is given to Research Performing Organisations (RPO) and Research Funding Organisations (RFO). Funding is also provided to the development of a common framework to evaluate national initiatives promoting gender equality in research policy. A dedicated campaign aims at encouraging girls to study science and female students to further embrace a career in research. Research will be funded to analyse the impact of gender diversity in research teams on research and innovation performance. These activities target researchers and innovators, research organisations, primary, secondary

and higher education establishments, science museums, citizens and their associations or groupings, media, and policy makers at national, regional and local levels.¹¹⁶

Women's international organizations are striving to enhance a gendered dimension throughout all these topics, and WRCs engage in these processes through their national and European associations.¹¹⁷

Open Questions

- How can the meanings and definitions of innovation be changed and broadened so that women's needs are included and relevant approaches are taken?
- Which are the most effective strategies to support innovation and growth in a systemic and cooperative way, ensuring that all actors taken into account the gender perspective?
- How can women innovators and researchers be supported?

WRCs' role for change

- WRCs can be active agents within innovation networks, according to the above-mentioned quadruple helix model;
- WRCs can liaise with the academy, other civil society members, governmental authorities and the private sector for supporting innovation and sustainable development with a gender perspective;
- WRCs can create and coordinate customized projects around innovative women's start-ups;
- WRCs can support and counsel women innovators and inventors in their career paths;
- Specialized WRCs on ICT and technologies may offer training to women and young girls. WRC's may also cooperate with formal education institutions in this effort.

Conclusion: gendered regional development policies

Several studies have discussed the impact of an increase in female employment (or of a reduction of the gender gaps in employment) on economic growth. It is estimated that there could be a gain in GDP of almost 30% for the EU as a whole if gender gaps were eliminated.¹¹⁸ This estimate points at the great economic potential of reducing gender gaps in the EU Member States and EaP countries.

Equality between women and men is one of the EU's fundamental values, and its promotion is an obligation enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty. To fulfil this

obligation, the European Commission, on 3 December 2015, published its 2016-2019 Strategic engagement for gender equality.¹¹⁹ This takes into consideration the European Parliament's resolution on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post-2015, the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020, and the 2010-2015 Strategy for equality between women and men,¹²⁰ and confirms the Commission's continued commitment to gender equality as a fundamental EU value. It lists key action points that remain valid for the next four years, with clear timelines and indicators for monitoring. In addition, it emphasises the need to integrate a gender equality perspective into all the EU policies and funding programmes. The EC also based the Strategic engagement on the results of consultations¹²¹ and its ad hoc evaluation,¹²² which has concluded that ongoing efforts to promote gender equality need to be maintained.

Regional development policies necessarily include measures for promoting a sustainable and just economic and social development based on all the above-mentioned areas, from boosting entrepreneurship to promoting innovation, enhancing employment and work-life balance, and promoting human capital through education.

The Structural Funds are the EU resources devoted to regional growth and cohesion, and they represent 1/3 of the EU budget; they are divided into the European Social Fund (ESF) in line with the Employment Strategy, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) that support programmes addressing regional development, economic change, enhanced competitiveness and territorial cooperation. Funding priorities include research, innovation, environmental protection and risk prevention, while infrastructure investment retains an important role, especially in the least developed regions, as well as interventions on environment and transportation (the Cohesion Fund). Experience has proved that although gender equality was indicated as a cross-cutting theme in the EU Policy documents and was integrated in goals and objectives within National and Regional Programming Documents for FESR and ESF funds,¹²³ this type of discursive mainstreaming often does not correspond to concrete actions and projects in favour of women.

Important inputs are coming from international women's organizations, such as the European Community of Practices on Gender Mainstreaming¹²⁴ for increasing quality standards and the accountability of gender mainstreaming strategies in Structural Funds. Nevertheless, it is important to continue to stress how important it is to invest in

positive actions for women in regional development, as gender mainstreaming by itself still presents several pitfalls and risks.¹²⁵ This is what Winnet Europe, the European Association of Women's Resource Centres is trying to do together with partners from the Winnet8 Project: a consultation process has been launched at the European level to collect hints and suggestions on how to innovate gender equality policies and make growth policies more effective and sustainable through a gender approach. Results from the consultation process and from regional Round Tables organized within Winnet8 and leading to Regional Action Plans formed a participatory baseline to shape policy recommendations.

In recent years, interesting projects on gender equality in regional development have been funded by the European Commission. The Women's Resource Centres have been leading actors in carrying them out. These were concrete actions that have been put in place to support regional development policies with a gender equal approach and have shown how WRCs can contribute to the debate and implement actions and initiatives to empower women's role in regional economies.

Women Resource Centres are becoming a key player in the EaP area. Eastern Partnership, initiated by the EU in 2009, is the political framework for relations between the EU and the six partner countries in Eastern Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Under this framework, on 27 June 2014, the EU signed Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs), with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.¹²⁶

These processes bring the anti-discrimination and gender equality indicatives into EaP countries' integration agenda and, in particular, approximation agenda for the three AA/DCFTA signatories.¹²⁷

Cross-border cooperation projects in Europe and neighbouring countries

FEM

FEM project, a Baltic Sea Region Interreg III B project 2004–2007 (Lead Partner Finland, partners from Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland). The overall aim of the FEM project was to build up a structure for the support of women's entrepreneurship in the Baltic Sea Region. The result promised was to strengthen the

role of women in local and regional development and to promote the access of women into the labour market. Training, meeting-places and networking were considered main tools to tackle these obstacles and Women's Resource Centres were the structures identified for having a role in carrying them out.

W.IN.NET

Interreg III C W.IN.NET 2003–2005, a European Network of Women's Resource Centres (Lead Partner Sweden, partners from France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia). W.IN.NET was promoted with the aim of creating a European network of Women's Resource Centres, through interregional cooperation, able to increase and improve policies and tools for Equal Opportunities between men and women at the local, regional and European level, promoting women's role in development. The model of the European Network of Women's Resource Centres has been developed focusing on the following subjects:

1. Modelling of Resource Centres for Women, as promoters of regional and local development
2. Women entrepreneurs
3. Territorial systems on gender equality and local development
4. Services and activities for unemployed women and women in difficulty
5. Women and new technologies.

As a sustainable outcome of the project, the Winnet Europe Association was founded in 2006.

More information about Winnet Europe is available on its official website at www.winneteurope.org.

Interreg IVC Capitalisation project WINNET8

Interreg IV C Capitalisation project WINNET8 2010–2011 led by Winnet Sweden, and implemented in cooperation with partners from Greece, Italy, Finland, UK, Bulgaria, Poland, and Portugal contributed to regional growth by improving women's participation in the labour market. Its focus was on horizontally segregated labour markets, and little presence and participation of women in innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship.

The project aimed at shaping regional, national and EU-level policies and development programmes that relate to women's status in the labour market, and ensuring these policies are integrated into mainstream provisions. It focused on dissemination of the Women Resource Centres as an innovative tool to secure women's participation in sustainable regional growth at all levels in the EUBSR

cohesion policy and actions. The results of the project were presented both at the EU Commission and the EU Parliament, and subsequently contributed to the development of Horizon 2020. WINNET 8 provided policy input in several domains: rural development, local and regional development, employment, education, entrepreneurship, innovation, and science and technology.

More information on the project is available at www.winnnet8.eu.

The Interreg South Baltic program project: Going abroad – Connecting business potentials across borders

Going Abroad, financed by the Interreg South Baltic Programme, was yet another project inspired by the work of WRCs across borders, implemented in 2011-2014 by partners and associated organisations from Sweden, Germany, Lithuania and Poland. Its objective was to strengthen the business potential of enterprises run by women across borders through creating networks and providing new knowledge to enable them to run their businesses sustainably and competitively.

The project aimed to promote female entrepreneurs by helping them tackle the problems with accessing new markets. It allowed women to build networks that connect small enterprises. Exchange of knowledge between enterprises from the four countries was essential for increasing export and international trade.

In the result of the project, between 2011 and 2013, about 80 women got a chance to meet face-to-face for networking; attend capacity building workshops and most importantly, develop different types of cooperation.

More detailed information about the project is available at <http://www.goingabroad.nu>.

New thematic partnership: Winnet Baltic Sea Region

Winnet Baltic Sea Region (Winnet BSR) is a spin-off of a seed funding grant from the Swedish Institute for the “Baltic Sea Region Partnership Platform for Gender & Economic Growth”, initiated in 2013. It involves new actors from



Sweden, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Poland, and as a thematic partnership, focuses on developing gender sensitive models and methods contributing to business development and innovation in SMEs led by women in ICT, tourism and creative industries.

The Winnet BSR central partnership with Women Resource Centres, researchers, associations for women entrepreneurs, and business support actors in BSR aims at bringing about change towards gender mainstreaming both in policies and practices in the region.

In this framework, a Winnet Centre of Excellence® in Baltic Sea Region, was established in November, 2014, at Stettin University in Poland.

More information on Winnet BSR is available at <http://www.balticsearegion.org>.

Winnet Armenia Regional Project

Since June 2016, Women’s Development Resource Center Foundation (WDRCF), backed by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Winnet Sweden and Winnet Europe, has engaged Armenian network of WRCs (Winnet Armenia) in an initiative to strengthen the role of WRCs as key actors of local/regional growth and support the participation of women in regional development. It targets WRCs in Armenia as well as aims to establish partnership platform for WRCs in the Eastern Partnership countries.

The project pursues three interlinked specific objectives: (i) increase the capacity, role, visibility, and impact of Winnet Armenia network in the country; (ii) provide women’s empowerment opportunities in the local beneficiary communities; and, (iii) strengthen regional cooperation and experience sharing among women’s resource centres.

By sharing best practices learned through years of experience. Winnet Sweden and Armenia will be able to

increase the organizational capacities of the established organizations, increase women’s interest and involvement in politics, empower women in the economic sphere, and secure Winnet model for a Sustainable Gender Equal Growth in Eastern Partnership platform.

Chapter 2: The history of WRCs and their role and mission today



PHOTO: LANI NOREKE

*Women's Resource Centres:
historical background
and their role and mission
today*

The history of WRCs

*WRCs' role and mission
today*

The Winnet Model

*Winnet Centre of
Excellence® (WCE)*

Winnet Europe

Winnet Sweden

*Network Women's
Resource Centre
in Mecklenburg-
Westpommern*

*FRAU & ARBEIT in
Salzburg, Austria*

*Winnet Armenia: Network
of Women Resource
Centers*

Mission and objectives

Women's Resource Centres: historical background and their role and mission today

Women's Resource Centres have their roots in Sweden. Started for about 20 years ago in the third largest EU member state, which officially claims gender equality to be a cornerstone of its society, nowadays, WRCs can be found all over Europe and beyond. This chapter provides a brief overview of WRCs development in Europe, their roles and mission presently, and offers examples of diversity in structure and design based on specific needs and characteristics of each society where they function. It describes WRCs' ongoing efforts to ensure gender equality across the EU through the approach adopted by WRCs and to promote Women's Resource Centres as an effective instrument for implementing the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade, Europe 2020, and EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 which aims to reduce disparities between EU regions in order to achieve balanced economic, social and territorial development. The ripple effect of WRCs' activities has already crossed the borders of the EU, reaching out to South Africa, Turkey, Chile, Armenia...

The history of WRCs

Swedish roots

Resource Centres for women have their roots in Sweden and have originated among women living in rural areas. During the 1980s, women's rights enthusiasts were working proactively to address local community development and women's issues. This included work within the framework of a national campaign aimed at development of rural communities, "Let all Sweden live", which was part of Swedish regional development policy. At the time several women formed a non-formal group which started to take concrete actions towards enhancing women's participation in regional development. They initiated various cooperative projects, organised several conferences and started being a women's network. The group was supported by the Swedish National Rural Development Delegation at the Ministry of Labour from 1988 to 1992. The women's group sought to ensure

that regional policies reflected women's perspectives and lobbied extensively for distributing adequate funds for implementation of regional policies and for addressing the unequal gender division in regional policy issues.

Following up the activities of the women's group, in 1992 the three-year project *Women's Power* was launched. Organisationally, it was linked to the Swedish National Rural Development Agency, which, together with the Ministry of Labour, financed the project. An administrative office was set up in Stockholm. *Women's Power* conferences were held all over the country. The goal was to create Regional Resource Centres for women and to create a National Resource Centre for women in Stockholm.

Women's Power achieved these goals when in June 1994 the government decided to give the County Administrative Boards the responsibility to prioritise means of establishing Regional Resource Centres for women. The Parliament also legislated to set up a National Resource Centre for women at the Swedish Business Development Agency (NUTEK), extending this mission to latter and the Swedish National Rural Development Agency.

From early 1994, the role of the County Administrative Boards was to stimulate, support and assist women in exchange of experiences, to trigger collaboration and to establish networks. An increasing number of women were discovering that working with a WRC was a meaningful experience worth investing in. Thus, regional WRCs were being established all across the country. The scope of their activities grew as well, and a variety of projects were being carried out by WRCs.

Recognising the impact of the WRCs' activities and willing to ensure that the grassroots perspectives on gender equality were reflected in national, regional and local policies, the government started the National Resource Center (NRC) project in 1995, which was successively extended until 1999. NRC's main task was to support and coordinate the work of Women's Resource Centres nationwide. NRC developed a variety of educational courses, prepared research and analytical reports, started to publish the news pamphlet "Women's Power" and regularly organised conferences. Upon the completion of the NRC's project, the staff was disbanded. It was decided that NUTEK was to integrate NRC's activities into its main operations. By this time the name of the agency changed from NUTEK to Tillväxtverket, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

However, the NRC board felt that the knowledge,

competences and experience built up within the NRC project should not be wasted but put to good use. Subsequently, the board decided to create a non-profit association, and on 16 December 1999, *the Swedish National Federation of Resource Centres for Women*, NRC was founded. In 2010, NRC changed its name to *Winnet Sweden*.



There are about 150 local and regional WRCs all over Sweden. Most of them are NGOs, while others may be run by public authorities or other organisations.

The European movement

The Swedish WRC model has been successfully disseminated, leading to the start-up and running of around 600 organisations all over Europe. These Women's Resource Centres serve as key agents of women's active participation in regional development and growth, innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as in building sustainable and gender equal regions in the European Union. More details on how the European movement of women's resources centres evolved are available under the section Winnet Europe.

From Syunik Women Resource Centers Network to WINNET Armenia

To address the limited participation of women in public and economic life of Armenia, in 2007 the OSCE Office in Yerevan started a project with a goal to support women empowerment at local level. The project focused on Syunik region, a southern region largely isolated from the capital Yerevan, where women made up a majority of the population. However, they did not have a voice in local politics and they were disadvantaged compared to men in terms of employment opportunities.



In 2008, OSCE office in Yerevan offered guidance and technical support to a group of highly motivated local women active in their communities and sharing a visionary understanding of local development needs and women's role in this effort, to establish three resource centres. These women that had previously volunteered in various community initiatives targeting women's participation, became the core of the resource centres in three Syunik communities: Goris, Kapan, and Meghri. They pioneered in creation of a support circle for women in the region. Appreciating the power and capacities of a network, these resource centres united into Syunik Women's Resource Centers Network, which joined Winnet Europe as the first member from a non-EU country in 2014. Later in the year it was renamed 'Winnet Armenia – Network of Women Resource Centers'.

In the next two years Winnet Armenia expanded the network. In 2015, with the support of European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and OSCE Office in Yerevan it established new Women's Resource Centers in three other communities two of which are in different regions: Sisian Women's Resource Center Foundation, Ijevan Women's Development Resource Center Foundation and Yeghegnadzor Women Resource Center Foundation. Thus, today Winnet Armenia includes six resource centres in three regions countrywide. Its mission is to empower women, and promote their roles and competitiveness in social, economic and political life locally, regionally and nationally.

WRCs' role and mission today

Today Women's Resource Centres in Europe and worldwide advocate for:

- claiming women's share of society's resources;
- utilizing women's capacities and potential in all aspects of life; and
- valuing women's and men's efforts equally.

The Winnet Model

The Winnet model is an innovative reflection of the Quadruple Helix, which embeds the university-industry-government relations of the Triple Helix by adding a fourth helix the 'media-based and culture-based public' and 'civil society'. The model's focus on creative industries and emphasis of values underlies the efforts of WRCs to increase women's participation in—and benefit from—regional development policy.

The Winnet model stresses the necessity to change the narrow spectrum of actors and areas considered of importance to innovation and growth. WRCs all over Europe have exposed how many women urge to realize their ideas of new businesses, innovations, employment, and projects, if only given proper support. Based on local needs and interests of women, the Winnet model allows women to engage in local initiatives and further expand their aspiration to address similar needs at other levels as well. Business and personal counselling, mentoring and networking through workshops and conferences empower individual women, develop local talents, and create competitive agents of development. Besides business counselling and construction of joint action networks, the Winnet model comprises project development and implementation.

The projects managed by WRCs target different areas identified as crucial for the expansion of women's entrepreneurship and innovation. The Winnet model constitutes an example of creative thinking in the organization regarding how joint action networks can make new knowledge and innovation prosper, thus contributing to the welfare of communities and societies.

The construction of joint action networks involving different groups and actors is another feature of the Winnet model. In order to support women realize their ideas, WRCs have systematically constructed new constellations of actors that are capable of contributing. Depending on the geographical context, WRCs have involved, e.g. SMEs, global corporations, banks, business development centres, employment offices, public authorities, research institutes, consultants, educational associations, NGOs and foundations. The involved actors adhere to different sectors of the society - the public, private, academic and civil (non-profit) sectors. Each actor has contributed with knowledge about for example financing, product development, marketing and work-life balance. Such best practices have enhanced the Winnet model, and allowed WRCs at all levels to become successful lobbyist for gender mainstreaming.

Winnet Centre of Excellence® (WCE)

The Winnet model is anchored on knowledge development based on locally identified needs, which implies a creative combination of women's initiatives in entrepreneurship, and public promotion of joint action networks. A key agent of knowledge generation with this

model, is the Winnet Centre of Excellence® (WCE), an international network of researchers promoting teaching, policy making and research on gender, innovation and sustainable development.

The Centre documents, analyses, disseminates and mainstreams the experiences from Women's Resource Centres in Europe since the mid-90s. Combining several interdisciplinary approaches, its strategic research agenda is to increase understanding of the emergence, organization and results of WRCs and thus inform the future design of policy measures for regional growth. The Centre of Excellence aims to interlink researchers experienced in WRC involvement and to compile empirical data from WRC projects which have been funded by different EU programmes. Through joint identification of relevant research issues, joint applications for R&D projects, and joint strategies for influencing policies and practices, the Centre optimises the WRCs' impact on the European innovation system and EU policy programmes.

More information about is available at <http://www.balticsearegion.org>.

Winnet Europe

Winnet Europe, the European Association of Women Resource Centres, was established in 2006 by national, regional and local Women Resource Centres across Europe. The name of the association itself, Winnet Europe, which stands for *Women in Net in Europe*, reflects the core value underlying the initiative: collaborative application of women's capacities and potential in local, regional and national development.

The initiative of creating a Pan-European network took shape within the project W.IN.NET, an INTERREG IIIC project implemented in 2003-2006.

The main goal of the project was to create a WRC network in order to support resource centres in promoting the role of women in local and regional development. The network's objective is to improve the efficiency and transparency of WRCs, and consequently the policies and tools for equal opportunities between women and men. Five thematic sub-networks were set up within W.IN.NET:

1. WRC: Quality indicators and modelling;
2. Women entrepreneurs;
3. Territorial system on gender equality and local development;

4. Women facing difficulties and social exclusion;
5. Women and technology.

In the WIN.NET project, contacts were created between the organisations involved, so that women could participate in development work throughout the EU.

Today the mission of Winnet Europe is to strengthen the role of WRCs as key actors in regional growth and support participation of women in regional development. Winnet Europe, in a collaborative effort among national, federal/ regional and local organisations in EU Member States, the countries of the Baltic Sea region, and Armenia, an Eastern Partnership country, aims to support and reinforce the activities of WRCs and/or other similar women's organisations in several key thematic focus areas:

1. Gender Equality Perspectives in Regional and Local Policies;
2. Women's Entrepreneurship and SME Development;
3. Gender Equality Perspective on Innovation and ICT;
4. Social Inclusion and Women's Opportunities in the Labour Market

In 2016, Winnet Europe already has member organisations in 10 of the 28 EU Member States and Armenia. There are also prospective future members from outside the European Union. The member organisations of Winnet Europe are National WRCs, Federal state WRCs, Regional WRCs, Local WRCs and supporting members.

The Annual General Meeting, AGM, is the Association's highest decision-making organ which elects the Board of Winnet Europe, comprising the president, 10 full members and 10 proxies. The President of Winnet Europe is *Ms Britt-Marie S. Törstensson* from Sweden.

More information on the role of Winnet Europe and its activities is available on the official website:
www.winneteuropa.org.

Winnet Sweden

Winnet Sweden is the National Women's Resource Centre in Sweden. Winnet Sweden is a non-profit organisation that was formed in December 1999. Local and regional Women's Resource Centres and women's networks can apply for membership. Individuals who support the work of Winnet Sweden can become *supporting members*. The mission of Winnet Sweden is largely in line with the umbrella mission of all WRC, i.e. to ensure that

- women claim their share of society's resources;
- women's competence is utilised by society;
- efforts made by women and men are equally valued.

Winnet Sweden strived to accomplish this mission through coordinating and supporting regional and local resource centres and networks. It lobbies and cooperates with organisations and authorities, nationally and internationally, to promote a society in which women's potential, rights and responsibilities are upheld. Winnet Sweden works to ensure that women and men have the same conditions and opportunities for work, exercise their development potential and engage in entrepreneurship to the same extent. It is a dedicated advocate for an equal gender division in respect to power and influence.

More information on Winnet Sweden is available on the official website: www.winnet.se

The ongoing work in Sweden

The work of WRCs can be summarised in the concepts 'make visible' and 'make possible'. This means making women, both Swedish and immigrants, and their capacities visible to the society and use these capacities towards its development. Towards this end Winnet Sweden generates research evidence to shape the public opinion and disseminates information to illustrate women's lives. Capacity building and creating business contacts is another task.

'Making visible' also means taking into account women's perspectives in regional growth programmes, and working to ensure that women participate in regional and local development and receive their share of the resources available. Regional WRCs are often represented in partnerships established for regional growth programmes, regional development programmes, as well as in equality councils and in groups for development of rural areas.

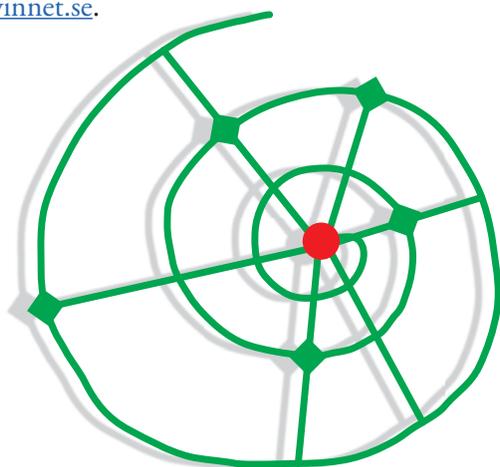
Winnet Sweden's target group is all women who wish to and are able to work actively to contribute to improving women's conditions, and to create and engage in opportunities within regional and local growth and development, thus contributing to integration and equality. This applies to entrepreneurship, health, gender-divided labour market, education, life situation of young women, to mention but a few areas where Winnet Sweden works.

The National Women's Resource Centre employs a comprehensive inventory of strategies: creating meeting places for women's socialization and development, cooperating in networks for women, and collaborating with the authorities and all interested organisations.

Important tools in this work are network-building, competence development and development projects. The common thread running through Winnet Sweden's activities since 2008, is cooperation in networks, and development of partnerships for regional innovation and growth.

National collaboration in Sweden

Winnet Sweden and Tillväxtverket, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth have intensified their collaboration since May 2005 when it was agreed to sign a joint Declaration of Intent for enhancing the ongoing cooperation and obtaining further resources to invest in the growth work taking place in country's local and regional WRCs. The Declaration of Intent is available in English on the Winnet Sweden official website: www.winnet.se.



Network Women's Resource Centre in Mecklenburg-Westpommern

The Network Women's Resource Centre is a joint project for supporting female entrepreneurs of the Institute for Data Processing and Management GmbH, in cooperation with the association Women into Business in Rostock.

Development Timeline

- 1999: Start of the activities of the first Women's Resource Centre in Rostock
- 2002–2004: Development of the existing network and start of the activities of five Local Women's Resource Centres in rural areas (Sternberg, Bad Doberan, Grimmen, Wolgast, Stavenhagen)
- 2005–2006: Continuation of the activities of the five WRCs and establishment of three new WRCs in Rostock, Hagenow und Pasewalk
- 2007–2008: Three Local WRCs established in Güstrow, Rostock and Stavenhagen

- 2009-2011: A local Women's Resource Centre established in Parchim.

Objectives of the Network Women's Resource Centre in Mecklenburg-Westpommern

- Increase the number of female entrepreneurs;
- Develop the business and personal competences of women and use this capacity for local and regional development;
- Motivate women for starting up a business;
- Help women get more chances and opportunities by increasing their influence in regional and social development processes, in the same way as men get support in starting up their own business, and help them establish contacts with other businesswomen;
- to have the Network Women's Resource Centre in order to exchange experience
- Sensitise network partners of local authorities, banks for the special needs and situation of female entrepreneurs.

Activity Profile of the Network Women's Resource Centre

Support in the process of starting up and consolidating a business:

- information and guidance in starting up a business and consolidating an existing business (ideas, business sectors, regional conditions, partners);
- analysis of business ideas and common problems in business life (financial strategy, situation on the market, chances of success);
- seminars on developing and implementing business objectives considering the situation of women and special issues of interest for them;
- meetings of regional networks (project participants and other regional partners) and all networks throughout the country;
- workshops;
- round tables;
- launching of regional products on the market;
- arrangement of support to other businesswomen of the network, such as offering a hands-on training which may lead to the creation of new jobs;
- mentoring through pairing a successful businesswoman with a female entrepreneur;
- gender training for partners of the network on characteristics of working for business-women and men;
- individual coaching according to the special needs in the start-up process and further consolidation, such as promotion or financial advice;

- development of a supporting structure to secure gender equality in all business sectors.

The Network Women's Resource Centre mainstreams gender also in the following issues:

- change of role from an employee or unemployed to a businesswoman;
- realisation of differences between roles as a woman, businesswoman, mother, daughter, wife and girlfriend;
- education of children on gender stereotypes;
- support of the life partner and family in the process of starting up a business, and development of a supportive structure;
- management of work-life balance.

Results of the Project Activities of the Network Resource Centre: 2002–2008

- About 5000 people have benefited from the WRC activities, among which 60% are women;
- About 5000 women, mostly within the age range 45-50 age, have created start-ups;
- 60 regional meetings have been held.

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FRAU & ARBEIT in Salzburg, Austria

Frau & Arbeit is an NGO, established in 1995 and from 2010 onwards working as a non-profit limited company. Frau & Arbeit has 23 employees in five offices in the regions of Salzburg, Hallein, Bischofshofen, Zell am See and Tamsweg in Austria.

The work in Salzburg is supported by the Employment Service Salzburg, Federal Government Salzburg, Chamber of Labour, City of Salzburg, Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth, Federal Chancellery: Women, ESF and EFRE. Frau & Arbeit cooperates very closely with the Employment Service in all regions of Salzburg, and

in some cases the offices are located in the same building. The political will essential to drive the organisation can be seen at all levels. Important in this context both for Frau & Arbeit and for their customers is a very good network with all regional organisations based in Salzburg. This, subsequently has made a common platform available, which gives the customers the best possible support and is a solid foundation for Frau & Arbeit.

Main Areas of Activities

Frau & Arbeit mainly works in two areas. First, Frau & Arbeit offers coaching, consulting, training and networking for women who are seeking changes in their occupation or career. The second area is developing, designing and coordinating women-orientated EU projects.

Target Groups

The services are offered to women who:

- are unemployed;
- are returning to the labour market after maternity leave or other family-related breaks;
- want to change their occupation/career;
- want to start or have started their own business.

Services

The services offered include:

- comprehensive information;
- professional coaching;
- creative solutions for business;
- hands-on workshops;
- strategic networking;

Current EU projects

- Frauen in die Technik (FIT) aims at integration of Women into technical fields of work;
- InterregIVA: "Unternehmerinnenschaffenmehrwert" is a transnational project with Bavaria, which focuses on networking amongst entrepreneurs, Internet-marketplace, and micro- financing;
- InterregIVA: "ProFiT" – Family and work is another transnational project implemented with an Italian organization aiming at ensuring women's work-life balance in touristic areas;
- Women 45+;
- Integration of women with migration background in the labour market;
- Counselling and labour market advice for female sex workers;

- Internet-Service Site (ISS) aims at providing information for job-seekers;
- Regional Coordination offices for Territorial Employment Pact (TEP) and Gender Mainstreaming;
- Transit Workers Project: “Compulsory school assistants” in the Salzburg region;
- Collaboration with InterregIVC, WINNET8 through providing expertise.
- Equal 1: Technik A. - Integration of women in technical fields of work;
- Ziel2 - Vocational training for women returning to jobs in rural areas;
- Equal: Technik.A
- InterregIII B: Women Alpnet - Network of women’s resource centres in the Alpine region;
- InterregIIIa: WIN - Women’s job and business net;
- Equal 2: “Sichtwechsel” - Women 45+;
- Equal 2: Flu Equal – Regional dialogue processes for integration of asylum seekers.

Completed EU Projects

- Information centre for younger woman;
- Employment NOW: Berta - Female entrepreneurship, work-life-balance, vocational training for women in low-skilled jobs;
- InterregIIA: Frauen imBusiness - Women business centre;
- LEONARDO: Multiply now – Transfer of know-how and networking of women’s foundation centres;
- InterregIIIA: MAP - Mentoring as an instrument of human resources development;

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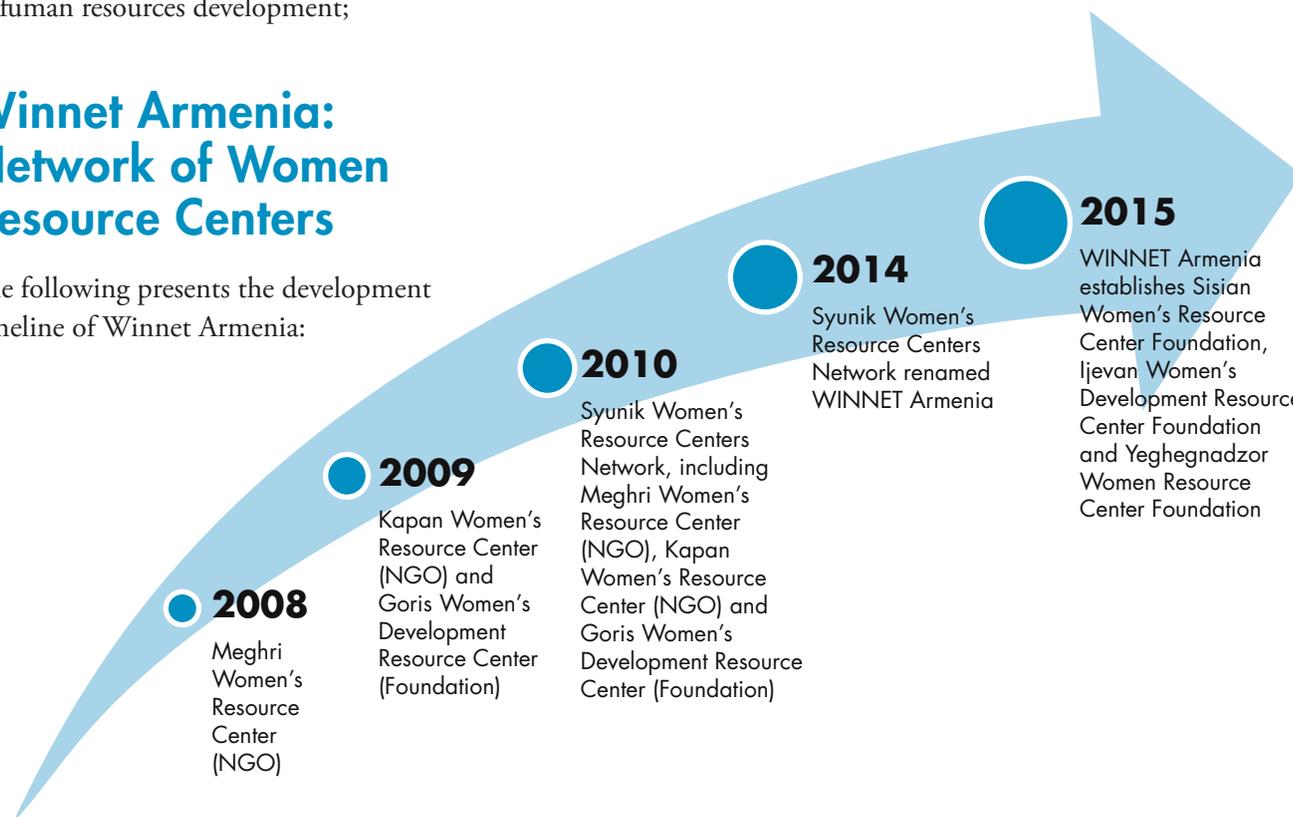
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Winnet Armenia: Network of Women Resource Centers

The following presents the development timeline of Winnet Armenia:



Mission and objectives

Winnet Armenia’s mission is to support economic and political empowerment of women in Armenia and countries of Eastern Partnership through establishment and development of women’s resource centres at four levels: community, federal, national and regional.

The Network strives to achieve its main goal of women’s empowerment through:

- effective implementation of gender policies at all levels;
- enhanced participation of women in political decision making;
- protection of women’s health;
- improvement in social protection of women;
- prevention of gender-based violence;



- participation of women in conflict regulation and peace-keeping;
- enhanced economic role and increased competitiveness of women;
- development of institutional capacities of the Network and its members;
- expansion of Network's activities both in Armenia and the EaP region.

Target groups

Winnet Armenia works with diverse groups of women, targeting each according to their needs. The Network specifically provides support to women building careers in politics and willing to get involved in political decision making at both local and national levels. The second largest group of beneficiaries is women from vulnerable groups, such as women from low income families, women with disabilities and women having suffered from domestic violence. Women who want to start their own businesses and current entrepreneurs are also Winnet Armenia's main target group. It supports young women to get better access to labour market, and to women who have been left out of labour market and try to regain the work-life balance.

In addition to this primary target groups, Winnet Armenia believes in investing in youth, and therefore actively contributes to capacity building among local youth.

Main activities

The three main tracks of Winnet Armenia's initiatives are economic, political and social empowerment of women through baseline and targeted actions. Given the importance of women's economic independence to prevent violence against them and to encourage their political participation, women's economic empowerment has been one of the focus areas of WRCs' activities. Through awareness raising seminars on women's economic rights, as well as capacity building trainings, the centres help local women to become competitive in the labour market. Handicrafts development was

identified as a direction that could provide local women with opportunities to contribute to their families' welfare financially. Ongoing mentoring and consultancy help women to enhance their handicraft practices, improve the quality of their products and successfully market those. Winnet Armenia has been a mediator and supporter of these local initiatives, specifically through arranging participation in national and international fairs and expos, networking and creating business to business links. Some of these handicrafts studios have turned into social enterprises which both address social issues in local communities and ensure an income source for the WRCs.



The second track of Winnet Armenia activities targets women interested in politics and promotion of democracy. It regularly organizes political debates, community meetings, presentations and talks by prominent women leaders, supports election campaigns for women, observes elections, offers alternative media coverage and offers capacity building activities to both women and young people. Regular training, mentoring and consultancy are the major capacity building instruments Winnet Armenia employs to empower young women and leaders, reporters and youth activists to promote local participatory democracy in their communities. In addition, the WRCs consistently work towards raising women's knowledge on local governments in order to encourage their engagement in community development and local decision-making processes.



Within the third track, social support to women, Winnet Armenia offers comprehensive support to women from vulnerable groups, believing that education, financial stability and independence of women boosts their self-confidence and thus help them gain equal footing in the society and ensure equal participation in all aspects of life.

The WRCs continuously organize awareness raising community events, roundtables and discussions on women's rights in order to prevent domestic and gender-based violence. Besides, the centres work with the victims of violence through economic empowerment initiatives, by connecting them to supportive networks, respective organizations and shelters as well as ensuring their access to necessary information and resources.

Still, Winnet Armenia's activities are not limited to the above-mentioned priorities. It follows up with any need that rises within the community or the region at a given time. Thus, it has engaged in various regional development programmes ranging from environmental issues, development of tourism and hospitality services, to access to health services for women. Individual WRCs have actively participated in numerous community initiatives, co-funded by local governments, thus proving the viability of Quadruple Helix WRCs advocate.

Impact

Overall, more than 4000 women have benefited from the activities of WRCs. The continuous efforts and effective operations of WRCs have resulted in development of a pool of educated, informed and active women citizens in various communities of Armenia, aware of their rights and interested either in socio-economic or public and political participation. Thus, after the 2012-2013 local self-

government elections, 71% of beneficiaries of a project implemented by Women's Resource Centers with the support of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Netherlands to OSCE, were elected as local self-government officials in seven urban and 14 rural communities.

To combat domestic violence and offer support to victimised women, WRCs have established networks of stakeholders, which include regional and state authorities, police and healthcare institutions, psychological and legal service providers, as well as other NGOs working in the communities. They signed memorandums of understanding in order to define specific activities for each organization taking into account the capacities and resources of the involved organizations to ensure comprehensive and effective cooperation towards the well-being of the victims of domestic violence.

WRCs have also created over 120 job opportunities for women in the Syunik region, who are engaged in handicrafts such as needlework, yarn spinning, making carpets and carpet accessories and pottery. Finally, the young leaders and reporters trained by the centers later have initiated and implemented various community projects, such as cleaning of local parks, improving bus stations, starting local newsletters and covering women's issues in the media.

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Chapter 3: The work of a Women's Resource Centre

Tapping women's potential

Founding principles

Knowledge and ethics

Target groups and profile

Legitimacy and lobbying



PHOTO: LANI NOREKE

Tapping women's potential

A Women's Resource Centre strives for tapping the full potential of women for the benefit of women themselves and the society generally. It underlines the grassroots drive for change and development. It provides women with an opportunity to design activities based on women's needs, and is indeed a support circle established by women for women. A Women's Resource Centre gives women a chance to use their knowledge and skills, and represent women's interests in regional and local development work.

Founding principles

Collective action from the local level

Activities of a Women's Resource Centre stem from the *grassroots*, as it identifies local needs and specific features of the area where it functions, maps available and feasible resources and develops its activities accordingly. WRC strongly believes in individual's agency to bring about change in their own lives and influence the society through effective use of their knowledge and skills. Empowerment is yet another trademark of the WRC activities.

A meeting place for women

A WRC is a meeting place for women where they can voice their needs, interests and ambitions. WRC provides guidance and capacity building, personal development and networking opportunities. It is a safe environment to deal with personal issues, overcome isolation, exchange experiences, get support with creating jobs and engaging in entrepreneurial initiatives. It is a learning environment where women get information, knowledge and skills. A common WRC inventory of tools includes counselling, mentorship, and organising lectures, seminars and a range of training courses. WRC gives women advice as to how to proceed with their projects or business ideas.

WRC is intended to be an open actor that is available to all women looking for change and development in their work. It is often the first step in the process of progressing through a career. When women work together on their own terms and identify problems and solutions together, the development processes at all levels are enhanced, and at the same time women's opportunities for participation in community life are increased. Women's participation in decision making and implementation is ensured through open meetings, where WRC activities and projects are

discussed and decisions are made about the focus of the activities, planning and budget. Such an approach to participation allows the WRC to secure an inclusive milieu for all women and even for the community around them.

Empowerment

Mobilisation of women's own resources is one of the cornerstone of the work carried out in WRCs.

Taking responsibility for one's own life and work is a fundamental concept. Within the framework of a WRC women are given sufficient space to develop their ideas, dreams and wishes. The aim of WRC is not to take care of women who seek their help, but rather to give them guidance towards self-help. The task of a WRC is to support women through supporting them in realisation of their ideas.

Empowerment means giving women and men power to take control of their lives through enhancing and mobilising their capacities, motivation and authority, and enlarging the pool of resources, talents and opportunities available to them.

Networking

Another key approach to WRC work is networking on various levels: local, regional, national and transnational. The networks explore ideas and potential areas of collaboration. When members of the network share common interests, cooperation follows naturally. WRC networks rely both on women's resources and any external support which sympathises with the WRCs' cause. Networking allows women's empowerment to become a reality, and not simply a promulgated value.

Management by demand

The WRC is designed to be an open and neutral actor the management of which is defined by women and the needs they voice. For the efficient use of existing resources, the work needs to be monitored from the viewpoint of the needs and situations of the women concerned.

Flexibility

Keeping women's needs in focus, the WRC work should develop in a flexible and process-oriented manner. Projects and activities therefore need to be followed up and documented continuously. This documentation can be used as a foundation for further changes and interventions to sustain progress of the WRC.

Knowledge and ethics

Focal point for knowledge

WRC acts as a focal point for generating and sharing knowledge and experience about women's issues, thus turning into a valuable asset for the development of a society. WRC can be a centre of information and documentation necessary for shaping perspectives and opinions on gender equality and for developing and using effective tools for promoting gender equality in the area. WRC is also a watchdog to ensure that women's interests are considered and protected in regional and local development work.

WRCs are indeed hubs for generating and sharing creative knowledge, as the centres offer conducive environments for women from different cultural and/or disciplinary backgrounds to interact with each other, different situations, contexts, processes and products, and thus be more creative, than homogenous groups. These creative settings then incite innovative solutions, which benefit both women and their societies at large.

As such a focal point, it helps women identify financial and other kinds of resources for realising their personal and professional development goals.

Respect and equality

Empowerment of women involves special interpersonal skills which are a necessary prerequisite for running a WRC effectively. These skills are grounded in basic ethical values, such as respect and equality between all people regardless of their educational level, status, age, or any other characteristic. Acquisition and development of such skills is an arduous task which can be achieved through employing various approaches, one of which is focusing on the strengths rather than weaknesses of every single woman.

Inclusiveness and integration

WRC encourages equal involvement of all women and attempts to integrate their individual capacities into its activities. All women regardless of race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or other characteristics can be active in a WRC. Utilising every woman's unique experience and competences, it ensures that diversity contributes to social cohesion. All women get a chance of personal and professional development at WRC.

Target groups and profile

A basic premise of a WRC is that its activities are open to all women. Its activities, whether a basic one or a special project are tailored to the specific needs of various groups of women. These can touch different aspects of women's lives, from personal to professional issues. It is important that every activity and project has a clear target group, so that the problem it is designed to solve can really be addressed.

A WRC is not always able to work with all relevant issues, but should instead prioritise a few important areas in their activities, and consequently limit their target group. Thus, a WRC may offer certain activities of interest to all women, and in addition, implement initiatives targeted at, for example, women living in the countryside, or women willing to start a company.

A WRC should also work to raise public awareness women's issues and contribute to women gaining greater influence in local and regional development. In this respect, its target groups are local and public authorities, local and national organisations, decision makers and politicians.

The wants and needs of women involved, which as a rule guide development and implementation of concrete measures and projects, contribute to establishing the unique profile of the WRC. In the same way as the target groups can change over time, so can the WRC profile.

Legitimacy and lobbying

Legitimacy

A wide network is necessary for a WRC to achieve success. Both success and the extensive network are vital for the society to perceive WRC as a legitimate actor. Achieving legitimacy requires patient and tireless work and excellent working relations with decision makers and politicians, cooperation with organisations, authorities, and media in the geographical area where the WRC is operational.

Active involvement of women themselves is the most important prerequisite for achieving legitimacy. A highly involved board or steering group is also essential.

Legitimacy: When something is accepted as correct, permitted or justified in a society according to the prevailing norms and values of that society.

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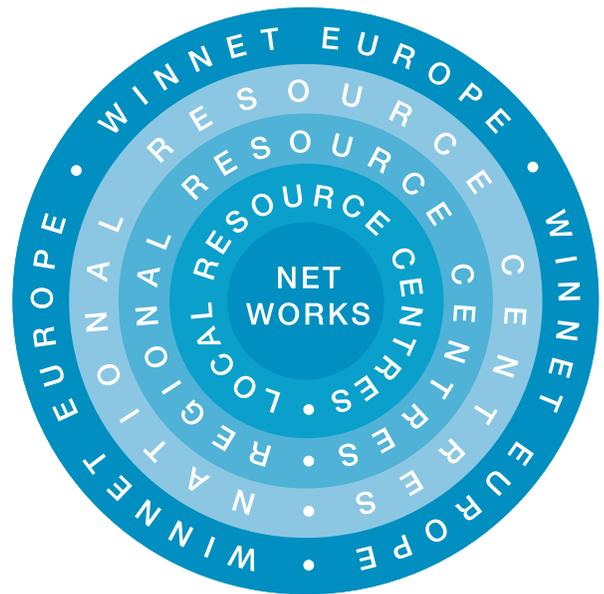
Legitimacy earns a WRC respect. It facilitates cooperation with other actors in the society and can lead to wider funding opportunities. Establishing WRC's legitimacy involves constant balancing between internal integrity and external adaptation.

For WRCs that work locally it is natural to have contacts on the local level. WRCs that work regionally have regional contacts and a WRC that works on the national level has contacts on the national level. The European organisation Winnet Europe, which is the organisation for national, regional and local WRCs, has contacts in Europe, for example within the EU and on an international level.

Lobbying

Central to achieving legitimacy is to establish effective working relations with individuals who in various ways are tasked by the society to work for and contribute to equality in all aspects of social, economic and

political life. These are people in national, regional and local governments, national parliaments, the European Parliament and the EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly (Euronest PA). Other important people to establish connections with are representatives of organisations and associations in those areas where WRC is active. A wide network facilitates WRC operations and results in its capacity to influence major actors and processes that have impact on women's lives and can help improve their lot.



Chapter 4: Starting a Women's Resource Centre, organising and guaranteeing sustainability



*Run by women on
women's terms*

*Starting a Women's
Resource Center*

Management

*Guaranteeing
sustainability*

*The structure of Women's
Resource Centres*

Run by women on women's terms

A successfully operating Women's Resource Centre is run by women on women's terms. Key concepts governing WRC operations are goal orientation, openness, involvement, competence, and effective relationships, partnerships and communication.

Starting a Women's Resource Center

Shared goals and basic criteria

To start a Women's Resource Center, it is crucial to understand and share the goals of such a center, since it is the overall vision and goals that eventually shape the WRC model.

The overall goals of a WRC are:

- to empower women;
- to be a neutral meeting place for networking groups of women;
- to be a centre for information and documentation;
- to support women through counselling and mentorship to get on with their projects/business ideas;
- to facilitate women's access to women's networks;
- to ensure participation of women in development and implementation of local and regional development plans;
- to create new sustainable jobs by developing women's own ideas;
- to increase women's influence in the labour market and society;
- to become opinion makers and to communicate female experiences and perspectives;
- to mobilise local and regional resources in order to support women;
- to support a more equal distribution of economic resources between women and men
- to prevent gender-based violence and to support fighting against GBV.

Within the framework of the general concepts governing WRCs, each WRC has freedom to mould a profile based on its target group and needs.

A Women's Resource Centre is based on five key criteria which at the same time are the basis of quality certification of WRCs. Those are

- Legitimacy;
- Continuity;
- Organisation;
- Competence;
- Financing.

Initial actions

Starting a Women's Resource Center at any level implies dealing with the existing resources and specific features of a given community, region and country. However, regardless of the characteristics of each level, the idea of establishing a WRC starts with a group of women who get together to consolidate the existing needs of women and voice their willingness to engage in efforts addressing these needs and facilitating development through a WRC. In a nutshell, WRC is a meeting place arranged by women for women to support them in their lives, goals and careers.

In addition to providing support to individual women and assist their development, the tasks of a WRC might range widely. These may also include development of the local community or the region, lobbying for equality together with other stakeholders, and involvement in implementation of social, economic and cultural policies. It is essential that these groups receive adequate guidance since the inception phase, in order to establish a resource center in accordance with the WRC model.

Networking and partnerships are key to the successful operation of these groups, and once a group of women is formed, promulgating one or more of the above-mentioned goals, it is essential to start collaborating with other organisations, local government and public authorities.

Organising

To earn legitimacy as a representative of women's interests, to be able to generate financial resources for their operations, and to manage their activities effectively, at a certain point it is necessary for the groups of women to formalize their status and register officially, for example as a voluntary association, an NGO, a cooperative, or a foundation, depending on the legal framework of each country. Other organisational forms are possible as well, and some WRCs have opted for joining another organization with a similar mission, as an adjacent entity.

Formalisation of the group's status entails procedural requirements, such as adoption of a statute, the organization's declared policy which describes the mission of the organization, main areas of activity and organizational structure. Regardless of the type of the

organization, its statute usually describes, but is not restricted to the following:

- Name, type, purpose and functions of the organization;
- Organizational structure, including the composition of the board, roles and responsibilities of the decision-making body;
- Board election and membership procedures.

A WRC statute should reflect the basic principles of WRC mission and work, specifically:

- WRC should be open to all women in the geographical area of its location and to all professional/vocational groups;
- WRC should ensure internal democracy: one person, one vote;
- WRC should be managed by women for women;
- Men who share the same values as WRC are welcome to participate;
- WRC should work to promote an equal society, including an equal labour market;
- WRC should promote equal and sustainable development.

Registration with authorities as a legal entity varies from country to country. Still, once a decision has been made to formalise the women's group, prior to the registration several steps are undertaken which are universal across countries. Usually, the women's group is to hold an inaugural meeting, where the organization's statute is adopted, and a board, as well as auditors and elections committee are appointed. For example, in Sweden the association is registered with the tax authorities and receives an organisation (or in some countries, a registration) number which endows it with a legal capacity, i.e. the WRC has a right to own property, enter contracts and implement projects.

If WRC carries out its activities within another organisation, it needs to develop rules of procedure, based on the same basic principles as the statute of its umbrella association. It is advisable to have a statute, board elections and a steering group to ensure the independence of the work of the association and guarantee the women's power to influence the operations.

Management

Management and leadership

WRC implements its activities according to an *annual work plan*, prepared by the board and adopted by the

members at the annual meeting. However, strategic and operational documents guiding WRC activities may vary from country to country. For instance, in Armenia, WRCs manage their activities in line with a mid-term strategy, which highlights the priorities on which they will focus for a given period, usually four years, and a respective action plan which details out specific actions for each year.

In Europe, the WRC's annual meeting is the highest decision-making body, which tasks the board with specific operations. At each successive annual meeting the board reports on the WRC performance, including the scope of the WRC activities carried out during the year, results achieved and challenges faced. It also presents an annual financial report. At the annual meeting the board recommends a work plan for the next year which is being discussed and confirmed by the members. These annual narrative and financial reports, as well as the work plan for the next year ensure continuity and transparency of WRC's activities.

The board is responsible for division of work at WRC. It specifies the tasks of the board members, and defines the working procedures of the center. It also appoints a WRC executive who is responsible for day-to-day operations of the center. The executive reports to the board, but on urgent matters s/he reports immediately to the chairperson. The executive is the liaison between the board and the WRC staff. The staff holding a position higher than the executive in the organizational hierarchy still works on tasks the latter assigns them. Clear distribution of work and delegation of roles and responsibilities is essential for effective operation of a WRC.

The WRC board is elected at the annual meeting and the election usually reflects the needs of the center. Board members are elected based on several criteria, such as their credentials, experience, age and interests. The composition of the board should be constantly reviewed in order to reflect WRC priorities at a given time.

Management structures and procedures differ across countries and depend on the legal status of the WRC.

However, there are a few key approaches which WRCs share universally. First, internal democratic procedures are essential in all aspects of work in a WRC, since these allow the centres to walk their talk, i.e. routinely exercise one of the core values of WRCs, equality. Second, motivation and enthusiasm of the board members is crucial for sustainably supporting women regardless of any challenge the centres may face during their work. Moreover, board members are the visionary agents of change, who continuously ensure

women's empowerment at all levels. Their credentials and leadership are also key factors that contribute to establishing the legitimacy of WRCs as an actor in development work for sustainable growth.

Work plan and budget

An annual *work plan* and *budget* are necessary to plan and later report on the WRC activities. The work plan should reflect both the *basic operations* of the center and its projects, which are framed as '*special efforts*' in this Handbook, as these actions are time-bound and target specific needs and groups of beneficiaries.

The work plan may include but is not limited to the following:

- the nature and type of basic operations and the roles and responsibilities of the WRC staff;
- frequency and dates of board meetings;
- frequency and dates of members' meetings, public and WRC annual meetings;
- current projects;
- planned project proposals, deadlines and responsible staff;
- types and dates of lobbying activities;
- types and frequency of WRC promotion and marketing activities, activities planned with the media;
- types of activities ensuring WRC online presence;
- projected budget for the above-mentioned operations.

The work plan needs to be feasible based on a budget that reflects the existing and plausible financial resources. In project work the budget is generally clear, since it is what the WRC has applied for and been granted project funding for. The main challenge here is to have long-term funding to maintain the right level of operational ambition. The books should be balanced every month, and this reported to the board. At least four times a year the entire work plan should be reviewed by the board or the steering group. The board/steering group then has an opportunity to amend the operations that are not going according to the plan.

Basic activities

Basic activities are what provide continuity for the WRC. Arriving at a common focus and common goals is essential and it is ensured through inclusion of all women in planning the WRC work. A WRC is a democratic and learning organisation, which is necessary to continuously develop the centre's capacities. To successfully carry out its basic activities, WRC should maintain excellent working

relations with authorities and like-minded organisations.

Basic activities vary from a WRC to another and across countries. For example, in Armenia the basic activities of each WRC are bound to the needs of the specific community and/or region, where they are based. WRCs regularly conduct needs assessment to identify the direction of their main activities for a given period. In addition, they offer both free and commercial needs-based services. Adjacent to some WRCs small social enterprises have been launched which support local women by providing them with opportunities for sustainable income. Moreover, these small businesses secure a continuous financial resource for these WRCs, thus contributing to their financial sustainability.

Special efforts

Target initiatives at WRCs often take a project form. Projects are solutions to a specific problem that the WRC team is committed to solving. It identifies the problem, describes its impact and offers a solution. Often solutions require external funding to support meaningful progress toward the project goal, and therefore such initiatives require vigorous work with development partners.

Financially projects tend to comprise the major part of the WRC operations. Though each project is managed in compliance with the rules and regulations of the development partner, it is essential that the WRC project reflects basic values and statutes of the center.

Implementation of each project requires a clear logical framework, work plan and management structure, which are part of the overall WRC operations. Project goal, objectives and activities usually highlight one or the other aspect of the WRC work, and the permanent staff may redistribute their functions to match the ones required for the effective implementation of a specific project.

Projects can be local, regional, national and international. A WRC can initiate its own international projects, or participate in calls of other organizations if the objectives of the call match the WRC's mission. WRC can opt for participating in collaborative projects led by other organizations as well.

Centre's premises

The need for premises and office equipment depends on the scale of WRC operations. Sharing premises with a partner might be a good solution.

Financing

Financial stability is essential for the sustainability of WRC in a long run. Depending on the type of formal

status of the center, the operations can be financed through:

- membership fees;
- donations to specific operations or projects;
- support from partners, e.g. provision of free premises, or access to office equipment;
- income from commercial services and social enterprises;
- service fees from project participants;
- voluntary contributions.

Guaranteeing sustainability

Success factors

Depending on the operations of a WRC, success factors that contribute to the centre's sustainability may differ, though here is a list, which seems to be shared across many centres:

- Equality underlies all activities;
- Activities are open to all interested women;
- Women's potential is used extensively;
- Voluntary work is an integral part of WRC operations, and enthusiasm and motivation of women involved in WRC activities are valued and rewarded;
- Legitimacy of WRC is reinforced through ongoing involvement of women, decision-makers at all levels and other organisations;
- Lobbying activities are consistent and regular;
- Partnerships and long-term alliances are formed to enhance both basic operations and projects;
- The WRC board/steering group is interested in and passionate about promoting equality in development and implementation of regional policies;
- The WRC goals are clear and feasible, and everybody strives to achieve those;
- Securing external funding is essential for achieving WRC goals;
- An annual work plan and budget are available and are followed up with narrative and financial reports;
- Horizontal management both within WRC and a WRC network enhances internal democracy;
- Extensively sharing experiences and mentoring among individuals, WRCs and WRC networks is key to effective capacity building;
- Those working in and with WRC should be familiar with policy documents at all levels, including the EU or other regions, country, region and community;

- The concept of sustainable growth is well understood and shared;
- Internal communication is effective and members, staff, the board and the steering group are well aware of WRC's activities;
- External communication is lively, and WRC is a recognised actor in the society;
- WRC ensures strong public presence, using both conventional and social media;
- Those working with and in WRC receive quality training in effective communication and negotiation;
- WRC stands as a lifelong learning milieu.

WRC as a network

Both individual centres and WRC networks tend to fully explore the advantages of networking, such as shared knowledge, opportunities, development of connections and visibility of one's profile. Regular networking events are organized, discussions are encouraged to generate new ideas, and new groups of people are regularly invited to participate in the WRC work. Networking allows WRCs to identify a diversity of perspectives on various issues and to stimulate innovative thinking.

Individuals and groups of women are encouraged to participate in all aspects of WRC activities. Their participation is valued at all stages of these activities, and WRCs make sure to tap to the potential of both individuals and groups.

Those involved coach and mentor each other. Ensuring a healthy feedback loop is a crucial approach to communication at a WRC and beyond. Finally, WRCs emphasise the need for enjoying every and each activity undertaken within the center, as they adhere to the claim the renowned civil rights activist Maya Angelou made: "You can only become truly accomplished at something you love."

Dealing with conflicts

To manage or resolve a conflict, it is necessary to identify the nature of the conflict first. A *substantive conflict*, for instance, occurs when there are disagreements over the strategies, policies, and procedures used for completing a task.

Facilitated discussions over these disagreements can often lead to resolutions agreed among the conflicting sides. *Role conflicts* arise when staff do not agree about who should do what. Such conflicts may be solved by clearly projecting the necessary tasks, and outlining the requirements and functions necessary for accomplishment of these tasks.

Pseudo conflicts usually reflect misunderstanding and miscommunication. Clarification is the best strategy to handle such conflicts. *Conflicts of interest* arise when the needs of the parties involved seem to be incompatible. Then the position of the parties has to be made clear to everyone. *Value conflicts* are about disparity between parties' basic values and these are quite challenging to resolve. However, it is still possible to try to talk things over and at least emphasize with one another.

The structure of Women's Resource Centres

Women's Resource Centres operate at *four* level: local (community), regional (federal), national and international. WRCs at all levels tend to share several key characteristics, specifically, they:

- work in accordance with the overall WRC goals;
- actively participate in development work;
- are open to individual women and other WRCs;
- provide a meeting place and support for women and WRCs;
- implement activities designed and carried out by women;
- is established with support of local, regional and national authorities and organisations, as well as international organizations;
- are governed by a work plan and budget, and ensure continuity and transparency of their activities through annual reports and follow-ups;
- has a board / steering group or equivalent, and an executive responsible for administration.
- is a non-profit organisation.

At the **local** level one of the fundamental premises of community-based women's resource centres and networks is that they develop and grow out of local needs and interests.

At the **regional** level WRCs cooperate within and across communities and regions to reinforce their work, benefit from each other's capacities and experience and implement joint projects. Regional cooperation can be organised through a regional WRC, in which local WRCs are members.

A regional WRC should stimulate and support development of local resource centres and networks. It

initiates activities that can serve as a model for work in other WRCs. The scope of its activities can vary. It can promote women's entrepreneurship in collaboration with WRCs and other actors locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. A regional WRC can initiate and support development projects focusing on business and employment for women in various industries.

The task of a WRC at the **national** level is to coordinate and support regional and local resource centres and networks. Through lobbying and cooperating with organisations and authorities nationally and internationally it aims, to promote a society in which women's potential, rights and responsibilities are upheld. A national WRC works to ensure that women and men have the same conditions and opportunities concerning work and development. It promotes equality in respect to power and impact. It is important for the national WRC to lobby for shaping a public opinion that takes into account women's perspectives.

The best, and as of 2016 the only example of **international** WRC is Winnet Europe, the European Association of Women's Resource Centres, which was established in 2006. The mission of Winnet Europe is to support and reinforce the activities of member WRCs, to strengthen the role WRCs as key actors of regional growth and support the participation of women in regional development.

Membership is open to WRCs from the EU member states, the European Economic Area and countries in the formal process of accessing to the European Union. However, it accepts members from other geographic areas as well, such as a Winnet Armenia, which joined Winnet Europe in 2014 as the first member from a non-EU country. Membership applications are considered by the Associations General Meeting (AGM).

Winnet Armenia will serve as a hub for extending the model of women's resource centres for sustainable growth and gender equality across the Eastern dimension of the European neighbourhood. The partnership platform will enable women entrepreneurs, politicians, researchers, civil society leaders and other women's groups to introduce the WRC model in these countries based on experience of Winnet Armenia.

The Winnet Center of Excellence[®] (WCE) provides an up-to-date evidence and state-of-art analysis to feed the initiatives and interventions of WRC across the European Union.

Chapter 5: Project work: Developing and implementing projects

Working in project form
Projects and project work
Project planning



PHOTO: JAN NOREKE

Working in project form

A project is usually defined as an activity that is limited in time, has a specific goal and its own resources for implementation. This means that every project has a beginning and a conclusion, and activities implemented according to a pre-determined project plan. Due to these characteristics it differs from WRC's basic activities, though is still within its overall mission and goals. Good project planning, clear organisation and sufficient time are necessary for successfully completing the project.

Projects and project work

Work in WRCs is based on a combination of ongoing activities, called '*basic activities*', and targeted *projects*. Continuity of projects can be maintained through forward-looking project leaders, boards and members, who can contribute to developing plans for new projects while other projects are in progress.

A project must have a *purpose* or *aim*, the reason why a WRC wants to implement it. An example of an aim might be to strengthen women's position in the labour market and in the business world. The *goal* is more concrete and thus more easily measured. It explains *how* the aim will be achieved. It describes what needs to be done in concrete terms to achieve the aim of the project.

To run a project well it is important to constantly keep the goal in view. The project plan details the steps it is necessary to take to achieve the goal. It is essential to allow time for reflection, reporting and financial follow-up. It often takes a lot longer than initially planned.

Project planning

Planning and implementing projects can be split into ten different phases:

- Concept
- Preliminary study
- Acceptance
- Project staffing
- Detailed planning and confirmation of project plan
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Final report

- Evaluation
- Conclusion.

Concept

Project ideas can initiate from many different sources. The foundation of any project should be a need expressed by a group of women. The concept of the project has to be agreed among the women concerned, the board and the WRC members. The concepts are adopted and processed within the WRC. At this stage, active brainstorming is essential and the project idea might first appear as a collection of vague thoughts that need further clarification. If this is the case, to clarify the various ideas and support the needs expressed by women with robust evidence, it might be appropriate to conduct a preliminary study of the issue.

In some cases, to conduct a preliminary study it is possible to apply for funding. Regardless of whether a preliminary study is conducted or not, before going ahead with project planning, the following questions should be answered:

- What concrete needs does the project concept address?
- What are the most important arguments for investing time, energy and other resources into this project?
- Who are the possible project partners?
- In what way can the project contribute to achieving a more equal labour market and business environment?
- Is there support for or resistance to the concept?
- Is it possible to overcome the resistance?
- Are there any reasons for not proceeding with the concept?

Specific criteria should be developed for determining whether it is worth proceeding with the idea or not.

Preliminary study

At this stage background information on the needs, beneficiaries and target groups is needed which will provide sufficient evidence for planning the project.

A baseline study should provide an overview of the issue or issues, and the evidence should allow to determine how significant of the intended intervention. It should also provide better background information on the need for a final evaluation of the project concept and for deciding on the way to proceed. Making a list of previously conducted studies and projects is an important part of the preparatory work. WRC should look for information

on the topic area before drawing up the project plan. The project goals and limitations should be discussed with the board and members involved. The feasibility of the idea should be assessed, and a list of personal, economic and material resources should be made. There should be enough information about the needs being addressed and the necessary resources for the board to make a decision.

Acceptance

At this stage, the project concept should be described and accepted by the groups of women whose needs it will address, the board and WRC members, so that a decision can be made about whether there is sufficient rationale for running the project and to get it financed. The concept should be briefly described and potentially interested stakeholders should be identified. It is important that the WRC contacts possible funders, presents the concept and listens to their feedback. It is necessary for the concept to tally with various policy programmes that have funds for which WRC intends to apply to finance the project. It is important to learn of the respective organisations'/ authorities' policy statements and regulations for preparing adequate applications.

It is crucial to get the approval of the WRC board, potential funders and participants in the project. Project application should specify the project goals, target group(s), activities that are to be carried out in order to achieve the goals, project timeframe, project staff, costs, income, conclusion, evaluation, marketing, and indicators.

Answers to the following questions will help design a project that will be accepted:

Are the WRC members, the board and the funders in agreement about the project concept? If there is disagreement, is it possible to change the project in order to satisfy all concerned?

What arguments are important to put forward to assure the project is carried out?

Who might be interested in the results of the project?

What expectations do the board, participants and financiers have of the project?

How have the various interested stakeholders perceived the information they have received so far? Does it need to be complemented, made more concrete?

Project staffing

It is necessary to identify the project staff. For small projects it might be sufficient to appoint a project leader

with an overall responsibility for the implementation, and another staff responsible for finances. They report to the WRC's board/steering group.

For large projects the board/steering group should define clear roles and responsibilities for implementation of each task and appoint adequate staff. Project management should include a project leader responsible for the project, a staff responsible for the finances, and a board representative for leading the whole project. During the project implementation a partnership is set up, a steering group for the project comprising e.g. representatives of collaborating partners who are involved in the project, and representatives of the WRC board. The steering group acts as a board for the project. In addition, it might be a good idea for the project team to cooperate with a *reference group*. The reference group should be made up of experts in the subject area of the project who can pass on valuable knowledge to the project leaders.

Detailed planning and confirmation of the project plan

After a formal decision that the project can proceed, the WRC board or an equivalent formally appoints a project leader who is responsible for the project. A steering group, reference group, evaluators and project members are identified and formed as well.

In some projects, the board can act as the steering group. It can delegate tasks, including dealing with the finances, to the project leader. Delegation always means that the person assigned with the task should report to the board.

The detailed planning should include activities and the time frame during which the activities should be carried out.

Questions that can help with the planning include:

- How do we achieve the goals?
- How do we ensure that those in the target group are involved and active?
- How do we start?
- How do we end?

At this stage the project planning team should reflect on how detailed description of the activities should be. Regarding the time plan, it should reflect the time when respective activities should be concluded and when there should be checkpoints for reflection, continued planning, and revision of the plan if necessary. Alternative ways of achieving the goals should be thought through as well. A project gains from concrete results. The time scales should be realistic.

Implementation

When planning is complete and financing arranged, it is just a matter of working in accordance with the activity and time frame. While the project is in progress, it is important to keep written records. Everybody's function within the project should be clearly defined.

The project needs a plan for internal and external communication. Those involved should be well informed about the work in progress, both regarding their own tasks, and the project as a whole. The same applies to the steering group, financiers and external collaboration partners.

To achieve successful results, project team should feel motivated, with each person's role clearly defined. In addition, there should be a palpable team spirit.

To ensure functionality of the project team, the following questions need to be discussed:

- What norms of decision-making, management and openness are important?
- Should the project leader be responsible for information or should the entire group be active?

Monitoring

While the project is in progress, there should be continual follow-up, which means going through the project plan to check the pace and quality of the progress vis-à-vis the project plan. If there is discrepancy, it is necessary to make adequate changes to ensure that the project aim and goals can be achieved. Interim reports should also be filed at the frequency indicated in the project plan and when requisitioning funds that have been granted.

Final report

The following actions will help prepare the final report:

- Follow the project plan and describe what has happened;
- Check with the goals and describe achievement, challenges and ways been used to overcome those;
- Report on participation from the target group, using statistical data if possible;
- Produce a financial report.

The financiers of a project often have detailed regulations about how they want the final report presented.

Evaluation

Since the inception of the project, it should be decided on how the evaluation will be conducted. A simple evaluation is an account of goal achievement and how the target group has experienced the project. More thorough evaluation is conducted through what is known as '*process evaluation*', where an evaluator follows the process and notes what is happening. Finally, conclusions can be drawn about what has worked well and what has been a challenge and an in-depth analysis of goal achievement and the target group's participation can be made.

Conclusion

A clear conclusion of the project is important. A good way to do so is for the project leader to present the final report and evaluation results to WRC members, board, reference group, steering group, participants and funders. The presentation should include an analysis of the project implementation, lessons learnt, and what is felt to be important to work further on. This can form the basic background information for future projects. Good results should live on and form the start of something new.

Chapter 6: WRC working methods and tools



PHOTO: LANI NOREKE

The toolbox

Counselling

Mentoring

Group mentoring

*Master Suppression
Techniques*

*Examples of WRC best
practices*

The toolbox

In this chapter the working methods and inventory of tools are described, which WRCs use across the globe. Some have been developed by WRCs, while others are borrowed from other sources and adapted to WRC work. Key methods, such as counselling and mentoring, as well as any other method can be used by a WRC as long as its fundamental principles are respected. These methods can be adapted and further developed by each WRC in accordance with their specific needs and objectives.

Counselling

Potential for development

Counselling is a useful and effective method for working professionally in a WRC and providing support to its members. Counselling helps in orientation, decision making and planning for the future, and focuses on:

- the effective conduct of a supportive relationship;
- dialogue;
- non-dominant discussion;
- change or realignment of behaviour on the basis of a learning process;
- a process of clarification of the next steps.

Counselling involves working in a structured way, based on a supportive relationship, which makes it possible for women to develop a self-respectful understanding of the actual situation. Counselling helps them to reflect on this situation, find new orientations and proceed to the next steps in a positive way. Based on the conviction that every woman has the capability for development within herself, the task of counselling is to create the right conditions for her to find and activate her potential for development.

Thus, the aims of counselling are:

- to provide support in arriving at self-respectful understanding;
- to help gain awareness of what is really important to aim for;
- to assist the thought process and reflection on the actual situation;
- to provide support in arriving at decisions.

The use of counselling

A WRC can provide support by counselling women in many different situations, for example when they want to:

- enter or re-enter the labour market;
- improve their working skills;
- start or develop their own business;
- start up a women's rural co-operative or improve an existing one.

The WRC approach is based on a number of important principles. Every woman is a unique case, and the WRC has to fully respect the priorities of the women concerned and their own particular circumstances. The relationship between the women and the advisors/counsellors is equal at all levels. The counselling process is proactive and participatory.

Mentoring

Mentor and mentee

Mentoring is the conscious matching of two people, where the one less knowledgeable and experienced, *mentee*, can learn from the other, *mentor*. The mentor assumes the part of the role model with the task of helping the mentee develop personally, develop their company, or develop in their work role. The mentoring programme for people with small businesses fills an important need, since small businesses are not able to benefit from the competence of external experts larger companies have in their boards of directors. Mentoring is a way of creating better conditions for company development and business growth.

A mentoring programme creates networks, spreads knowledge and offers a unique opportunity for an entrepreneur to gain advantage from the expertise and knowledge of a more experienced person. When the relationship between the mentor and mentee works well, there is a high chance that it will be rewarding and educational for both parties. Depending on wishes, needs and practical circumstances, women or men can be mentors for women participating in the scheme.

Mentoring is a mutually rewarding activity. It is a human relationship in which partners learn to respect and appreciate each other. The mentor works voluntarily and with no payment. Confidentiality is a very important element in mentoring and has to be confirmed in a written agreement between mentor and mentee.

A mentoring programme includes a series of meetings between the mentor and the mentee. Most programmes also include common meetings where all the mentees and mentors can make new contacts and learn new things.

Mentors and mentees might have different needs, so there could also be separate meetings for mentors and mentees respectively.

Recruitment and matching

It is essential that the recruitment of participants and matching of mentors and mentees is conducted proficiently to ensure that the mentoring programme is rewarding for the participants. Often the participants are recruited first and then suitable mentors are found based on the mentees' circumstances and wishes. It is important that those who are responsible for the programme put a great deal of care and effort into ensuring that the mentee is provided with a suitable mentor. Introductory training for mentors is necessary for those assuming this role. The mentees need information about what a mentoring programme is and what they can expect.

A successful mentoring programme

A mentoring programme normally runs for one year. During this time the mentee and the mentor meet about once a month for 2–4 hours. The mentee decides the course of the discussions, based on their own needs. They are usually provided with a list of topics that are good to discuss, for example finances, marketing, sales, business development or production. The person responsible for the programme maintains ongoing contact with the mentee and mentor and solves any problems that might arise.

10 points for a successful mentoring programme

1. Ensure you have an excellent project leader;
2. Define goals and the target group;
3. Promote the programme;
4. Assign sufficient resources for the recruitment of mentees and mentors and for matching;
5. Offer meetings for mentees and mentors to delve further into issues;
6. Offer separate meetings for mentees and mentors;
7. Offer individual orientation sessions: not all common meetings need be obligatory for both mentors and mentees;
8. Let the mentoring programme run for one year, and conclude with an evaluation one year later;
9. Establish a framework for the mentoring programme that can be re-used;
10. Maintain enthusiasm and involvement!

Group mentoring

Pair mentoring or group mentoring?

The traditional way of mentoring is pair mentoring. Another mentoring model is group mentoring. It depends on the needs, demands and qualifications of the potential participants, as well as on the entrepreneurial environment and attitudes to entrepreneurship one chooses.

Who is group mentoring for?

The potential participants in group mentoring are interested in developing their businesses through networking and practical cooperation. They are open-minded and ready for new viewpoints. They are willing to discuss their own businesses and exchange experiences within the group.

The description of group mentoring below is from the FEM Mentoring Manual Guidelines. These Guidelines are based on women entrepreneurs' mentoring experiences (both in pairs and groups) in *seven countries* during the Interreg IIB FEM project in 2004–2007. In the FEM project, pair mentoring has been more successful in countries with shorter histories of business traditions. In contrast, in those countries where business traditions are well-rooted, group mentoring has been far more successful, even beyond expectations.

The technique

In group mentoring usually 4–6 mentees work with a mentor. The mentees are chosen first and then, according to their wishes, the mentor is identified. In group mentoring the role of both the mentor and mentees is different compared to pair mentoring. The mentor guides and facilitates the group in the chosen direction, and the mentees act as mentors to each other. The main role in the group lies with the mentees.

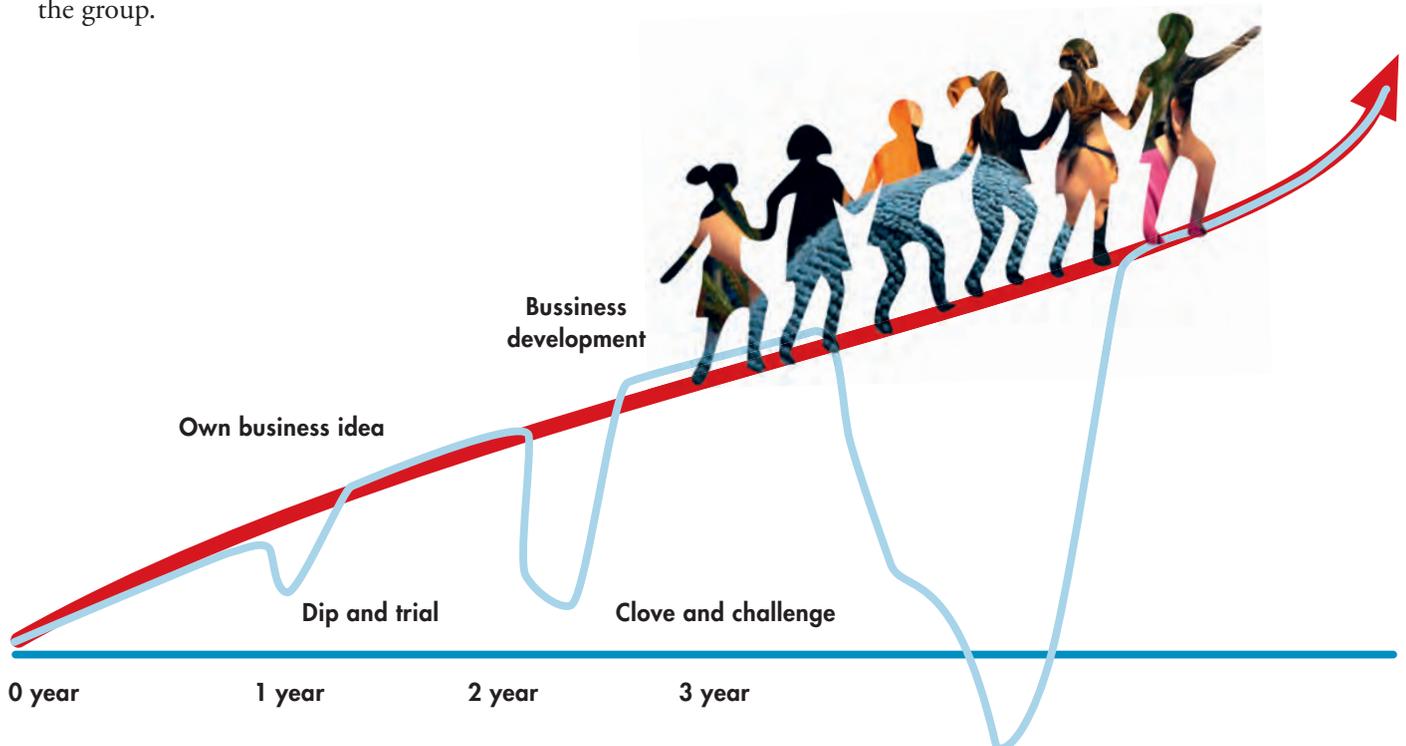
Participating in group mentoring can in many ways be more demanding than participating in pair mentoring. The mentees need to believe in themselves and their businesses, and to have the courage to share their experiences with others, even though they are in the same situation. However, it can be very rewarding, too. The mentees receive various opinions, suggestions and advice from their fellow mentees who work in the same society and know the business environment inside out.

Benefits of group mentoring

- Activates and builds mentees' self-confidence, helping them realise what they know and how they can help the others;
- All participants gain new experiences and develop contacts with many people, instead of only one. They also learn practical networking and cooperation skills;
- The group becomes a *team*, when everybody in the group already has enough confidence in herself and contributes to both individuals and the team as a whole by giving credit to the other participants, their capabilities and achievements;
- All participants have a responsibility to give support to the group.

Limits of group mentoring

- One mentor may not be as good with the whole group as in a pair;
- The composition of the group can restrict exchange of views if there is no common objective shared by all mentees;
- Lack of commitment within the group may be a hindrance. If all the mentees are not equally keen and do not participate in groups meetings regularly, outcomes of group mentoring can be jeopardised.
- To avoid these limitations or risks, selection of mentor and mentees in the group should be carried out with absolute thoroughness.



Business Success Team

The idea

A *Business Success Team* is a new approach in establishing contacts and networks. The idea is for businesswomen from different branches to meet regularly to motivate and support each other in the management and development of their own enterprises. The Business Success Team comprises a group of 4-6 people, who meet regularly every 3-4 weeks to support each other and to help each other achieve their stated goals. This programme usually takes at least 6 months, depending on the composition of the group.

Activities in a Business Success Team focus on improving participants' abilities in starting up and managing a business, motivating each other and sharing their individual experiences.

The aims of a Business Success Team are in particular:

1. to systemise goals (identify and formulate);
2. to maintain the initially high level of motivation;
3. to integrate external suggestions and personalise examples;

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

Henry Ford

The idea of Business Success Teams originates from the USA. The method is credited to Barbara Sher, who came up with the idea in early 1980s. In 1990s, Ulrike Bergmann brought this idea to Germany. WRCs in

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have been working with Business Success Teams since 2000, and this has inspired WRCs in Sweden to apply the method as well.

The idea of Business Success Teams can be used with various groups of women. Here it is described how it has been used with women running their own businesses. It can also be used in groups where the participants have other goals for personal or professional development.

Success Factors

Women in Business Success Teams achieve their aims faster and improve their self-discipline and management thanks to the regular meetings and the motivational impact of the group dynamics. Factors crucial for success of the team include peer pressure, the interactive structure or workplace and the development of common strategies to achieve aims. The communicative interchange and social support from others, and celebrating achievements together with like-minded people are other positive success factors.

Requirements

There are various requirements for running a Business Success Team, including readiness to participate in a team with people in a similar situation. Each member pursues concrete aims and gets tailored support to achieve those. Everyone can rely on assistance from others. Specific collaboration guidelines ensure efficiency of the approach. The survival and success of the team depends on the commitment of the individual members. The members need:

1. to invest sufficient time, energy, and demonstrate stamina;
2. to trust in each other;
3. to have a positive attitude;
4. to use discretion;
5. to be honest while sharing experiences related to both problems and failures, as well as successes;
6. to appreciate each other;
7. to engage in respectful communication;
8. to be open to constructive criticism.

How does it work?

Clearly structured 'rounds of talks' are held. Participants take turns to chair the meeting. A journal is kept to record the meetings, and discussion within the group leads to the establishment of a Business Success Team.

Each meeting lasts 2–3 hours and has three stages or rounds: getting started, back-up and aim.

Round 1: Getting started

Every participant reports on the progress of her work since the last meeting: what stated plans she has achieved, what has happened since the last meeting, what she has done, what she has achieved and which issues she has had success with?

Talking time is limited to 3–5 minutes for each participant. The aim of the first round is to assess, schedule the topics of the meeting and practice self-assessment.

Round 2: Back-up

The goal of this round is to re-assess together and to find solutions for difficult issues and situations. The method provides a number of questions to guide the discussion:

1. Where have I not progressed?
2. What aspects have I developed?
3. What are the explanations?
4. What ideas and solutions can I contribute to help the other participants?
5. How should I proceed in the future?
6. Which more effective practices can I use?

Round 3: Aims

At this round, each participant defines her aims to be achieved by the next meeting. These goals are recorded in the form of a journal, so that it can be checked that the participants work in a goal-orientated manner. Each participant has about two minutes to state her aims. The targets seem to gain more weight as those are recorded in a journal. These aims are thus more clearly defined and easier to check because of the positive formulation and a specific deadline.

Master Suppression Techniques

Anyone working for equality is often met by more or less active resistance, which can be expressed in various ways. One such expression is what is called 'master suppression techniques'.

The concept of 'master suppression techniques' was popularised by Berit Ås, a Norwegian politician and researcher of women's issues. Master suppression techniques are strategies used to gain and/or maintain dominance over others, or ways of asserting oneself through repressing others.

To start with, Ås defined five such techniques: making invisible, ridiculing, withholding information, double punishment, and blame and shame. Later, Ås also identified two other techniques: objectifying and force/threat of force.

Berit Ås tried to make these strategies visible by publicly showing a respective number of the technique using fingers. She encouraged her female politicians to signal each other with their fingers every time they felt they were being subjected to suppression techniques. For example, if a woman thought she was being ridiculed, she raised two fingers. This made master suppression techniques

visible and soon the perception regarding such behaviour changed: women came to perceive what was happening as nothing personal, but rather as general strategies used against them.

The five master suppression techniques and ways to overcome those

The following table explains the five master suppression techniques and offers specific strategies to counter them. These counter strategies and confirmation techniques can be used to break the pattern and protect oneself against attempts of dominance.

Domination technique	Counter strategy	Confirmation technique
Making invisible You, or a group that you belong to, are treated as if you are not there or are insignificant.	Taking space Demand attention, train your voice.	Making visible
Ridiculing You, or a group that you belong to, are referred to or are treated in a denigrating manner.	Question Protest, don't join the laughter.	Respecting
Withholding information You, or a group that you belong to, are kept in ignorance about something.	Cards on the table Demand to know what's going on.	Informing
Double punishment Whatever you, or a group that you belong to, do, is wrong.	Break the pattern Confront and question the criticism.	Double reward
Blame and shame You, or a group that you belong to, are blamed for being the person you are or something you have said or done.	Intellectualise Analyse and challenge others to defend themselves.	Confirm yourself and others

Examples of WRC best practices

Employment Service

The *Employment Service of the Ergani Centre* in Thessaloniki, Greece, ensures the smooth entry or re-entry of women to the labour market. The counselling in this service aims at heightening women's social skills and professional competences in order to meet the demands of the labour market.

Entrepreneurship Service

The *Entrepreneurship Service* run by the same Ergani Centre supports potential entrepreneurs in defining their business ideas, and provides step-by-step guidance on how to establish a company. It helps women with exploring funding opportunities for the future sustainability of their companies. This service also

supports active businesswomen in identifying and solving problems in their companies and in planning their future development. It offers courses on topics such as advertising, marketing and customer relations.

Start-up Reference Card

The *Regional Resource Centre in Skåne*, Sweden has developed a Start-up Reference Card. The purpose of the card is to help women who are thinking of starting their own companies to evaluate, develop, and, if they so wish, put their ideas into practice. Anybody who is thinking of starting her own company can use the card, regardless of how advanced their plans are. There are three levels:

- Should I start my own company? – I have an idea!
- I want to start my own company – Is it a viable idea?
- I intend to start my own company – From an idea to an enterprise!

For each of the three levels the Start-up Reference Card presents a list actions necessary to take in order to move to the next level, such as who is to be contacted and what preparations are needed for success at the given level. The card also supplies contact information to local networks, organisations and authorities that the prospective entrepreneur may find useful at each level. Women taking part in this scheme receive an introductory consultation which supports them in placing themselves and their business concepts at the right level.

Participants commit to taking part in two individual meetings with a personal counsellor, in at least three group meetings, and after completion of the programme, they are to return the card, annotated with information about what they have done, to the Regional Resource Centre for women in Skåne. The project offers women the following opportunities, free of charge:

- participation in group meetings in a coaching programme with other prospective entrepreneurs;
- counselling based on the current development level of the start-up;
- guidance by the project leader and ongoing contact with them;
- participation in inspirational meetings offered in the local area;
- visits to local networks, organisations and meetings targeting entrepreneurs.

Study visits

Study visits are a powerful networking and capacity building tool which WRCs across countries regularly use to enhance their networks and overall capacities. As a rule, these are learning opportunities for WRC leaders and members, which focus on sharing experiences, best practices and lessons learnt. Another important dimension of study visits is expansion of WRC networks, which allow both novice and experienced WRCs to meet with counterparts and relevant stakeholders across borders and expand their communities of practice.

Study visits between German and Swedish WRCs

During the collaborative project between the Regional Resource Centres in Skåne, Sweden and Mecklenburg-Westpomerania, Germany, it was realised that there was a lot of interest in organising an exchange of experiences between businesswomen in both countries. Since 2006, 3-day study visits for Swedish and German businesswomen interested in cooperation have been arranged. There is a common theme for these study visits:

“*Forum for Bilateral Business*”. The participants are women who are already established entrepreneurs and women who are planning to start their own businesses. The target industries include tourism, consulting, wellness and health, fashion and design, and development of regional products.

The goals of the study visit are:

- to set the stage for new business opportunities to develop;
- to create a forum for introducing participants’ businesses to each other;
- to take advantages of the services and schemes WRCs and networks can offer in supporting female entrepreneurs;
- to learn from businesswomen in neighbouring countries and to reflect on ones’ own business situation;
- to focus on improvement of skills in starting up and managing a business, to motivate each other and to share collective experiences.

The mentioned study visits have had special targets as well, specifically:

- to establish business contacts between female entrepreneurs in Mecklenburg- Westpomerania/ Germany and Skåne / Sweden;
- to transfer business ideas and experiences in
 - a. managing entrepreneurial tasks;
 - b. setting up a business successfully;
 - c. developing business cooperation;
 - d. in engaging with associations and WRCs.
- to set up new enterprises, new services and new projects for cooperation in future.

The exchange of experiences concentrates on various issues such as:

- the structure of the work in WRCs;
- the profile of activities;
- the capacities of WRC staff;
- cooperation amongst associations and networks, e.g. the WRC Christina in Kristianstad, Sweden and Women into Business, Rostock, Germany;
- regional lobbying for female entrepreneurs, cooperation with local councils, projects for families, regional and economic development and the supporting structure for female entrepreneurs.

Each participant learns to prepare a presentation of her own business in English and to present her own experiences in starting up and managing an enterprise.

Other topic discussed at study visits was transfer of the method of Business Success Teams from Mecklenburg-Westpommern to WRCs in Sweden. Finally, the study visits resulted in a project within the EU Interreg IVA South Baltic programme: “Connecting Business Potentials over the Borders – Going Abroad together with WRCs and Germany, Sweden and Lithuania”.

Winnet Armenia study visits to Winnet Sweden

Since 2010, Syunik Women’s Resource Centre’s Network participated in two study visits to Sweden with the support of OSCE Office in Yerevan in order to exchange experiences, visit women’s organizations, meet politicians and civil society actors, observe women’s participation at the local, regional and national levels and build on the existing capacities.



In 2010, the OSCE Office in Yerevan supported three newly launched WRCs from Syunik region of Armenia to visit Winnet Sweden to study the experience of various Swedish WRCs from north to south, to learn of opportunities and challenges these centres encounter while implementing activities at different levels to empower women socially, politically and economically. This was the first ever attempt to learn of the WRC model, work ethics and networking of Winnet Sweden and Winnet Europe.

In 2013, six women politicians from local governments in Syunik region of Armenia went on a seven-day study tour in Sweden to learn of political participation of women in Sweden and of best practices of women’s participation in regional development and growth. Visits to the Swedish Parliament, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Ministry of Enterprise, and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), as well as to civil society organizations, such as Winnet Sweden, Winnet Gavleborg, Resource X, Winnet Dalarna, W7, and Winnet Sala enabled the participants of the study visit to learn of various success factors contributing to the effectiveness of a WRC, and of structural changes in relevant policies and actions.

Meetings with Swedish female politicians encouraged and inspired Armenian participants to engage more actively in local and regional politics. They shared experiences on organizing campaigns, communicating with local community members, raising different community issues, identifying supporters and followers, making changes in regulations, and combining professional and personal life. During the various meetings, plans were discussed on how the results of the study visit could be expanded further to build on the recommendations from Swedish counterparts.

One of the most significant achievements of the study visit was the suggestion of Winnet Sweden for the WRCs in Armenia to become a member of Winnet Europe, which eventually happened in 2014. Another outcome of the visit was the resolution of one of the Armenian participants to establish a Women Resource Center in Sisian, which was established in two years in 2015.

Social Entrepreneurship and Services

To address the social needs of local communities and to initiate a source of income, some WRCs have started social enterprises. Social entrepreneurship promotes economic development of rural communities through strengthening capacities of rural women, creating sustainable income opportunities, and enhancing quality and competitiveness of the existing products.



WRCs’ experience in social entrepreneurship has proven that successful initiatives rely heavily on local market demand, as well as existence and characteristics of locally available resources, including the human capital. For instance, since 2010, Winnet Armenia, supported by international development partners and local communities, has helped over 150 rural women artisans and entrepreneurs to engage in WRC handicrafts studios by crafting carpets, pottery, crochet, and needlework; to introduce quality control schemes; and generate

sustainable income. Winnet Armenia has pioneered in introducing this model in a culture traditionally appraising handicrafts and applied arts, and it advocates for starting social enterprises based on identified local resources and needs.

Since 2009, Winnet Armenia has established handicraft studios across Syunik region, engaging over 500 women and girls in vocational education, creating 120 jobs and ensuring income generation for women and families. Winnet Armenia's social entrepreneurship initiatives have been inspired by its first endeavour - Goris Crochet Studio, a local handicraft brand. Involvement of local and international experts in product development is also a successful instrument. In the past six years, Winnet Armenia, engaging local and international experts, has introduced over 50 handicraft products, which are marketed domestically and globally.

The Wool-to-Carpet Studio is another key social initiative of the Winnet Armenia, which successfully revived a post-industrial site into a modern manufacturing facility. Winnet Armenia invested heavily in this modernisation project of a demolished rural manufacturing premise, which has turned into a successfully operating social enterprise and an attractive tourist destination.

Quadruple Helix in action to combat domestic violence

To prevent domestic and gender-based violence through providing a sustainable support loop to the victims, Winnet Armenia has established functional networks of relevant stakeholders, including regional and state authorities, police and healthcare institutions, psychological and legal service providers, community leaders and NGOs. By signing memorandums of understanding with these stakeholders, Winnet Armenia has succeeded in defining specific activities of support, taking into account the capacities and resources of the involved organizations, thus ensuring comprehensive and effective cooperation for the benefit of GBV survivors.

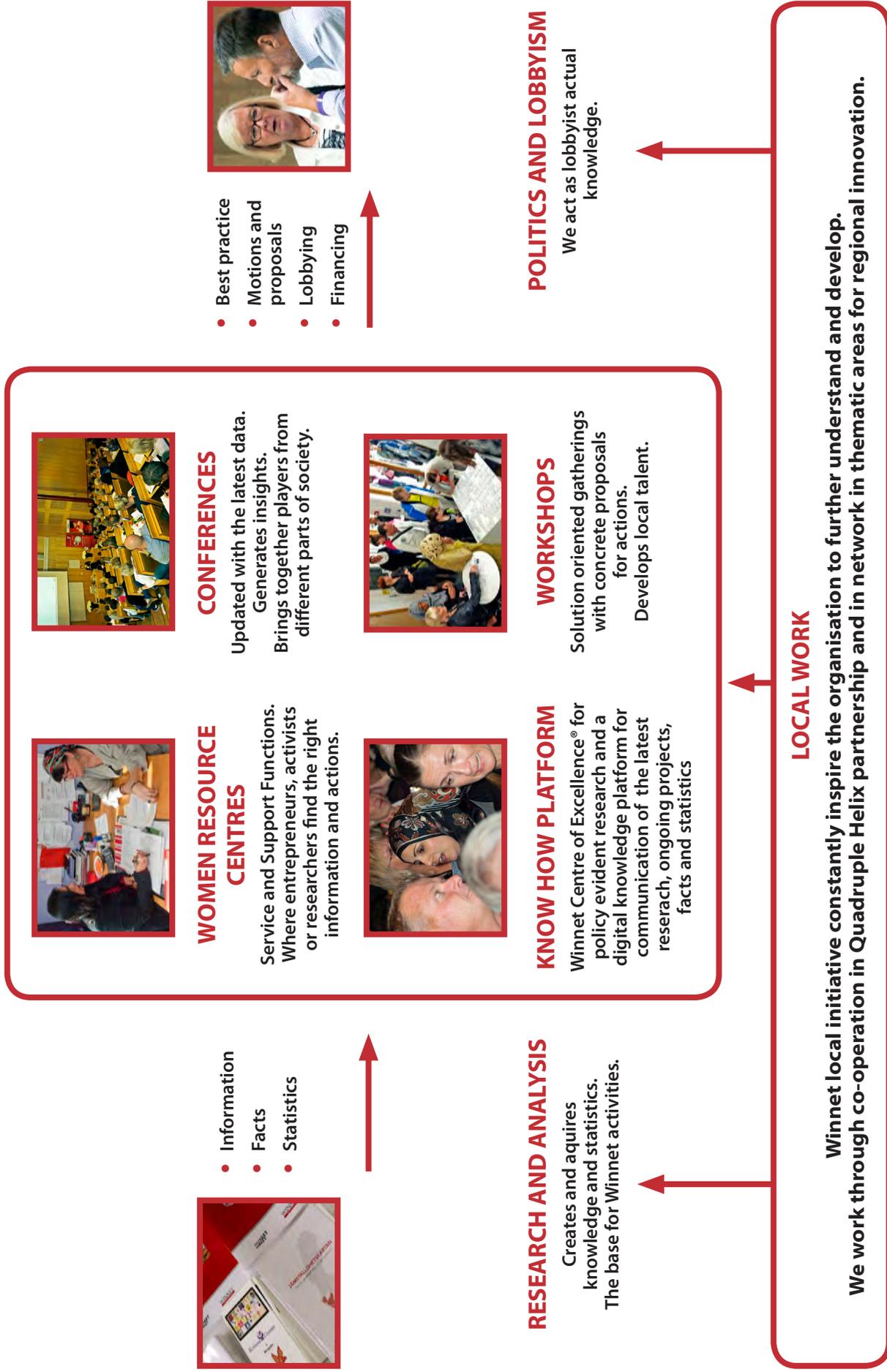
Winnet Armenia continuously organises awareness raising community events, roundtables and discussions on women's rights, in order to inform and educate various stakeholders of the perils of domestic and gender-based violence. Moreover, the centers work with the victims of violence through economic empowerment initiatives, by connecting them to supportive networks, relevant organizations and shelters, as well as by ensuring their access to necessary information and resources.

Annexes

- 1 See some already existing examples: the AWFDF Resource Centre in Ghana <http://www.awdf.org/browse/1055>; The Women's Research and Resource Centre (WRRCC) Limbe, Cameroon <http://www.worldpulse.com/node/21189>; Asia Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC) Japan <http://www.aworc.org/org/ajwrc/ajwrc.html>; Centro de recursos Generar Igualdad, Consejo Nacional Mujeres Argentina <http://www.cnm.gov.ar/generarigualdad/index.php>, the Taskhent WRC in Uzbekistan <http://www.civilsoc.org/nisorgs/uzbek/wmrsrctr.htm>.
- 2 Europe 2020 targets. http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/targets/eu-targets/index_en.htm.
- 3 2015 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union. European Commission Staff Working Document. SWD(2016)54. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/2016_annual_report_2015_web_en.pdf.
- 4 Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child (%). Eurostat. Last visited: 20-08-2016. <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.
- 5 Eurofound (2015), Upgrading or polarisation? Long-term and global shifts in the employment structure, European jobs monitor 2015.
- 6 Eurostat, Labour Force Survey.
- 7 Armstat.
- 8 Gender Analysis of the EU AA/DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. 29 January 2016. Indevelop AB.
- 9 Source: Eurostat (online data codes: enpr_pslm, enpr_sisoc, lfsi_emp_a, une_rt_a and une_ltu_a).
- 10 Ukraine's labour statistics are poor for recent years, and a full set of consistent sectoral data for 2014 was unavailable. Source: Gender Analysis of the EU AA/DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. 29 January 2016. Indevelop AB.
- 11 Note that these employment rates also relate to men aged 16–59 and to a smaller and more youthful subsection of the female population aged 16–54. European Neighbourhood Policy - East - labour market statistics. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/European_Neighbourhood_Policy_-_East_-_labour_market_statistics#Employment_rates.
- 12 Armstat.
- 13 Gender Analysis of the EU AA/DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. 29 January 2016. Indevelop AB.
- 14 Eurofound (2015), First findings: Sixth European Working Conditions Survey.
- 15 Senik C. (2016), Gender gaps in subjective well-being, European Network of Experts on Gender Equality. OECD (2012) also reports findings that European women who engaged in housework for more than the median length of time in their country reported a reduced degree of happiness (Mencarini and Sironi, 2012), while a country's average degree of happiness increases with greater gender equality (Veenhoven, 2011 and 2010).
- 16 OECD (2012).
- 17 Annual Growth Survey 2016: strengthening the recovery and fostering convergence, Commission Communication (COM(2015) 690 final). See also http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm.
- 18 Eurofound (2015), Early childhood care: accessibility and quality of services.
- 19 Armstat.
- 20 Belstat. http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/solialnaya-sfera/obrazovanie/operativnyye-dannye_15/obrazovanie-v-respublike-belarus-uchebnyy-god-2015-2016/.
- 21 The vast majority of second-income earners in couples are women. In a fifth of households, women have no earnings and in nearly 44 % of households women earn less than their partner. With joint and progressive taxation, this means that the tax rate on women's work will be relatively high. Even if separate taxation is in place, it often features disincentives similar to those in a joint taxation system. For example, transferable tax credits discourage second income earners from taking a job or increasing their working hours.
- 22 2015 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union. European Commission Staff Working Document. SWD(2016)54. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/2016_annual_report_2015_web_en.pdf.
- 23 Eurofound (2015), First findings: Sixth European Working Conditions Survey.
- 24 The Swedish Government is proposing to introduce, from 2016, a third reserved month of parental leave for each parent (in practice, an extra month for fathers), so that parents can share allowances more equally. Also, the Social Insurance Agency will be promoting gender equality in the use of parental leave.
- 25 2015 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union. European Commission Staff Working Document. SWD(2016)54. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/2016_annual_report_2015_web_en.pdf.
- 26 http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_just_012_new_initiative_replacing_maternity_leave_directive_en.pdf.
- 27 Directive 2006/54/EC.
- 28 Directive 92/85/EEC.
- 29 Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 68, 18.3.2010, p. 13). The Parental Leave Directive provides for an individual right of parental leave of at least four months, one of which is in principle not transferable, to involve fathers more in childcare; see also overview: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/files/parental_leave_report_final_en.pdf.
- 30 http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm
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The Winnet Model



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Note: this is a working document under development

How to run a Women's Resource Centre successfully

Structure for a training based on the Handbook for Women's Resource Centres, Winnet Sweden/Winnet Europe 2012

1. Introduction

- What are Women's Resource Centres?
- By women for women
- Equality between women and men

2. Why and how Women's Resource Centres can contribute to change

- Introduction
- Employment
- Reconciliation between work, private and family life
- Education and research
- Entrepreneurship
- Innovation
- Conclusion: gendered regional development policies

3. Women's Resource Centre, the historical background and their role and mission today

4. The work of a Women's Resource Centres

- The building bricks
- Basic principles
- Knowledge and ethics
- Target groups and profile
- Legitimacy and lobbying
- Master Suppression Techniques

5. Starting up, organising and guaranteeing sustainability in a Women's Resource Centre

- Starting up
- Management
- Guaranteeing sustainability
- The structure of Women's Resource Centres

6. Working in project form

- Projects and project work
- Project planning

8. Working methods and tools for use in a Women's Resource Centre

- Counselling
- Mentoring
- Group mentoring
- Business Success Team

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- 121 See, for example, the analysis of the results of the public consultation on equality between women and men and the report of the April 2015 forum on the future of gender equality; http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/gender-equality/files/public-consultation-gender-web_en.pdf; http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/future-of-gender-equality-2015/files/report_forum_gender_equality_en.pdf.
- 122 Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010 2015; http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/151120_strategy_evaluation_en.pdf.
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