



# WOMEN, ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

## NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 8, MAY 2011



# THE FINAL WEED NEWSLETTER



**European Union**  
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Connecting cities  
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## WELCOME



Welcome to this final edition of the WEED newsletter. In this issue we reflect on some of the main achievements in our partner cities' efforts to tackle gender segregation and inequality in employment and enterprise.

We know that the success of the European Strategy for Growth and Employment depends on higher quality integration of both women and men in the economy and local development: achieving gender equality is vital for growth, employment and social cohesion across Europe. However when we started the WEED project we also knew that despite increased understanding of what is needed to encourage and support women into employment and enterprise, municipal involvement remained if not a fairly new then a seldom-sustained approach, even though it is an important area for progress.

During the last three years a great deal of effort has been put into working together with colleagues at local level and sharing experiences and lessons with other cities to improve this situation. WEED focuses on exploring concrete local actions that can improve the position of women in employment, entrepreneurship, and the knowledge economy.

We have discovered and explored some fantastic examples of what members of Local Support Groups can accomplish when they work together to develop

programmes of actions and set realistic targets for reducing the barriers to women's involvement in enterprise and quality employment. The result at local level includes a range of new and improved concrete actions for change as well as a healthy number of projects successfully funded because of improved planning processes and partnership.

However, the work of WEED has also coincided with the worst financial crash that we have had for over 70 years. This has resulted in a sharp increase in unemployment levels across the whole of the EU and has meant that local authorities are faced with severe austerity measures that are resulting in the cutting of services and jobs. It is particularly satisfying, then, that at the Final Conference Mayors from each city signed a commitment to do all in their power to close gender gaps in employment, enterprise and innovation and strengthen the local measures included in their final Local Action Plan.

Such a commitment gives great hope that the next few years will see each city putting their Local Action Plan into place and that by continuing to work together local stakeholders will be able to do everything possible to assist women to achieve their full potential and cities to benefit from the skills and capabilities that they bring to their local economies.

**Professor Gill Scott**  
**Lead Expert for the WEED project**

## THE WEED FINAL CONFERENCE

On 12 and 13 May 2011 the WEED network 'Women, Enterprise, Employment and Local Development' held its Final Conference in the city of Amiens. Amiens was extremely pleased to host the conference as along with their involvement in WEED they recently appointed Madame Maryse LION-LEC, Vice-Présidente en charge de la lutte contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité and welcomed the chance to develop ideas with other European cities. In Madame LION-LEC's welcome address in Amiens (reproduced on the following page) we were reminded just how much individual cities have welcomed the opportunities provided by WEED.

More than 50 participants from 10 European countries took part in the event, among them political representatives of WEED's eight partner cities Celje (SL), Enna (IT), Crotone (IT), Amiens(FR), Santiago de Compostela (ES), Alzira

(ES), Karvina (CZ), Umea (SW) plus representatives of the URBACT Programme.

The conference presented and discussed the results of three years of inspiring and successful project work - both on project level and on local level in the partner cities. Further, it aimed to promote one of the network's final publications, a Catalogue, which provides information about the project and its achievements, partner cities and their local action plans. Since 2009 the WEED network focused on developing integrated and innovative strategies for overcoming the barriers to women's involvement in enterprise and quality employment.

All project documents as well as further information on the Final Conference (e.g. the conference programme) are available for download at [www.urbact.eu/weed](http://www.urbact.eu/weed).



*The WEED Final Conference in Amiens May 2011*

Dear Colleagues, Mayors and Deputy Mayors,

*I, on behalf of Gilles Demailly, Mayor of Amiens, welcome you to our city. It is a pleasure and an honour to welcome you to our beautiful city hall for the final conference of the WEED project.*



*Today it is thanks to the European Union that we are all united and enjoy enriching ourselves from the experience of others; from our differences and from our numerous similarities. Together, we are an illustration of a Europe that unites, thinks and acts for a transformation of the everyday life of people in our respective countries. To those who believe that Europe is far from peoples' concerns, we will answer today by examples, through our shared activities, in the field of employment and business creation in favour of a real equality between women and men.*

*Moreover, I want to tell you on this occasion what a delegation like mine owes to Europe. The fight against discrimination was born in Europe and mainly from the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. It made prevention against discrimination a priority for all member states. France's major advances in the prevention against discrimination were born within the EU. It is in this context that our city carries out actions every day for those who are most vulnerable to unequal treatment. In France, there are 18 bases of discrimination that define the target of our policies; age, gender, origin, family status, sexual orientation, lifestyle, genetic characteristics, actual or supposed membership of an ethnic group, a nation or a race, physical appearance, disability, health status, pregnancy, the family, political opinions, religious beliefs, and trade union activities. We are fighting for the groups that are victims of these 18 discrimination criteria.*

*In Amiens, we have a multiple deprivation approach - integrating into our actions, people from deprived areas and living in precarious situations. So, I am very proud that Gilles Demailly, the Mayor of Amiens, entrusted me with the responsibility of "the fight against discrimination and for equal rights." This policy lies at the heart of all the actions that our municipal team are leading, particularly in the areas of education, culture, housing, and of course employment. It is in the field of employment that inequalities between women and men are more stubborn. And yet, it is by employment that we can actually help women access real autonomy.*

*The WEED project was, for the city of Amiens, an excellent opportunity to network with other cities and to initiate a new local dynamic. This resulted in the creation of a local support group, whose excellent work has yielded innovative and ambitious proposals that will form the basis for a future programme of concrete actions to promote access for women to employment and entrepreneurship. I know that in each of the partner cities, local groups have shown the same talent. I am very excited to share with you the results of this ambitious work. I am sure it will help to change our practices in a long lasting way for a vital and real equality between women and men in their access to employment and entrepreneurship.*

*Welcome to our city, I hope our discussions will be rich and effective.*

**Madame Maryse LION-LEC**

**Vice-Présidente en charge de la lutte contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité**

## DECLARATION OF MAYORS

During the Final Conference political representatives of all WEED partner cities signed a declaration in a ceremony stating:



- “Our commitment to closing the gender gaps in employment, enterprise and innovation. More specifically we welcome and endorse the need for a gender sensitive approach to economic and employment development as a means of increasing the chances for growth in our cities.
- Our commitment to use our powers and strengthen co-operation with local actors in developing concrete actions in favour of equality of men and women.
- Our desire to adapt and strengthen measures to improve women’s position in enterprise and employment emerging from the W.E.E.D. network activities, particularly those included in our Local Action Plan.

In short we acknowledge that it is essential that local governments take the gender dimension fully into account in their economic development policies. Our commitment to promote practical measures to achieve this rests on a view that real equality of men and women is one of the keys to our city’s economic and social success.”

## FINAL LOCAL ACTION PLANS

Local Action Plans are an important dimension to the URBACT program. They are intended to improve the impact of transnational exchange and learning on local policies, and give a concrete form to the outputs from networking activities carried out by each partner. All the cities involved in WEED had active Local Support Groups involved in developing such Local Action Plans. Their content shows the varied context and issues faced in different cities. Some are prioritizing actions to help women start up and develop enterprises, others to reduce gender segregation across the world of work and business.

Whatever their approach, partners feel that the chance to bring together stakeholders at local level, to learn from models being adopted in cities across

Europe as well as the opportunity to take time to plan actions has been a valuable dimension of the URBACT programme.



*Members of the Karvina Local Support Group*

Three noteworthy examples are the plans of Umea, Santiago de Compostela and Celje. Umea is interesting because it shows how a multi-year, multi action strategy can be developed when local

partners get together. Santiago de Compostela holds interest because of its commitment to use women's capacity for economic growth and urban regeneration. Celje is interesting as it shows how the identification of service gaps alongside a focus on women, employment and enterprise can produce effective plans that attract significant funds.

**Umea, Sweden.** The Local Support Group in Umea produced a joint action plan for the Västerbotten region. It focuses on equal opportunity in the workplace and the labour market. The main focus of the action plan is gender-specific segregation. It identifies the importance of reducing gender segregation for the region, for employers, for employees, for entrepreneurs and for a fair division of resources, power and influence. The action plan is signed by the Mayor of Umea, the County Governor of Västerbotten, the Director of Swedish Public Employment Services, the Director of Leia Accelerator and the Director of ALMI (the lead partner and initiator of several programmes which assist in the starting up and development of new businesses). This commits all signatories to work together to implement the activities drawn up in the plan based on our specific and shared experiences and perspectives. The action plan is a multi-year strategy for the region's continued work toward reducing gender segregation of the labour market in Västerbotten. It includes ten areas of action including measures to increase mobility between female and male dominated sectors in the labour market (which has attracted funding from the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) and also incorporates actions to draw attention to women's entrepreneurship and the male norm in the business world.

**Santiago de Compostela.** The Local Support Group in the city comprised the Municipality of Santiago, University of Santiago, Syndicates, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of

Industrial Area of the Tambre, Federation of rural associations, Psychology Official College. Two strategic priorities were selected by the LSG: promoting the full participation of women in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life; and increasing women's participation in the economy of knowledge and innovation. The range of actions proposed in the LAP and adopted by the Mayor and members of the LSG to achieve these include an increase in positive actions that promote women's access to quality employment (e.g. lobbying to create awareness of the general and specific rights of working women bearing on the fight against work precariousness), a range of labour activation policies to favour women's insertion in the job market and strengthen equality of opportunities in a working environment, measures for gender training in collaboration with trade unions, to foment a balanced presence in Collective Negotiation tables, and the provision of technical and economic support to women, women's associations and enterprises to favour access and use of new technologies.

**Celje, Slovenia.** The Local Support Group in Celje comprised members from the local Social Services, Employment Department, Chamber of Commerce and NGOs. The local action plan they have developed focuses on greater gender equality in employment and entrepreneurship as well as the improvement of the quality of life of families living at a time of demographic and economic change.



*Members of the Celje Local Support Group*

The Celje Local Action Plan aims to meet a gap between the needs of families and public sector capacity to meet their needs: a gap that has been growing with the economic crisis and with wide ranging changes in traditional family structures. Based on an initial analysis of families, unemployed women in the city and local social service, training and employability resources the LSG worked on a project proposal for a Centre for Information, Consultancy and Education. The plan consisted of an analysis of the quality and quantity of existing services, a clear outline for the establishment of a new educational programme for workers to support the elderly and families in crisis. The programme was to recruit and train unemployed women alongside the establishment of a register of available workers who had completed the training but also includes a programme of training for those who wish to be self-employed in the sector. By the time the WEED project was finishing, funding of €300.000 had been attracted from the European Social Fund.

Other action plans and actions developed during the WEED project focused on a range of objectives. They include:

**Objective 1: To reduce barriers to women's entrepreneurship (Alzira, Enna, Crotona, Santiago de Compostela)**

- Extend mentor support for women entrepreneurs (Alzira has attracted Leonardo funding to support new entrepreneurs activity);
- Increase interest in entrepreneurship from school age to older age (Santiago de Compostela's Enterprise and Economic Development Departments have worked together to develop this in the Fomenta de la Cultura Emprendora project);
- Micro finance initiatives to encourage social enterprise in the knowledge economy (Enna has attracted EU funding for a small project to take this forward).



*Members of the Alzira Local Support Group*

**Objective 2: To address the inequalities in the nature and quality of work available for men and women (Umea, Karvina, Amiens, Celje)**

- Training initiatives to open up new less gendered pathways (Umea has attracted regional funding for this);
- Increase women's take up of employment training (Partnership between CIDFF and municipality in Amiens developed this during the WEED project);
- Projects that change attitudes amongst employers towards more family friendly employment practices (Alzira developed the Born Equal Make Equal campaign, Karvina is developing a funding application for this).

**Objective 3: To reduce the underutilization of women's knowledge and skills in innovation and the knowledge economy (Santiago de Compostela, Enna)**

- Change attitudes to science and IT amongst the young (Celje LSG was involved in developing a Fair to progress this amongst young people during the WEED project; Alzira is currently extending a SERVEF funded project through CHANTIER programme);
- Joint university/ municipality initiative to increase uptake of enterprise route by women in knowledge economy (Women Empreende works with the city authority in Santiago de Compostela, with considerable support from University and local banks);

- Extension of training opportunities in new employment sectors (care) (Celje has developed and gained EU funding for a care training programme, Enna

has submitted a funding application to take this forward).

Details of all the WEED Local Action Plans are available in the final report and WEED brochure at [www.urbact.eu/weed](http://www.urbact.eu/weed).

## CITY OF CELJE

*The City of Celje is the lead partner in the WEED project. Here, Alenka Vodoncnik from Agencija Ave presents a profile of Celje, the key challenges for improving women's performance in the labour market, and how involvement in WEED is helping to meet these challenges.*



Celje has a long tradition of manufacturing and trade. In 18th and 19th century it had a well-developed tourist industry but lost its importance to neighbouring tourist wellness and spa locations. After independence of Slovenia from former Yugoslavia republic, Celje was the first city in Slovenia where the economy collapsed. From 1990 to 2000 it had very high unemployment. Its socio-economic situation has greatly improved in the recent period: the unemployment rate has reduced from 11% to 6% over the past 6 years.

Women have played a significant part in the labour market in the city for more than 50 years. The employment rates for women, as for Slovenia as a whole, are higher than the European average. Public

sector employers have a duty to implement equal opportunities and women hold high level managerial posts. In the private sector the position is not so strong. Women have fewer opportunities for on the job training and for promotion. The number of highly educated women is high. Despite the higher average education it is more difficult for women to find a job than men and the difference between employment and unemployment rates of men and women has increased during the last years. So higher education does not provide a guarantee that higher education will add to the pool of skills in the city. Higher educated women in Celje, for example, make up 4% of the unemployed compared with 3% in Slovenia as a whole. However the existence of highly educated women in the city does indicate the capacity for the city to develop a more knowledge based economy, and its current underutilisation. Women's rate of unemployment generally is higher than men's: 6.3% women, 5.7% men in 2002, women comprise 55% of the unemployed, men make up the other 45%. This rate is relatively low compared to other accession countries. Many women (and also men) have to leave the city to find and get a qualified job in two larger cities Ljubljana and Maribor. A lot of

them are daily migrants (leave city at 7.00 come back at 19.00). Many students have previously left the city to study at Ljubljana and they do not all move back to Celje.

### **Priorities for change**

Following the initial local mapping identification of the current situation and problems regarding the utilisation of women for a Jobs and Growth agenda in their local area, members of the LSG discussed what they might prioritise for work with the WEED project. This was based on where they felt they had capacity for change and interest in doing so.

Representatives from the training organisation, city authority and union felt they had a reasonably high ability to support women into work and to promote women's interest in science and technology. They were less convinced that they could effectively help to support women in setting up in business.

Representatives from employers and private company felt they currently had relatively little capacity to support women in any of the three WEED themes. However when members considered what expertise they had to offer other WEED partners, specific areas of capacity became clearer: they included a level of knowledge and understanding of women in business, experience of supporting women graduate clusters and motivating women to take risks for growth of women business as well as experience of collaboration between different authorities.

### **What has Celje learned from WEED?**

The city of Celje is proud to have coordinated and implemented the WEED project for almost three years and to have successfully cooperated with a leading expert, Professor Gill Scott, who has

guided us, helping us reach the best results.

We have learned that exchanging knowledge and experiences can be useful in order to consider and evaluate possible solutions to a certain issue. Of course this cannot be just transferred into a local environment but has to be adapted according to our needs.

The opportunity to discuss ideas, experiences and successful approaches with WEED partners during transnational workshops saved us from having to reinvent solutions to problems that we are all experiencing. That is critically important in time of recession, when time and the right solutions are key.

Starting the project in 2008 brought us different views and opinion on gender segregation and inequalities from the issues in 2010, when the economic crisis reached us with growing demands. Each month more people lost their jobs, family incomes decreased, housing issues become more demanding etc.

WEED gave the City of Celje a forum to compare our services with partner cities and for the first time ask questions, such as: Is promotion of successful women enough for decreasing gender segregation and inequalities or we can do more? How can we support new and existing enterprises? How can we ensure that growth opportunities have a social and economic impact?

The WEED project took place at a time when the national law on social enterprises is in preparation for adoption and there are great opportunities to answer these questions with new action plans.

Our local action plan as resulted from the WEED project is not the last step. We will continue our role and work in future because being part of the WEED project opened us to many ideas for new opportunities.

We are happy that the WEED project is successfully coming to its end and that some of its partners have already taken part in new projects, which have resulted from the WEED project. We are also pleased to have gained new experience

and seen some good practices and to cooperate with opened minded partners.



*Gill Scott, WEED Lead Expert, with Suzi Kvas and Alenka Vodoncnik from Celje*

## URBACT NEWS

### Summer University

URBACT have taken a decision that the 2011 Annual Conference will be replaced by a Summer University for ULSG organisations, which will be held in Kraków, Poland, 29th-31st August 2011. The objective of the event is to create a community of work of Urbact Local Support Group members aimed at providing networking opportunities, and the Secretariat have confirmed that Call 1 projects are welcome to attend and share their experiences and reflections. Each Project Partner is invited to nominate two delegates – one of which must be the project's local co-ordinator – and at least one delegate must speak English. The costs associated with attendance will be eligible (for Call 1 Project Partners) if the ULSG budget category is under spent and formal approval from the URBACT Monitoring Committee will also need to be sought.

### New project proposal call

Project Partners are also asked to note other important dates from the URBACT Secretariat, namely that December 2011 will see the launch of the 3rd Call for project proposals, with applications due for submission by March 2012. It is anticipated that final decisions on the approval of Call 3 projects will be made by May 2012. Call 3 projects would typically run from June/July 2012 until the end of the current URBACT Operational Programme in 2015.

### Final Conferences

Between March and May most of the Call 1 projects held their Final Conferences. For details of these other partners in the URBACT programme why not have a look at <http://urbact.eu/en/header-main/news-and-events/urbact-events/>

## EUROPEAN NEWS

### **The Council of European Municipalities and Regions**

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) announced, at the occasion of the 2011 International Women's Day, that over 1020 municipalities have signed the [European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life](#). The Charter, which was launched in 2006, is the fruit of decades of CEMR work in the promotion of gender equality in all spheres related to local and regional life. Leading up to the Charter, CEMR led a project called the [Town for Equality](#) to collect best gender equality practices in European local government so as to draw a virtual portrait of a town that takes equality between men and women into account in all of its policies.

### **Gender4Growth**

G4G is an INTERREG IVC project about growth. It aims to update partner's economic policies with consideration to gender issues and empower gender mainstreaming in regional economic policies. INTERREG IVC projects helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention. The partnership consists of eight partners from seven countries. It is led by the Ile de France region and partners include the Catalan Women's Institute, the Balearic

Islands Region, Veneto Region, Regional Social Welfare Resource centre Budapest, the County of Timis, The Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) and the Municipality of Lidköping. More information can be found at: <http://www.gender4growth.eu/>

Their final conference will be in Paris in June 2011.

### **European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)**

The EIGE is a European agency created to support the Member States and the EU in their efforts to promote gender equality, to fight gender discrimination and to raise awareness about gender issues. Its tasks are \* to collect and analyse comparable data on gender issues \* to develop methodological tools, in particular for the integration of the gender dimension in all policy areas \* to facilitate the exchange of best practice and dialogue among stakeholders, and to raise awareness among EU citizens.

The Institute's budget for the period 2007-2013 is €52.5 million. The Institute will employ approximately 30 staff during 2010 and envisages the engagement of seconded national experts to enhance its expertise in the field of gender equality. <http://www.eige.europa.eu/>

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 300 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

## WEED CONTACTS

### Lead Partner

Suzi Kvas

Tel: +386 3 49 24 042

e-mail: suzi.kvas@siol.com

### Lead Expert

Gill Scott

e-mail:

gill.wilmot1@btinternet.com

### Project Assistant

Maria Hoffman

e-mail:

m.hoffman@ludenet.org

### Newsletter

Liz Mackie

e-mail:

liz@gpartnership.com

For more information about the WEED project, including our newsletters, workshop reports, presentations and information about all the WEED partners, please visit the WEED website at

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