

June, 2007

FEM (Female Entrepreneurs' Meetings) is a Baltic Sea Region Interreg IIIB project. The aim of FEM is to strengthen the structures which support the entrepreneurship of women through co-operation, exchange of knowledge and experiences as well as best practises. FEM started in August 2004 and will run to August 2007. The participating countries are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

This is the third FEM newsletter. You will find more information about FEM activities and participants in www.feminfo.net. Overall co-ordination of the FEM: annamari.asikainen@intermin.fi, leena.heiskala@palvelupartio.inet.fi

A new portal for women's resource centers in Europe



The new portal, www.winneteurope.eu will boost several new opportunities for women entrepreneurs in different countries. The portal is an innovative tool created to provide women's resource centers a platform for successful networking and efficient communication. Winnet Europe aims to establish a network of women's resource centers in the EU and to help women to be active in regional development and growth.

The portal provides women an easy and efficient way to find information about resource centers all over Europe. This is a milestone for the whole FEM-project, and in future Winnet Europe will work as a marketplace including information about training and project partnerships.

The portal provides women a chance to read documents, find useful statistics and learn about research on women resource centers. During 2007 all the new resource centers, which are built up in FEM, can use the tool and be co-editors of the portal without paying extra fees. So let us use it to inform about our activities in the FEM-centers!

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Estonia believes in the power of active networking



Estonia wants to be in the forefront of the efforts to increase women's access to become entrepreneurs. There are currently five regional resource centers running on full-speed throughout Estonia. Furthermore, strengthening the cooperation between the sub-organization of various ministries has been a major achievement – although there are still many challenges ahead.

Active approach key to success

The resource centers have a strong presence in every region they operate – they organize discussions and workshops, training plans and programs. Different activities and trainings are also made affordable and equally available for everyone. Based on the feedback and interests of the local women, the resource centers plan to organize visits to see female entrepreneurs in other parts of Estonia and abroad. If the resources centers keep up the same pace the following year looks bright and busy.

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The fruits of the FEM-project in Ostrobothnia, Finland



The FEM-project has formed an important part of women entrepreneurs' life in South Ostrobothnia, Finland. The localised version of the project has concentrated around the development of women's business skills using group mentoring as a main method.

Overall, the project has turned out to be highly successful and women have gained valuable skills in marketing, international business management and accounting, just to mention few.

The women who participated in the project highlighted that the most valuable part of the whole experiment has been networking with other entrepreneurs and creating valuable business contacts. The participants

all agreed that by acting together and supporting each other it is easier to develop one's own enterprise and create new business opportunities.

The most memorable part has been the meeting with the President of Finland, Tarja Halonen, last January. The meeting gave women a chance to discuss the problems and challenges relating to entrepreneurship.

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FEM Estonia and Norway strengthening network



Nine representatives of different Estonian credit groups met in Oslo this May to exchange best practices on supporting women entrepreneurs and ways of reaching into this highly profitable market.

The main purpose of the visit was to share experiences about Networking Credit. The meeting helped participants to expand their networks, discuss experiences and strengthen the networks between Estonia and Norway. During the visit, the women also had a chance to explore Norwegian culture and meet women living in the rural areas in Akershus.

All of the participants unanimously considered the visit to be a big success. "Although cultural differences might set some differences in the local business practices, women entrepreneurs will always have a lot in common", noted the National coordinator Elin Sabbasen who was in charge of organising the visit.

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Poland hosts FEM-seminar



In April Lebork and Leba towns hosted an international seminar for 130 participants from all the FEM countries. The participants had a chance to get to know the local culture and visit the beautiful Old Town of Gdansk. The seminar provided the participants an unique opportunity to strengthen their international network as well as listen to presentations and participate in different enjoyable workshops.

The highlight of the workshops was an e-marketing training, where the editor and entrepreneur Elisabeth Gullner introduced how to make use of the Internet and develop electronic network and marketing possibilities in small and micro businesses.

The dialogue was vivid and active throughout the seminar and the discussion featured future prospects on female entrepreneurship as well as new behaviour models of the women entrepreneurs. The participants had also a chance to visit the local women entrepreneurs, enjoy the Polish songs and dances as well as experiment the local food specialities.

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