

STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP, HELSINKI

minutes

Time 30.1.2006 10-17 hours
Place Hotel Arthur, Board Room, Vuorikatu 19

Present: Elin Sabbasen, Norway
Joanna Kolesnik
Elsbieta Rekowska-Klassa , Poland
Lisbeth Holmquist-Arbrandt, Sweden
Orinta Minalgaite, Lithuania
Anneli Luisk, Estonia
Baiba Rivza, Latvia
Kaisa-Leena Lintilä
Annamari Asikainen
Sirpa Polo
Leena Heiskala
Laura Perheentupa

1. Latest activities in the countries + strategies of the countries in FEM – Country Lead Partners present their situation

Elin Sabbasen explained that in Norway there has been training of process leaders and group members going on. An evaluation of the groups is taking place. **Evaluation model can be translated into English for the use of others.** There is also going on coach training.

Joanna Kolesnik told about Poland where Resource Centres have been set up and are working. Centres receive mostly unemployed women. They are starting to work with coaching in the Centres. For micro credit financing hasn't been found. Lisbeth Holmquist-Arbrandt explained that in the Resource Centre in Szczecin, there they do actually work with entrepreneurs. Every week there is a chance to meet with a lawyer for the entrepreneurs. Concerning financial situation the co-financing is a challenge for the municipalities told Joanna. The Szczecin Institute is in a better position there. There is need in the Polish Centres to buy computers, and if the Lead Partner accepts this Joanna would need it in writing.

In Sweden a lot has taken place in FEM and around the theme of women entrepreneurship. The Swedish government has just raised it's support for Resource Centres by 50%. Lisbeth Holmquist-Arbrandt is involved in the European Association of Resource Centres WINNET, and the EU Commission supports the theme. In mentoring there are three groups going on. Sweden has applied for a micro credit project, and the application has been approved (4,5 MSEK). They will start with 10 groups for immigrant women. Sweden is really interested in the entrepreneur portal and has applied for money even. For the

portal we need to build criteria for entrepreneurship says Lisbeth. Last week there was a Resource Centre visit from Latvia, Valmiera to Lisbeth's Centre.

Baiba Rivza told that Latvia has opened two new Resource Centres. They have had big seminars in FEM. Four micro credit groups have started, and a bank is involved in the loan process. They have just produced a new publication about FEM in Latvian and English about all the WPs. The publication has been already sent to all regional papers. Latvia has its own FEM web pages and there is information there among other things about advisory networks and entrepreneurs. Baiba also told that they have been to see the country's President. There was representation of all the four regions there and they presented FEM to the President. Next plan is to go to the parliament, Baiba told. Concerning co-financing they would need more of it. Money is a real problem. Baiba realised only during last autumn how the EU-money comes, and that they really have need for much more liquidity in order to be able to operate properly. They cannot take a bank loan because the interest rate is not eligible expenditure from the project. The only thing Latvians can do is to apply for more co-financing it seems.

Orinta Minalgaite from Lithuania also started by saying that money is a problem for Lithuanian partners in FEM. Women's Employment and Information Centre in Kaunas and Lithuanian Women Farmers Association have got some money support, though now, and Women and Business in Lithuania has some money of its own to operate with. The Resource Centres are in lack of money as well. There is an analysis taking place of what are the needs of the women that come to the Centres. The Centres' leaders had a meeting and it was discussed there that money is the biggest issue, especially for the Centres that don't get any support from the municipalities. Orinta said that they don't really know how to solve this problem. In Lithuania the ministries are not financing FEM either. Micro credit is not going forward. Municipalities will not accept to cover interest rates of the loans. Women themselves are really interested in micro credit and would like to have training organised to them by the Norwegians. The idea in Lithuania is to have micro credit function under the umbrella of the Resource Centres. Elin told that there are some companies that provide micro credit in Lithuania and Poland, but she recommended not to start co-operation with them, but rather to start making it themselves in the Centres.

Anneli Luisk told about Estonia. There has been a competition of running of the Resource Centres. In all regions there will be one Centre. The applicants have been existing advisory organisations, which is a good thing. The advisory organisations are now for the first time also co-operating with one another, now that the runners of the Centres are chosen. Estonians have organised together a national seminar. There is also a publication made of entrepreneur stories. Estonians have made study trips to Kainuu, Finland and to Lithuania that have been really good. Training for advisers is organised starting this spring. There are mentoring groups going on. There is an Estonian networking credit programme. New groups are starting.

Leena Heiskala told about what's been happening in Finland. In South-Ostrobothnia there are 2 mentoring groups that have been working already for a year and the work has been rewarding to the entrepreneurs. Kainuu region has two mentoring groups going on. The mentoring groups of the two regions have also met and had a study visit together to Kostamus, to the Russian side of the border between Finland and Russia. Päijät-Häme region has been working with model building in WP 2 and 5. North Carelia has a group of entrepreneurs with the aim of internationalization.

2. Observations about the situations in different countries by Leena Heiskala

Leena emphasised the importance of project application in implementation and reporting. The implemented activities will be looked in relation to Planned results, Result indicators and Outputs. Transnationality is the main issue and the added value in all activities.

We have committed ourselves to move forward according to the application. If at some point this is not the case clear and specific explanations are needed.

There are specified country action plans and strategies in WP-s in the application. In the strategies and action plans the chosen directions and reasons/justifications for activities should be clearly visible. The joint strategies and action plans will be put together on the bases of these country papers.

Keep in mind in reporting

- return to the former milestone: what you have promised there, what are the consequences from the work done there, has something been worked further, completed what was delayed? ...
- look at the country analysis, reports, ... - how they have influenced the implementation?
- look at your reports at former milestones
- keep your feet on the ground; "Rostock" asks more widely and practically thinking of the whole benefit of FEM
- send additional material to Lead.

Leena emphasized the difference of countries and their starting points in FEM. That's why the implementation is different. All the countries have their own strategies, in different wp-s and in the whole country, and it should be visible in their performance. All the countries also have something to bring to other countries, this should be brought to the common forum. It makes an important part of the transnationality.

Leena discussed shortly the situations and challenges in the different countries.

3. What is a strategy and what is the strategy of the FEM? – Kaisa-Leena Lintilä

Kaisa-Leena Lintilä presented and distributed the strategic framework of FEM. Values that we have worked on already in Malmö are equality, trust, respect, women benefiting, personal growth, and to have fun! Our mission in Kaisa-Leena's words is Building female entrepreneurial culture and gender sensitive society. Strategy is Learning by experience, Co-operation and collaboration, Joint responsibility, Influencing and participating in the decision making processes. Goals are exact figures of how many Resource Centres are built, how many participants are in training etc. Vision 2007 is that FEM is the leading provider/network promoting women's entrepreneurship in Baltic Sea Region. Vision 2013 is a well functioning structure for the support of women's entrepreneurship and women's active participation in society.

Decision: We agreed that we want to work on our common strategy still together when we have more time.

4. Possibilities that the Lead Partner budget still has to offer to improve our common work in the FEM – Laura Perheentupa

Laura Perheentupa reminded how when preparing the application we were really working a lot together between countries. Now in the first phase of the implementation phase of FEM all countries have worked quite a lot on their own. Now with the start of this Strategic Working Group there is really a wish that we will work more closely together again, bringing all issues around our common table.

The Lead partner proposes that we enhance increasing of the transnational work between countries in different ways. There is all together about 60 000 euros in Lead Partner budget that can be used for specific operations to still improve our common work.

Themes that are proposed are common trainings for WPs organised by the relevant WP leaders, as well as producing and spreading information about the actions that are taking place in the project. Still meetings and events of WPs are encouraged to take place outside the big international seminars.

Training in WP 1 was discussed. Some of us proposed that trainers would go to different countries. An other proposal was that a common training where all the Resource Centre leaders would meet each other should be in order.

Decision: Types of costs Lead partner can cover in the trainings of WPs are expenses paid to International WP leaders for organising the training, + the costs of trainer including possible travel and accommodation of trainer.

Lisbeth Holmquist-Arbrandt starts to plan the training and makes a proposal to Laura Perheentupa.

Similar discussion took place concerning training organised in WP 4.

Decision: It was decided that countries send their wishes to Elin Sabbasen, and Elin will arrange for training to take place.

Tuuli Paaksi is also organising a training within WP 2 for all countries that will take place in Estonia, and where also entrepreneurs from WPs 3 and 5 can participate.

Laura Perheentupa proposed that countries will produce on 6 months intervals readable short information material about what has been happening in FEM in countries. This will serve the people inside our project as well as to spread information to those outside our project and to decision makers, and those that make financial decisions.

The other proposals in Laura Perheentupa's paper will be discussed later in the coming strategic working group's meetings.

Decision: Laura Perheentupa and Leena Heiskala will produce instructions to countries on when to send this information material for the use of ourselves, press, decision makers etc.

4. Financial issues – Kari Rouvinen FEM international auditor

Kari Rouvinen clarified what is the role of the national auditors and what is his role. Kari specified what it is that he needs from the national auditors within the deadlines. He really underlined that it's time we now live according to the deadlines set by the EU Commission. This will make quicker the time frame with which the money that EU pays always afterwards will come to us. Kari went through the theme of tendering processes, which are strict in the EU. He reminded us of the documentation too. All the documents have to be found at all times.

5. Facts about economical situation by countries – Laura Perheentupa

Laura Perheentupa showed financial prognoses by countries. If countries continue to spend what was spent in the second milestone a lot of the money budgeted to this project will not be used, which is a big shame. Countries told that there is quite a lot more spent now during the third milestone, for example in Lithuania about 33 000 euros, and Estonia about 47 000 euros.

There was a discussion about when we will make our one budget change during the project period. Laura Perheentupa asked the countries to start sending their change request during this spring, and we will take it up already in Norway.

Decision: All countries start to send information about their needed changes to budget between WPs and/or budget lines as soon as possible. Keep in mind that only small changes are normally approved.

Joanna Kolesnik told that Poles would like to make more investments. In order to do it it was decided that Lead partner sends it's approval of this.

Decision: Lead partner send to Poland approval of using more investments within their budget frame.

The financial reports from the auditors in Latvia and Poland will come during the second or third week of February. It was discussed that we will request for Latvian auditor to treat our report more quickly.

6. Seminar in Norway – Elin Sabbasen (Attention: date is now March 20-22.2006)

Elin Sabbasen told that it's possible that Norway organises at the same time a national meeting of networking credit as well. The main theme of the seminar is networking credit. The theme is usefull also to Resource Centre leaders as well as advisers. Elin Sabbasen will send very soon a draft programme to everyone. About 50 persons will participate within FEM.

Decision: Elin Sabbasen sends the first draft of seminar programme shortly to everyone after discussions with the Lead partner.

7. Ending of the meeting

Kaisa-Leena Lintilä thanked everyone for coming and for active participation.

Decision: Next time this group meets we will reserve 1,5 days so that there will be more time for discussions and common working.