

Action and strategy plan for Women´s resource centres (WRC) and the networking between them.

Visions and longterm aims

The primary task and mission of WRC:s is to increase the number of women participating in economic life on a regional and local level. Fundamental for WRC:s is that they should be developed on the basis of local needs and conditions.

According to the European work in progress of integrated guidelines for growth and jobs 2007-2013 , the overall goal of regional development policy shall be , well-functioning and sustainable labour market regions with good service levels in all parts of the EU25. The proposition states that special resources shall be allocated for strengthening women´s situation on the labour market, as entrepreneurs, and to make use of their initiatives and competences in the regional development work for growth and jobs. This will strengthen the degree to which women are able to take part of government resources available for regional and local development. Thereby women shall in the future be able to act in regional development work, under the same terms and conditions as men.

Some WRC are primarily oriented towards developing business ideas and supporting selfemployed women and entrepreneurs, others are oriented towards unemployed women, immigrant women, minority groups (social exclusion), women in technology or other thematic areas of concern in regional and local surroundings.

Historical background of WRC:s in the European Union member states

The creation of the first wrc:s dates back to the late eighties in Sweden. In 1994 the Swedish Parliament decided to give financial support to the regions for the creation of wrc:s. Between 1995 and 1999, 160 local and regional wrc were established in Sweden. The centres spread out widely first of all in Sweden and afterwards in Europe, thanks also to the support of the European Union .

According to the Swedish model , wrc:s were built up in several European countries during the late 1990:ies and 2000. One model were built up in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the former DDR. The conditions in a transition country are rather similar between the countries in economic transition . The model of wrc:s are now established in almost every country in the EU25 . During 2002-2005 an Interreg IIC-project Winnet took place . One of the objectives of Winnet has been to develop the networking of wrc:s in Europe, in order to support the implementation of equal opportunity policies and women´s participation in regional and local development.

The Winnet-project has given the base of a European Association of Resource Centres for women WINNET EU 25. The first meeting took place in Brussels October 2005. The official launching will be during June 2006.

The aims of WRC

- to integrate regional and local development plans with the desire of women to take part in regional and local development
- to create new permanent jobs (and companies) by developing women´s own ideas, concerning production of goods and services
- to increase women´s influence on the labour market and the society
- to participate in opinion making and communicating women´s experiences
- to mobilise the local and regional resources
- to support a more equal distribution of economical resources between women and men.

The function of a WRC

Empowering women means helping them to realise their own strength, power and knowledge, as well as their capability to learn new things. In order to empower women it is essential to be able to point out existing possibilities and established paths, which can be used. It is also of great value to have such knowledge of society, which makes it possible to help women to identify the means (economical or others) for realising their personal development and professional aims.

To be a neutral meeting place for networking groups of women and is available for all women who search active change and development in their work. It is often the first step of getting further in the working life.

To be a centre for information and documentation , an opinion maker in gender equality issues and a tool for the gender equality work in a country.

To be a centre for support and to give advice , counselling and mentorship as to the way of getting on with their projects or business ideas in their countries.

To mediate contacts with women´s networks in business and finance world, in the field of enterprises, authorities, organisations, international contacts, medias etc

General indicators – definition of criteria

A regional and local WRC

- It works accordingly with the purposes defined in statutes of WRC in the BSR
- It is legitimated by the demands of women in the area
- It is open for women and resource centres in its area
- it is a meeting place for work
- it is supported by authorities and organisations in its area
- it takes an independent part in regional or local development
- it has a working plan; annual accounting and evaluation to monitor it based on the legislation in every country
- it has a board or a steering committee
- it is a non-profit organization
- the personal should have competence and skill to act within the areas of concern

What competences, methods and skills do you need in a WRC?

Empowerment strategy involves special interpersonal techniques which are necessary for WRC personal to master. The techniques are based in a basic ethics or respect and equality between all people regardless of education, status, financial, regional or political background and age. One such basic technique focus on the strengths and not the weakness of every single woman.

The empowerment methods at a WRC need special working methods when you support, guide and empower women in a changing situation. The following working methods are used in a WRC:

Networking in different levels: local, regional and transnational context.

The principle of **Empowerment**; the mobilisation of women's own resources shall and must be an important base of the work in a WRC.

The principle of **Management** by demand; the WRC shall be open and a neutral actor

The principle of **flexibility** with customers need in focus; the work ought to develop in a flexible and process oriented way.

To run and to be a **Manager** of a WRC the following skills are needed; the use of the empowerment methods demand a special interest of a process oriented working method, psysiological and pedagogical skills with an integrated gender perspective.

The entrepreneurial wrc:s in the Baltic Sea region according to FEM.

The wrc:s that have been built up in the FEM-project shall follow the criterias that has been defined in the Winnet EU25 – the European Federation of wrc:s.

This Federation will work and lobby for a basic funding of wrc:s to secure the long-term work of local and regional wrc:s and national federations in the EU.

The FEM-wrc:s shall have special knowledge to support women entrepreneurs´and especially new starters.

The FEM-wrc:s shall have access to advicers for female entrepreneurs and the advicers´shall participate in the Baltic Sea Region network .

The FEM-wrc:s shall be the nodes for transnational business contacts in the Baltic Sea region. They shall have special knowledge of criterias for entrepreneurs that want to internationalize their businesses.

The FEM-wrc:s shall be the nodes of networking credit models to help women get financial solution of their businesses.

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