

International Coordination- and networking meeting in Riga

The day 16th in May 2014, delegations from the four groups arrive in the capital of Latvia. The first incoming groups, the French and Germans, are greeted with a welcome drink, followed by playing a game for to know the names each other and then, by a first moment of “self-open” to the others participants, sharing experiences and results of the first months local activities. The Italian group arrives late in the evening and the knowledge moment for them is postponed to the next morning.

17:05:14 Moment for to know each other (with the Italian group): sitting in circle, everyone has pronounced loudly own name associated with a movement (a greeting, a jump, a clap, a bow, etc.). In turn, each repeated and memorized the names and the movements of the others. Other informal game in this morning: each group, using the imagination and reproducing the movement, represent the own country through the figure of an animal that would reflect some quality / characteristic of the country. For the German group a butterfly as symbol of freedom, transformation, development and especially multiculturalism; the French have associated their country to the chameleon, able to camouflage itself by changing its color according to the environment and indicating on this way “change” and “adaptation”; Italians group have played the slow movement of a turtle, as metaphor for the slow legislative development / progress compared to the other countries; The Latvian group has been a horse for its noble attitude, as ability to demonstrate to have the requisites standards (political, economic and legal) for to entry in the 'EU.

After this introduction phase, the author of the project Orsola De Lucia, presented in plenary the project (content, objectives and priorities, expected results at local and international level), answering to the questions of the participants:

- << Why the project choice the theme gender equality? >>
- << Today, more than in the past time, many things have changed in relationship with the theme. We can speak from “progress”, but there is still a long way to go for an effective insurance of equal opportunities and the project "Women, Democracy Europe, aims to answer to the problem of the limited women involvement in the active participation to the civil society, beginning from initiatives like this one >>
- << What's means exchange of “best practices”? >>:
- << Form the debate/exchange on “gender discrimination”, there are certainly common traits and / or differences between the countries involved, it will be possible to identify and collect best examples, maybe reflecting these in the own context of origin (local level), in the field of resolution “strategies” to be adopted as support to problems, concerning the equality of rights between men and women>>
- << Why we have involved in the project men too? >>
- << It is true that the project is aimed particularly at women, disadvantaged compared to the opposite sex on many levels (political, social, cultural, work and skill competences, etc.) but gender equality is an issue that affects all the people >>

At the end, the local leader of the first international meeting, Ginta Salmina, presents the work

program, asking for suggestions for changes and / or improvements of the work calendar. Furthermore, the most of the involved organizations present themselves (objectives, target groups, work philosophies, etc.):

05/18/2014 The morning began with a Riga city tour realized in national groups for to collect first impressions, for a better understanding among the participants and for the presentation of the last organizations.

The presentation of the organizations allow the delegations to become much more details about the work realities of the involved organizations and territories, about their different work areas and target groups: a "space" for to mature reflection and debate, and where latent potentialities can be rationalize and revitalize the best action's strategies.

The second part of the day is dedicated to a discussion about the general and specific objectives of the project Women, Europe and Democracy, summarized as follows:

- Establishment and development of local gender "observatories": for to check the local situation of women in different levels (cultural, social, political, at work, etc.), focusing, according to their own interest, on specific aspects / areas.
- Creation of a Web platform for the exchange of information, best practices, experiences, as well as for the project publicity and result dissemination.
- Creation of newspaper articles: highlight the situation of women, past and present, denouncing inequalities, researching possible solutions.
- Reports (statistics, local events, cultural activities, changes in laws, etc.)
- Collecting a documentation
- Report of the results on Cd-roms

These objectives have been writing on sheets of different colors and affixed to a wall in our work space. Subsequently divided by national groups, there was time to discuss "how" to achieve them, using "which" tools. At the end, report of the following proposals in plenary:

- meetings and interviews with local represents / decision makers
- involve other local associations / organizations
- creating videos, social street events or in other public places
- organize events, presentations and / or public meetings, "salons of debate."
- To stage a flash mob in contemporaneity in the 4 involved countries at 25th November (international day against violence against women)

The afternoon was dedicated to the presentation in power point of local women situations in 4 countries. At the end, each participant write on two different sheet paper, at least three differences and three similarities detected, for to build two different work areas. As results of this moment: the number of women is dominant in social areas like volunteering, work with children and disabled; women salaries are in the most of the cases lower then men; everywhere you feel the existence of stereotypes about women as emotional, illogical, employee, obsessed from the "appearances". On the other side, the man is ambitious, competitive, independent, rational, results-oriented; if we talk about leadership, man is considered far superior; in politics, a small percentage of seats is occupied by women, usually delegated to themes "soft" such welfare or culture.

The day ended in the “intercultural evening”, a dinner with traditional food offered by each national group, and in following traditional music and dancing.

05.19.14 The morning began with a name game followed by a meeting with two volunteers of the Resources Centre for Women "Marta" that supports, as they explained, each year 200-300 women who have victims of home violence, one of the more complex forms of gender crimes. The Center, offers professional assistance and support in crisis situations through social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists, lawyers and other specialists. All were many involved in the presentation, showing great attention to the exposure of volunteers and placing at the end of the same specific questions.

In the afternoon we all went along with it "Niceplace Attic" for the cultural festival "the other side of the Mediterranean in 2014" aimed at promoting co-operation with south and east Mediterranean's area countries, an event to get to know and understand more about the cultures of the region through its various aspects and to discover interesting features. It has witnessed the opening of the "Mobile Euro-Med" related to the mobility in the region just by watching a video documentary about the life in Turkey, the point of view of foreigners, adaptive capacities, difficulties encountered and obvious differences. The event concluded with a conference of the Latvian ambassador in France, talking about the cultures in the Mediterranean countries.

20:05:14 After a linguistic game moment, the national delegations were divided into two groups: on the one hand, the representatives of the organizations for a Skype conference with Bruno Motti (legacy representative of Mosaico association) on the financial aspects of the project, on the other hand, the other participants involved had collect and put together the results achieved during the first months local and international activities. Then, again by national groups, there was time to think about and write down on flip-chart different types of questions that will be used for the interviews, concerning the status of women, reported at the end in plenary by each group as following:.

- What defines a woman? And a man?
- What role assigns the society to women?
- Rights of women with children.
- Why the skills of men are recognized better than women's skills?
- How can we fight against women oppression and at the same time, ask for gender duality roles?
- Have you ever felt discriminated at your workplace?
- Have you ever perceived gender discrimination?
- Why women are used for political manipulation?
- Why there is such a small percentage of women in government?
- There is still solidarity among women?
- How the role of women is changing over the centuries / time?
- What position have the women at work?
- Why in the schools or universities there are more registered men addresses?
- Feminism still exist?

- What are the gender stereotypes?
- Who pays for the restaurant? (Men or Women)
- Why women are more active in the social life, and mothers more than fathers?
- Why there is a tendency that women are often more at home with the baby and the man go out?
- Women are able to manage with success children, home and work?
- What are the differences between men and women?
- How do you feel yourself emotionally at work, at home?
- What is the point of view of men about women?
- What can do a man for to improve the situation?

After this work moment, is presented a video. A documentation on multiculturalism in France, a multiethnic country with a lot of migrants. The challenge of integration, different cultures and religions in a culture and a set of unifying values and shared, those that are the basis of French society, and that cannot be ignored or not accepted by those who have decided to live in this country without an idea about a common society, they could not live with diversity, but it would only have separate lives and “explosive” potentially.

In the afternoon, we was gone all together to the headquarters of the Latvian Association "Trepes". The association explained to the delegation his work consisting mainly in the organization of projects for young people from social risk groups, the promotion of cultural activities for volunteering, by orphanages, prisons, hospitals, etc., in the implementation of training courses for social / youth workers, in cooperation with a network of NGOs. An interesting “full immersion” in the “local, through the eyes and the perceptions of any volunteers with direct experiences about.

By “Trepes”, later, we had the final evaluation of this first international meeting "Women, Europe and Democracy" by filling in an anonymous form, a questionnaire prepared in advance between the association Mosaico and Baltic Regional Fund, processing a unique model to be used during all international meetings planned, giving homogeneity and continuity to the results we will get.

21:05:14 This day was dedicated to the departures of the groups.

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The group dynamics it was very funny and the activities have been developed in an atmosphere of cooperation, with an active involvement and participation of all the participants. We had the possibility to become a really panoramic of the women situations in the involved countries to this project, to exchange experiences and problematic, to compare the different women situations, to give “voice” to all the women, to all the situations that

normally are excluded from the international dialogue. The direct knowledge of the work realities of the organizations partner that working in these fields, has created a new awareness and sensibility for the women condition, stimulating more our civil participation. The activities carried out were an informal and creative approach to the subject and helped to create a climate "solidarity" between the participants.