



In this issue:

Social economy - a way out of poverty for women?

Promoting better work and social enterprise for women - 2nd WEED workshop

City Profile: Santiago Local Support Group - women and enterprise

WEED at URBACT Annual Conference

WEED partner news

URBACT Thematic Pole Meeting, Paris, January 2010

EU news

Social economy - a way out of poverty for women?

Interview with Dorotea Daniele, DIESIS

Dorotea Daniele is the Director of DIESIS. She has been working for the last 15 years in promoting social enterprises at the European level as well as working with national governments in order to support them in fostering social enterprises in their countries. Previously she has been working in Italy for social cooperatives.

Please tell us about DIESIS and your work?

DIESIS is a European support structure for the social economy and cooperatives. We have members all over Europe and our members are organisations that support or represent at various level social economy organisations. DIESIS members have a network of more than 80,000 enterprises all over Europe.



Our activity is mainly at European level such as research on social economy issues and support and creation on networking amongst various social enterprise organisations in different European countries. We also provide technical

assistance for projects' development in the field of social economy, in order to access European and other sources of funding as well as support to project management and evaluation.

We offer flexible training programmes for cooperative and social economy

entrepreneurs, adding a European and international dimension to their activities: how to lobby European institutions, how to access European funding, how to manage transnational projects, etc. We also promote the exchange of good practise between social economy enterprises. *

Is social enterprise an area where you see particular interest from women?

It really depends on the sector of the social enterprise and on the opportunities they provide for women. One sector where there is a great participation of women is in the provision of social services. However, even though women are the main workforce in this sector they often do not occupy any decision making positions or/and are not represented at the managerial level. Our interest and work lies in promoting "quality work" for women and assisting with the creation of enterprises where women can play different roles.

Do you think that social enterprise can provide a means of getting women out of poverty?

Yes, social enterprises are well adapted not only to women but to all people that are at risk of social exclusion and poverty. Social enterprises provide a flexible work environment and are very attentive to the needs of people that are at finding it difficult to get employment in other kind of enterprises or organisations.

Another interesting factor is that many social enterprises provide help and services to women who want to work such as for example child care services. As such social enterprises provide structures which allow women to reconcile their work/professional and family life.

* for more information about DIESIS please visit their website at: <http://www.diesis.coop/>

Promoting better work and social enterprise for women - 2nd WEED workshop



Social cooperative producing wheelchairs

Do you think social enterprises can become part of the cities plan for stimulating economic activity?

As mentioned before, the added value of social enterprises is that on the one hand they provide good opportunities for women wishing to set up their own enterprise and on the other hand many of the social enterprises provide crucial services for women who want to work such as child care facilities. In fact I am going to present a project which deals with the creation of nurseries as a social enterprise at your next WEED workshop in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Municipalities can play an important role in promoting social enterprise in that they can provide funds and/or facilities which will support the creation of social enterprises. Also advisory services provided by the municipality are a good mean to promote social enterprise within the city structure.

The next WEED transnational workshop is being held in Santiago di Compostella from 5-7 May 2010 on the theme of social enterprise for women.

The first Transnational Workshop of WEED in September 2009 focused on micro enterprises and start-up support for women's entrepreneurial activity (see workshop report). Many innovative approaches were considered at the workshop and are informing a variety of planning ideas in partners' cities. Our second workshop, whilst continuing with the horizontal theme of enterprise through a consideration of women and social enterprise, is more concerned with whether supporting enterprise and new forms of work can provide a safeguard against poverty for women and be part of a strategy for recovery for city economies.

This fits well with European Commission aim of promoting inclusive and good quality employment practices within enterprises and enhancing the role of public practices in the process. The central idea is that developing good quality jobs for workers in new enterprises and highlighting the economic and social benefits of innovative investment in SMEs can be done in way that brings together a wide range of stakeholders.

WEED's initial Local Mapping exercise identified a number of ways that partners wanted to take such issues forward in relation to women. Three objectives in particular were identified that stakeholders wanted to take forward. These will form the focus of the workshop and include:

- Expanding the capacity of municipalities and partners to enhance social enterprises as a source of employment, particularly in areas of deprivation, and as a means of stimulating quality employment experiences for paid and self employed women.
- Developing measures to improve career possibilities for women working in the private and NGO sectors, particularly male dominated sectors.
- Developing strategies at city level to help reconcile work and family life.

For more information about the workshop please contact Suzi Kvas at suzi.kvas@siol.com

City Profile: Santiago Local Support Group - Women and Enterprise

Interview with Javier Ferrero, Santiago di Compostela City Council



Javier Ferrero works at the City Council of Santiago de Compostela where he is responsible for the Department of Economic Development and Employment. His department is also coordinating the WEED project Local Support Group.

Santiago de Compostela is the capital of the Galicia region in North-Western Spain. It has a population of close to 93,000 inhabitants. The city's economy depends mostly on the public administration, health, cultural

and tourism sectors. The economically active population has increased over the last ten years and whilst women have been more effectively integrated into the labour market they are predominantly employed in the service sector (73%) and there are high levels of unemployment amongst young women and those above 45. This is partly due to inadequate levels of education and training but also to the persistence of gendered stereotypes and lack of facilities and services allowing family and work-life conciliation.

What are the local actions that your Local Support Group is preparing within the framework of WEED?

Our local action is based on the three subthemes of the WEED project ie improving employability and access to the local labour market, the knowledge economy and entrepreneurial activity.

Our Local Support Group is preparing a base document which will help in the development of the Local Action Plans for each of these three subthemes. The document is still a "work in progress" but includes the following objectives and planned actions.

- To create a mentor net to promote women entrepreneurship, this can generate synergies and support lines for entrepreneurship projects.
- To support innovative entrepreneur ideas aimed at women and that generate employment.
- To support through a subsidy program, entrepreneur initiatives for women in the area of Santiago de Compostela.
- To create subsidies for women employers who contract women employees to work in their companies in Santiago de Compostela.
- To establish measures to promote equality as a social responsibility for companies in Santiago de Compostela.

We are very happy to be hosting the next WEED workshop which will take place here on the 5-7 May 2010 as we believe it will give some good impetus to our work at the local level.

How has your Local Support Group been set up?

When we created our Local Support Group we wanted to ensure representation from a wider range of stakeholders, therefore our Local Support Group includes technicians from the city council such as the Department for Economy and Employment, representatives from the University of Santiago de Compostela, representatives from the autonomous administration as well as representatives from organisations who are working on gender equality issues. Each of these groups will concentrate on their area of expertise in the preparation of the local action plans.

What are the challenges you see for your Local Support Group?

I would say that one of the challenges we are foreseeing will be in the practical implementation of the bottom up approach that we have adopted here in Santiago. That is to say that we would like to discuss our base document - once it has been completed - with our citizens and disseminate our plan to the relevant social entities, stakeholders and the public at large which will allow us to collect their opinions and suggestions for the local plan. The main problem we see with this is mostly on the logistical side not so much on how to do it.

To what extent have you included women into your employment strategy for Santiago?

The situation in Santiago de Compostela is very similar to the

rest of the country in that we have seen an increase in the unemployment rate of women in the local labour market. Having said that the economic crisis of the past two years is especially affecting our male workers, though in general the unemployment rate amongst women remains higher than that of the male population. The sectors where this is most prominent and where women are still having difficulties in accessing the labour market are the sectors related to new technologies, science and research.

As concerns our employment strategy in Santiago we want to avoid that the issue of employment becomes solely a question of gender and ensure that a more universal approach is taken. I think the issue of gender equality should be more situated around the methods and ways of showing the richness and potential of incorporating women in local economic activity and to break away from stereotypical views of traditional gender roles.

In order to enter into this process we need to encourage actors at the local level to apply strategies that would promote gender equality in all the three themes and areas that we are dealing with in the WEED project.

For more information about the Local Support Group please contact:

Fernando Piñeiro: fpineiro@santiagodecompostela.org

WEED at URBACT Annual Conference

Article by Gill Scott, WEED lead expert

The URBACT Annual Conference took place in Stockholm, on Wednesday 25 November 2009, in a fascinating building that was once a car parts factory. The conference was primarily dedicated to the URBACT community: active players in European cities, local, regional and national authorities, Local Support Groups, Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes, universities, experts, etc. Over 300 people attended and the conference provided a lively opportunity to exchange experiences and to learn and confront one another's ideas and policies for a better life in cities. High on the agenda were the actual and potential responses to the economic downturn and environmental uncertainty facing European cities. How do we make sure that responses do not lead us into a repetition of the conditions that led us in to the current economic crisis and the inequalities that accompanied it?

WEED was present in the form of Gill Scott (Lead Expert) acting as Moderator for the session on Human Capital and Entrepreneurship, in Helene Brewer (from the Umea partner of WEED) presentation on gender inclusive entrepreneurship in the same workshop, and in Suzi Kvas' valuable contribution to networking and workshop activities. There was considerable interest in what we are doing in WEED as well as much to learn from the FIN URB ACT and NOSE projects who were also participating in the workshop: much discussion around social economies, integrated approaches and entrepreneurship for 'not for profit' as well as profit ends. The workshop reports on the URBACT website (<http://www.urbact.eu>) give a good idea of the energy that exists in the URBACT community.

The final plenary session, highlighting the importance of stakeholder participation and guided by international experts in community building, provided a myriad of ideas for the other essential dimension of URBACT projects - developing good practices at local level and the incorporation of transnational learning in local plans.

This was the second annual conference I had been to and for a one-day event it was highly stimulating and relevant to the WEED project.



From left to right: Gill Scott, Suzi Kvas, Helene Brewer

Medway:

Members of the Medway Local Support Group together with South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) responded to a Call for proposals to develop a **national Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors**. This was to add to the European Network of Ambassadors of successful entrepreneurs campaigning on the ground to encourage women — including women in active professional life and students — to set up their own businesses and become entrepreneurs.

The call was addressed solely to organisations active in the field of fostering, promoting and/or supporting entrepreneurship, with a view to setting up a Network to bring together successful entrepreneurs across Europe to work locally and nationally to inspire and encourage women to consider becoming an entrepreneur as an attractive career option and follow their lead. The present call for proposals aims to improve the geographical coverage and is therefore designed for countries not yet included in the Network . For details of the call that ended on March 12th http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3917&lang=en

Alzira:

Members of the Alzira Local Support Group were involved in a bid for the EU Leonardo fund in February 2010. The focus was on supporting projects that strengthen the link between educational studies and future skills and employment needs. The objective is to ensure that training and education programmes are better tailored to match the needs of the economy. For details of the fund see http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1864_en.htm

Umea:

Helene Brewer from the Umea Local Support Group was participating in the Beijing + 15-conference at the UN office in New York in March 2010. She was part of an international delegation from United Cities and Local Governments. One of the sessions of interest to WEED partners was on Women's economic empowerment in the context of the global economic and financial crises. We hope to have a report on the Conference in the next newsletter.

For details of the New York event and an interesting paper on the theme see:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/ievents.html>

URBACT Thematic Pole Meeting, Paris, January 2010

by Gill Scott, lead expert, WEED network

Four times a year Lead Experts and Lead Partners meet up to discuss the lessons that can be drawn from the URBACT programme as a whole and discuss how to improve the process of the URBACT programme. Much of the work at the meetings in the early part of the programme focused on administrative issues but lessons are beginning to emerge and the publication of the article by WEED's Lead Expert in the URBACT Tribune shows how valuable the work of the network is judged.

WEED is part of the "Cities, Engines of Growth and Jobs Creation" thematic Pole. The Pole is headed by Paul Soto. WEED, along with URBAN NOSE, Open Cities and FinUrbact are the three networks in the Pole that are particularly focused on how cities can improve human capital and promote entrepreneurship. The regular contact between Lead Experts and Lead Partners is a valuable way to share worries and ideas for the URBACT Local Action Planning process as well as producing some valuable insights into how to avoid the enormous economic waste that occurs when certain groups are not included in economic activities of a city.

The synergy that can occur when cross network discussions was also evident when Gill Scott, Lead Expert, and Helene Brewer from Umea contributed to the annual URBACT conference in November alongside speakers from URBANNOSE and FinURBACT. The January meeting focused on the lessons that the three networks, plus the new ROMANET network could hope to produce in 2010.

The focus of our May workshop was seen as a valuable one in this European Year of Combating Poverty and the transferability of lessons about supporting the growth of social enterprise from URBAN NOSE could be useful to WEED. Lead Experts will be expected to produce material for the URBACT website on these issues for later in the year.

Each lead expert is also expected to work with partners in their network to produce two case studies: an analytical and a process case study. The first of these will focus on some aspect of practice that a city partner has developed to address one of our sub themes: enterprise, better employment, knowledge economy. The second will focus on the changes brought about in cities by Local Support Groups and Local Action Plans. I would be delighted to hear if any of the WEED partners would like to work with me to develop one of the case studies.

EU news

Putting in place jobs which last: a guide to re-building sustainable employment at the local level

In the coming years, a new partnership between the public and private sectors is necessary to develop better quality jobs with possibilities for progression and greater accessibility for all. The guide reviews the most recent policy tools being trialled in OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) to contribute to this objective, illustrating the key messages with a variety of different case studies.

Addressed to both local practitioners and national policymakers, the guide reviews current responses to the economic downturn and the steep rise in unemployment in OECD and non-OECD countries, before identifying key principles for returning our communities to more sustainable growth for the future. More info:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/63/44580546.pdf>

See also

http://www.oecd.org/document/24/0,3343,en_2649_34417_43973976_1_1_1_1,00.html

Eurfond publishes a report on gender pay gap in Europe

In the last five years, the pay gap between men and women has narrowed in a great number of EU Mem-

ber States, but the unadjusted gender pay gap remains high at 17.6% (Eurostat 2007) for the EU as a whole. Eurfond publishes a comparative analytical report, which provides an overview of national studies of gender pay gap, examines policies and actions of governments and social actors to fight pay discrimination and identifies good practices to prevent and tackle the issue.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=727&furtherNews=yes>

Transversal Analysis on the Evolution of Skills Needs in 19 Economic Sectors

The European Commission has carried out in depth studies of the 19 economic sectors in Europe, accounting for two thirds of European employment. The sector study reveals the increasing polarization of the demand for skills and competencies. At the one hand, the strive of European production to pursue an excellence strategy, in order to sustain competitiveness in an increasingly competitive world, drives a strong demand for high skilled professionals. At the other hand, the growth of service industries drives a steady demand for both high skilled and low skilled workers.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=727&furtherNews=yes>

EU to provide 45,000 micro-loans to unemployed and small entrepreneurs

EU Employment and Social Affairs Ministers have agreed on March 8, 2010 a new facility to provide loans to people who have lost their jobs and want to start or further develop their own small busi-

ness. The European Microfinance Facility will have a starting budget of €100 million, which could leverage more than €500 million in cooperation with international financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group.

Read <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=730&furtherNews=yes>

Equal Pay Day, Germany 26 March 2010

To mark the third Equal Pay Day in Germany activities will be organised in towns and cities throughout the country, including press conferences to provide information on the gender pay gap to journalists, lectures, workshops and conferences to explore the issue, and demonstrations to raise public awareness of the pay gap and its impact on women's lives.

Read <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=241&furtherEvents=yes>

International Women's Day

Each year around the world, International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on 8 March. This year's theme was on Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all. On this occasion Eurofound presented a recent publications on women at work, gender and equality issues. For more info:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/gender/internationalwomensday2010.htm>

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