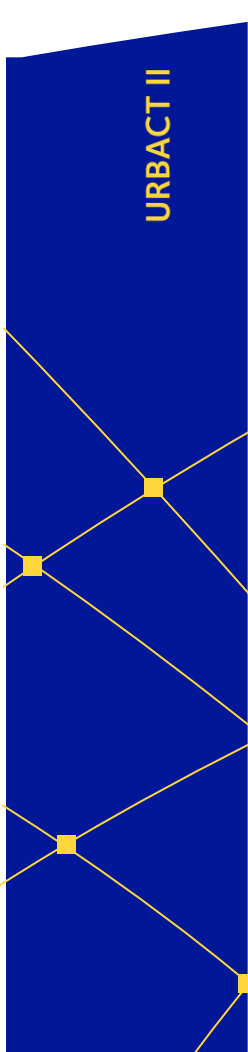




# WEED- Final Outputs – Fact Sheet

May 2011



Connecting cities  
Building successes



## 1. SHORT DESCRIPTION IN A NUTSHELL

Developing local level strategies to improve women's role and reduce gender segregation in employment, business creation and the knowledge economy.

## 2. WEED- Women, enterprise and employment in local development

*Project launch: April 2008*

*End of the project: July 2011*

## 3. PARTNERS

*City of Celje – city of Savinjska region, SLOVENIA*

*City of Alzira- city of Valenziana region, SPAIN*

*City of Amiens- city of Picardie region, FRANCE*

*City of Crotone- city of Calabria region, ITALY*

*City of Enna- city of Sicily, ITALY*

*City of Karvina- city of Karvina District, Moravia-Silesia Region, CZECH REPUBLIC*

*City of Santiago de Compostela- city of Galicia region, SPAIN*

*City of Umea – city of Övre Norrland region- SWEDEN*

## 4. WHAT WERE THE CONCRETE CHALLENGES ADDRESSED BY THE PROJECT?

*At a time when women across Europe are more directly exposed to the impact of economic change than ever before addressing gender inequalities remains key to social justice and economic growth. Gender equality is seen as a fundamental value of the European Union but also as vital to the EU objectives of growth, employment and social inclusion. The Europe 2020 strategy includes a target of 75% employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 and the European Commission's Strategy for Equality between men and women 2010-2015 aims to "use the potential and the talent pool of women more extensively and efficiently, so that economic and business benefits can be gained". The Bank of Italy estimates that if female employment rose to 60 percent gross domestic product in Italy would rise 7 percent; The International Trade Centre concluded in 2010 that women's entrepreneurial abilities could play a major role in leading the way towards revitalisation of national economies and world trade.*

*Ensuring women's talents and skills are actually used and that they can share in any benefits of growth, however, is not automatic. Women's employment rate remains lower than men's in Europe, their pay rate is less than men's and their participation in enterprise and the knowledge economy is lower than expected. It is clear that women encounter various and numerous obstacles in the job market, in innovation and in the business creation field. The position, moreover, varies between different countries, regions and cities. France, for example, has a very low rate for female entrepreneurial activity in comparison to Spain. Some cities are more inclusive than others.*

*Without a clear and multi level strategy on gender equality in relation to jobs and growth the capacity for all to benefit from women's economic activity will not be expanded. There are numerous ways that governments can encourage local economies to be more gender equal but commitment from local stakeholders and innovative ways of thinking about how to increase women's involvement in enterprise creation and growth and how to develop quality sustainable jobs for women are as essential as national policies. It is at this local level of policy that WEED works. Despite increased understanding of what is needed to encourage and support women into employment and enterprise, municipal involvement remains if not a fairly new then a seldom-sustained approach, even though it is an important area for progress. WEED focuses on exploring concrete local actions that can improve the position of women in employment, entrepreneurship, and the knowledge economy. The aim was to improve the co-ordination between planning and policy making activities in order to achieve more gender balanced economic development.*

*Alzira, Santiago de Compostela and Umea were all cities with equalities strategies well established, in place and supported regionally and nationally when the WEED project began. Problems remain, however, in the under representation of women in business, the lack of gender awareness amongst employment and*

entrepreneurial support agencies and an underutilisation of new technologies by women in their economic activity. The challenge for these cities was how to make future plans more concrete and more focused on economic and entrepreneurial growth at a time of economic crisis : a time where the danger of reducing local political will towards equality issues is real. Developing specific actions that enhanced existing plans and improved local partnership working for gender free economic development was a key focus in these cities.

In Amiens the city authority had only recently set up an Equalities Department and the challenge addressed by the LSG was how to make sure the newly established commitment of the Municipality to reducing gender inequality could be realised through concrete actions. The main focus was on how to reduce the difficulties encountered by women while creating their company or looking for a job. Women's unemployment is more pronounced than men's even amongst those with the same qualifications and female entrepreneurs are few and far between. The two key issues addressed by the LSG were how to improve partnerships between the municipality, NGOs and the private sector in order to make services to support new entrepreneurs less gender specific and develop actions that would reduce the limitations of current childcare on employment.

In Crotone and Enna the city authorities worked with stakeholders to address two key problems – attitudes that effectively exclude women from the world of high quality employment and enterprise and a lack of institutions and actions that effectively support women into enterprise. Their desire was to change attitudes towards women's involvement in enterprise and work and integrate business support more effectively for men and women wanting to start their own businesses.

In Celje a more specific challenge identified by the LSG was how to fill the gap between the care needs of families and the elderly and a reduced public sector capacity to meet those needs, at the same time as enhancing women's power in the local economy. Care for the elderly has become increasingly privatised locally but there has been no strong tradition of women move into the private sector as employers and care work has traditionally been seen as relatively unskilled. Finding ways to create good quality conditions to integrate women into entrepreneurship and improve training for the sector was the main priority.

## 5. WHAT CONCRETE CONCLUSIONS DID YOUR PROJECT ACHIEVE? WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU PUT FORWARD?

The overall goal of WEED was to assist partner cities to improve practice in relation to women, employment, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy. The aim was to develop multi-stakeholder Local Action Plans and within these identify good practice project proposals for possible funding from ERDF, ESF or other EU or National sources of funding. There was a significant diversity amongst partners; some were quite experienced in addressing gender equality issues in relation to economic development, some were experienced in European learning exchange programmes. In sharing and exploring examples of effective actions and local action planning at local and transnational level ideas were generated for development into possible solutions to the barriers facing women in employment, enterprise and innovation.

In terms of effective actions the key conclusions made were: -

Municipalities can increase women's involvement in entrepreneurship by: -

- 1 developing measures in schools for early intervention to break ingrained attitudes regarding careers for boys and girls, and male and female roles;
- 2 making micro-finance more accessible for women;
- 3 developing more integrated and innovative support for new businesses and business growth.

Quality employment for women at local level can be achieved: -

- 1 if employers provide more family friendly employment practices;
- 2 if flexible training initiatives open up new and less gendered career pathways;
- 3 if social enterprise is encouraged as a way to open up new areas of growth.

Gender inequalities in the knowledge economy can be addressed: -

- 1 through better focused and interesting training including outreach work from knowledge hubs;
- 2 by making the environment more women and family friendly;
- 3 through effective area based partnerships between municipalities and universities.

WEED's activities also focused on improving local planning processes. Key conclusions here were: -  
Partnership at local level brings focus and trust when it: -



- 1 develops a dialogue between stakeholders at local level, particularly as exploring possible solutions allows a stronger understanding of how agencies and organizations fit together.
- 2 reduces competition between agencies and opens up possibilities of engaging with new stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of policy change.
- 3 focuses on the development of a local action plan: it contributes to existing approaches because it is very specifically focused on the topic and encourages a joint strategic agenda for all local partners.

Transnational work can play an important role in giving those involved a chance to exchange ideas and learn from each other when it involves: -

- 1 Study visits, online presentations, newsletters with information about partner activities and funding opportunities; they all help to inspire partners to see their own work from another perspective
- 2 Exploring a range of participant and other experiences as it reduces the fear of new and innovative ways of doing things.

## 6. WHAT WAS THE ADDED VALUE OF BEING INVOLVED IN AN URBACT PROJECT FOR YOUR PARTNERS?

*WEED is about promoting a more gender balanced economic environment in order to draw on the positive potential of women in local economies. The project has done this by developing new insights into women and men's route in entrepreneurship and employment; developing and disseminating good practice in reducing gender specific segregation; and developing Local Action Plans to sustain positive action for gender equality in local economies in the future*

*Three themes were explored during the project:*

- how to improve women's position in the labour market,
- how to promote and support women in entrepreneurial activities,
- how to promote and support women in science, research and the use of new technology.

### **What worked**

*Each partner city had their own priorities concerning the project themes. The consensus building meetings of the Development phase of the WEED project meant that from an early stage partners shared where they were strong, what lessons they could share with other cities and where they wanted to concentrate their efforts to achieve further progress. Working together with the lead expert this resulted in the creation of a strong knowledge exchange network where experiences, problems and potentialities could be discussed and drawn on. The subsequent Case Study Compendiums that were produced for each of the sub themes drew on good practice from partners, other agencies in Europe and North America. They have left a resource that is of lasting use to all partners and the wider URBACT community.*

*Involvement in joint planning of the transnational workshops and in planning and delivering on-line events driven by partner interests evidenced willingness on the part of a number of partners not only to commit time and resources to the project but also to create effective synergies between local and transnational activities. For example a video that was created by the **EntreprenörCentrum** in Vasterbotten, a member of the Umea LSG for a WEED on-line session on inclusive enterprise creation is being used across Sweden to promote the type of actions they found work successfully.*

*The focus on local issues was viewed very positively by a number of Mayors in the partner cities.*

*Feedback from Mayors in the cities shows a positive evaluation of the experience.*

*The Mayor of Celje at the beginning of the project reported that,*

*"I am sure that the challenges we face in Celje are similar to the ones faced by many other cities and local authorities in Europe. Through participation in this network we can share and learn from each other's experiences and develop solutions that can be adapted to our local context."*

*The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Karvina highlight an increase in partnership between cities within a region:*

*"By means of the project WEED we managed to establish a partnership not only with the project partner towns but also with other towns in the Czech Republic. I can say that our participation in the project was very positive for the town."*

### **What didn't work**

A significant challenge for partners was how to promote local implementation of good practice at a time of economic crisis and political uncertainty. In a 2009 survey of their experiences and responses to the economic crisis partners reported that large numbers of jobs are being lost in all cities and the most vulnerable workers, including large numbers of women, were the most likely to be affected. In Celje, Slovenia, for example, a worsening of conditions was reported for those working on a minimum wage, the majority of whom are women and in Amiens, France a marked increase in claims for food aid from families showed how women were bearing the brunt of managing the impact of the crisis. The focus of the LSGs in relation to women and employment shifted considerably with this crisis. Initially there was considerable interest in developing strategies to increase women's involvement in the higher levels of the knowledge economy. Since the economic downturn in Europe a greater interest in focusing on ameliorating the impact of the crisis on jobs and the quality of jobs emerged. This can be valuable for women as they tend to be the most vulnerable in the labour market but less fortunately a reduction in political support for measures promoting gender equality in the economy was reported by a number of partner cities.

The economic context also proved to be a factor in the time and resources that partners were able to commit to bi lateral visits. These had been planned as a way of bringing smaller groups together to look at issues that two or three partners wanted to concentrate on for their local action plan. Unfortunately they were difficult to achieve when time became squeezed.

## **7. WHAT ARE THE CONCRETE SOLUTIONS DEVELOPED BY PROJECT PARTNERS?**

Local Action Plans are an important dimension to the URBACT program. They are intended to improve the impact of transnational exchange and learning on local policies, and give a concrete form to the outputs from networking activities carried out by each partner. All the cities involved in WEED had active Local Support Groups involved in developing such Local Action Plans. Their content shows the varied context and issues faced in different cities. Some are prioritizing actions to help women start up and develop enterprises, others to reduce gender segregation across the world of work and business. Whatever their approach partners feel that the chance to bring together stakeholders at local level, to learn from models being adopted in cities across Europe as well as the opportunity to take time to plan actions has been a valuable dimension of the URBACT programme. Three noteworthy examples are the plans of Umea, Santiago de Compostela and Celje. Umea is interesting because it shows how a multi year, multi action strategy can be developed when local partners get together. Santiago de Compostela holds interest because of its commitment to use women's capacity for economic growth and urban regeneration. Celje is interesting as it shows how the identification of service gaps alongside a focus on women, employment and enterprise can produce effective plans that attract significant funds.

**Umea, Sweden.** The Local Support Group in Umea produced a joint action plan for the Vasterbotten region. It focuses on equal opportunity in the workplace and the labour market. The main focus of the action plan is gender-specific segregation. It identifies the importance of reducing gender segregation for the region, for employers, for employees, for entrepreneurs and for a fair division of resources, power and influence. The action plan is signed by the Mayor of Umea, the County Governor of Vasterbotten, the Director of Swedish Public Employment Services, the Director of Leia Accelerator and the Director of ALMI (the lead partner and initiator of several programmes which assist in the starting up and development of new businesses) w. This commits all signatories to work together to implement the activities drawn up in the plan based on our specific and shared experiences and perspectives. The action plan is a multi-year strategy for the region's continued work toward reducing gender segregation of the labour market in Västerbotten. It includes ten areas of action including measures to increase mobility between female and male dominated sectors in the labour market (which has attracted funding from the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) and also incorporates actions to draw attention to women's entrepreneurship and the male norm in the business world.

**Santiago de Compostela.** The LSG in the city comprised the Municipality of Santiago, University of Santiago, Syndicates, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of Industrial Area of the Tambre, Federation of rural associations, Psychology Official College.

Two strategic priorities were selected by the LSG: promoting the full participation of women in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life; and increasing women's participation in the economy of knowledge and innovation. The range of actions proposed in the LAP and adopted by the Mayor and members of the LSG to achieve these include an increase in positive actions that promote women's access to quality employment (e.g. lobbying to create awareness of the general and specific rights of working women bearing on the fight against work precariousness), a range of labour activation policies to favour women's insertion in the job market and strengthen equality of opportunities in a working environment, measures for gender training in collaboration with trade unions, to foment a balanced presence in Collective Negotiation tables, and the provision of technical and economic support to women, women's associations and enterprises to favour access and use of new technologies.

### **Celje, Slovenia**

The Local Support Group in Celje comprised members from the local Social Services, Employment Department, Chamber of Commerce and NGOs. The local action plan they have developed focuses on greater gender equality in employment and entrepreneurship as well as the improvement of the quality of life of families living at a time of demographic and economic change. The Local Action Plan aims to meet a gap between the needs of families and public sector capacity to meet their needs: a gap that has been growing with the economic crisis and with wide ranging changes in traditional family structures. Based on an initial analysis of families, unemployed women in the city and local social service, training and employability resources the LSG worked on a project proposal for a Centre for Information, Consultancy and Education. The plan consisted of an analysis of the quality and quantity of existing services, a clear outline for the establishment of a new educational programme for workers to support the elderly and families in crisis. The programme was to recruit and train unemployed women alongside the establishment of a register of available workers who had completed the training but also includes a programme of training for those who wish to be self employed in the sector. By the time the WEED project was finishing funding of 300.000EURo had been attracted from European Social Fund.

Other action plans and actions developed during the WEED project focused on a range of objectives. They include

#### **Objective 1: To reduce barriers to women's entrepreneurship (Alzira, Enna, Crotone, Santiago de Compostela)**

Extend mentor support for women entrepreneurs (Alzira has attracted Leonardo funding to support new entrepreneurs activity)

Increase interest in entrepreneurship from school age to older age (Santiago de Compostela's Enterprise and Economic Development Departments have worked together to develop this in the Fomenta de la Cultura Emprendora project)

Micro finance initiatives to encourage social enterprise in the knowledge economy ( Enna has attracted EU funding for a small project to take this forward)

#### **Objective 2: To address the inequalities in the nature and quality of work available for men and women (Umea, Karvina, Amiens, Celje)**

Training initiatives to open up new less gendered pathways (Umea has attracted regional funding for this)

Increase women's take up of employment training (Partnership between CIDFF and municipality in Amiens developed this during the WEED project)

Projects that change attitudes amongst employers towards more family friendly employment practices (Alzira developed the Born Equal Make Equal campaign, Karvina is developing a funding application for this)

#### **Objective 3: To reduce the underutilization of women's knowledge and skills in innovation and the knowledge economy (Santiago de Compostela, Enna)**

Change attitudes to science and IT amongst the young (Celje LSG was involved in developing a Fair to progress this amongst young people during the WEED project; Alzira currently extending a SERVEF funded project through CHANTIER programme)

Joint university/ municipality initiative to increase uptake of enterprise route by women in knowledge economy (Women Emprede works with city authority in Santiago de Compostela – with considerable support from University and local banks)

*Extension of training opportunities in new employment sectors (care) (Celje has developed and gained EU funding for a care training programme, Enna has submitted a funding application to take this forward)*

*Details of Local Action Plans are available in the final report and WEED brochure.*

## 8. AVAILABLE OUTPUTS

### Local Action Plans and details of the project

Available at <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/weed/homepage/>

**Project Brochure** (May 2011) This includes a range of materials, gives details of the cities involved and a summary of their local action plans. Paper version in all partner languages. USB key also included with all project outputs.

**Final Report on CD Rom** (June 2011)

**Newsletters 1-8** (May 2009-June 2011)

Available at <http://urbact.eu/en/header-main/documents-and-resources/documents/?project=198>

### WEED Baseline Report

Available at <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/weed/our-outputs/>

### Sub Theme Reports and Case Study Compendiums

- 1 Female Entrepreneurship in an Economic Downturn, Gill Scott, WEED LE, September 2009
- 2 Female Entrepreneurship in an Economic Downturn, Case Study Compendium, September 2009
- 3 Promoting better work and social enterprise for women, Gill Scott, WEED LE June 2010
- 4 Promoting better work and social enterprise for women, Case Study Compendium, June 2010
- 5 Women, Innovation and the Knowledge Economy, Gill Scott, WEED LE, February
- 6 Women, Innovation and the Knowledge Economy, Case study Compendium, February 2011

All available at <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/weed/our-outputs/>

### Expert reports

- 1 Gender Pay Gap and Occupational Segregation, implications for local economic development and planning, Angela O Hagan, Glasgow Caledonian University, June 2010
- 2 Case Studies in Gender Analysis for Economic Development, Angela O Hagan, June 2010
- 3 Women and Social Enterprise, Dorotea Daniele, DIESIS, June 2010

Available at <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/weed/our-outputs/>

### Articles

- 1 Female entrepreneurship: developing an urban agenda for female entrepreneurship, Professor Gill Scott, WEED LE

Available at [urbact.eu/fileadmin/general\\_library/article-SCOTT1.pdf](http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/general_library/article-SCOTT1.pdf)

- 2 [Empowering women in the Labour Market](#), report, Professor Gill Scott, WEED LE

Available at [urbact.eu/fileadmin/general\\_library/Empowering\\_women2\\_2\\_.pdf](http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/general_library/Empowering_women2_2_.pdf)

- 3 Steps towards inclusive growth, Professor Gill Scott, WEED LE

Available at [urbact.eu/fileadmin/general\\_library/Inclusive\\_Growth\\_-\\_GS\\_3\\_.pdf](http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/general_library/Inclusive_Growth_-_GS_3_.pdf)

Also available in URBACT Tribune 'Can European cities grow smaller, sustainable and inclusive?'

## URBACT II

**URBACT** is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 255 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

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