



SME WOMEN & START-UP QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - March 2007

1. FOREWORD

Etelka Barsi-Pataky MEP, Co-Chair of SME Women & Start-up



I am delighted to present all our partners the first issue of the SME Women Newsletter. It is a pleasure to start this new initiative to improve the communication of our Working Group. I am confident that this project will strongly contribute to create a wider publicity for our varied activities.

Our aim in the SME Women Working Group is to work actively in order to promote female entrepreneurship in Europe, since women's entrepreneurial potential is not fully exploited. Far from being a matter of mere political correctness, the advancement of women in the field of entrepreneurship is an important strategic issue. Countries that do not capitalize on the full potential of one half of their societies are misallocating their human resources and undermining their competitive potential.

Our society in Europe needs more enterprises. We also need more growing enterprises. And we definitely need more women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is about expressing one's creativity, about putting in place ideas and ambitions or releasing untapped potential. Women especially know this very well. Women, in general, create smaller but relatively more viable enterprises.

Our work is concentrating in promoting the creation of a positive business environment for entrepreneurship across the European Union and in all aspects of entrepreneurship. In 2006/2007 one of the most important purpose of the SME Women Working Group is to establish in all EU Member States an SME Women contact person who could help to build up an own network. The task is for these contact persons to mobilize as much female entrepreneurs as possible in each Member States, whose value and aims are close to the EPP-ED.

The SME Women network will be at the forefront of the decision making process in women entrepreneurship, small family businesses and start-up issues on European level. We also would like to influence the legislation on the regional, national and European level to make economic environment more women entrepreneurship and family business friendly. In conclusion: there are many things to do. Let us move ahead together.

2. GERMAN PRESIDENCY

The first half of 2007 under German Presidency was announced as the „European Year of Equal Opportunities for All“. According to Ursula von der

Leyen, Federal German Minister for Family Affairs, one of the most important groups of concern are the young women. The aims are to increase the number of women in leadership positions, to eradicate the difference in salaries between men and women and to create the possibilities or easier reconciliation of work and family life.

Further information:

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/January/0130BMFSFJChancengleichheit.html

Minister von der Leyen on „Europe should be kinder to its children”

Ursula von der Leyen, German Minister for Family Affairs and Carina Christensen, Danish Minister for Family and Consumer Affairs published an article in European Voice, in March 2007. The article mentions the necessity of governments to face the demographic problems of Germany and other European countries. Additionally it presents also the German plan on the issue to establish an European Alliance for Families which shall be a tool for transferring ideas and experiences.

Read the full article: European Voice, Vol. 13 No; 9-8 March 2007

Minister von der Leyen insists on plans to support families

Nevertheless of strong opposition, German Minister for Family Affairs Ursula von der Leyen has defended the Cabinet's decision to write off taxes for child-care costs. She emphasized that this initiative would improve every family's living conditions. Previously it was regulated that child-care costs (for children up to six years up above 1548 Euros) can be deducted from a person's taxable income. Currently von der Leyen tries to write-off child-care costs from 1000 Euros on.

Further information: <http://www.germnews.de/archive/dn/2006/01/11.html>

3. LATEST EVENTS

2006-12-04 SME Women Networking Lunch



The SME Women & Start-up organized a Working Lunch on "Women Entrepreneurship: The Role of Business Networks" on the 4th of December 2006 in the European Parliament.

The moderator Etelka Barsi-Pataky, MEP and President of SME Women & Start-up gave a warm welcome to the speakers of the event including Marie-Christine Oghly, President of World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM) and President of SME Women France, Maria Cappone, Observer in the European Parliament and Member of the Bulgarian Parliament, Piia-Noora Kauppi, MEP and Vice-President of SME UNION, Marianne Thyssen MEP and the founding president of SME UNION of the EPP-ED. The discussion was closed by Ildikó Voller-Szenci, Director of SME Women & Start-up who coordinates in the future the work of SME Women.

The participants discussed the challenges women entrepreneurs are facing in different Member States and the importance of a good-working women network all over Europe.

2007-02-27 Public Hearing on Conciliation of family life and a period of studies for young women in the European Union

On 27 February 2007 – on the initiative by Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou MEP from the EPP-ED Group - a public hearing on “Conciliation of family life and a period of studies for young women” took place within the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament. The participants of the public hearing discussed the dilemma of young women to reconcile work and family life. Among the issues discussed was sharing responsibility for caring, raising female participation in the labour market, the need to make the EU more competitive through the Lisbon strategy. Further the experts issued the phenomenon that highly educated women tend to have fewer children at the later stage of their lifetime as simultaneous studying and bringing up children causes a lot of difficulties.

Further information:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings/20070227/femm/programme_en.pdf

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4. SERVICE & INFO

2007: Year of Equal Opportunity for All

Homepage European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/eyeq/index.cfm?cat_id=SPLASH

International Women’s Day

On the 8 March 2007 the International Women’s Day was celebrated in the European Union in the framework of this year’s topic of Equal Opportunity. It is worth to mention that equal rights for women were already written down in the Rome Treaty in 1957. Especially the European Parliament is – since a long time – a guarantor for the equality between women and men, inaugurating the Women’s Rights Committee in 1984. This committee evaluates the different legislative actions on how they affect the rights of women and also expresses its opinion on legislative proposals in the fields of health, industry and internal market. The Chairwomen of the Committee is Anna Záborská from the EPP-ED Group which is supported also by Livia Járóka, Piia-Noora Kauppi, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou and Amalia Sartori also from EPP-ED.

Further information:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/comparl/femm/womensday/2007/default_en.htm

Speech of Commissioner Vladimir Spidla on the European Year of Equal Opportunities: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/speeches/2007/vs_070308_en.pdf

Presentation of the 2007 Report on equality between women and men

At the Spring European Council the report on equality between women and men was presented to the EU leaders. The report points out, that actually three out of four new jobs created in the EU are being taken by women. However, women are still being employed less and as well as paid less (on average -15%) than men despite their higher educational achievements. Women also face greater difficulties in reaching important decision-making positions and have a high recourse to part-time work compared to men. The report highlights various obstacles to a better work-life balance like: child care, financial contribution, career setbacks, and the problems of returning back to the working life. Alongside with the report, the Commission presented also two other reports on gender pay gap and on the disadvantages for women and the gender dimension of poverty and social exclusion.

Report on equality between women and men:

<http://www.eukn.org/binaries/eukn/news/2007/3/2007-annual-report-gender-equality.pdf>

Report: Gender pay gap – origins and policy responses:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2006/ke7606200_en.pdf

Gender inequalities in the risks of poverty and social exclusion for disadvantaged groups in thirty European countries:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2006/ke7606201_en.pdf

Women's career and ICT: potential contribution to EU growth

The proportion of women which graduated in ICT (information and communications technology) in Europe is decreasing. In the framework of the International Women's Day, Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media emphasized that 'getting more women into ICT careers would be a force for change and major boost for this key economic sector in Europe. With Europe facing a skills shortage in this sector, we must encourage more women to study ICT subjects [...]'. The proportion of women graduating in ICT fell from 25% in 1998 to 22% in 2006. Therefore the Commission is trying to stimulate the interest among young women to begin studies relating to ICT. Actually the ICT sector is EU's most innovative and research-intensive sector and contributes 4% of EU's jobs and 5.3% of GDP.

Further information: <http://ec.europa.eu/itgirls>

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: New Report on Women and Entrepreneurship 2006

Women account for more than 1/3 of all the persons involved in entrepreneurial activities around the world, contributing to the international entrepreneurial spirit. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor published a comprehensive report of the role played by women. The report provides an overall assessment of women's business activities in 35 countries and analyses the key characteristics of female entrepreneurial activities. One part is also dedicated to the differences in female approach of doing business in comparison to their male counterparts.

2006 Report on Women and Entrepreneurship:

<http://www.gemconsortium.org/download/1175241865640/GEMWomens2006V3.pdf>

European Union Women Inventor and Innovators Network (EUWIIN) will award exceptional inventors and innovators

The European Union Women Inventors and Innovators Network (EUWIIN) want to award female inventors and innovators within the European Union. EUWIIN is a new organisation born out of the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network and aims to derive greater economic and social benefit from women's talents in inventing and innovation. A further intention of EUWIIN is to stimulate the European institutions for greater harmonisation in intellectual property right and to assist the EU to reach the employment, innovation and competitiveness goals set out by the Lisbon Agenda. Nominations are open until the 19th of April.

Further information: <http://www.euwiin.eu/>

ILO Report on global employment trends for Women

According to a new report by the ILO (International Labour Office), the gap in work life between men and women relating to job security, wages and education is contributing to the 'feminisation of working poverty'. Although the number of women participating in labour markets is at its highest point, the report points out that more women than ever are unemployed or in lowest-paying jobs in the agriculture and service sector. Particularly in these sectors women obtain insufficient legal protection, little social protection and a high degree of insecurity.

Report: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/download/getw07.pdf>

“ON BOARD” – New project of EUROCHAMBRES Women Network (by Birgit Arens)

Launched in 2003, EUROCHAMBRES Women Network (EWN) has been actively addressing – for the last 4 years – the concerns and problems of women in the economic environment. The network's first project – Women in Business and in Decision-Making – identified obstacles that women entrepreneurs faced in the start-up phase of their company as well as in its daily running, and it highlighted good Chamber practices in the field of female entrepreneurship promotion. The second project – CH.A.S.E. – Chambers Against Stereotypes in Employment – tackled the question of stereotypes in the working environment, from an entrepreneur as well as from an employee perspective. And, as there's always a third time, EWN pursues its activities in favour of a more women-friendly business environment with the new project “On Board – Women on Board of local development”. The project addresses in parallel three main areas of concern:

1. Women in economic decision-making: the first working group looks into the situation of **Women on Chamber boards**. It is to analyse the reasons for the under-representation of women on Chamber boards and to develop guidelines for increasing the female participation.
2. The reconciliation of work and family life is being dealt with by the second working group: **Linking local actors**. In this working group, the project partners will establish links between Chambers and other stakeholders that should lead to a better understanding and handling of the reconciliation question.

3. **Access to finance** for female start up entrepreneurs. The objective of the third working group is to improve the business environment for female entrepreneurs-to-be by making better Chamber services in the field of access to finance available at local level.

Further information:

http://www.eurochambres.eu/PDF/pdf_press_2007/02-EWNONBoard11Jan07.pdf

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The Cost of Childcare in EU Countries - a study managed by the Policy Department for Economic and Scientific Policy

A detailed study concerning "The Cost of Childcare in EU Countries" was managed by the Policy Department for Economic and Scientific Policy at the request of the European Parliament. The main intention of the study is to provide a description of policies concerning children aged between 0 and 6 in 25 Member States. The study comprises two parts: analysis of member state's policies and country reports including qualitative information.

You can download the study at:

<http://www.sme-union.org/viewdoc.php?LAN=en&FILE=doctext&ID=423>

5. PROJECTS & GRANTS

European Union Support Programmes for SMEs

In order to support SMEs in Europe, the European Union published a document which provides an overview about the main funding opportunities available to European SMEs. The document contains information about the different forms of support like grants, loans and guarantees as well as the main web sites for each programme. Especially four categories are named: funding, structural funds, financial instruments and support for the internationalization of SMEs.

Further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/smes/download/sp_2007_en.pdf

Jeremie (Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises)

A joint project of European Commission, European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund was launched, which aims to facilitate access to finance for SME's in the framework of European Regions. The main idea is to enable European Member States and Regions to assign part of their structural funds for obtaining a set of financial instruments contrived especially for support of micro and small and medium enterprises.

Further information: <http://www.eif.org/jeremie/>

6. INTRODUCING BUSINESS NETWORKS

WES - The European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship

The European Network was launched officially in 2000 and is composed of 16 members from all countries from the European Union aiming to promote Women's Entrepreneurship. The WES network aims to raise the visibility of existing entrepreneurs and wants to create a favourable climate for woman entrepreneurs.

Further information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/craft/craft-women/wes.htm>

WES Activities Report 2005: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/craft/craft-women/documents/wes_activities_report_2005_final_en.pdf

RWEU- The Regional Women's Enterprise Unit

The Regional Women's Enterprise Unit was launched in June 2006. The RWEU aims to provide support and mentoring for women who wish to start up or develop their business. The initiative is managed by three organisations: Prowess, Women's Business Development Agency (WBDA) and Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE).

Further information: <http://www.rweu.co.uk/pages/home/>

7. UPCOMING EVENTS

2007-06-14, Berlin, Global Summit of Women – The Global Marketplace: Opportunities and Challenges, Berlin, Germany

The 2007 Global Summit of Women deals with the business opportunities which the 21st century global marketplace offers to women as workers as well as entrepreneurs. The Summit will focus on solutions and best practices that allow women to contribute to the economic growth. The Summit expects a variety of participants like women entrepreneurs of all businesses, women professional and governmental leaders, business executives, women leaders of NGO, international, national and regional women networks, etc.

The event will take place in Berlin, Germany from 14 to 16 June 2007.

Find more information about the summit including the programme on:

<http://www.globewomen.com/summit/2007/Summit.main.07.htm>

Brochure of the Event:

<http://www.globewomen.com/summit/2007/2007%20Brochure%20English.pdf>

2007-06-04 Berlin, Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises

On the 4 and 5 June 2007 the German Presidency and the European Commission will organise a conference in Berlin on the Charter for Small Enterprises. The Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises is organised by the German Presidency and the European Commission. It will focus on the good practices in selected areas: Cheaper and faster start-up, improving online access and taxation. The conference is open to all countries participating in the Charter process and aims to stipulate an exchange of experiences in small business policy.

Further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/charter/conf2007/index_en.htm

8. SME WOMEN & START-UP NEWS

Until 25th May 2007, the SME Women & Start-up initiative would like to collect best practices from all of its members on the following topic: any means, tools, projects (etc) used by or organized by your party at a local/regional/national level which somehow involved women entrepreneurs in policy making - decision making.

On 6th June 2007, we will organize a SME Women & Start-up seminar. Details to be announced.

Please send your comments and opinion to us. Further information about your events, national studies or women projects are warmly welcomed. The next SME Women & Start-up QUARTERLY is planned for June 2007. Deadline for sending information is 25th May 2007.

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