

SEMINAR REPORT:

Why Gender Matters?

A part of the 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
(EUSBSR)

8th of November 2016
Stockholm, Sweden

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Overview

The seminar on gender equality „*Why Gender Matters?*” took place on 8th of November 2016 in Stockholm, Sweden. It was a part of the 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The seminar brought together representatives of: EU Committee of the Regions, government, civil society, private sector as well as academia representatives and individuals involved in the work for gender equality. [WINNET Sweden](#) organized the seminar in the cooperation with the Thematic Partnership: WINNET Baltic Sea Region (BSR), WINNET Armenia as well as the support of [Swedish Institute](#).

A panel discussion during the seminar focused on successful implementation of the [EU Strategy](#) and its actions with the require of gender perspective. Equality between women and men is a core value of the European Union. Economic growth and business innovation need to go in line with gender equality. The objectives of the EUSBSR can be achieved only by using the full potential of both men and women-the whole society.

Representatives from the EU Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Partnership countries reflected on different approaches towards gender equality and the policy that exists in their countries. Each of the speakers presented the positive outcomes of pro-gender approach. The results and benefits of equal position of men and women can be seen in the sustainable economic growth. Supporting women’s entrepreneurship as well as women’s participation in innovation, we contribute to the economic growth of the whole society. Moreover, the panel discussions focused on empowering women’s economic situation in general.

Seminar addressed also the following issues:

- Successful methods of promoting Gender Equality;
- Gender Approach implemented in the policy and actions of EUSBSR;
- Systematic approach for Gender Equality and its implementation;
- The role of government, private sector, civil society and other institutions in promoting Gender Equality.

The Winnet Model was presented during the session by WINNET Armenia. It is an example of a good method that gives men and women the same opportunity to contribute and benefit from the sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. The method has been introduced by WINNET and is ready to be used and spread out.

This report provides the summary of the panel discussion along with its inscription and other significant documents.

[Click here to see the seminar's programme.](#)

Find out more about the 7th Strategy Forum of EUSBSR under the following [link](#).

Kommenterad [Aleksandr1]: Would you like to write something more about WINNET Model? Is there some document or description online that could be attached here?

Kommenterad [Britt-Mar2]: I need to see what we can insert here, I think Winnet Armenia has a good drawing that could be used. I have asked for it, and will come back next week. Ok?

Moderator

- Håkan Ottoson, Consultant

Kommenterad [Aleksandr3]: Would you like to add some description?

Panellists

- H.E. Ms Anna Westerholm, Swedish Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- H. E Mr Artak Apitionian, Ambassador of Armenia in Sweden;
- Ms Esabelle Dingizian, (MP) Swedish Parliament;
- Ms Yoomi Renström, (S) European Committees of the Regions;
- Ms Ruzanna Torozyan, Winnet Armenia / Liana Aghabekyan, OSCE Armenia;
- Mrs Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, International Women`s Forum- Winnet Centre of Excellence in the Baltic Sea Region, Poland.

Introductory Speeches

2016-11-08, 9:30 am

Britt-Marie Söderberg Torstensson (the President of Winnet Sweden) opened the seminar with welcome to the audience and the panellists. Afterwards, the panel members and the moderator were presented.

Håkan Ottoson (Moderator) gave a short introductory speech before the panel:

I have been working with EU policies for last 20 years. My cooperation with WINNET started in 2005 and since then we implemented together many successful projects within the Interreg Programme. One of them called WINNET8 was the only project of more than 200 Interreg IVC projects that has been presented at the EU Member States COCOF committee (ERDF and ESF funding).

When we analyse the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region we can see that one of its main objectives is to maintain a competitive position of the region on the global scale. It can be done by promoting research and innovation within the region. Sustainable growth can be achieved mainly by increasing innovation capacity and supporting entrepreneurship, business development and scientific research. The innovation is understood as a summary of three factors: Market, Knowledge, and Challenges.

However, when we look through the pages of the Strategic Document we cannot find a word on gender perspective within the explicit areas such as Digitalization or Smart Specialization. This fact has been confirmed by the Policy Area Innovation (PA Inno). Therefore, PA Inno asks for an input from our seminar that might enhance Gender Perspective in the Innovation fields of the Strategy. The results of our today's discussions on "Why Gender Matters" can contribute to the next stage of EUSBSR 2016-2020.

Panel Discussion

H.E. Ms Anna Westerholm, Swedish Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs

Feminist Government

Feminist policy does not mean the policy against men but rather the policy for the whole population. It is not that much a policy but more awareness of the reality. It is like putting on another lens so that you can see the whole picture. So far, the policy formulation has mostly included the perspective of half of the population. The government can make better policy by including the perspective of the other half. Feminist government promotes gender equality in all of the areas of the policy making process.

Why Gender Matters?

Gender Equality is the right thing to do. By investing in equality between people, we all benefit from it. It is a goal by itself but also a method to reach other goals. Gender Equality is important for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

An Example from Sweden

We have more inclusive policies in Sweden since the parliament as well as regional and local governments have undertaken the gender-wise approach. It all started in 70s when the Swedish government implemented a few pro-gender and crucial reforms. Since then the women's labour force has been constantly increasing; women moved from unpaid to paid work; the tax-base became broaden; the productivity increased and the gender pay gap started shrinking.

The changes brought positive results for kids and their parents and gave a chance to both parents to really be a parent (including fathers). When mothers become active on the labour market, child care services are needed. The child care institutions provide a great support to

the parents but also create a job opportunity for many people. The equal share of the parental leave between men and women, supported by the Swedish government, has a positive impact on later pensions. This way of perceiving gender equality gives positive results within the economy- not only today but also in the future.

Let's Put on Our Feminist Lenses

In many countries, including Sweden and Eastern European countries, women are highly educated. They are needed as employees, experts and leaders in the society as well as entrepreneurs. Women have skills and knowledge to contribute to the economic growth and the development of our societies. It is time to use the potential held by half of our society.

Unfortunately, full gender equality is still a vision and requires further work. Therefore, we should put on our feminist lenses and include gender equality in all of the policies. As a result, we will have an environment good for all, both women and men.

Feminist Foreign Policy

The Government in Sweden stands for gender equality. It is also clear that Gender Mainstreaming should be present in the foreign policy. We have been working hard for many years to get higher gender equality on the agenda for the European Neighbourhood Policy. Now we can see the results in the ENP Review and the new [EU Gender Action Plan for 2016-2020](#).

Swedish Government has always been supporting projects such as WINNET Eastern Partnership and other projects that contribute to more equal position of men and women in the world. By organizations such as WINNET and thanks to the WINNET Model, gender equality and its benefits are being promoted and widespread. It is important to share the

knowledge between countries and regions such as for example between the Baltic Sea Region and the Eastern Partnership.

Swedish Foreign Service Action Plan for Feminist Foreign Policy 2015-2018, including Focus Areas for 2016 ([click HERE](#) to see full version of the document):

1. Human Rights (Focus 2016: in humanitarian situation);
2. Freedom from Violence (Focus 2016: sexual/gender based violence in the conflict and post-conflict areas);
3. Participation in Peace and Conflict Prevention (Focus 2016: actors in peace-building process);
4. Political Participation and Impact in All Areas of Policy (Focus 2016: within sustainable development);
5. Economic Rights and Empowerment (Focus 2016: resources, working conditions);
6. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights SRHR (Focus 2016: young people).

Conclusions

To create and sustain good policies, we need to look at the entire society and see the needs and potential of both men and women. The economic growth will be patchy if we leave a half of our human capital behind. We know how important gender equality is for the development and that is why we support the successful initiatives such as WINNET Model. We want to support women (and men) in improving women's situation. Thereby we believe

that we support the society as a whole. We wish to contribute to inclusive, sustainable and peaceful development in the Baltic Sea Region. Gender equality is a prove of having a smart policy and very smart economics.

H. E Mr Artak Apitionian, Ambassador of Armenia in Sweden

When we speak about women being strongly underrepresented in the elected bodies, the solution is not simply and only the establishment of quotas. The solution is to make politics more attractive for women and encourage them to take action. We need to clean up the air and change “the rules of the game” on the political scene.

It is important to understand the mechanism that stands behind gender inequality. What causes more prevalent gender inequality in rural areas and in the agricultural sector and lower level of gender inequality in the cities. We should not forget that in all six countries of the WINNET Eastern Partnership, from quarter to half of the population lives in the rural areas. While handling the issue of women empowerment we need to understand the general deterioration of economic opportunities in transitional economy. Especially when it comes to rural areas with less advantageous conditions for women and higher unemployment rate.

When we fight gender-based discrimination, we should start from the basics. One of the prerequisites is well-organized child care system together with after-school institutions. The rights of workers and working parents need to be protected. Overall, the knowledge of gender-based discrimination and high level of awareness needs to be spread out. It needs to reach not only the political bodies but the whole society. The knowledge should be shared by the politicians and through the civil society initiatives.

This is the place where the grassroots organizations such as WINNET play a significant role. WINNET Model creates economic opportunities for women and encourage them to be active in the regional and local administration. WINNET creates the trend of having more active women in our society.

Ms Esabelle Dingizian, (MP) Swedish Parliament

First of all, I would like to highlight the issues of active and passive resistance. It is important to be identified while discussing the implementation of the Strategy. Within the civil society, we have organizations that want to change the current situation and support the equality

between men and women. However, there are also those organizations that do not want any changes. The undertaken actions or resistance depend *inter alia* on the knowledge.

It is important to involve as many organizations as possible and reach out to the whole society while working for equal status of men and women. However, the information needs to reach also those people who did not care about the gender equality before. We need to constantly extend the group of people who are interested in the gender-related issues. Furthermore, the gender perspective needs to be present on all of the levels and in all of the areas of the decision-making process. The crucial question is: who has the power to do that?

The WINNET Model is indeed an interesting solution. The Model shows us how to build an infrastructure and maintain systematic actions for a good change.

Ms Yoomi Renström, (S) European Committees of the Regions

Research on new technologies, big visions and male networks -this all together is still considered as serious, respected and interesting. The judgement is made by the groups of the traditional orientation. Banks and capitalists invest rather in male-based business and

research projects. Researches done by men are being considered as “those real researches”. [The Triple Helix](#) concept which has been used as a good and serious model of the cooperation also in the Baltic Sea Region, supports the male bonding orientation within the research and innovation. It has never had an integrated gender perspective.

Moreover, the private sector as well as higher education in the field of business and innovation are maintain male-dominated. By adding the civil society into the concept of the relationship between university, industry and government Triple Helix, we can see that the gender balance is changing. Women are mostly involved in the public and third sector. They are rarely the risk-takers but often complete their projects on time. The organizations and businesses led by women seem to be generally more local and more stable than those led by men.

Ms Ruzanna Torozyan, Winnet Armenia / Liana Aghabekyan, OSCE Armenia

Back in 2007, the OSCE office in Yerevan conducted a survey in Syunig region of Armenia, which revealed that women’s activism is very low. A package of recommendations included the idea of establishing the WINNET Resource Centres as a grassroots organization for

supporting women locally. We had an example of the WINNET Resource Centres in Sweden so that the whole procedure was much easier.

Our first step was to target women initiative groups in Syunig region. Afterward, in 2008-2009 three of WRCs were established accordingly in Meghri, Kapan and Goris. The centres have been actively working, serving as a local platform for women. Thanks to that platform women have a chance to meet up, discuss the local issues, define the challenges and opportunities that they find around them and find the possible solutions. Through those meetings women establish a network that is really useful in the local society. Within the WRC we have been for several years discussing and working on the issues such as: women's economic empowerment, violence against women as well as women's involvement in politics.

After visiting Sweden in 2010 and 2012 all of the WRC started working together as a network. In 2014-2015 the Armenian network of WRCs established three more centres in Sisian, Yeghegnadzor and Ijevan. Same year we became also an official member of WINNET Europe.

Mrs Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, International Women's Forum- Winnet Centre of Excellence in the Baltic Sea Region, Poland

Gender Matters for Europe

Post-crisis Europe looks for new sources of sustainable and inclusive growth. The importance of gender equality is the key to prevent negative political trends. This is particularly important in some countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Gender equality should be also perceived as a potential in sustainable development – women’s role in innovation /STEM, smart specializations, pool of talents. Demographic context strengthens the imperatives for gender equality due to labour force shortages, high dependency ratios and budgetary constraints (pensions, health expenditures).

The need for a systemic approach at all levels (EU, macro-region and national)

The framework already exists such as *Europe 2020 and the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region*. The EU Strategy for BSR in particular has created a good platform for actions focused on innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable growth. It refers to gender equality as an element of effective programmes in those areas. This has been confirmed by Hearings of the Committee on Regional Development on mainstreaming gender in Cohesion Policy (April 2011); and in *“Gender equality in regional policies for growth - the approach of the new cohesion policy in the Baltic Sea Region to gender equality issues”* (February 2014).

Much however remains to be done

We have to identify the gaps in Gender Equality in the area of innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable growth. There is thus a need to develop 1) new arguments, analysis and ideas, such as on the links between gender equality and innovation; 2) new partnerships and networks; and 3) new channels to promote good practices.

The WINNET model as a good practice

The WINNET Model is a result of the Thematic Partnership Winnet BRS project, supported by the Swedish Institute, and is now available. The model was developed through a collaboration among many stakeholders and partners in BRS. It consists of the WINNET Centre of Excellence (WCE), a think –tank for analytical work based at the Szczecin University (Poland) and of Winnet Resource Centres (WRC) gathering practitioners in various countries in BRS and beyond (for ex. Armenia). The Model is linked to the EU Strategy for the BSR so it is possible to bring the results at the EU level. At the same time, it is rooted in national/local experience and based on a 4-Helix approach. This allows for building partnerships and networks among key actors and for working on local, national, regional and European level.

Kommenterad [Britt-Mar4]: Write Winnet Baltic Sea Region (BSR)

The WINNET model was presented at the final conference of the WINNET Thematic Partnership project at the Warsaw School of Economics on 4th of October 2016 (Warsaw, Poland). The conference was hosted by a project partner, the International Forum of Women (IWF) (Poland). It discussed good practices and research conducted under the WCE (published in „Women and Business „ - “Kobieta i Biznes”, a publication of IWF and the Warsaw School of Economics). It included a pioneering pilot study looking at innovation of women owned SMEs in 5 of the Baltic Sea Region countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden).

Future role of the WCE as a platform for policy oriented research and cooperation with practioners – from government at all levels, business and civil society.

Gender-inclusive economics allows us to take a broader view on the key challenges for reviving Europe's growth. If we want to mobilize women's economic and innovative potential we have to address issues of care economy, unpaid work, segregated labor market, wage and pension gaps. One of the key components of gender equal development is the balance between paid and unpaid work provided by women and men.

Therefore, **we propose the implementation of the 3R rule:** 1. **Rethink** the concept of paid and unpaid work. 2. **Register** the quantity of paid and unpaid work time, and 3. **Reallocate** the unpaid work into paid one in the markets.

The WINNET model shows the commitment of BSR countries such as Sweden, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to make the growth more equal –and thus stronger.

Putting gender equality on the agenda of regional policy is a key to assure sustainable growth in the post-crisis Europe and Baltic Sea Region.

This model should be shared with countries beyond BSR using the existing EU frameworks such as the Neighbourhood policy framework.

Conclusions
