

EUROPE DIRECT NI

Women Return to Work Project: Heather McLaughlin, Europe Direct NI; Marianne Lundberg & Kristina Nasenius, Stiftelsen Minerva Foundation (Sweden), Grzegorz Kot & Lidia Koziel Foundation Institute for Human Development (Poland); Abdullah Kaleli & Suleyman Kecici, KOMEK (Turkey).

Speakers: Mary Garrity, FODC; Edel Browne & Bernie Marlow, ASPIRE; Fionna Martin, Fermanagh Enterprise; Karen Smith, Disability Action; Eva Haremza, Women of the World; Eileen Drumm, Women Making Waves; Teresa O'Loughlin, Network for Enterprising Women. Study Visit: Michael McGoldrick First Steps Women's Centre.



The '**Women Return to Work Project**' is an EU project with partners from Sweden, Poland, Turkey and Northern Ireland (UK)
The project is funded under Erasmus+ for two years

The aim of the project is to prepare women of all ages (local, migrant, refugee, and disabled) to return to employment or entrepreneurship after a period of economic inactivity by developing their skills and competencies to improve labour mobility. Each partner will host a study visit to their region based on their expertise in specific areas: Sweden will present ISO 9001 certified mentoring programme; Northern Ireland (UK) Training, networking and setting up Business; Poland, Support for women returning to work after childcare and women with disability; and Turkey, its training programmes and initiatives for job seekers, especially women.

Planning and Action Plans

On the first day the participants met in the European Union Commission in Belfast to review and plan activities for the next few months.



Women's Centre

The Mayor of Mid Ulster Council, Trevor Wilson welcomed the group in First Steps Women's Centre, Dungannon with Chief Executive Michael McGoldrick.



A seminar '**Women Return to Work – Sharing best practice between regions**' was hosted in the Ardhoven Theatre in Enniskillen on Friday, 12 May 2017

Introduction and Opening: Mayor Mary Garrity, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council welcomed everyone to the event, especially those who had travelled from far away. She said it was a, 'great event for women returning to work'. She described how the District Council supports and encourages women to work.

Heather McLaughlin, Europe Direct NI introduced the Return to Work Programme and outlined how such programmes can be supported through the Erasmus+ funding programme. She described how great it was to be able to showcase Northern Ireland, and especially County Fermanagh and all it has to offer.

Heather outlined the range of speakers for the seminar from statutory to community and voluntary and invited

Marianne Lundberg, Sweden: Stiftelsen Minerva: Mentoring Programme

Marianne is the Women return to work project co-ordinator and President of Stiftelsen Minerva in Sweden. She described the aims and objectives of the Women return to work project .

'ideas, to develop, adapt, and transfer new methods and tools between partners ... flexible movement of the labour market regionally, in the EU, and internationally'.

Marianne talked about the benefits of the partnership and hoped that we could, *'...learn from each other, from best practices, disseminate ideas, and build networks'.*



Marianne Lundberg, Stiftelsen, Sweden

Edel Browne: ASPIRE Employability Programme: Support into Employment

The ASPIRE programme is led by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in partnership with Western Health and Social Care Trust, Education Authority, and Fermanagh Rural Community Initiative. The programme began in April 2015 and has a finishing date of 31 March, 2018.

- 65% of participants are women, the majority are returning to work
- It will support 800 people in the Fermanagh and Omagh area
- A focus of the programme is parents returning to work of which 95% are women
- Areas worked on are: low self confidence, skills gaps, no recent employment experience, out-of-date qualifications, references, and work life balance
- The programme is participant centred and individually tailored for each person.



**Edel Browne, Manager
ASPIRE Programme**



**Bernie Marlow,
ASPIRE Programme**

Bernie Marlow from the Health and Social Care Trust

Bernie Marlow has been seconded from the Health and Social Care Trust to work with the ASPIRE programme as Specialist Liaison Officer.

Bernie outlined her role and the services and support she delivers in conjunction with the ASPIRE programme.

The remit is to, 'deliver soft skills to support people in their health and wellbeing'.

Among the type of the programmes they offer includes "Happier, Healthier, Me", walking groups, and focus on transferrable skills, for example, time management.



Kristina Nasenius, Stiftelsen, Sweden

From 1998-2014, there have been 90 mentors and 90 mentees.

"Through the mentor programme, I got life quality" (Nina, mentee)

Kristina Nasenius , Stiftelsen Minerva Mentoring, Sweden

Kristina explained the objective of the Mentoring programme was To improve the participants knowledge about the Swedish labour market and strategical goals to reach individual goals.

She outlined the seven main areas: seminars about working life in Sweden; job coaching; language training; the process of finding a mentor; networking between mentee and mentor; evaluations; and work training placements.

99% of participants have gained employment in their own profession. The authorities state it takes nine years for an immigrant to gain employment; with Minerva, this figure is two years.

The Mentoring programme has ISO Quality System Certification.

Fionna Martin: Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd:

Starting A Business

Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd is one of 28 enterprises spread over three sites. They have offices, a retail centre (the Buttermarket), and industrial estates. The aim of Fermanagh Enterprise is to help people into employment and to advise them on self-employment.

Between May 1, 2016 and April 30, 2017 of the 176 enquiries made to Fermanagh Enterprise 50% were from women. During this period, there were 157 business plans written with 50 % for women. This shows how the employment market is shifting with women becoming increasingly likely to start their own business and become self-employed.



**Fionna Martin,
Fermanagh Enterprise, UK**



Karen Smith, Disability Action, UK

With funding until March, 2018 they aim to reach 700 participants.

Over the first two years (until end of March 2017), there have been 316 participants enrolled of which 114 were female (36%). Of these 316 participants, 97 have gone into paid employment (31%).

Karen Smith, UK: Disability Action: Job Match Project

The Job Match Project is a government backed, European Social Funded project aimed at, 'promoting best practice with retention of people with disability'.

It offers one on one tailored support; pre job: help with job/career goal or self employment planning, CVs, job applications, business ideas, and confidence building; in work: workplace adjustments, Access to Work, business and career development planning for up to six months.

The benefits of Job Match are far reaching and families are comforted knowing that their children/siblings/etc are in paid employment and are being giving opportunities to grow and succeed.

Eva Haremza, UK: Women of the World: Support for Migrant Women

Eva, originally from Poland, talked about moving to Fermanagh and the benefits of joining Women of the World. She is a, *'real example of migrant women moving to Fermanagh with no English'*.

She focused on empowerment and how the voluntary organisation allowed her to improve her self-confidence. She said that she started to feel, *'if I do not like something, I will change it'*.



Eva Haremza, Women of the World, UK

Grzegorz Kot: The Foundation Institute for Human Development: Be Right Back Programme

The Women Return to Work project is the first time the Foundation has been involved in an EU project. Grzegorz outlined the support provided for women with disabilities in Poland.



Grzegorz Kot, Foundaton Institute, Poland

There are two types of support available: NGOs and institutional. They focus on career guidance and occupational rehabilitation. The Institute informs people of available help and informs employees of their obligations toward people with disabilities.



"Be right back - a programme supporting return to work after a break related to birth and upbringing of children"

The premise is to help the participant choose the right kind of job and, 'help in choosing the right kind of training'.

Eileen Drumm, Women Making Waves

The Women making waves is a voluntary group offering support and guidance to women *'the voice of abled and disabled women in Fermanagh'*.

A variety of courses, workshops, and events are offered including, personal development, sport, cross community events, British Sign Language courses, drop-in services, residential options, health and beauty, and days-out.



Suleyman Kececi, KOMEK

KOMEK offers training and courses with a programme of over 300 courses in 31 districts. The courses include: gardening, IT, wood technology, nursing, personal growth, accounting, music, nutrition, sport, and languages - Japanese, English, or German.

There are currently 100 000 participants with services provided in 65 centres and 20 of these are for women only with the remaining 45 centres being mixed.

There is also a focus on giving the participants a platform to display, exhibit, and sell the goods that they produce with some centres having a specific space for women to sell their goods. The exhibitions are well visited with one in May predicted to attract 100 000 visitors. Members of the public are able to buy goods online or at the sale centres.

To date, there have been 452 000 candidates. At the end of each course, these candidates have gained certificates which are then used to enter employment.



Teresa O'Loughlin, UK: Network for Enterprising Women: Support for Business Women

"This event themed, Women Return to Work, is an excellent platform to share best practice in how we, and others, support women in their return to work. We have heard from so many excellent speakers today, but for me, I am always interested in hearing about and meeting women who have taken the leap into self-employment. This event highlighted the female entrepreneurial spirit we have in our region which is always wonderful to see".



"I am not alone, we are not alone"

- Kristina, Sweden

"Another great opportunity for networking and making connections"

- Lidia, Poland

Women return to work partners from Sweden, Poland and Turkey with host Heather McLaughlin & Mayor Mary Garrity

"There is so much support and encouragement available to women at the moment and these events highlight the diverse nature of female employment"

- Suzanne, UK

"Feeling inspired! So much good work going on supporting women returning to work - it was great to hear all the stories"

Kyette, UK