

Regional Round Table in Seinäjoki, Finland 20 April 2011

Invited (Participants marked with bold)

1. Winnet 8 partners and relevant MAG representatives

**Ms Pia Kattelus, Continuing Education Coordinator/ Helsinki University Ruralia Institute**  
**Mr Jaakko Hallila, Project Manager Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia**  
**Ms Kaisa Männikkö, Coordinator, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia**  
**Ms Sanna Alaranta, Coordinator, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia**  
**Ms Terhi Välisalo, CEO, Rural Women's Advisory Centre of South Ostrobothnia / Process Coach**

2. Representatives of Managing Authorities from other NUTS 2 levels (if it exists) of Regional and Structural Funds (ROP) non-partner regions in Winnet 8 partner countries

Mr Arttu Vainio, Western Finland ESF Coordinator

3. The National and/or Managing Authority in each Winnet 8 partner countries

Ms Tuulikki Laine-Kangas, Project manager (Female Entrepreneurship) Ministry of Labour and the Economy, South Ostrobothnian Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment  
**Mr Timo Urpala, Regional Development Director, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia**  
**Ms Heli Seppelvirta, Regional Development Planner, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia**

4. Elected Members (Politicians and/or their Representatives) from both national and EU levels

Ms Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Member of European Parliament  
Ms Eila Koskinen, Political Member of Regional Co-Operation Group  
Ms Riikka Manner, Member of European Parliament  
Ms Kirsti Mäki-Paavola, Political Member of Regional Co-Operation Group  
**Ms Anu Nurmela, Member of the Regional Board, Political Member of Regional Co-operation Group**  
Ms Paula Sihto, Member Parliament

5. Non-partners representative from public authority at regional, local levels as well as organizations, NGO s and WRC s (quadruple helix perspective)

Mr Pasi Artikainen, Director, Sedu Vocational Adult Education Institution  
Ms Maria Hanhisalo, CEO, Private Business VM-Carpet  
Mr Harri Jokiranta, Vice Mayor, City of Seinäjoki  
Ms Kati Katajisto, Research Director, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, R&D Department  
**Mr Pertti Kinnunen, CEO, South Ostrobothnian Chamber of Commerce**  
**Ms Tuija Takamäki, Local Leader Group Suupohjan kehittämissyhdystys ry**  
**Ms Raila Uusi-Vähälä, Advisor, Employment Centre of Seinäjoki**



## Programme

- 13.00 Coffee
- 13.15 Welcoming words / Jaakko Hallila, Project Manager Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
- 13.20 Presentation of Winnet 8 project, results and targets/ Jaakko Hallila, Project Manager Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
- 13.45 Purpose of Winnet 8 Consultation process: goals and results /Pia Kattelus, Continuing Education Coordinator/ Helsinki University Ruralia Institute
- 14.00 -16.00 How to influence the ROP/ Moderator Kaisa Männikkö, Coordinator, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
- 14.00 **Session I: Tackling Occupational Segregation**  
Introduction followed by discussion about Action Plan and Policy Recommendations
- 14.45 **Session II: Promoting Female Entrepreneurship**  
Introduction followed by discussion about Action Plan and Policy Recommendation
- 15.30 **Session III: Women and Innovation**  
Introduction followed by discussion about Action Plan and Policy Recommendation
- 16.15 Closing / Jaakko Hallila, Project Manager Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia



## Report

The Regional Round Table gathered 11 representatives from South Ostrobothnian public administrations, educational institutions, business life and NGOs, to discuss about the gender equality in labour market, in Seinäjoki. Many of the participants were already familiar with the Winnet8 project throughout different project events and dissemination activities implemented in the region and throughout the project area before, which helped to create a very open and motivated discussion atmosphere from the very beginning.

### Need to start thinking new

After introducing the Winnet8 project and the consultation process, the actual round table discussion started. Occupational segregation was the first theme to be introduced to the Round Table participants. It was vividly discussed why occupational segregation is so high in Finland, what kind of impact it has on labour market and on regional growth and what should be done to tackle the segregation.

When comparing the labour market activity of women and men in Finland, the gap is narrow: 72, 5 % of women and 75, 7 % of men are being active on labour market. But when considering the occupational segregation in the Finnish labour market, the situation looks very different: Finland has the fourth most segregated labour market within EU27. To give an example, only 20 % of the work forces in technology sector in Finland are women and likewise only 10 % of the work force in social and health care are men. Moreover, only 17 % of private sector directors in Finland are women, whereas the EU27 average is 32 %.

It was agreed during the discussion that more focus should be put on the selection of the field of study among boys and girls. Currently most of the boys select technical studies or science whereas girls study mostly health and social care, educational studies and culture field and other humanistic subjects. This gender segregated selection reflects very strongly later on in the labour market. Therefore, all education institutes should pay more attention on tackling the educational segregation. Segregation should not be further encouraged and also the higher education provides should pay more attention to reach more equal share of students.

It was also stated that occupational segregation is deep in the culture. Still today many parents encourage direct or indirect their children to make segregated educational choices. Technology related branches in general are being understood as heavy and masculine branches suitable for men. The same way social and health care branch is considered suitable only for women 'who are caretakers'. Still, when looking at the reality in working life, health care is actually very technical and physically demanding branch and technology branch is more and more about creativity and planning.

Strong educational and occupational segregation hinders regional growth. When working places and branches are distributed between genders, only 50 % of the work force is considered potential. This leads easily to situations where one branch is lacking work force and at the same time other gender suffers from structural unemployment within the same area. Such situation means double costs. Therefore it was suggested in the discussions that in South Ostrobothnia, where the most important clusters are food, metal and wood, one should stop speaking about men and female working places, but consider the whole population as potential work force for all branches. This change of attitudes and culture could change the current situation where some men dominated branches such as metal industry are lacking work force and at the same time there is structural unemployment of women. The change of attitudes can really create growth for the industry, individuals and for the whole area.

## **Policy Recommendations**

- Currently only very few ROP project applications indicate that the project has gender impact. But in reality almost all projects have some kind of gender impacts. Therefore each project applicant should demand to do gender analysis when applying for a project.
- Those projects that have clear gender impacts (such as tackling segregation) could be given priority or higher funding percentage. For example modification training that aims at training women to male dominated sectors and vice versa.
- In order to monitor projects, gender related indicators should be set.
- Especially in the Nordic countries, where gender issues are perceived to be already on a high level, we should pay attention to “gender blindness” i.e. continue to improve our policies and practices.

## **Supporting women’s entrepreneurship**

The Round Table discussion continued with female entrepreneurship theme, which is very important in South Ostrobothnia, the region known as the entrepreneur region of Finland. In South Ostrobothnia the entrepreneurs are aging and retiring rapidly and there is a threat that service sector will decline especially in the remote rural areas of the region. Therefore there is a real need to encourage and support female entrepreneurship in the region.

One third of the entrepreneurs in Finland are women. This is a rather high number on EU level, but still the entrepreneurial activity of men is double as high as of women in Finland. In Finland, the women owned businesses are also very small; most of the female entrepreneurs are self-employers. Moreover, entrepreneurship is even more segregated than the labour market in Finland. Therefore, one should not just look at the number of female owned enterprises but also to the size and operating field of the women owned enterprises.

In the round table it was discussed, that women should be encouraged to start businesses also on men dominated branches, which are more likely to bring more investments and growth. In South Ostrobothnia where a lot of entrepreneurs are going to retire in the coming years, there is an opportunity for women to buy an already running business also on typically men dominated branch. Such activity would however need systematic support and encouragement to get the potential sellers and buyers to meet – perhaps in a form of a project.

It was also noted that in the current regional development plans and strategies there is no special emphasis on female entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship in general has been noted in the strategies but support is mostly focused on growing enterprises and internationalization of enterprises. There is a risk that the current support mechanisms do not need the needs of female entrepreneurs. Therefore, to get women interested in entrepreneurship as a real career choice, specific support mechanisms targeted for women should be available. A regional strategy aiming at increasing the number of female entrepreneurs and the size of women owned enterprises should guide the activities in the region.

Besides creating a regional strategy, the current enterprise support actors and actions should co-operate more with each other and create a real network of support. The network could be launched with a project that would make an analysis what support mechanisms already exist and what are still needed for female entrepreneurs. To guarantee that the women owned companies are not just self-employment bringing companies operating on traditional female branch, the support needs to be targeted to all phases of

entrepreneurship, not just to the starting phase. It was also noted, than when benchmarking and promoting best practices on supporting female entrepreneurship, one should enlarge the benchmarking area outside the EU. We should look also e.g. to USA and see what has been done there to get more women to start own businesses.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- On one hand the statistics show that there is need for stronger support for female entrepreneurs. On the other hand one needs to be careful that support mechanisms targeted only for women do not actually increase segregation and inequality. There is need for more detailed information and statistics about female entrepreneurship on regional, national and EU-level. Also the different characteristics of female and male entrepreneurship should be pointed out to be able to see what kind of support we should specifically offer to female entrepreneurs.
- There should a regional strategy to promote female entrepreneurship or it should be at least part of the regional development plan.

### **Women in innovation and technology**

In the last session, the round table participants discussed about increasing the number of women active in technology and innovation fields. In Finland, the number of women active in innovations is between 5-10 % when looking at new patents. Also, the number of women studying or working in technology branch is only 20 %. Therefore one can easily say that innovation and technology are very male dominated fields in Finland. This means that the public funds allocated to support innovations go mainly to male dominated branches and businesses.

It was discussed that the concept of innovation needs rethinking. Currently innovation is too often understood as something only technology related even if in reality innovations and innovativeness exists in all fields. For example the service sector and especially the health care sector, where women mostly work, is not considered to be very innovative. But actually the health-care sector innovations have not really been researched (unless they are related to technology) or fully recognized. And moreover, the public service sector would benefit very much from new innovations that would ensure services to all with fewer and fewer resources.

It was pointed out that building of different clusters and interdisciplinary cooperation are fruitful bases for new innovations. Also in South Ostrobothnia one should cooperate more between different branches and sectors and build also untraditional networks of actors from very different fields of activity. South Ostrobothnia has a joint innovation strategy together with Ostrobothnia and Central-Ostrobothnia regions. This strategy identifies the current and future strengths and weaknesses and possible new cooperation fields. The current strategy does not include gender aspect, and it was suggested that it could be added.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Concept of innovation needs rethinking and widening to cover clearly and concretely also other fields than just technology.
- More innovation support funds should be allocated to service sector, also on public services. This would make the distribution of innovation support funds more gender equal.
- Gender aspect should be introduced to innovation policies and strategies.