

1. FOREWORD

The EuroFEM network began in 1994 after a series of European conferences started to focus on the dissatisfaction felt by women living in a built environment which did not reflect their everyday life experiences. Women were tired of simply highlighting the problems and wanted to take action. EuroFEM grew out of this desire to demonstrate alternative models of living and organise everyday life which reflected the reality of lived experience. In practical terms EuroFEM was created by a meeting of three people: Chris Booth and Rose Gilroy from the UK and Liisa Horelli from Finland. Chris and Rose wanted to look at women's projects across Europe but did not know how to get their research funded. When the research opportunity was presented in the form of an EU Action programme on Equal Opportunities between women and men, Liisa was able to use her expertise in EU funding to shape the first research bid.

The first stage.

The first phase of research identified a group of 15 projects from a larger group of about 60 and analysed these according to the contribution they made to four activities and four themes of the EU 4th Action Programme on Equal Opportunities between women and men 1996-2000 (see the Eurofem Actor Analysis, Figure 9). An attempt was made to draw projects from across Europe to reflect the diversity of north and south, urban and rural. The three EuroFEM researchers visited most of the projects and used questionnaires to determine information from the others. In addition, as part of this first phase, project leaders from 15 projects were invited to participate in a three day seminar in Kokkola, Finland. Here a variety of methods were used to unlock experiences and good practices that others might learn from.

Lessons from phase one

In essence the 15 projects demonstrated that there were eight best practice lessons which most of the projects could point to:

1. They took a multi-dimensional holistic approach to their issue.
2. Project leaders had a high level of reflexivity, that is they were aware of their own role and how they were perceived by others.
3. Projects could re-conceptualise or bend agendas, that is they were able to capitalise on current debates to find funding for their project or to win critical friends.
4. All projects were as concerned with the process as with the outcome and paid attention to participation of stakeholders.
5. Projects were alert to their own organisational structures and to those of outside bodies.
6. There was sensitivity to context, in some cases this meant good political awareness.
7. Projects aimed to have a broad basis of support and did not forget to keep in touch with their grass roots members.
8. Projects used innovative methods to unlock ideas and to spread awareness.

Many of these ideas can be found in more detail in the pages of the Toolkit.

Second stage

The second stage grew from the Kokkola workshop where a clear demand for better and more accessible guidance was made by project leaders. To satisfy this demand the second year of EuroFEM research (again funded by the EU Fourth Action programme) has been to produce a Toolkit, which comprises stories and methods from all the EU countries. As part of this phase, an international conference was held in June, 1998 in Hämeenlinna, Finland where interactive workshops were held to test out some of the methods used in the Toolkit.

Where EuroFEM goes from here is not clear and you can read our thoughts on this later in the section on organising your work. Writing this toolkit has been a collective effort shared by many women whom we have visited all over Europe. We are grateful to you for giving us part of your experiences. We are also grateful to the Equal Opportunities of the European Commission for supporting us financially. Part of our work has been to look at our own roles, which revealed that the team consists of three personalities:

Madame Fix It



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Idea Cracker



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