

## **XIV UBC General Conference Växjö, Sweden, 24-27.10.2017**

*Julia Gierczak*

*UBC Working Group on Gender Equality*

*Gender mainstreaming and the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men at the Local Level*

### ***Workshop on Gender mainstreaming and the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (UBC Working Group on Gender Equality, Växjö, 26.10.2017)***

**During the workshop the Working Group members and guest participants were discussing the crucial articles of the Charter that relate specifically to their local practices to find what works and what are the most urgent issues to be confronted with our local policies, according to Charter. In the background we were discussing the cases of Gdańsk, Helsinki, Kalmar and other cities in the Baltic Sea Region that have already signed the Charter and the ones in the process of preparation to this act.**

The initial discussion based on introductory presentation provided by Ann-Sofie Lagerkrantz – one of the Group coordinators and representative of the City of Kalmar. Ann-Sofie Lagerkrantz discussed consecutive articles of the Charter and then focused mainly on recent evaluation of its first 10 years of proceedings and practice in particular European cities. The presentation led from the historical background of the Charter's constitution to its practical implementation in the Union of Baltic Cities.

Ann-Sofie Lagerkrantz mentioned the principle goals of the Charter founded on the assumption that the case of equality of women and men should be considered as the fundamental right, widely stated on the Pan-European level.

In the given context, the participants were about to share and discuss their local concerns regarding principles of the Charter, considering the recent backlash happening also in many European countries as well as the challenges of the contemporary world, to begin with the so called refugee crisis discussed in the perspective of gender equality, the efforts to preventing violence against women and the principles of inclusiveness based on wide representation of variety of different age, social and ethnic groups. Participants expressed their view on the crucial areas where the Charter could be seen as the tool or a part of more complex process of social change.

During the workshop the Design Director of Helsinki, Anne Stenros came up with examples on how *Women and Tech* – event consisting of 1000 participants this year – started as an informal gathering of only couple of women interested in sharing their experience. Deeds, not words! – as the Stenros' message proclaims.

Other components of the workshop included the view on the processes going on in Gdańsk nowadays – including the international conference on Charter, the declaration of the mayor on implementing the Charter, the latest initiatives such as the Citizen’s Panel on equality and more, discussed briefly by Julia Gierczak, representative of Network of East West Women and UBC WG on Gender Equality, with the contribution of the former leader of the Group and the well recognized expert, Hanna Maidell from Helsinki, who also added remarks from the local and international perspective.

The practical result and the planned follow up of the workshop would be the recommendation transferred to the UBC Executive Board by the WG members, proclaiming that UBC should also sign the European Charter on the wide, organizational level. That gives a good aim to the coming year to get all member cities to sign and also the action plan needed after signing covers implementation in the work of the UBC commissions. City of Kalmar is ready to apply EUSBR funds to run a project with this aim.