

BPW the Netherlands: short report 2002 / 2003

Submitted to the ECC by: Lesha (B.M.) Witmer, vice president BPW the Netherlands

Federationboard:

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Vice President: Lesha (B.M.) Witmer
Secretary: Wikje Alink – van Velzen
Treasurer: Margré Wiarda
Member: Janke de Geus – Neef
Kiek Houthuijsen
Young BPW: Ester Beerepoot

Membership and Clubs:

In the period 2002 /2003 two new clubs where established in the Netherlands: Club The Hague and Club 't Gooi. Club the Hague is a "international" club with members coming from all over. The Club aims to reach especially women who come from abroad, live in the Netherlands and work for multi-nationals, European and International Agencies, etc. The club-language is English.

A unique "feature" is the fact, that the European Space Agency, based in the Netherlands, pays for the women that work there to be members of BPW (20 a year) and actively promotes membership. The Federationboard of BPW seeks to promote a similar arrangement with other European Institutions, based in the Netherlands.

Despite all our efforts, a lot of new members in the Hague and 't Gooi and the media interest we got, our total membership has not grown, mostly due to the problems in the so far biggest Club Almere.

It also is very difficult at the moment to get new board members for the Clubs; this seems to be a general problem for every volunteer / civil society organization in Western Europe. A brainstorm session to look into solving this problems, lead to proposals for changes in our by-laws which make it easier for clubs to choose their own division of tasks in the Board – so to make it more attractive for women to accept a role / task on the Board.

BPW the Netherlands was one of the initiators and participates in the Hanse Network, that brings together women from the former Hanse cities in the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. It's informal and different way of operating seems to attract and/ or more women to participate actively.

An other effort concerns the cooperation with Club Aachen, Belgium and the Netherlands in the Euregion Rhine/ Maas (Aachen / Maastricht/ Liege). This to our opinion is part of the future of BPW in Europe: cross boarder clubs and contacts at a regular basis. Unfortunately this is not really come of the ground also due to "problems" in Club Aachen. A new effort will be made in 2004.

Representations and memberships

BPW the Netherlands is an active member of:

Netherlands Women's Council

Commission on Sustainable Development of the Netherlands Women's Council

Women's Alliance

European Women's Lobby

Women for Water, Water for Women Partnership

Jet Brummelhuis is a member of the EWL Board.

BPW Europe - and BPW International activities

BPW members were active internationally during the following events:

March: third World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan (sponsored by the Dutch government)

March: national meeting BPW Germany

March: Hanse Network

April: visit to Club Aachen, Germany

June: Regional meeting BPW Ontario, Canada

July: conference Women's Council , Gotland, Sweden

September: European Congress BPW in Rome, Italy

September/ October: opening Global Peace Village and regional meeting in Sri Lanka

November: national meeting BPW Germany

November: Hanse Network

December: World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, Switzerland

From most of the meetings attended, there is an extensive report and pictures on the website of BPW: www.bpwnl.nl for all members and (non-members) to read.

Themes and activities

Members of BPW the Netherlands focused with a lot of their activities during 2003 on lobbying for the following main themes:

- sustainable development and especially the involvement of women in water management
- healthcare legislation and adequate information about and legislation for reproductive health
- European draft constitution / convention: equality and equity issues
- Involvement of women in peacekeeping (resolution 1325)

Via the website members can get more information about these themes.

In March 2003 BPW staged a major event during International Night in preparation for "Kyoto" with a lot of guests including the ambassadors from Japan, Nigeria, Suriname, Croatia, "sustainable development – the Netherlands, Lena Hokfelt, the president of Soroptimist the Netherlands, etc.

Mrs. A. Jorritsma, mayor of the city of Almere, was awarded the Liesbeth van Dorsser keus-award for her outstanding role in promoting women entrepreneurs when she was still Minister of Economic Affairs and being the first female vice prime minister of the Netherlands.

Apart from that members were active for Amnesty, clean clothes campaign and mentoring for Young BPW.

Lesha B.M. Witmer, vice President
25/50/2004