



BPW Europe
Business and Professional Women



European Presidents meeting

Riga – Latvia

Astor Riga Hotel

28th April 2017

BPW Europe Presidents Meeting and
BPW EC AISBL General Assembly 28 April 2017 Riga

President Hilarie and I attended the above meeting at the Astor Hotel in Riga on Friday 28th April 2017. The meeting was conducted entirely in English. (How impressive was that!!!)

Karin Raguin, the Co-ordinator of BPW Europe, welcomed everyone and gave her report. She wished that she could have visited more countries. Her work concentrated on the “Equal Pay Day” activities and the “Women on Boards” strategies. Her message was that although much progress has been made, there is still a lot to do. Karin will finish her term of office at the International Congress in Cairo in September, but wishes to continue as the co-ordinator for the Women on Boards strategies.

Her successor as Regional Co-ordinator, to be elected un-opposed at Cairo, will be Pinella Bombaci (BPW Italy). Pinella is retiring as the current Secretary of BPW Europe. She gave a presentation about herself as a candidate for the Regional President. Kikoula Cotsapas (BPW Cyprus), to be elected un-opposed in Cairo, will be the new Regional Secretary. She wishes to improve mentoring, teaching and networking throughout the region.



Alexandra Preuss (BPW Germany), the Regional Treasurer, gave the accounts for 2016 to 2107 and the budget for 2017-2918. There were no concerns.

Bernadetta Palermo (BPW Italy), will to be the new YBPW representative.

Catherine Bosshart the International Secretary was welcomed to the meeting and gave greetings from International President Yasmin who was unable to attend.



Elizabeth Bosshart (BPW Switzerland) gave a presentation about the European Congress held in Zurich in September. It was agreed that this had been a great success and had been thoroughly enjoyed by all members attending.

The next European Congress will be held in Galway, Eire May 24th/26th. The planning for this is already under way.

The Presidents of Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom each gave a short presentation concentrating on a success and a dream for the coming year. Most of the other presidents spoke about their work on Equal Pay activities, Hilarie concentrated on our work with the young focussing on the Public Speaking Competition and the work undertaken by Marina Leal Freitas.

The President of Estonia focussed on the 25th anniversary which will take place in Tallinn on November 11th 2017, to which all European Federations and Affiliates are welcome to

attend. The President of Norway told us about the meetings she has set up in cafes in Oslo that are beginning to be successful at attracting potential new members. The President of France told us about “hub-to-bee”, a website set up by Louis de Veron who joined the meeting via Skype during a question and answer session. Although this is his business he is giving our members world-wide very preferential rates. The website contains information about the travel plans of our members. If you are travelling to another country, you will be able to contact someone from that country and meet up with them.

The members of Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine are meeting in May to promote crafts and cottage industries in their respective countries. It is hoped that by doing this, women will be encouraged to set up their own businesses.

There were three resolutions for the meeting to consider;

1) The Reopening of and the Allocation of Funds to the European Moldova Fund

Rationale; Moldova is a very small and poor country. There is very little capital investment. The fund will be used for attending seminars and the fees for courses and visiting conferences.

2) Allocation to the YBPW Fund

Rationale; To keep the fees for YBPW low to enable members to attend the YBPW Symposiums. YBPW members are our future and it is vital that they become involved as early as possible within the BPW organisation.

3) European Women Refugees

This was a very complex resolution requiring European Union governments to look after women refugees by setting up reception centres, by giving them language courses, medical support and the opportunity to earn a simple income. The resolution also asked for improved data-bases to make sure that women were not trafficked or came into danger within Europe.

All three resolutions were carried.

The meeting concluded with a short discussion then question and answer session about the United Nations, Vienna and Geneva and the work that is undertaken there by Catherine Bosshart. It was suggested that if the next presidents meeting was held in Vienna then a visit to the building could possibly be arranged.

Helen Ashworth 3 May 2017

The presidents' meeting was hosted by BPW Riga and they had organised a full programme of events either side of the meeting.

The first being the Gala dinner held the night before the meeting. This was a short walk from the hotel, which was situated in the old town, going into the new town. Unfortunately it was so wet that it was a case of heads down and a very swift walk. However this was more than compensated for on arrival by the meal that had been provided. The chocolate soufflé became the talk of the weekend. On the return journey we were able to take more notice



of our surroundings and of the buildings as the rain deluge had stopped.

Friday evening saw us all walking to the river for a river cruise. We all began on the top deck but as the sun set and it became colder, people disappeared under cover to keep warm. President Inga and the Riga members brought with them typical Latvian nibbles and their national drink. It smelt and initially tasted like Ribena but the after kick gave a very warm feeling and definitely wasn't Ribena.



Saturday was set at a more leisurely pace with a sightseeing walk through the old town of Riga, in the rain. The hotel was obviously ready for this as they passed out large umbrellas as we left. The old town is really beautiful and the various periods of history and its different occupations can be seen through the architecture. We passed many other sightseeing groups as we walked through the cobbled streets and squares with no fear of being knocked down. The old town is a car



free zone and its squares become many large outdoor eating places. Apparently in the warmer months you do not choose the bar or restaurant by the food but by the live music that is playing. For lunch, a warm up and dry out we went to a Latvian restaurant where we were able choose a meal from the vast array of food that was on show. The day concluded with a visit to the National Art Gallery which depicted art from the end of the 19th century till today. Some of the art from the beginning of the 20th century spoke of the suffering that had been endured.

Scenes from Riga.

