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18th Annual European WFPW Conference Tirana, Albania 16.11.-18.11.2018

"Women's Active Participation in Decision Making:
Development and Sustainable Peace."

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Brief report EU Conference 2018

November 19, 2018 | Magda Haugen



The whole conference can be considered a great success. Many influential and politically active Albanian women spoke at the event in parliament on the 16th, the mayor of Tirana was present at the proceedings on Saturday, and delivered a welcoming speech.

It was very clear from the start that our European conference was a great attraction in Albania!

The conference topics were very varied and included:
- womens' active cooperati...

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3rd Day EU Conference 2018

November 18, 2018 | Katarzyna Minollari

The Sunday program included two sessions. The first one was moderated by Mrs. Renate Amesbauer, President of WFWP Austria, which featured presentations of an educational curriculum for young women that is being created by WFWP Middle East and WFWP Europe under the facilitation of Dr. Zoe Bennet, WFWP President for the Middle East. Mrs. Marilyn Angelucci, President of WFWP Afghanistan, Mrs. Katharina Bauer from WFWP Austria, an...

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Remarks for Albanian Parliament by Carolyn

November 16, 2018 | Carolyn Handschin



18th WFWP EU Annual Women's Leadership Conference :
Albanian Parliament

"Women's and Nation-building: Active participation in
decision making, development and sustainable peace"

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,
Each time I come to Albania, already at the airport, I
recognize that there is more prosperity.

Hon. Vasilika Hysi and esteemed members of Parliament,
thank you for the invitation to meet you here in your lov...

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1st Day EU Conference 2018

November 16, 2018 | Katarzyna Minollari



This yearly event is an anticipated opportunity to network, share, reflect and introduce our friends and guests to the ideals and activities of WFWP, as well as make plans together for future projects and advocacy.

All photos:

This time the conference was preceded by a public event in the offices of Albanian Parliament on the afternoon of November 16, with the title "Women and Nation-building: Dialogue between Legislators and..."

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The whole conference can be considered a great success. Many influential and politically active Albanian women spoke at the event in parliament on the 16th, the mayor of Tirana was present at the proceedings on Saturday, and delivered a welcoming speech.



It was very clear from the start that our European conference was a great attraction in Albania!

The conference topics were very varied and included:

- womens' active cooperation in decision making, development and lasting peace.
- cooperation between government and civil society towards peace and development.
- the dignity of woman and healthy families: prevention of violence.
- women's empowerment and impact.

On the overall topic 'women's empowerment and impact', nine working groups were offered under the heading:

'mini-workshops for capacity building and training'

All the workshops addressed topics of great current interest, making the decision about which one to attend extremely difficult!

Should I attend:

'how to give a speech' with Marilyn Angelucci (WFWP Afghanistan).

or 'empowering women by dialogue, friendship and social action' with Patricia Earle (WFWP England).

or perhaps 'time to overcome cultural differences for global peace' Kholoud Kassem (Lebanon).

or 'a new subject in school: happiness' offered by the young teacher Zita Kiedler sounded fascinating, as did 'moral education: how can we move, guide and protect the heart?' with Olga Vakulinskaya from Russia of 'Angels of Peace' fame?

Finally, perhaps also in the hope of a German speaking session, I decided on 'how can we influence society to value place more value on the family?' offered by the Austrian family therapist, crisis adviser and trauma expert, Heidi Mayr, which proved to be a very lively group.

In the following plenary session each group presented a resume of their discussion.

This challenging day was followed by the opportunity for sightseeing, shopping or a dip in the pool, before the program continued in the evening.

First on the agenda was a celebratory water ceremony and prayer for peace.

Then came a colorful Albanian dance group. After a short energetic opening dance, they drew all the ladies into a

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circle.

The steps were easy to learn; high heels were kicked aside and even the more mature ladies danced bravely to the end, even if with slightly less vigor than the many young ladies in the group! We were all very pleased to see Mr Gani Roshi (president of Family Federation, Albania) and his wife dancing with great professionalism. He had quite spontaneously taken over as mc for the family evening. Thus at the end the Albanian dance group was joined by Russians, Ukranians, Lebanese, French, English, Germans and members of other nationalities and the atmosphere was very joyful!

On the next day, Sunday, there was an 'educational session' –'capacity building for peace leadership: living in peace as global citizens', a presentation by the 'WFP young women's curriculum' and a talk by Carolyn Handshin (Director, WFP UN-Office) who had already impressed us with her talk in the parliament. In closing, all the regions (Middle East, Central, North, South-West and Eurasia) introduced themselves using power-point presentations to demonstrate the various highlights and activities of 2018 and to present their goals and vision.

All too soon, the conference came to an end, and email addresses and callingcards were exchanged as arrangements were made to continue the cooperation and develop new plans.

The conference had given much opportunity for networking and discussions, and the 'Hotel Tirana International', provided a comfortable atmosphere and excellent food. Thanks go to WFP Albania and especially their president, Mrs Kasia Minollari, and also to the preparation team. This short and intense visit to Albania left a very positive impression on me. And the cooperation with many, often 120 active women from about 20 countries showed me again how important it is that we inspire each other, and to actively seek out new contacts and new ideas to foster peace, thus following the lead of the founder, Mrs Hak Ja Han Moon and other brave women who pioneer the way forward in a time when many are seeking sparks of hope!

Magda Haugen, WFP Germany. (English translation: Catriona Valenta)
Photos: Natascha

Tags: Tirana 2018



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3rd Day EU Conference 2018

November 18, 2018 | Katarzyna Minollari

The Sunday program included two sessions. The first one was moderated by Mrs. Renate Amesbauer, President of WFWP Austria, which featured presentations of an educational curriculum for young women that is being created by WFWP Middle East and WFWP Europe under the facilitation of Dr. Zoe Bennet, WFWP President for the Middle East. Mrs. Marilyn Angelucci, President of WFWP Afghanistan, Mrs. Katharina Bauer from WFWP Austria, and Mrs. Carolyn Handschin each presented the sections that they had been working on with some youth participation and the audience was asked how it might be improved for their needs. The three themes were: "Becoming the True Me", "Creating your Dream Family" and "What is My Impact in the World?"

This was later followed by sessions of reports from six regions, moderated by Mrs. Irmgard Mantler, Treasurer of WFWP Europe. Reports were presented by Ms. Natascha Schellen, Magda Haugen (President of WFWP Germany), Johanna Torensen (President of WFWP Norway), Elisabetta Nistri, Brigitte Wada, Olga Vakulinskaya (President of WFWP Russia), and Anna Kalmatskaya (President of WFWP Ukraine). It seemed an impossible task to condense the dozens of events and programs into a 10 minute report, yet each managed to give a sense of the quality, the breadth and advances made in each region. Noted too was the blossoming of personal leadership skills among WFWP leaders from year to year.

The closing session was a chance to offer gifts to invited international speakers and the WFWP organizing team. As expressed by participants, the event was very successful on many levels! Many factors contributed to this, the high level of presentations in the Parliament Offices hall, the variety of speeches during conference sessions, the diverse and balanced program, the warm atmosphere and last but not the least, the hospitality and delicious food from our Albanian hosts. Also recognized was the way that goal-setting at the beginning of each year seemed to guide the accomplishments. Plans were already being made to bring substantial fruits through newly found partnerships and initiatives, as well as to also recharge "our batteries", so as that we are able to continue the daily work in our nations!!

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2nd Day EU Conference 2018

November 17, 2018 | Katarzyna Minollari

The next morning was composed of two sessions, in which the participants were joined by nearly fifty local guests. The initial portion was moderated by Mrs. Minollari, beginning with greetings from the Vice Mayor of Tirana, Mr. Andi Seferi, who warmly welcomed all guests, and expressed his appreciation for the contribution of women and girls in civil society and local government. As we learned from him, very proudly, the number of women in local governments in Albania is even higher than the number of women in the Parliament. After the remarks of the Vice Mayor, a video on international activities of WFWP was shown as an introduction for the new guests. Mrs. Carolyn Handschin then welcomed once again all participants, in the name of WFWP Europe, sharing her presentation on Peace Leadership. She emphasized that peace needs to come from the roots of society, and as such it cannot be forced, but needs to be nurtured and encouraged starting on a personal level. Consequently, women need to realize their leadership role in that process. "Peace is freedom to recognize needs and respond naturally", she shared, proposing an innovative definition of peace, and setting the tone for the conference. To complement this insightful presentation, Mrs. Marcia de Abreu, President of WFWP Spain, explained the meaning and importance of the conference's theme, focusing on the issue of equality between men and women. As she stated "women have remained in a position of inequality compared with men partly because their situation, needs, priorities and concerns have not been considered in current decision-making". There needs to be complementarity and balance between sexes, in order to allow women to make their vital contribution. The following session on "Harmony through Integration and Unity in a Diverse Europe" was moderated by Mrs. Brigitte Wada, President of WFWP France. She first introduced the next speaker, Professor Dalila Paulo from Portugal, who shared her perspective on the topic as a psychologist. She emphasized the necessity of win-win approach, where we give up the concept of competition for cooperation and mutual benefit. Next speaker, Ms. Natasha Schellen, Vice-President of WFWP Germany, started her remarks making a reference to recent commemorations of a 100 years anniversary of the end of WWI. Europe has faced many wars, and even though we have had a period of stability, lack of military conflict is not yet a true peace, as there is many underlying conflicts, she said. Trade itself cannot bring peace. We need to start on a deeper, human level. Ms. Schellen then gave the example of her own international marriage and how it contributes to overcoming existing barriers and prejudices.

The second session "The Dignity of Women and Healthy Families: Preventing Violence", led by Mrs. Tina Coombs, Special Advisor of WFWP Europe, featured a variety of speakers, each of them bringing a different approach to the topic. Ms. Samantha Streibl, a Speech Contest Winner from UK, spoke passionately about "period poverty", a struggle of many young women to afford sanitary pads and tampons during their periods, and the necessity for the governments to address this problem. Mrs. Aferdia Prroni, Director for the Human Rights in Democracy Center in Albania shared about the problem of domestic violence in her country and the work her center does to support women who are victims of this inhumanity. Ms. Anisa Berisha, President of World Youth Alliance in Albania, said that her organization's educational curriculum on human dignity emphasizes the family. "The family is the most basic unit of society and the place where free and responsible citizens are best formed. In order to develop free and just societies, the family must be cultivated and protected in culture and law." Then Mrs. Heidi Meyr, Marriage Counselor and WFWP member from Austria shared about the need for a paradigm shift - we need a society where family is valued to the point where economic and social systems are built to protect the family, not a system where family is sacrificed in order to attend to economic needs. She stated that it is not healthy for a family when both parents need to work long hours, leaving their children in the care of public institutions. The last speaker, Ms. Nicole La Hogue, Vice President of WFWP Germany, spoke about the necessity for internal preparation before starting family. The session concluded with the appointment of twenty new Ambassadors for Peace, both from within and outside Albania.

The afternoon was a time for workshops in groups, coordinated by Ms. Natasha Schellen, where participants could choose a session they want to attend. Altogether nine workshops were offered, featuring a variety of topics, ranging from training in public speaking to sharing experience on character education and "energy profiling", an innovative personal development program. This was a very fruitful session, which gave a chance for more interaction and networking. Participants then had some time for sightseeing in Tirana, enjoying the festive atmosphere of the city, even joining in some of the traditional dancing on the Square. The evening program resumed after dinner, with a very meaningful "water ceremony" guided by Mrs. Elisabetta Cali, President of WFWP Italy, and Ms. Francesca Stabile, also from Italy. Mrs. Cali first reported on recent Centennial Commemoration of Armistice after WWI, organized by WFWP in Padua, Italy. The water ceremony, where representatives of various countries poured water to one container, was a symbolic expression of a desire for peace and unity in Europe. Mrs. Handschin then took the floor and introduced to participants the idea of family festivals, and guided all in a toast for healthy families with a glass of holy nectar. All were then encouraged to participate in the Marriage Blessing ceremony when they returned to their own countries- with their husbands. The evening continued with a performance of traditional Albanian dances presented by an invited ensemble. Eventually all participants went out to the floor and joined the dancers, actively experiencing Albanian culture. The day finished with a beautiful and joyful atmosphere.

Text written by Katarzyna Minollari (WFWP Albania, Pres.), with editing and photo assistance from various

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Remarks for Albanian Parliament by Carolyn

November 16, 2018 | Carolyn Handschin

18th WFWP EU Annual Women's Leadership Conference : Albanian Parliament
"Women's and Nation-building: Active participation in decision making, development and sustainable peace"

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

Each time I come to Albania, already at the airport, I recognize that there is more prosperity.

Hon. Vasilika Hysi and esteemed members of Parliament, thank you for the invitation to meet you here in your lovely and historic Parliament of the Republic of Albania. You have been exemplary in global politics, with a 10% increase in women parliamentarians in 2017 and over 40% of the candidates who ran for office were women. Cited in the IPU.




I discovered that 2018 is the year of George Skanderbeg, (15thC) a brave, righteous Albanian man dedicated to defending his people and nation against overwhelming odds. ("Where Iskander rose; Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise," wrote Lord Byron in 1812.) I have a statue of Skanderbeg in my living room, presented to my husband while when he was coordinator for the Family Federation's "Balkan Project" in Tirana. In 1990, months after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the founders of Women's Federation for World Peace, Rev. Dr. (Father) Sun Myung Moon created "sisterhoods / pairings" between nations of eastern and western Europe to accelerate development and partnership. Switzerland was paired with Albania. Many Swiss colleagues and friends of mine travelled to Albania as soon as the border was open, between 1992 and 2002.

Our theme is deals with women's critical involvement in nation-building. It used to be thought that nation building was a man's work, fashioned mostly by historic military campaigns or political decisions. But Skanderbeg too, came back to Albania after his military campaigns, longing to preserve the Albanian culture and people he fought for.

I have read many biographies about people, especially women, who defied obstacles to stand up and speak out for their vision and goals for dignified lives - and how this shaped their personality and gave them "dignity". So often these heroes, local or global, from many different historic periods, refer to the motivational role that their parents played. There is a book (commissioned by the OSCE), "Empowering Women in Politics". It is a series of interviews with contemporary Albanian women leaders. Even there, among the many descriptions of how these women were called to political or public life, many described the important role their parents played in their life choices.

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Our youth have a hard time today. It is easy to be apathetic and unavailable for a "greater calling". Blame cannot be pushed too far away. Some part is our education system that does not prioritize character building. Some part is policy-makers when they have narrow or short-sighted interest. But most critical is the daily role of parents. It is the parents who prepare an environment where children can discover their goodness and an innate goodness in humanity that is worth fighting for.

Parents, especially mothers, nurture and instill values in their children. They teach the proper balances between freedom and responsibility and (hopefully) do their best to be the example. They prepare a place in the minds and hearts of their children so that when they later read Sacred Texts or even the UDHR or the framework for the SDG's, they are touched and motivated. Children are very vulnerable to the way parents treat each other. Domestic violence, substance abuse or bullying are problems, but laws will not solve them. We don't always realize how impressionable children are, nor think that in raising our children to be good future citizens, we are nation building. We are creating world peace- ...or not.



We live in a time when there are so many opportunities for youth to engage for ideals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) is one well thought out program to build global empathy to think and act like a Human Family. Our WFWPI UN Offices organize opportunities for young people to participate in related conferences and activities. Yet, the UN knows well that the most carefully crafted ideas for peace, human rights or sustainable development, solemnly agreed upon at the highest levels, are only as valuable as the actual changes they bring in people's lives. Most young people would be excited to be a part of this process.

WFWP began with grassroots activities in 160 countries. Over 21 years, we've been looking at our results. My work as responsible for our UN Offices is to help the UN fulfil their mandate by showing what works, what has been done by women to solve the same problems that they are working on; hunger, poverty, violence, illiteracy, insecurity. My other task, not to be underestimated, is to help those hard-working women at the grassroots realize that their work is contributing to World Peace. This is how we knit the fabric of Global Family.

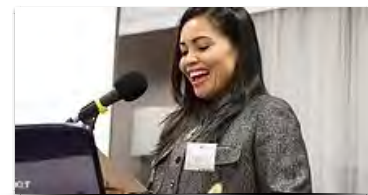
Our WFWP Founder, Dr Hak ja Han has been developing an innovative curriculum for youth with a very unique angle. It's essence is "Hyojeong", a Korean word that refers to the application of filial piety or a filial heart to all realms of life. Transformative and lasting change cannot be forced. You experienced that here in Albania. Peace is only possible by motivating, touching the hearts of people to choose goodness, justice and co-prosperity, never by force. One of the reasons I love Albania and see so much hope here is because that pure hearted curiosity in young people, that respect and love of youth towards parents has not eroded, as we see elsewhere. Yet, we/you do have to be careful and do our serious best to be the leaders, parents and models that youth will naturally respect and love. As lawmakers, NGO leaders, educators, business leaders, parents, our nations would be well served if we see ourselves as Peace Leaders, "who can create a peace culture that changes the world by moving the hearts of people".

Carolyn Handschin, Director, WFWPI UN Offices, Geneva , Switzerland,

President of Women's Federation for World Peace-Europe

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1st Day EU Confere nce 2018

Nov
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This yearly event is an anticipated opportunity to network, share, reflect and introduce our friends and guests to the ideals and activities of WFWP, as well as make plans together for future projects and advocacy. All photos: [Tirana 2018 conference](#) [europa](#) [albania](#)

This time the conference was preceded by a public event in the offices of Albanian Parliament on the afternoon of November 16, with the title "Women and Nation-building: Dialogue between Legislators and Civil Society". It was made possible due to the involvement and support of Mrs. Vasilika Hysi, the Vice Chairwoman of the Albanian Parliament, an Ambassador for Peace, who had participated previously in the European UPF conference in Vienna during our Founder's visit in April, as well as in the Global Summit in August in Korea. The event in the Parliament Offices was attended by roughly thirty WFWP leaders and guests from abroad, These included a Member of the Ukrainian Parliament, Mrs. Olga Bogomolets, and Mrs. Kholoud El Wattar Kassem, Director of Women Political Leaders Global Forum from Lebanon, seven current or former members of Albanian parliament, and approximately seventy WFWP members and guests from Albania.

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Mrs. Hysi, our host, opened the meeting and greeted all participants, making a connection to the International Day of Tolerance. Mrs. Hysi emphasized that it is important for women in politics to transmit peace, avoid hate language and work to eliminate barriers in society. In order to fulfill all political objectives related to women, children, and families, concrete actions are needed, stated Mrs. Hysi.

Then welcoming remarks were offered by Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, President of WFPW Europe. Mrs. Handschin commended Albania on the achievements related to women's participation in politics, citing facts from 2017 parliamentary elections - 10 % increase in women parliamentarians and 40% candidates for parliament being female. Mrs. Handschin went on to present a new paradigm for nation building, based not only on political decisions, but mainly on the parental role focused on raising a new generation of caring and responsible citizens. In order for young people to respond to higher ideals expressed in Holy Scriptures or secular documents, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, they need to be nourished with the proper understanding of values in their own family. Mothers especially have a crucial role in touching the hearts of children, and bringing out their innate goodness, pointed out Mrs. Handschin. She then shared about the educational curriculum being developed under the guidance of WFPW Founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, which has as its center the idea of

"hyojeong", or the culture of filial piety towards parents, which creates a base for respect and commitment also in other spheres of life. According to Mrs. Handschin, Albania needs to make efforts to preserve its culture of respect for parents and family values.

The conference continued, dividing into sessions - "Women's Active Participation in Decision Making, Development and Sustainable Peace." moderated by Mrs. Manjola Vasmatics, Board Member of WFPW Albania, and "Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society for Peace and Development" skillfully and with care, guided by Mrs. Mitty Tohma, President of WFPW UK. In the first session the speakers were Members of Albanian Parliament, Mrs. Eglantina Gjermeni and Mrs. Elona Gjebrea, former Member of Parliament, Mrs. Mimoza Hajdarmataj, and Mrs. Olga Bogomolets, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine. Mrs. Gjermeni reiterated on the achievements of women's

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movement in bringing equality through influencing the legal framework and policies in Albania. She mentioned current numbers – 50% of the Cabinet and 30% of the Parliament are women. However, as Mrs. Gjermeni stated, it is very vital to consider the quality of women's contribution, not simply the numbers. Mrs. Mimoza Hajdarmataj, in turn, focused on the necessity of women's education, because as she said "development and empowerment of women contributes to the development and empowerment of the country".

Mrs. Olga Bogomolets focused on her motivation to enter politics. In her case, she as a medical doctor, decided to run for parliament after witnessing death of innocent young people during recent political upheavals in Ukraine.

Mrs. Bogomolets has been focused since then on initiatives to support poor families, improving the health system and increasing the life expectancy in the Ukraine.

The presentations were then followed by lively discussion. One of the points raised was the need to support women parliamentarians, who are often not voted into office by other women. "Women don't like strong women", as somebody mentioned.

MP and former Minister of Defense, Mrs. Mimi Kodheli, expressed that women need to provide proper education for youth, in order to avoid aggression and war, while Mrs. Marilyn Angelucci, President of WFPW Afghanistan, shared about her project of educating women parliamentarians in Afghanistan. The second session was opened by Mrs. Kholoud Wattar Kassem's presentation. Mrs. Kassem, as a Lebanese, shared about her difficult path to being heard and influential as a woman. Despite being raised in a very conservative society, she decided to be involved on a public level, in order to speak out against injustice. "If women are neglected, 50% of the problems are neglected" she said. Another speaker, Mrs. Edlira Cepani, Director of Women's Network for Equality in Decision Making emphasized women's strength, which according to her lies in their direct experience of dealing with many life problems, and the ability to cooperate and work together. As she expressed, "unity is the solution". The last speaker, Mrs. Hatixhe Hoxha, former Member of Parliament of Kosovo, called in her speech for concrete actions towards peace.

The parliament session was concluded with appointments of new Ambassadors for Peace: Mrs. Elona Gjebrea, Mrs. Mimoza Hajdarmataj, and Mrs. Edlira Cepani.

After this very informative and lively discussion, all conference participants headed back to the hotel, enjoying the brightly lit streets of Tirana. In fact, as we learned later, it was the first day

that the holiday lights went on. The main conference officially started with an opening dinner at Hotel Tirana International, which was also the venue for the whole weekend. This time was a chance for a more informal mingling among participants, greetings, and introductions. Mrs. Katarzyna Minollari, President of WFWP Albania welcomed all participants to Tirana, wishing them a fruitful conference, and moderating a short and spontaneous entertainment, which featured a trombone player, Mr. Martinas Oliaka from Russia and Miss. Artina, a music student and CARP member from Albania. Guests were also greeted by Mr. Gani Rroshi and his wife Mrs. Marjeta Rroshi, president of FFWPU and Vice President of WFWP Albania respectively. Welcoming remarks came also from Mrs. Lavdie Ruci, Chairwoman of Tirana Peace Council.

Text written by Katarzyna Minollari (WFWP Albania, Pres.), with editing and photo assistance from various European WFWP Members.

