

# Global Women's Peace Network in Europe

## "Defining and Strengthening Women's Leadership in the 21st Century Education, Advocacy, Networking"

Prague, The Czech Republic, 13. - 15. November 2015



**W**FWP Int'l in Europe kicked off its three-day event on November 13, 2015, with its first mini workshop session on **Young Women's Leadership** at the Hotel Olsanka in Prague, Czech Republic. It took place on the theme 'Defining and Strengthening Women's Leadership in the 21st Century – Education. Advocacy. Networking'

The discussion was chaired by Marcela Rozehnalova, WFP Czech President, who emphasized the importance of **developing people's internal skills** – the heart and character of a person – and their external skills.

In order to find ways to effectively **implement women's skills into the society**, guest speakers were invited to offer insight on female role models and to encourage young women to take more initiative.

Among the invitees were Carolyn Handschin, President WFPW-Europe, Rostya Gordon Smith, Human Resources Expert, and Luciana Krupickova, a representative of Erasmus+ Youth.



In an interesting turn of events, young women from the audience were invited by Rostya Gordon Smith to participate on a brainstorm session/debate. The goal of this session was not only to get the youth thinking, but to also give them the chance to raise their voice regarding issues women have faced up to this day.

The wfpw-eu-ck (7) mini workshop session concluded with advocates of peace being presented with Ambassadors for Peace Awards, offered by Yeon Ah Moon, Carolyn Handschin and Marcela Rozehnalova.

**The second day** of our WFPW EU conference in Prague, CZ, Sat 14 Nov 2015, was overshadowed by the attacks in Paris. With heavy hearts, we started the day with a minute of silent prayer to remember our brothers and sisters in France and around the world in the wake of these atrocities, praying for





peace; in the face of hatred and evil. And we could only come to an even stronger resolve to work for peace, **unity and love. It's the message of love and compassion that the world needs now, more than ever.**

With such a resolve, we had a full day of inspiring speakers, lectures and activities to empower our sisters of all ages and religious and cultural backgrounds to take on the challenges of leadership based on the logic of love.

The morning sessions took place under the themes **'Women's Leadership and Responsibility' and Intergenerational Partnerships and feminine Leadership'**.

In the afternoon, the topic of discussion was **'Breaking through the Glass Ceiling in Society and Changing the Leadership Paradigm'**.



This was followed by a hands-on interactive session during which we split up into different break-out groups to receive practical guidance and tips on the topic of our choice.



We were also treated to beautiful musical performances.

We are witnessing a Europe in turmoil at the moment with terror attacks and migration crises, and these issues can only be resolved through strong leadership of both women and men working together for peace!



### **'Bridge of Peace' Ceremony**

The highlight of the evening program on the second day of our WFWP EU Conference in Prague, CZ, was a **'Bridge of Peace' Ceremony**.

Our Ceremony in Prague this time around brought together women from more than 25 different nations and including different religions and cultures; and was framed by beautiful musical performances as well as a traditional Czech folklore group.

Many guests were so moved by the spirit of sincerity they could see in the participants taking part that they



spontaneously decided to also find a sister they could cross the bridge with. Several sisters shared from their heart why they felt called to join the bridge with their particular counterpart. It was deeply moving. We had sisters from Russia and Ukraine, as well as several Eastern European countries and also France and Morocco, Portugal and Mozambique to name but a few among the group participating on behalf of their nation. We also had two inter-generational pairs.



The inter-religious bridge brought together several pairs representing Islam and Christianity. This had particular significance as throughout the day the terror attacks of the previous days were so much on our minds.

We are deeply concerned about the world going forward, seeing hurt, pain and hatred escalating on a worldwide level. The need to reconcile and build bridges of peace has become an absolute urgency!

Seeing all our sisters during this event with such sincere hearts and coming together to help reconcile the hurts of past and present – we could feel hope and renewed determination to let love be the final victor in this battle!

The Bridge of Peace Ceremony is the signature event of WFWP ever since its founding in 1992.

The essence of such a ceremony is to create bridges of reconciliation between sisters (and sometimes brothers) whereby two representatives of conflicting religions, cultures or nations pair up with the heart and intent to forgive, and to respect to each other, on behalf of each of their respective group that they represent.



The symbolic 'Bridge of Peace' ceremony should only be the first step of two women (or men) from opposing groups meeting on the bridge or stage, approaching each other with the heart of giving and seeking forgiveness for the wrongs of each of their respective religion, culture or nation. They embrace each other as sisters and step forward with the resolve to create unity, peace and friendship.

After this symbolic ceremony they exchange their contact details and exchange a 'Bridge of Peace' Pledge. They are encouraged to substantialize this resolve through investing into the relationship going forward.

WFWP has conducted many hundreds of these 'Bridge of Peace' events around the world in the pursuit of reconciliation and our common desire of a world in which every single human being can live in dignity and wellbeing.

### Third Day

The last day of our International WFWP three-day event in Prague began with an

interfaith morning meditation/service.

After a musical interlude from Nicole Turner, Lubica Magnusson, President of WFWP Slovakia, chaired the next session.



This session gave Jack Corley, President of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification Europe, and Marcela Rozehnalova as well as Lubica Magnusson the opportunity to offer presentations based on using effective tools for character building and education.

While Jack Corley highlighted the importance of family in character education, Marcela Rozehnalova emphasized that each and every person is unique as a character. Lubica Magnusson

spoke about the need for character education in her country, they are educating teachers based on a program called 'Free Teens' in connection with AIDS prevention, so the message can be effectively taught in the schools. There was great interest in the program.

After an interactive discussion, where the audience was invited to ask questions and comment on the speaker's presentation, the final session of the day dealt with WFWPI's future plans and goals.

Chaired by Eisabeth Riedl, WFWP European Secretary General, International Affairs, the session invited Brigitte Wada, Vice President of WFWP Europe to present WFWPI's projects that occurred during the year 2015.

Those included programs that promoted the dignity and health of women, programs to celebrate the official UN Days, such as International Women's Day organized by WFWP Youth at the UK Parliament in London or the International Day of Peace; also multicultural as well as inter-religious events that promoted unity among the different cultures and religions.



Once Yeon Ah Moon presented her closing remarks, the event ended on a high note as WFWP appointed Ambassadors for Peace to recognise their contribution to peace building.

[More pictures](#)

