

Winnet Centre of Excellence

In order to document, analyse, disseminate and mainstream the experiences made by Women Resource Centres (WRCs) in Europe during the last decades, a Winnet Centre of Excellence is suggested to be established gathering a "critical mass" of high level researchers. Such a centre is suggested to be financed by EU Structural Funds or FP7 Funds. The main mission of WRCs is to enhance women's labour market participation and to integrate a gender perspective in regional growth policies. A strategic research agenda – combining several interdisciplinary approaches – could increase the understanding of the emergence, organisation and results of WRCs and thus inform future design of policy measures for gender in regional growth.

There exist a handful of research studies describing and analysing WRCs and their emergence, organisation and results (e.g. Axelsson & Ungmark 2000, Horelli 2002 & 2011, Forsberg et al 2004, Pettersson & Saarinen 2004, Stenmark & Johansson 2005, Lindberg 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, Hudson & Rönnblom 2007, Danilda 2008, Eriksson et al 2008, Johansson 2008, Ramböll 2009, Lindberg et al 2012). These studies are the result of scattered research projects, though, without an all-embracing strategy of focus and continuous development of the field. The ambition of Winnet Centre of Excellence is to provide such an all-embracing strategy by creating an overview of existing WRC research and of researchers experienced in WRC involvement. It also aspires to co-ordinate future WRC research in order to develop the field more strategically. The excellence centre would thereto have an important role in disseminating and mainstream research results to a wide range of stakeholders, including policy makers, civil servants, non-profit organisations, business leaders and researchers. The close interaction with stakeholders in a networked structure that has characterised most WRC research is to be continued by joint identification of relevant research issues, joint applications for R&D projects, joint processes of project management and joint strategies for influencing policies and practices. Such joint research processes would optimise the WRCs' impact on the European innovation system and EU policy programs.

The establishment of the Winnet Centre of Excellence exemplifies how processes to identify and support "European Centres of Excellence" could allow initiatives coming from the research community or user groups, as well as priority actions initiated at policy level on the basis of identified weaknesses or opportunities. The establishment is to be pursued in dialogue with the Winnet Europe association, gathering WRCs throughout Europe.

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