

Project No. 2020-1-LV01-KA204-077474
Building a Network to Boost Social Secure Europe



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Building a Network to Boost Social Secure Europe - BOSS

REPORT FROM THE OPENING CONFERENCE OF THE PROJECT ON THE 25TH MAY 2021

Civil society organizations from **BOSS** partner countries¹ have established a quality framework for fighting against poverty and social exclusion, are the most familiar with the needs of their target groups and have an understanding of gender equality issues. However, the influence of these organizations regarding the promotion of social security across Europe is insufficient due to the lack of a strengthened cooperation network.

The Socialist Women's Movement participates as a partner in the Project "BOSS- Building a Network to Boost Social Secure Europe" supported by the European Union's Erasmus+ Program, which involves 10 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from an equal number of EU countries. The objectives of the project are:

- 1) to establish a cooperation network of European organizations for the promotion of social security and to strategically strengthen the capacity of this Network;
- 2) to increase the knowledge of BOSS partner organizations' employees and volunteer leaders about the social inclusion strategies;
- 3) to ensure the exchange of experience for the BOSS partner organizations' employees and volunteers on the possibilities of implementing social rights and gender equality.

On **25/05/2021** the inaugural BOSS conference was held with great success, which took place online. The overall theme of the Conference was «**Building a network of CSOs that will promote Social Inclusion Strategies: Benefits and Difficulties**».

¹ Cyprus, Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia (Leader), Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Greece

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During the Conference, speeches were made by the President of the Socialist Women's Movement, **Ms. Roula Mavronikola**, the President of the Latvian Anti-Poverty Network and Project Manager, **Ms. Laila Balga**, and the Equality Commissioner, **Ms. Iosifina Antoniou** (accompanied by **Ms. Andri Savva**, Advisor on gender issues in the Commissioner's Office).

Ms. Eleni Karaoli analyzed the relationship between civil society organizations and policy makers, the role, and the need for organized civil society networks to promote policies for social inclusion, both at national and European level, the value of networks in promoting common goals. At the same time, reference was made to the benefits that members have, but also to the difficulties we need to overcome. Finally, reference was made to the experiences of the Socialist Women's Movement as well as the assumptions regarding the participation and what is needed to achieve our goals.

Continuously, **Ms. Josie Christodoulou**, Equality Advisor at the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, referred to the Women's Rights specific network for the promotion of gendered social policies. She made special references to personal experiences on creating feminists NGOs and networks that are working for women's rights. She also mentioned the importance of having and building networks in order to promote human right, social issues, such as women and men equality, social inclusion, and poverty.

This was followed by a discussion on the need to exert pressure at the political level and the need for political will to bring about change, multilevel training to combat stereotypes and prejudices. In particular and in relation to gender inequality, reference was made to the need for women to be present in parliament and other bodies, and for a significant number of them to be present in the public life, and for co-operation between women in parliament, regardless of political party, for promoting common positions and goals.

Dr. Nicos Satsias, president of the Cyprus Antipoverty Network presented the concluding remarks.

The conference was held via the ZOOM platform, with more than 60 participants, from Cyprus and abroad, representing 20 Cypriot NGOs and 10 from other countries of Europe, and partners of the project. **Mr. Orestis Collins** has moderated the conference.

The participants from Cyprus express their interest in a follow up discussion for further actions on national level, and this is an incredibly positive outcome. Socialist Women Movement will try and find a way to organize one or two round table discussions, as a follow up and continuance of the opening conference, for the Cypriot NGOs and representatives.

Finally, the Conference was recorded and we are in the process of preparing a short video with the highlights of the Conference.

Prepared by Eleni Karaoli, Project Manager, The Socialist Women's Movement

Nicosia, 30 June 2021