



EUSBSR Forum for Gender Equality and Growth 3.0



Gertrud Åström, President of Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative

Message from Gertrud Åström, Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative

Welcome to the second newsletter for the EUSBSR Forum for Gender Equality and Growth 3.0! A few words about our recent and upcoming activities: last year peaked with partners meeting in Stettin November 3-5 where preliminary results from the qualitative study on women entrepreneurs and innovation as well as the quantitative study on gender equality and economic growth were presented and vividly discussed. The report is finalized and focus of our discussions is on

recommendations and action. Our seminar November 17th on Gender equality in Innovation gave an insight into different support systems for gender equality in general and specifically on the Eastern Partnership and within innovation. Unequal conditions due to an unconscious gender bias among actors in the innovation system and a gender aware tool for innovative businesses and organizations were presented.

On February 8-9 we will participate in the digital conference Forum Jämställdhet. A seminar hosted by the Estonian partner focusing on women's organizations as a driving force for gender equality and growth is coming up in the beginning of March. We are also looking forward to a round table discussion in March with partner Baltic Institute, PA Inno, headed by Esa Kokkonen to follow up on the seminar on November 17th with the aim to strengthen commitment to gender equality in Innovation systems. In this month's newsletter, we share Winnet Sweden's interview with Esa from October 2021.

Gertrud Åström



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Q&A ■ Esa Kokkonen

■ *Baltic Institute of Finland*

Q: Could you talk about joining the EUSBSR Forum for Gender Equality and Growth, 3.0? How does it fit into the vision of your organization?

EK: This is especially connected to our role as a main coordinator of the policy area of innovation of the EUSBSR. When Britt-Marie and other project initiators approached us during the project preparation, I realized that this is a topic—obviously a very important one—that we haven't really put a special emphasis on. And of course in general we can be very happy on how gender equality is considered and implemented in practice in the EUSBSR on different levels: in management, in projects.



Esa Kokkonen, Director of The Baltic Institute of Finland

Obviously that is something that all of the projects have to pay attention to: they are paying attention to or even promoting gender equality. Overall the situation, I think, in the Baltic Sea region is quite good, but it's obviously not enough. We all know that there's so much room for improvement in this, and even sometimes it is most dangerous if you consider that this is not a problem and you don't need to pay attention. That's why I realize that we—as now representing somehow the policy and strategy of the whole region—it's urgently needed that we somehow pay attention, that for innovation and business, for companies in the Baltic Sea region, equality is still an issue. Especially in the new startup scene, technology, new businesses, even though we think that it's a new generation and [there are] increasingly equal amounts of women in boards, and the amount of female entrepreneurs is increasing, still there are obvious issues when it comes to salaries and representation of women in management positions and boards.

It was a good awakening call when Britt-Marie approached me and I realized it was something that we needed to join. We want to learn and pay attention in our action plans and projects increasingly on equality matters. Even though it's a small project and our role is very small, we get all the information and the learning opportunities. Especially when we can do our part after the project, when we are responsible for utilising the results, disseminating them, and scaling them, showing that PA INNO activities... [Read the full interview](#)



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