

## European Professional Women's Network

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### W.I.N. Conference 2007: Networks sharing information and Norway as Northern Mecca for Women on Boards

*EuropeanPWN was well represented at the Women's International Networking conference (WIN) in Norway September 26-30.*



Diane Morris kicked off the conference moderating a **panel of network president's** in a closed door session on Wednesday September 26, that shared challenges, opportunities and best practices, using her knowledge as immediate Past President of City Women's Network in London to guide the discussion. Patience Allen (Oslo) represented EuropeanPWN and Cristina Vinci (Brussels) and Caroline Miller (Geneva) were amongst the attendees. Also, on the panel were Ania Jakubowski, Geneva Women in Trade, Kristin Engvig, the founder and CEO of WIN , and Stephanie MacKendrick, President of Canadian Women Communications and President of The International Alliance for Women (TIAW).The session focused on key concerns, such as succession planning and communicating with members, as well as an exploration on the ways in which networks can work more closely together while fulfilling their own organizational mandates.

The EuropeanPWN presidents came together again at a **drinks party** hosted by the Oslo network, AIPBW. Joining them were Mirella Visser, Mary Van der Boon (Amsterdam) and Nicola Stevens (CWN London) and other attendees – a great networking occasion, thank you Oslo.

Stephanie was also one of three panelists on the **Women on Boards session** Friday September 28. Mirella Visser moderated and set the scene from her extensive work on gender diversity in business , quoting from the European Boardwomen Monitor in the process, and most recently her experience as a presenter to the Corporate Women's Directors International in New York. It was very well attended, a sign of the issue's growing importance as women move into increasingly senior executive positions and seek to have that seniority leveraged in executive and non-executive board appointments.

Discussing women on Boards in Oslo is a bit like taking coals to Newcastle as Norway has by far the highest proportion of women on boards of any country at 29.5%, primarily the result of a law

that has set a 40% minimum quota of board seats to be held by women in public limited companies as well as government owned and municipal companies.

Kari Maeland outlined how the Female Future project has been working in tandem with the legislation to help companies under the 2003 legislation to find qualified women candidates. It's a comprehensive program that provides a vital addition to the effort to get women into the most senior positions. Hundreds of women have been placed in board positions since the law came into effective and the Female Future project has played a major role in facilitating many of those appointments.

But the picture outside of the Nordic region is less encouraging and participants at the session wanted concrete advice on what they needed to do to prepare themselves to sit on boards and strategies they can use to improve the chances of being appointed.

Stephanie's offer to share TIAW's Ten Strategies for Women Seeking Board Appointments, (a piece developed by Canadian Women in Communications) was very well received and WIN and TIAW promised to collaborate to provide links to the information for delegates. The audience was also interested in strategies to encourage companies to do better in appointing women (outside of Norway), which is an area both CWC/ TIAW have done work on. The third aspect that struck a chord was the work that TIAW and CWC are doing to create an "Action Team" protocol that would equip women to advocate for more women on boards through three or four simple strategies that individuals can implement.

#### **Women on Boards Quota legislation - Summary of Scandinavian countries**

- In four years, (2003 to 2007) Norway went from 8% to almost 30% women on boards after legislation was introduced.
- Sweden has not implemented legislation yet, but is considering a law with 25% as the minimum to be met or legislation will take effect. They are currently around 20% women on boards.
- Finland has no quota or legislation and has about 13% women on boards.
- Denmark as 11% in the top 100 companies, but a low number of executive directors. (Inside directors who are part of the company's management).
- Iceland has specific problems with women and men typically both holding down two jobs to support a very high standard of living.

**Editors:** Diane Morris

Immediate Past President CWN and 1st VP and President elect TIAW

And

Stephanie MacKendrick

President of Canadian Women Communications and President of TIAW