

EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT TO IrFUW COUNCIL

OCTOBER 2015

There have been two UWE gatherings since the last Council meeting. The first of these was the UWE Meet and Greet 2015, which was held in London on 29-30 May 2015. As the Meet and Greet is not an official UWE meeting it had been decided at the IrFUW Council meeting in March 2015 that the Irish Federation would not send an official delegate, but that members who were in a position to do so might attend in a private capacity. Among those attending was Mary O'Donoghue, CIR and member of UCD Women Graduates Association. IrFUW President Marion Gibson was also present for part of the first day's session. A report of the Meet and Greet by UWE PRO Roxana Elena Petrescu, is on the UWE website, uweboard.wordpress.com.

The second meeting was the UWE Conference and AGM which was held in Utrecht in the Netherlands from 27-29 August 2015. Members from fourteen European NFA's attended the conference, including ten members of the Irish Federation: Marion Gibson (IrFUW President), Honor Baird, Margaret Donaghey and Elizabeth Miller of QWGA, Margaret Watchorn (UCD WGA President), Annette Durkan, Colette Grant, Niamh Hynes and Jane Treacy of UCD WGA, and Máire O'Connell (IrFUW Co-Ordinator of European Affairs) of NUI Galway WGA. Husbands and friends of some members also travelled, making the Irish group of sixteen one of the largest.

The theme of the conference was *The Art of Networking: Skills, Styles and Values*. The three principal speakers on the first day were Catherine Royle, former British diplomat, political adviser at NATO, and currently Head of the Secretariat of the International Police Advisory Board, Bercan Gunel, Director of Woman Capital and NGL International and Claudine Hermann, Hon. Professor of Physics and Vice-President of the association Femmes & Sciences. Though dealing with the theme from very different perspectives, each stressed the importance of establishing and maintaining effective networks if one is to be visible and get one's message across.

A series of workshops covered such matters as intercultural networking, the do's and don'ts of building and maintaining networks, and the work of women's networks such as UWE and the EWL.

The theme of networking was again on the agenda on Saturday morning, when Danièle Castle, Executive Director of Graduate Women International spoke of the relationship between GWI and UWE and the networking functions of each. Danièle highlighted the three priorities of GWI, - membership, visibility and funding - and said that while there were positive developments in the areas of membership and visibility, funding was still a cause of concern. As a regional group UWE does not pay fees directly to GWI, which relies on membership fees from NFA's and fundraising projects to finance its work.

Reports on the activities of the National Federations were given by the CER of each NFA. I have circulated the report which I gave on behalf of the IrFUW to all associations and it is also available on the UWE website. This was followed by the election of two new members to the incoming Board of UWE, Roxana Elena Petrescu of the Romanian Federation as Secretary General and Elina

Glenday of the Finnish Federation as Treasurer. UWE President Edith Lommerse, who had completed one term in office, was re-elected for a second term.

It was announced that the recipient of the Jans Gremmée Award 2015 was Raija Sollamo of the Finnish Federation for her wise leadership and unifying work as co-ordinator of the Grundtvig project *Domestic Violence met by Educated Women*.

The AGM then took place. As part of her President's Report, UWE President Edith Lommerse said that Anne Nègre of AFFDU (French Federation), who had been elected as gender expert to the Council of Europe in 2014, was acting as adviser to the UWE Board; Annelies Pierrot Bults of the VVAO (Dutch Federation), a member of the European Women's Lobby, is also an adviser to the UWE Board. Roxana Petrescu (Romanian Federation) had done public relations work for the Board in the past year and had now been elected Secretary General of the incoming Board of UWE. The financial report and budget proposals for 2015-2016 were presented by outgoing treasurer Auli Ojala of the Finnish Federation and accepted by the meeting. The dues for 2015-2016 are to remain at 46 cent per member, based on membership numbers in January 2015. President Edith thanked the outgoing treasurer for her work over the past three years and welcomed the incoming treasurer, Elina Glenday, also of the Finnish Federation, and currently resident in the U.K. She said that reports from officers of the Board would be published on the UWE website, uweboard.wordpress.com.

In relation to the UWE website President Edith said that it was proving popular, with 3,607 hits so far, the greatest number coming from the Netherlands, followed by the U. K. and Romania. She strongly advised members to keep up to date with the website which was an invaluable source of information.

It was announced that UWE intends to set up sub-committees on matters such as the UWE Constitution, public relations, and finance. Some nominations were received and agreed at the AGM and the Irish Federation agreed to consider nominating a member to serve on a sub-committee at its Council meeting in October.

As the next GWI Triennial Conference is due to be held in Cape Town, South Africa in August 2016, it was announced that the UWE Conference 2016 will be held earlier than usual — from 24-26 June 2016 in Winchester, U.K.

An interesting and enjoyable programme of events was organised by the Dutch Federation, the VVAO. This included a reception at the University of Utrecht, a boat trip on the canals and a guided tour and festive dinner at the Speelklok Museum with its large collection of street organs, pianolas and music boxes and clocks.

Máire O'Connell
CER IrFUW
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