

ECREA WOMEN'S NETWORK REPORT 2013

“The main objective of ECREA's Women's Network is to assess and develop the interdisciplinary and multicultural field of female scholarship in the context of European Communication and Media Studies. Furthermore, the Women's Network aims to research the current situation of women in higher education and academic research in Europe, identifying differences, strengths, weaknesses and areas of good practice.”

The business meeting of Women's network of ECREA was held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2012. There, a new management team was elected for two years. Teija Waaramaa, Ph.D. from the School of Communication Media and Theatre, University of Tampere, Finland, was elected as the chair, and Barbi Pilvre, Ph.D., Tallinn University, Institute for International and Social Studies, Tallinn, Estonia, and Inês Mendes Gil, Ph.D., School of Communication, Architecture, Arts and Information Technologies, University Lusófona of Humanities and Technologies, Lisbon, Portugal, were elected as vice chairs of the network.

Teija Waaramaa is a postdoctoral researcher, and her research areas are emotions in human voice, evolution of speech and vocal emotional communication in cross-cultural contexts.

Barbi Pilvre is an associate professor, and her research field has been media and gender issues, changes in media culture, tabloidization of media, mediatization process of politics and other fields in society. Barbi Pilvre is currently responsible for master program in journalism at Tallinn University. She also supervises master theses and teaches journalism criticism, media research methodologies and methods.

Inês Gil is an associate professor and a postdoctoral researcher. She is currently supervising the 1st Cycle of the Photography Course and directing documentaries which help her to link practice to theoretical investigation.

The fourth international workshop of Women's Network of ECREA was organised at Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia (Institute of International and Social Studies), and it was held on the 5-6th December 2013. The organizing committee was the board of the Women's network.

According to the earlier alignment Women's network concentrates on the problems and questions raised in the discussions at international conferences and meetings, and on political issues in general. One of the essential interest areas of Women's network is the gender issue in communication studies, within universities, polytechnics, colleges, and research centres in Europe. Women's Network of ECREA continued this alignment also at the workshop in 2013.

The keynote speaker of the workshop came from Estonia, Mari-Liis Sepper who acts as the Estonian Counselor for Equal Rights and Equal Treatment. Mari-Liis Sepper gave an overview of equal rights legislation in Estonia which has been valid since Estonia joined EU in 2004. Sepper also discussed the historical background of little interest towards equal rights issues in Estonian society. Estonian academy is very feminized (as it is low-paid) and equal rights issues have not been interesting or understood by women until now. Majority of university students are women, depending on the field. Sepper concluded that no cases from Estonian academy have been brought to the counselor to be solved, although it is known from everyday practice that there are gender inequalities in payment and treatment.

The organizers of the workshop had asked the members of Women's Network to write an essay of 1-2 pages about "Your Story" which concerned the choices and reconciliation between the academic career and family life. The workshop was titled "Me, my academy and my family". It was an option to keep the writing anonymous, however, each writer wanted to use their own names. The essays were read and analysed at the workshop by the attending participants. The writings were very personal stories and hence, the viewpoints varied between the writers. However, the same issues came up in all of them, two above all: On the one hand, how to organize childcare, husband's attitude, the role of the grandparents and the family, and on the other hand, the attitude of the academia, how does it support female careers or does it support them all. The writers represented Estonian, Finnish, Latvian and Turkish members of Women's Network. Additionally, one participant from China attended the workshop. Thus, six nationalities altogether were represented at the workshop.

A thorough discussion of the theme concluded in a new plan. The workshop decided to release a new call for essays for some extra writings on the issue among the ECREA members and to publish the essays with an introductory article written by an expert on gender and women's career in the academy.

The year 2014 the board will work with the publication, and the next workshop will be organized at the ECREA conference, in partnership with Lusofona University, Lisbon, November 12-15th 2014.