

WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION
23rd Standing Committee on European Affairs
Cetinje (Montenegro) 16-19 June

MEETING OF THE SCEA WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN
Cetinje (Montenegro), 17 June 2014

Present:

Mrs. Marie-Elisabeth Sveri, Chair of the Standing Committee on Women
Mrs. Inge Nedergaard, Chair of the SCEA Working Group on Women
Mrs. Anne Lise Olsen, Norway
Mrs. Elisabeth Wourgaft, UK/France
Dr. Sophie Pinkas, Bulgaria
Mrs. Hannele Toivonen, Finland
Mrs. Heilwine Bakker, Netherlands
Mrs. Annalee Bergtun, Norway

Miss Faye Purcell, WVF Secretariat

1. Mrs. Marie-Elisabeth Sveri, Chair of the WVF Standing Committee on Women and Vice President of the WVF opened the meeting and stated that the aim was to establish contacts and decide on a way to work in the future.
2. The participants introduced themselves and their backgrounds.
3. Mrs. Nedergaard suggested that one of the main problems concerning women veterans currently was that serious issues such as PTSD were often brushed off as being “women’s problems”. This general attitude towards women was problematic as it hindered the recognition of other serious problems that were more easily identified in men.
4. She considered that it was important to look into this condescending attitude and ensure that women really were being treated equally.
5. Mrs Sveri mentioned that she had attended some workshops run by organisations that were looking at educating men on how to treat women. It was agreed that it would be interesting to get in touch with those organisations.
6. Mrs. Bakker suggested that an important tool would be to show strong female role models from within the group to inspire others. This could be done on a website or through facebook. It should outline the main problems that the person has faced and their main successes in order to show that everyone has overcome something.
7. Mrs. Bergtun presented an idea that had been discussed at the meeting of the SCAP working group on women, to set up a facebook group for veterans’ wives to help them deal with the problems that they face. This could help them cope with the already widely recognized issues of post-service problems such as PTSD or feelings of guilt being taken out on the family and resulting in changes in behaviour and divorce.

8. This would also be a way of linking up veteran families. The representatives from Finland and Denmark confirmed that such programmes existed in their countries in the form of phone lines available to families of soldiers before and after posting where they could talk to people who knew what they were going through. The programmes were successful.
9. Mrs. Bergtun suggested that a facebook page might still be useful because sometimes even picking up the phone can be a difficult thing to do. On a facebook page they could simply read other peoples' discussions.
10. She also suggested that it would be useful to incorporate Mrs. Bakker's work with Balans & Impuls.
11. Mrs Bergtun would administrate the page and put up links but it would otherwise run itself. It would however be important to share it widely so it would have a good effect.
12. It was also suggested that during WVF meetings, women delegates should take photos and share them widely to show that women are participating and encourage others to do so.
13. The Chair closed the meeting and thanked the participants for their valuable contributions, encouraging them to stay in touch.