



**Dr. Catherine Bosshart, BPW International President 2021-2024**

**Speech for the Opening of the Regional Conference of Europe in Reykjavik, 27 May 2022**

Excellencies, Authorities

Dear Colleagues of the Executive

Dear Regional Coordinator Anu

Dear President Johanna

Dear Presidents of the Federations and Affiliate Clubs

Dear Friends and dear Guests

On behalf of BPW International I welcome you all to the first of our five Regional Conferences which are going to be held during the Triennium 2021-2024.

I would like to express my special thanks to the local organizers. It is a great achievement for an affiliate Club to organize such a big conference. Thank you to President Johanna for having made the huge effort during the time of COVID-19 to plan and organize with all the uncertainties that came with the pandemic.

BPW Reykjavik was helped by the European Team, first and foremost by the Regional Coordinator Anu Viks and her ECC Team. Thanks also to the European Young Representative Alice Minuto and the European Communication Officer Sheerah Kim who organized the Young BPW Symposium. Thanks to all the helping hands involved in the preparations for the conference. With that I wish us all a very successful conference.

We are all assembled here at a very difficult time. Europe has a war at its borders and has to help thousands of refugees to find new homes in the countries of Europe. BPW International has collected money to help to ease the suffering of the Ukrainian People, especially our members in Chernihiv and the refugees in our respective countries. In this context I would like to thank our Federation in Taiwan which collected the enormous amount of over 60,000 Euros. Firstly, we financed a truck with the most urgently needed goods and sent it to our club in Chernihiv. Everything arrived safely. We are preparing the next lorry with very much needed medication and canned food. Moreover, we support an organization in Liviv which gives the refugees shelter and food on their way to the Polish border.

In the meantime, we received several projects which support Ukrainian families to prepare them to find new jobs in the countries of Europe. These are all humanitarian actions. As an international NGO we have in our constitution a paragraph which clearly states that we are non-partisan in the field of politics. Our founder Lena Madesin Phillips knew why she put this sentence in the mission statement of our organization. Therefore, I ask you all not to support any statements that seek the political exclusion of Russia from European or International Institutions. With such an action we put our organization in political spheres which is not within our mandate and discredits our organization and our position at the UN and its agencies. Actions in the field of education and humanitarian aid are in line with our aims. We are in difficult times and have to be especially careful in what action we take.

BPW Reykjavik chose the theme of "Equality" for this conference. Looking at the history of Iceland and the fact that the first parliament assembled as early 930 in Thingvellir, this topic corresponds to one of the main themes of your country. Equality is only possible on the basis of inclusiveness of all ethnic groups, religions and political directions. Equality is also the foundation of our international theme "New Actions through Cooperation". Cooperation can only happen on the basis of mutual respect, trust and acceptance. We are all very interested in the different plenaries and workshops which will talk about good practices to achieve equality.

Before I close, I would like to answer a question that is often asked: What do we get from BPW International? You have and/or you will receive a flyer with 6 major tangible benefits that you receive from BPW International. You will receive the flyer when you leave the room.

- 1) We have totally remodelled our website and we update it daily. Have a look at it once a week and get all the newest information.
- 2) From May 2021, you receive a Newsletter every month with what is happening at international level. It appears in the 5 languages E, F, S, I and German. Due to the European data protection law you will have to enroll yourself to receive it.
- 3) BPW International offers you an international Business Card at membership level. The only thing a Club President has to do is to confirm that you are a club member and have paid your dues.
- 4) Each member who sees the necessity and is willing to invest in a special action can launch a project in accordance with her president. Please register your project on our data base.
- 5) All the Clubs and Federation projects are collated together in an international Database on our website. Register your projects as they give our organization visibility.
- 6) Since the beginning of this year, each month BPW International organizes a webinar on the various topics which are important to our organization.

These are 6 very concrete benefits without even mentioning the international outreach each member has through the international organization.

Wishing you a fruitful conference, I thank you for your attention.

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