



Embracing change – Fresh perspectives

For four days, women leaders from 20 European countries gathered in Sarajevo to learn, discuss and network with one another.

When we chose this theme for our bi-annual conference of “Women in Leadership” in the “Hope for Europe” network, we had no idea what changes Europe would be going through in the year 2023. Now, we see that the topic of “Embracing Change – Fresh Perspectives” was right on target.

For four days, June 7-11 2023, 64 women from 20 countries gathered in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. As Christian leaders in our respective countries and ministries, we came to learn, discuss and network with one another. Also, we were eager to hear and see how our host country is doing now, over 20 years after the terrible war in the 1990s.

We had chosen Hotel Hills for our meetings, as the European Evangelical Alliance had held the meeting of all “Hope for Europe” networks there in October 2022.

Our topics

Our topics in the plenary meetings and in the seminars were manifold. We heard and spoke about resilience, emotional intelligence, marriage, time management, prosperity, overcoming loneliness, changes in Europe, Jesus giving women fresh perspectives, trans-gender, trends in young people, etc.

As Christian leaders in our respective countries and ministries, we came to learn, discuss and network with one another.

Our speakers came from eleven countries, among them Usha Reifsnider (regional director of Lausanne Europe) and Amanda Jackson (former director of the Women’s Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance), plus Dr. Jenn Williamson from France, Kristina Ecis from Latvia, Gail Stathis from Greece, Olga Boldireva from Moldova and many more.



Elke Werner, WiL Network Chair, Germany



Usha Reifsnider, Lausanne Europe, UK

Great times of prayer and worship helped us to focus on God, who alone brings hope to Europe! As it is our tradition since the beginning, we invite women from our host-country to join us on the last day. So, about 50 women from Bosnia came and joined us for the Saturday, and were inspired and encouraged in their personal journey of faith.



Evangelistic Saturday event with Bosnian guests

The history of our women's network

Around the time when the Iron Curtain came down, the Lausanne Movement and the Evangelical Alliance got together and formed: "Hope for Europe", in order to work together in the countries that were opening up at that time. The track focusing on "Women in Leadership" was started in 1992 under the umbrella of Hope for Europe by Elisabeth Mittelstädt, who then was the publisher of Christian Women's Magazines in several European countries.



Moderation with Evodia Budai, Romania



Workshop with Dr. Jenn Williamson, France

So many issues and topics affect us all the same way, no matter whether we live in the West or in the East, South or North of Europe

These bi-annual conferences continued until today, later led by Romkje Fountain (NL) and Hannelore Illgen (Germany), and are now led by Elke Werner (Germany). The leadership team consists of 11 women from 8 countries. We are now affiliated with the European Evangelical Alliance and are also the European partner in the WEA Women's Commission.

Looking forward

We do not yet know where our next conference – planned for 2025 – will take place, but the feedback from our participants (most of them for the first time at one of our conferences, many under the age of 50) shows how much these meetings are appreciated and needed.

We love to connect leaders, young and old, to encourage the church in Europe. So many issues and topics affect us all the same way, no matter whether we live in West- or East, South- or North Europe.

And it helps to listen, to pray and be informed about what is going on in other parts of Europe.

Together, as women in leadership in Europe, we want to share the hope of Jesus for our world, and especially for our continent.

Report: Elke Werner, she is the Chair of the *Hope for Europe-Women in Leadership* Team, www.womeninleadership.eu



The group of participants on the top of Hotel Hills, Sarajevo/Bosnia-Herzegovina