



Press Release N°6
March 2015

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AS AN ANTIDOTE TO THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

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The end of the 24-month initiative High Heels - Building Opportunities for Women in Construction was marked with a large-scale event in Athens, Greece on the 19th of February 2015. The project is implemented within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, Transfer of Innovation, co-funded by the European Union. The final outcomes of the High Heels project are innovative, customised and basic Soft Skills training courses for women (managers and employees) aimed at facilitating their career performance, professional experience and general behavioral knowledge. High Heels provides a know-how on how to deal with gender stereotypes, work with confidence, effective leadership, conflict management, successful negotiations, how to deal with difficult people and how to spot strengths and talents. The project uncovers psychological tricks how to cope with the obstacles to the professional advancement targeted at women - the minority in the male-dominated construction sector.

An early roundtable discussion preceded the conference, moderated by Dimitris Zafeiriadis, Vice President of knowl. Professionals and academics from the construction sector participated in the talks, with the aim to explore the special characteristics and conditions for the employment of women in the construction sector. The conference was completed with the delivery of a free training session for mastering communication, negotiation and leadership attributes aimed at developing sound interpersonal skills for women pursuing successful professional careers in the construction sector. The facilitator of the sessions was George Vlachos, Business Development Consultant and former CEO of Lafarge.

The main outcomes of the discussions during the Tips-4-SKILLS-day can be summarized as follows:

- The under-representation of women is attributed to both personal (lack of motivation, lack of competences) and external factors (labor market, culture, psychology).

- Women need to upgrade their competences with flexibility/adaptability, interpersonal and communication skills and confident professional attitude. This will improve their self-esteem at work which determines the career advancement in the construction sector.

- Upgrading skills in particular is considered an effective way of improving competitiveness, entrepreneurship and employability, based on the observations in many professional sectors.

- Women could opt for more innovative, construction-related areas, such as energy, sustainability and environmental projects.

According to Mrs Olga Stavropoulou, President of Militos Consulting: «Most speakers agreed that the development of soft skills and interpersonal competences for coping with people and difficult situations, allows women to better manage cases of chauvinistic behavior, mistreatment or contestation.»

[CLICK HERE for photographs from the conference](#)

[CLICK HERE for rich informative material \(articles, conference outcomes etc\)](#)



Perhaps unsurprisingly the final conference of High Heels project was entitled "Tips 4 SKILLS". The happening was co-organized by the Greek partners Militos SA and knowl Social Enterprise and hosted by the modern event house Collage. An early roundtable discussion, part of the High Heels dissemination strategy, preceded the conference, which expanded the final conference into a full, intriguing Tips-4-SKILLS-day. Productive discussions, provision of practical solutions and knowledge, continuous interest in behavioral knowledge and a full house is a short list of what characterizes the final project event.

The conference focused on the "barriers" to women professionals in the male dominated construction sector. It showcased the points that differentiate women from men and the soft skills which, if developed, can offer women a competitive advantage over their male competitors.

The conference was moderated by the renowned internal spaces decorator Sissy Feida. Among the distinguished speakers of the event were: European Parliament Member Maria Spiraki, the former General Secretary of Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interiors, Vasso Kollia, Leonidas Antonakopoulos, Head of the European Parliament Information Office in Greece, Professor Antonia Mouropoulou, National Technical University of Athens, Nikos Marsellos, Vivian Benetou, Bety Rouni, Stella Daouti, Architect and owner of Area Office, Dr. Ioannis Salamouris, President knowl Social Enterprise & Assistant Professor of Finance of HAEC, Justine Lisson and Dimitris Zafeiriadis. More than 200 professionals attended the conference.



High Heels is implemented by a European consortium of partners from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, and Romania. If you wish to learn more about the project, simply visit our website: www.highheelsproject.eu.

Partners



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Lifelong Learning Programme

With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.
This project has been funded with the support from the European Commission.
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