



**Europe**

**BPW INTERNATIONAL**  
Business & Professional Women

Opening speech Gabriella Canonica, BPW Europe Coordinator  
BPW European Congress in Stockholm, Friday 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2006

I remember a wonderful late summer day in Cyprus in 2001. The 3<sup>rd</sup> European Presidents Meeting.

Ilse Spritzendorfer, at that time our regional coordinator, announced the place for the next European congress. She said: the winner is...: Stockholm / Sweden!

I remember the laughing and happy expression on the face of Lena Hokfelt, at that time President of BPW Sweden.

2006 seemed so "far away".

And now, here we are!  
The time just flew by  
It is always "suddenly".  
Like Christmas, suddenly it is Christmas  
Like the end of the Year,  
Suddenly it is New Year

And we do not know where the time has gone.  
The wiser we get, the quicker it is "suddenly".

Standing here in front of you, I am proud to have the great honor to open **IN A FEW MINUTES** this 12<sup>th</sup> European BPW congress.

**Honorary Guests,  
Dear BPW Members from Europe and the world**

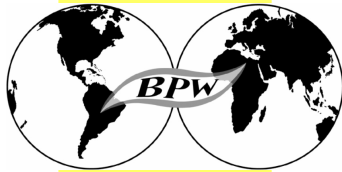
- A warm welcome to the Members of the Royal Family,
- the authorities of the City of Stockholm,
- Ambassadors,
- Consuls,
- International President and Executive Board members
- Past Presidents
- Presidents of Europe
  
- I welcome BPW members from:  
Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland,  
Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom
- And from overseas: Thailand / New-York-USA / Canada  
In this Aula we speak 19 different languages, but we all speak "BPW"! That is BPW Worldwide!
- dear ALL in this wonderful Aula of Norra Latin in Stockholm  
With the title of our 12<sup>th</sup> European congress: "Women making the Difference – for women and men" we really realize that NOW we do make the difference. Or have to do the Difference!

Of course I had some *sleepless nights...* thinking of "What am I going to say as opening words"

What do you expect me to say?

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What would you like to hear me saying?  
Then one night I sat up right in my bed with ... with the answer:

I am, as all my predecessors the European coordinators before me, "the Congress Opener"  
I stand here in front of you with the same task, nothing new to be invented.

I speak about the same topics. Maybe, or sure in other words, but the topics of 12 European congresses  
have proved successful.  
And if I look back on the 75 years of BPW International, it is the same - everything has proved successful.

The 1<sup>st</sup> European conference, took place 25 years ago, in 1981. We are celebrating!

Renata Blodow was the first Regional Coordinator of BPW Europe. I am happy, that she is here with us today.

**Small steps towards our goals.** Others would say: let's do big steps. I prefer the small, secure steps. ---Big  
planned steps can often end nowhere, just like empty words. - There are so many political empty words  
around this world, spoken every hour.

What we can do, is adapting ourselves to "our" time, no need to say: "...but 75 years ago, they liked this and  
that..."

No, we have to be "women of our time."  
We do it the way we do it, with the focus on the future, not the past.

**What about the present?** = – there is a saying "the present is a present that I don't want to miss"

**What can we promote today**, in the PRESENT with the knowledge of yesterday?  
With the history of 75 years of BPW International? With the 25 years of ECC, BPW Europe?

**Past:**

If I look back and see nothing, do not feel the power that was alive in the past, then there is only a black hole.

And that is for me the symbol of horror, because I can not understand the black hole, it frightens me.

But if I look back, and feel the power of 75 years of history, of the small steps taken year after year, with  
results we can see, results that show in our everyday life, then it is confidence that fills my spirit and my  
heart.

- But then again I thought?

Well, last year we had our 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of BPW International, sure that our members wait for the  
enlightening statements "One Year after congress" ..

Can you imagine that after this revelation, another sleepless night followed?  
Do I really have to tell you anything new?

Do I know anything you do not know already?

At the opening of the 10<sup>th</sup> European Congress in Tallinn, 2000, Coordinator Ilse Spritzendorfer said:

*If I had three wishes, I would ask for:*

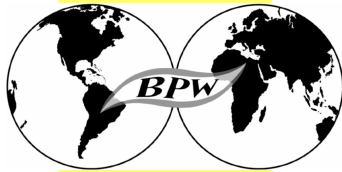
1) *Equal economic standards all over Europe" and." . . . . . Let's hope we see the day when the economic scene  
will enable everyone to stand on an equal economic platform. "*

2) *Equal access of women in all positions – not only in theory, but also in practice.*

3) *Strong business links between women.-*

*We cannot change the world but we can begin making these wishes reality right now!*

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At the same Congress, Dr. Antoinette Rüegg, at that time first Vice President of BPW International, said:.. *"But sometimes I meet members who believe the only purpose of BPW lies in raising their own business figures. These women must realize that the reason for being a BPW-member is not primarily their own financial profit. ....one of the principles of BPW is: "Give first, and then take".*

**Wise words!**

**My wish for the Future of BPW:** is "to Make our Members visible"!

Many, most of our members do not make themselves visible. Visible as BPW Members. Telling the world: Here I am, here are my skills, my professional and personal skills, here I have something to tell, or to sell you. I am an expert in this and that.

Not long ago, A president of a Federation phoned me asking desperately: do we not have any BPW lawyers in other countries? Am I the only one....?

Remark: She is visible with all her information on her profession/business in the Business and Member Pages of BPW International.

*"Give first, and then take"* She gave her information, her knowledge.

The Business and Member Pages. The only Members Directory for all our members to be visible to the world. ON-LINE! Are you using it? Our Expert Database open for and to all?

At the Presidents Meeting in Cyprus 2001, Christine Heinze said:

*Young BPW: Young BPW offers a management strategy to give sustainability to BPW-Europe which should be taken care of by the presidents of each federation and club. We urge every federation to stay attractive for future generations, but also give the opportunity to try new ideas and invent new forms of BPW gatherings, meetings and seminars.*

- During the 5<sup>th</sup> European Congress here in Stockholm 1988, a Panel Discussion of Young BPW was in the Program for the first time!

**Young BPW, is our future!**

I come back to my statement that I do not have to invent any new points.

**Explanation:**

Reading the History of our founder, Lena Madesin Phillips, I found many many passages with statements, tales, that are absolutely correct in "The actual" time. Framework. Transferring these tales or statements to "our time", into our world, makes sense.

Women always made the difference.

Women always struggled for the same goals

Women always arrived to obtain what they wanted, sometimes it took very very long, and sometimes it went "just like that".

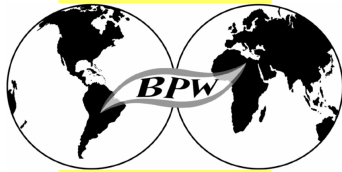
This Congress offers us the best opportunity to plan new strategies and methods, project our aims and most importantly, to empower us to becoming a major player in the formation of the European culture where all citizens share equal opportunities and status.

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**Our International Theme:**

I think that we go the way of “new Dimensions of Leadership” and straight into “women making the Difference”

Where do we really stand today that we can have this sophisticated statement of “Women making the Difference – for Women and Men?”

Let’s find out together In this Congress:

By the way, we are celebrating!

**1.**

Stockholm is for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Time Place of BPW Congresses, the first was an International Congress in 1953 with 2000 participants!!!

The second: the 5<sup>th</sup> European Congress in 1988, and NOW the third, the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of BPW Europe.

**2.**

25 Years of ECC, founded in 1988 in Strasbourg

**3.**

Increasing Membership: We do have good news!

New Country, new Clubs

1. Turkey, Club Ankara,

2. Hungary, Club Budapest.

3. Ukraine, Club Kiev

4. Spain, Club Alicante, Club Barcelona, Club Tarragona.

5. France: Club Lille Métropole, Club Toulouse

6. Germany, Club Osnabrück, it was founded just two weeks ago

**A special welcome to our newcomers.**

**And now, I declare this Celebration congress, the 12th European Congress of Business and Professional Women, officially opened**

May this congress be the one you will never forget, from where you will take home highlights  
The Difference?

Yes: Women make the difference for women and Men.

A Happy and warm welcome to you all in this Aula of Norra Latin in Stockholm!

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