



AKTEA*

Les femmes dans la pêche et les cultures marines en Europe

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Journal of the 'FEMMES' European Thematic Network

The 'FEMMES' European Thematic Network A laboratory for experiment exchanges and transnational reflexion.

Noting a mutual misunderstanding of professional realities between researchers and women in the fishing and aquaculture sector, Katia Frangouides – a researcher in social sciences with CEDEM at the University of Western Brittany – put in a request for European financing with the goal of researching a better way of determining the role and organisation of women through the creation of the FEMMES Network. This work will be carried out over a period of three years, in several languages.

A permanent core group from six countries (Finland, France, Spain, Ireland, United Kingdom and Portugal) will lead the network. The objective is to implement a system of exchanges in order to establish productive links between three categories of workers in the fishing and aquaculture field:

- 1- Researchers in Social Sciences
- 2- Women linked to these sectors
- 3- Interlocutors to women's organisations: social, administrative and training bodies.

The FEMMES Network has its own tools in order to fulfil this objective. Several transnational workshops will meet. A website will be used to present information and provide a forum for contact: fishwomen.org. Six information sheets are planned, with this issue for June 2003 being the first edition. A group is working on the popularisation of scientific research (see our article on "the stress of diatoma"). This group also has the task of propagating official documents con-

cerning the application of national and European measures to compensate for gaps identified by the network.

The current state of affairs

The transnational working groups will meet during three Workshops in order to deal with two major themes. Material is already being gathered to put up the picture of the state of affairs. Work is underway to establish contact between the different women's organisations in the fishing and aquaculture sector. This work will extend by way of their connexion with networks from other economic sectors. At the end of the project, a directory of women's organisations and European initiatives will be published.

The first Workshop for exchanges on the theme of "Women and the private space" took place in the French town of Brest from 20th to 22nd February 2003. The working groups discussed women's participation in activities linked to business and the issue of their status. The second Workshop will be held from 25th to 27th September 2003 in Vaasa, Finland and will take the theme of "Women and public space". The creation and operation of women's organisations as well as their participation in collective action will come under scrutiny.

The exchanges laboratory of the FEMMES Network lists the current shortcomings in research concerning women in the maritime world. It intends to increase interest among researchers for women using material gathered, while proposing new directions for research. An agenda will

EDITORIAL:

Women with a common desire for recognition of their work.

The meeting in Brest caused very productive debates between women and the researchers representing six European countries. Together, they tackled the issue of women in the private space, in turns examining production, business management, the question of legal status, etc.

We must recognise here that there are differences in treatment. On the one hand, work performed by female professionals is recognised and they are protected by law. On the other hand, we have women whose role is essential to the survival of businesses, but who work in their husbands' shade. All demand respect for their professions and recognition for their work. The FEMMES Network keeps this objective as its focal point. ■

K.F. ■

be put forward to decision-makers regarding research into gender and equal opportunities.

Furthermore, the exchanges laboratory will identify the aspirations of women with regard to improvements in their everyday conditions. A second agenda will present to policy-makers the claims of women. These two documents will be assessed by the Network during the third Workshop. Researchers will present a summary of the work completed by the FEMMES Network to a wider public. Other researchers concentrating on equal opportunities in other sectors of the economy will be invited to speak. ■

Those lost at sea enter into the debate

Towards a common measure of reform for the presumption of death of fishermen lost at sea.

The issue of fishermen lost at sea suddenly came up during a debate on the legal status of women. Everyone present agreed on the need for a common measure of reform to reduce the amount of time necessary for an official recording of death for those lost at sea. This measure would prevent financial difficulties from compounding the trauma caused by the death of a fisherman. The deceased's family would be respected and accorded protection. The current timescale stands at ten years for most of the Member States, although dispensations help the payment of insurance premiums and interim aid is given to families.

The issue of people lost at sea appeared during a debate on women's social status for several reasons. The most obvious reason is the unsatisfactory response following a loss of life at sea for the protection of families concerning the professional risks incurred by fishermen. Exposed to the most violent natural hazards, fishermen are constantly at risk from drowning and their bodies never being recovered. The fisherman's family is therefore faced with financial and administrative problems. How can they survive in the short term, if death is not pronounced? Psychological problems are added to the obvious distress. How can anybody mourn the loss of a loved one without the tangible evidence of a dead body? The wives of fishermen are often those in charge of managing the family income. The loss of income on which they depend compromises their future. As a consequence, they are looking after their own, encouraging their partners to find out more about their security.

In Finland, the death of somebody lost at sea is officially confirmed by a tribunal ten years after the person's disappearance. Married status is upheld for the same period. This

results in serious difficulties for families. Women would like to see the period required for declaration of death reduced to one year, in order to lift restrictions. "The loss of a husband represents a loss of the will to carry on", they say. The sale of a boat, insurance premiums, the disposal of property, frozen bank accounts, spiralling debt – all this goes on while children are still at school. In order to maintain a reasonable standard of living and out of respect for those in mourning, women demand the creation of a hardship fund until the payment of insurance premiums. They also demand more transparency from the authorities as regards the family during the enquiry. Women are campaigning for more safety at sea, and they are urging their partners to gain proper training. A great deal of training is available, including training via computer. But these resources are under-used.

In Portugal, a death certificate is issued ten years after the fisherman's disappearance. However, a man lost at sea is immediately considered as being deceased. The widow and any children are immediately helped by the "Fisherman's Mutual Insurance Company" – a not-for-profit insurance company covering over 95% of workers in the industry. Since 1997, fishermen have been obliged to take out life insurance for individual risks in addition to "workplace accidents" insurance, which is obligatory for all workers. Although it is the responsibility of the employer, contributions are often debited from the crew. The Court issues a declaration of death after a process similar to that undertaken after a land-based work accident has resulted in death. When the body is not recovered, the family is paid a premium of €50,000. Other benefits are paid to the widow and also to any children up to their coming of age or the end of their education. Where the widow remarries

she receives compensation, but loses the additional benefits.

In the United Kingdom, the waiting period after a disappearance at sea is ten years. Without a body, no death can be recorded. Insurance premiums are blocked, causing difficult financial situations. In certain conditions, it is possible to obtain a declaration by tribunal. An organisation takes control of problems linked to disappearances at sea, shipwrecks and other seafaring accidents. Its purpose is to receive sea-based workers in hostels and inform their families. Voluntary personal risk insurance is also available. If this insurance is taken up, the inclusion of a "disappearance at sea" clause should be considered. Sea-based safety must be improved. After the disappearance of their son – neither his body nor his boat was found – some parents used the life insurance premium to finance a publicity campaign aimed at fisherman to make sure they wear life jackets.

In Ireland, a death certificate is issued seven years after a disappearance at sea. This period can be reduced by a coroner's decision.

◆◆◆ continued on page 4

The FEMMES Network website:

The stress of diatoma makes researchers lose sleep

Between 20 and 30% of diatoma – microscopic algae at the bottom of the food chain in the aquatic environment – are developing chemical defences against their predators: copepods.

This chemical phenomenon could spread due to changes in the aquatic environment, thereby impoverishing the oceans.

Researchers are working on existing leads.

For more details, please see:
<http://www.fishwomen.org>

WORKSHOP

Agneta, Dominique, Sally and C^o

The Choice of diversifying

From noting that the fishing and oyster-farming companies' income is worsening, from the smaller catches in the sea to the development of tourism, women use two strategies to maintain or increase their income. One strategy consists of researching a sector outside that of fishing, examining an independent salaried employee with a guaranteed fixed income. The other strategy consists of extending the business activity by developing family activities linked to fishing and marine farming.

The Brest Workshop attempted to determine what women mean by the term 'diversification', and to identify the initiatives already underway and resistance to this choice. Four experiences were presented.

First experience, France: A fisherman's family on the Mediterranean coast has refurbished an old building. The family offers accommodation and food, and organises fishing trips on their second boat (tourist activities are not permitted aboard a fishing vessel). The local fishing committee and the département (county) and regional authorities contributed to the project. Income from diversifying has overtaken fishing and, in the long run, may lead to professional restructuring, although the official professional description would still be a working one - it provides for the table d'hôte home-cooking service, and gives social identity to the family.

Second experience, France: "Terre et Mer" a shellfish-farming association in Marennes-Oléron area launched *Projet Tourisme Bleu* (a tourism initiative) in order to develop rural tourism, promote local products, protect the environment and promote the status of women. Visitors go on a tour of the farm, which includes free oyster tasting and boarding for the parks. An annual audit reveals that the initiative attracted 1000 visitors and provided an increase of 7 to 50% on farm income. Partnering the project are: the Oyster Education Centre and the Seaweed Institute. Financing is provided by the Département (county), the Region and the EU.

Third experience, Ireland: In order to promote and preserve her husband's catches for the longest possible time, Sally – the wife of a fisherman – started work smoking wild salmon between the months of September and March. She then borrowed capital in order to create a processing installation employing four to eight people, all the while continuing to manage the boat. Today, she is thinking about developing her production installation. According to her, her initiative has brought her strength and energy.

Fourth experience, Finland: Returning to the country, going against the tide of a rural exodus, Agneta and her husband decided to create a fishing and tourism business using their seventeenth century family farm. The income generated by fishing and tourism are the same, but the sales structure for the sale of catches has changed, as private sales reach 80% instead of being a virtual monopoly for wholesalers. Plans for the future include: the processing of catches, the sale of produce, accommodation, seminars and a nature school.

Questions

Firstly, not all of the climates lend themselves favourably to tourism, and not all products allow for value adding. Regulations often oblige fishermen to invest in safety equipment before carrying tourist passengers. This is bearing in mind the short length of the tourist season. In any case, diversifying requires time and money. People should be careful not to concentrate too much on tourism and lose sight of the need to prolong the main resources and means of production. Fishing and marine farming should be enough to live on comfortably. Product value adding is all well and good, but diversification may not be such a good thing if it becomes the Trojan horse of reconversion.

The European Community, after having considered the breaking up of flotillas as a cure for the growing shortage of resources, sees diversification as a basis for discussion with small companies working towards better fishing management. Women are asking the EC to protect both resources and their profession by measures adapted to micro-economic structures. ■

Brief details from Brest:

Mariscadoras: Fisherwomen

Galician 'mariscadoras', shellfishwomen have become professional to the level of integrating clam production process. They are currently demanding recognition at European level.

The Prestige – a pivotal moment

Before the Prestige – a landscape and work. After the Prestige – anger and compensation. Galician women spearheaded the anti-pollution actions, organised financial solidarity, health checks and more. They created a lasting action group.

Female net repairers:

a "harsh and necessary" profession

The net-repairing profession requires real qualifications. In Spain and Portugal, it is a part of fishing communities' culture, but is now disappearing, under threat from the relocation of net manufacturing. Portuguese business is seasonal. Some women are paid, others receive no salary. The profession is put under threat from retired fishermen with low pension.

Convenient slave or economic player?

In Finland, salaried fisherwomen have the same rights as men. However, participating in the management of the boat women very often work with no salary or pension. "I am a convenient slave", one of them bitterly points out.

A view from Brest

FEBRUARY 2003, AT THE CEDEM



A diversity of experiences, a deepening of exchanges: the Brest Workshop was held in a very warm and friendly atmosphere.

SCARLETTE LE CORRE – DIVERSIFYING DYNAMICALLY

Mme. Le Corre welcomed Brest workshop participants in order to explain her career. A fisherwoman, she both fished and ran a seaweed farm in the open seas. She created a small processing company, mixing edible seaweeds with fishing produce. Business is booming!



◆◆◆ *lost at sea* (continued from page 2)

In Spain, somebody who has disappeared at sea is considered deceased ten years after their disappearance was declared. However, a death certificate is issued after two years. An emergency fund helps the widow up to the legal date of payment of a widow's pension.

In France, official recognition of death is fixed at ten years by law. After an enquiry conducted by maritime authorities, state aid can be released. The death certificate is issued after a legal enquiry by the courts the year after the disappearance. Almost

all fishing boat owners take out insurance against the risk of losing a boat, yet they rarely protect themselves against personal risks. Insurance is not obligatory. Families complain about the lack of transparency in enquiries and more particularly demand to know the criteria which lead the authorities to decide whether or not to raise a sunken vessel. For about ten years now, compensation lawsuits have been attempted on the grounds of professional incompetence against boat owners by the families of disappeared crew members. Up to now, judges have not acted on their demands. ■

The FEMMES Network:

France: CEDEM Université de Bretagne Occidentale - Association Femmes entre terre et mer, Southern Brittany

Spain: Universidad de La Laguna, Iles Canaries - Cofradia de Pescadores de Cambados, Galicia

Portugal: Universidade de Madeira, Madère - Mutua dos Pescadores, Lisbon

Finland: Osterbottens Fiskarförbund r.f., Vaasa

United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland: Non-organised members

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