

20 years of the IWF (1993–2013)

International Women's Forum (IWF) is an association of women involved in science and business, non-governmental organization with the head office in the Warsaw School of Economic (WSE). The beginning of the IWF activity goes back to 1993, when two American women – Christina Lane and Gayla Salinas from the INET Foundation contributed to founding a Polish-American Library for Businesswomen at the Warsaw School of Economics. Following that event, on the Professor Eufemia Teichmann's initiative the meeting establishing the International Women's Forum was held on 3 June 1993. For the first two years, the IWF operated as scientific-research program affiliated with the Collegium of World Economy WSE; within the framework of this program the IWF organized educational meetings and international conferences for women-business owners and company managers. There were also initiated, one of the first in Poland, studies on female entrepreneurship. In April 1995, the International Women's Forum was registered as association; by the power of the Senate Decree of 26 January 1996, the Warsaw School of Economics became the IWF's supporting institution.

Mission, forms of action, branches

The IWF mission is promoting women's entrepreneurship. Monthly discursive meetings devoted to issues important from the point of view of business management and personal development. There are periodically organized national and international conferences addressed to a wide cluster of businesswomen and academic community. The magazine "Women and Business" is published in Polish and English in cooperation with the Warsaw School of

Economics. There are organized psychological workshops for women, as well as other kind of training. The IWF has three regional branches: the Olsztyn Branch (since 2000), the Pomeranian Branch (since 2003) and Łódź Branch (since 2006).

Woman of Success Galas

Elections of the Woman of Success have been organized since 1999 by the President of the IWF Olsztyn Branch – Ewa Domaradzka-Ziarek. There were 15 editions of the Warmia and Mazury Woman of Success Gala (1999–2013), 3 editions of the Masovian Woman of Success Gala (2011–2013) and two editions of the Silesian Woman of Success Gala (2012–2013). The Laureates become women performing various jobs who in a special way facilitate development of a particular region and perform outstanding social activities. The contest Chapter consisting of local media journalists, representatives of local businesses, local authorities and non-governmental organizations choose 10 women among all entered to the contest, then among this "golden ten" one woman is voted who receives the Woman of Success statuette presented at the Gala. Another statuette – the Big Kiss – is presented to the man who facilitates promotion of the equal treatment of women and men in society through his attitude, work or activity.

Psychological workshops

The inherent element of the IWF's activity were Weekends for ourselves – psychological workshops for the members, initiated in 1999 and until 2008 carried out by Zuzanna Celmer. The topics of these

workshops were, *inter alia*: Intuition, motivation and communication, Archetypes of life roles; Time management according to Covey; How to create one's own conscious image; Nature of stress and coping techniques; Between emotions and reason; Emotional intelligence in private life and in business; Getting to know yourself – reading one's own body energy map and developing relations with others; My place in life and among people – finding archetypes that we follow in life.

Conferences

The IWF supported by numerous sponsors organized a periodical conference in cooperation with the Collegium of World Economy WSE. The Conference materials were published in "Women and Business". Overall, 15 conferences were held, including 10 international ones. Their subjects were as follows:

- A woman in business, society and family in the Central and Eastern Europe countries. Transformation – more chances or threats for women? 5–6 May 1994, Warsaw School of Economics
- Women business owners: small business as the antidote to unemployment 4 May 1995, Warsaw School of Economics
- Entrepreneurship in Europe: the role of women in the private sector development in the Central and Eastern Europe countries 30–31 May 1996, Warsaw School of Economics
- European integration, labor market, women 14–15 May 1998, Warsaw School of Economics
- Polish women managers 2000 26–27 September 2000, Hotel Sheraton, Warsaw
- Financing small and medium innovative enterprises by investment companies in Poland 6 October 2000, the Ministry of Economy, Warsaw
- Conditions and programs of women's entrepreneurship development (with participation of women from Kyrgyzstan) 20 November 2001, Warsaw School of Economics
- European Union on behalf of women and small and medium enterprises (the fourth meeting within the framework of the Central European Business Women's Academy CEBWA) 24–25 May 2002, Warsaw School of Economics
- Women and Business – Management in the Era of Globalization and Integration 15 May 2003, Financial Centre Puławska in Warsaw
- Ethics and communication in business 12 May 2005, conference under the patronage of the Polish Institute of Directors and the Scandinavian-Polish Chamber of Commerce, Warsaw School of Economics
- A woman – effective leader and manager 23–24 June 2005; conference organized by the Institute of Management in cooperation with the IWF, Warsaw
- Managing diversity in a company 19 October 2006, Hotel Hyatt Warsaw
- Diversity in management 20 November 2008, Warsaw School of Economics
- Diversity management: psychological, marketing and architectonic aspects 13 May 2010, Warsaw School of Economics
- Entrepreneurship of women and innovative economy 24 September 2013, Warsaw School of Economics

International Activity

One of the statutory objectives of the IWF is making contacts with similar organizations in Europe and the world, as well as drawing knowledge and inspirations from such contacts. The International Women's Forum was in a group of six organizations which established Central European Business Women's Academy (CEBWA) in 1999. It participated – as a partner organization – in two international projects financed by the European Social Fund within the framework of the Community initiative EQUAL in the years 2005–2007: Gender Index and ENTER. Together with the Centre for Advancement of Women, IWF organized the Polish edition of the contest Women of Europe Award 2003/2004 under the patronage of the current European Union Ambassador in Poland – Mr. Bruno Dethomas. The contest was initiated in 1987 by the International Association for the Promotion of Women of Europe (AIPFE); its objective was appointment of the woman who performed outstanding service on behalf of European integration. The main award is granted biennially; in 2004, the Polish laureate of the contests became Róża Woźniakowska-Thun.

In 2000, the IWF carried out its first foreign mission to the USA. Meetings with organizations of businesswomen in Boston, Washington and New York were the source of knowledge concerning the aid of-

ferred by the American government and non-governmental organizations in a form of information, training, counselling and credit guarantees, as well as the venture capital fund for women. In 2001, the IWF carried out the mutual project with the Swedish organization – “Forum Malardalen-Poland” – concerning women’s entrepreneurship promotion in Poland and Sweden. The project included three training seminars in both countries, which participants were Polish and Swedish women conducting their own businesses, including members of the established the year before IWF Branch in Olsztyn. The seminars topics were devoted, *inter alia*, to challenges facing small and medium companies due to European integration and possibilities to obtain European funds for business development. The same year (2001), a group of the IWF members were invited to visit Kyrgyzstan, and then IWF hosted twelve Kirgiz female entrepreneurs and leaders in Poland, sharing knowledge and experience in business management. The program consisted of seminars and visits to female-managed companies in Warsaw, Olsztyn, Tomaszów Mazowiecki and Łódź, as well as institutions supporting development of small and medium businesses in Żelów, Łódź and Tomaszów Mazowiecki.

In 2002, members of the IWF participated in the meeting with business representatives from Moldova and Armenia, held at the BCC premises in Warsaw. They also participated in the Fifth Economic Forum of the Western, Central and Eastern Europe countries in Skopje (Macedonia). In 2003, together with female entrepreneurs from Germany and Turkey, the IWF businesswomen participated in a conference in Berlin, where they, *i.a.* visited the female entrepreneurship incubator. During the

years 2001–2003, the IWF participated in the program of the European Economic Commission promoting entrepreneurship of women not only from Europe, but also from the Caucasian and Balkan regions. In 2004, the IWF was represented on the First Forum for Businesswomen Organizations in Mediterranean countries and the ones newly accessing the Community MED–PHARE, which was held in Barcelona.

In August 2004, by the courtesy of the Ambassador RPA in Poland – Ms. Sikose Mji – the IWF members went with the economic mission to South Africa, where they met women leaders of Businesswomen’s Association, Technology for Women in Business, Beads of Africa, International Women Club, and visited a few women-managed companies in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Since 2013, the IWF has been included as the partner organization into two international projects. One of them is the pilot project Baltic Sea Region Partnership Platform for Gender and Economic Growth carried out within the UE strategy for the Baltic Sea region by WINNET organization from Sweden and University of Szczecin. The other project: Knowledge Networking Program on Engendering Macroeconomics and International Economics objective is enlargement of knowledge on the role of women in economic development in conditions of globalization in Europe and Poland. The project consists of periodically organized in various countries Summer Institutes (2011–2016). It is carried out by the Jagiellonian University, Istanbul Technical University and the Levy Institute from the USA.

Ewa Lisowska