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***INICIATIVAS DE FUTURO PARA UNA
EUROPA SOCIAL (IFESCOOP)***



El proyecto “**Mujeres en una Europa Igualitaria**” (Women in an Equal Europe) utiliza un marco feminista y procesos creativos de teatro, cine y recursos digitales online para explorar y reflexionar sobre las experiencias de las mujeres que viven en Europa y el poder de las políticas de la UE para promover la igualdad de género, los derechos humanos y la diversidad.



Este proyecto transnacional de compromiso democrático de la sociedad civil involucra a cuatro socios europeos de Irlanda, España, Croacia y Serbia:

- **SMASHING TIMES THEATRE COMPANY**, Dublin (Irlanda), coordinador
- **INICIATIVAS DE FUTURO PARA UNA EUROPA SOCIAL**, Valencia (España)
- **MIROVNA GRUPA MLADIH DUNAV**, Vukovar (Croacia)
- **DAH THEATRE RESEARCH CENTRE**, Belgrado (Serbia)



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Utilizando las artes y el activismo político, el proyecto promueve la igualdad de género a través de las experiencias de mujeres en Europa para garantizar que sus voces y sus historias se escuchen y se reconozcan por igual.

El proyecto identifica 20 historias positivas, experimentadas por mujeres, cinco de cada país socio, que se han producido como resultado de su pertenencia a la UE.



Las 20 historias, junto con varios artículos entre los que cabe destacar el del historiador valenciano Kilian Cuerda **“UNIÓN EUROPEA E IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO: UNA CONQUISTA EN MARCHA”**, se utilizan para producir un libro digital, un taller de teatro sobre igualdad y derechos humanos y una performance sobre el papel de las mujeres en Europa para que ciudadanos, artistas y activistas debatan sobre estos temas y sobre el tipo de Europa que queremos para el futuro.



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Women in an Equal Europe

BOOK

CREATED AND EDITED BY MARY MOYNIRAN



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IFES
COOP

Women in an Equal Europe

INTERVIEWS
FROM SPAIN
CONDUCTED
BY INICIATIVAS
DE FUTURO
PARA UNA
EUROPA SOCIAL,
VALENCIA, SPAIN

Catalina Valencia // Pilar Mena // Mercedes Acitores
Yolanda Trujillo // Lourdes Mirón



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CATALINA VALENCIA

Biography

Catalina Valencia is a coordinator for the Start-Up Europe Awards initiative promoted by the European Commission and the Finnova Foundation. She is a Communications Officer for the Finnova Foundation in Spain, specializing in innovation and entrepreneurship. Catalina is originally from Medellín, Colombia, where she worked as an Audio-Visual Director until the beginning of her international trading in Valencia, Spain, where she completed three masters: in Television Scripting (FUA UIMP Scholarship), in Cultural Management and in Strategic Management for Communication (Berthoudt Built Scholarship). In 2014 she was chosen to represent Spain in the Summer School of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in New York, where she facilitated a workshop titled 'How to communicate a project'. Later she worked as Communication and Public Relations Manager for the co-working space Wayco. She has been a speaker at events such as Colombia 3.0 (Bogotá, 2013) invited by the ICT Ministry, and Colombia Transborder (Valencia, 2016) for the Consulate of Colombia in Valencia, among others.

In 2015 she received the high-performance citizenship 'La Diputa Europea' from the Diputación Provincial de Valencia, which allowed her to develop her career by working in Brussels in Belgium for five months. She was chosen as the person who most promoted the entrepreneurial community of the city of Valencia in Spain, in the Valencia Start-up Awards of the City Council in 2016. In November 2017 she received a scholarship for a Master in Innovation organised by I2i Institute. Catalina worked on communications for the Waycolimera project, a sustainable consumption platform that connects local producers and consumers, and she is part of the OutSpace community, a global network of independent professionals who study digital, social and collaborative transformations in depth. She has collaborated on a voluntary basis as a secretary in the association WOMES Professionals of the World for Social Integration based in Valencia.

Question: Tell us a little about yourself.

Catalina: I was born in Medellín, Colombia and I have been living in Valencia, Spain, since 2005. I have both Colombian and Spanish citizenship. I work as a journalist, community manager and project manager. I am Entrepreneurship Communications Officer for Finnova Foundation and Manager of the Startup Europe Awards initiative, promoted by the European Commission and implemented by Finnova. I help start-ups to get more visibility and to internationalise their projects, connecting them through networks such as Startup Europe Latam Assembly, where I am a founding team member. I am very interested in innovation, not only technological, but also creating communities and collaborative transformations in all fields. I love helping people to get connected and I used to collaborate in various initiatives in Valencia like Waycolimera, a community for a local and more sustainable consumption.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Catalina: I have been living in Spain for 12 years. I must say, I did not come to Spain because of security problems or the economic situation in Colombia, but because of the desire to know another culture, to have new experiences and to expand my professional horizons. I was able to come thanks to a grant from a foundation for audio-visual scripting, and when it finished I started a new Master in Cultural Management. After finishing this Master, I won a scholarship for Latin American students to study in the UK, a Master in New Trends of Communication.

In those first years, it was not easy to get a job according to my professional profile, but I could find some things that allowed me to support myself financially, although not with the best working conditions. However, Spain and Europe in general have been such a different and positive experience for me that I decided to persist and continue studying while looking for a better professional opportunity. And this opportunity came in the form of a grant from the Provincial Council of Valencia, which allowed me to work for five months in Brussels at the headquarters of the Finnova Foundation. When I returned to Valencia, the foundation hired me to continue working for them there. Spain has given me a lot of opportunities to grow personally and professionally. I have felt very well received and I have adapted very well from the time I arrived. I have never felt discriminated against because of my immigration status or for being a woman within my closest personal sphere. During the worst years of the Spanish economic crisis, I would notice in some people, feelings of fear towards immigrants, because in some way they felt threatened or imagined that the immigrants were in Spain to 'steal their work'.

In my native country the way of working is different compared to Spain: back there people live by and for work. Work is the main thing in your life, there is a very deep sense of duty and responsibility. This is not the case in Spain or Europe. People are less responsible, a person's time is more diversified and it seems that in the working week there is more time for other things besides working. That attracted me because I've always liked to collaborate and get involved in initiatives, even if they have nothing to do with the work for which I receive a salary.



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PILAR MENA

Biography

Pilar Mená is a professional with specific training in Labour Relations and Human Resources, having more than 26 years' work experience in the training sector. She started working in the area of administration in human resources and then began working in the development and management of training plans as well as working on European projects. In recent years she has worked as a quality manager, a position that has allowed her to carry out best practice in the development of people, through the pursuit of objectives and opportunities for improvement that are aligned with the strategic direction of the company. Her passion for working in Human Resources has led her to join the Territorial Council of AEDRE CV, the National Association for People Management and Development. Her work is always professionally linked to training and employment issues and she is a collaborator and consultant for an organization called Social & Talent and a teacher of the following modules - 'Training and Labour Orientation' and 'Entrepreneurship', at the Professional Centre of the European University of Valencia. She has a strong interest and knowledge in developing emotional intelligence and the benefits that emotional intelligence can bring in relation to the empowerment of people, particularly for people's well-being and employability. This has made it possible in recent years for her to participate as a volunteer in associations that support the development of these skills and competences with vulnerable groups (ASOCIACION DEDATA TU POTENTIAL) and people with intellectual functional diversity (ASINOWIN). She has extensive experience in the management of work teams and has actively participated in the development of European Projects, always related to training and employability. At present she is part of a work team developing validation for existing materials aimed at vulnerable groups, operating within the framework of the Erasmus + European Program.

Question: Tell us a little about yourself?

Pilar: My name is Pilar Mená. I have a professional career spanning thirty years. I am a mother to two teenage daughters and I have always made my work-life compatible with my training. Being a woman and also a mother of two daughters makes me a fervent defender of our rights. I started working at the age of nineteen because my family situation demanded it. I do not know whether it is because I started working within the training sector, and I have experienced a lot of growth because of training or it is because of my personal interest, but I have never stopped studying.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Pilar: Being aware of the reality of people's lives in other countries, I consider myself fortunate to live in a country like Spain, where studying at the university was affordable. This allowed me to get a qualification and find a good job in which to learn and develop, both personally and professionally. I have always considered myself a vocational teacher and nowadays it has become a reality. Currently I work as a professor at the European University and I combine my new profession with that of a HR consultant in a company called Social & Talent; a consultancy specializing in communication tools, work climate and employee welfare measurements. I am passionate about innovation in the field of training, and the development of new methods to promote employment for vulnerable groups, and for promoting people's development. To do this, I use tools that are in tune with emotional intelligence and I have discovered another way of doing things in positive psychology.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU?

Pilar: Belonging to the European Union has allowed me to pursue high quality, free training by taking part in courses co-financed from the European Social Fund. In addition, it has allowed me to work as a technician and to actively participate in the application of courses and in their subsequent development. Working on European projects from Leonardo to Erasmus+ has allowed me to travel and to analyse training and employment in a Europe rich in differences. It has also made it possible to share information in relation to employment in my own country with workers of other nationalities and to learn about the reality of other women's lives, and the different lived experiences they have despite the geographical proximity within a European context. The trips have been personally enriching and have allowed me to build my own skills and capabilities in terms of training and employment and this has undoubtedly influenced the fact that nowadays I work as a teacher at the European University of Valencia, where I teach the subjects of 'Training and Labour Orientation' and 'Entrepreneurship'. My professional change from training management to teaching and HR consultancy would not have been possible without my experience working as a technician on European projects.



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MERCEDES ACITORES

Biography

Mercedes Acitores has a degree in law, an MA in European policy and has worked in the area of European affairs. Mercedes was born in the USA on the 18 January 1973. Her Spanish parents had settled in the city of Los Angeles to experience the 'American way of life' in the early 1960's. After several years in the United States, her parents decided to come back to Spain where Mercedes was brought up. From an early age, Mercedes travelled backwards and forwards on a regular basis to the US and the UK, and her contact with people from different countries influenced her decision to study European Affairs during her University years. Once in Spain, Mercedes would spend time with her maternal grandmother and listen on a daily basis to stories of family life in post-war Spain. Many husbands, fathers and brothers died during and after the Spanish War, very often leading to grandmothers and female members of families coming together to help each other to raise their children. These stories were full of anecdotes about women's solidarity and strength. None of the women were aware of how brave they were, none of them wanted recognition as they felt it was their duty. One of these women was Mercedes' mother, Mariela who, since a very young age, had to help bring up her brother and sister.

While Mercedes was living in the US, she was cared for by an aunt, her father's sister Marcy who had a very interesting life that amazed Mercedes. Marcy left Spain in the early 1930's with her American husband and travelled all around the world. Once she became a widow she came back to Spain and by then, Franco was in power. Because of the circumstances in Spain, Marcy decided to accept an invitation from her husband's family to leave Spain and to go and live in California. There she married again and had a son. She was a free and independent woman, well ahead of her time.

In comparison to other homes during the 1960's in Spain, Mercedes used to see her father sewing and doing the grocery shopping. In her family, there was equal and full respect between her parents and these values of equality were passed on to Mercedes by both her parents. Both parents always encouraged Mercedes to give her own opinion and to make her own decisions.

Mercedes has worked for seventeen years in the area of European affairs and has devoted four of those years to the promotion of equal opportunities between women and men, coordinating an Equal Initiative project. During this period, she took advantage of the professional opportunities available to her to put into practice all the awareness she had obtained from her childhood and youth. For the past 10 years she is working in the area of European Cooperation.



Question: Tell us a little about yourself!

Mercedes: I was born in the United States and at a young age I came to Valencia, where I was brought up. Here I got my degree in Law. Since I was very little I wanted to work in an international atmosphere, so I did my MA in European Policies. I have been working in the field of European funds all my life. Because of my work with different organisations I have seen many changes that have taken place in European policies and institutions. Since 2008, I have worked in the area of European Cooperation. I can say I am a European believer. I would like to highlight my experience coordinating an equality project for four years. Working in this area was a challenging task for many reasons but was also very rewarding. During this period, I started to become aware of women's inequality, including inequality that can exist in a very subtle way in today's society and is very harmful. After working on this project I can proudly confirm that I am a feminist.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Mercedes: I came to Spain at a very young age and I grew up here. My childhood was full of trips, back and forward to the US and the UK. I realised I loved travelling and knowing people from different countries. I also used to spend long periods of time with my grandmother, who lived in Madrid. She often told us stories about Madrid and her life as a widow woman during the post-civil war. In spite of the difficulty of her situation, she always kept a positive attitude. She was very brave. I enjoyed my youth very much, it was the end of the Movida (a socio-cultural movement that took place during the Spanish Transition after Francisco Franco's death in 1975) and a sense of freedom as well as creativity was in the air. I have great memories from this period. By then, Spanish women were again starting to stand out and I was not aware of possible inequalities between men and women. Nonetheless, a large majority of Spain remained very traditional towards women particularly in relation to



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YOLANDA TRUJILLO

Biography

Yolanda Trujillo has a background in politics, being involved in the Social Democratic Party (PSOE) in Spain, as well as in student representation, being a part of the European Students' Union, first as a Spanish representative and now as a member of the executive committee.

She has worked in the Aerospace field, where she did a research internship in the European Space Agency in Cologne, Germany. She is currently completing her senior year of an Aerospace Bachelor's degree in the Polytechnic University of Valencia. This year she will be based in Córdoba in Spain, as she has received a grant for an artistic residency to write a novel in the Fundación Antonio Gala with other young writers and painters.

Yolanda has worked on a range of different projects in Belgium, Germany, France, French Guiana, Morocco, Finland, Slovakia and Poland. Her main interests are European politics, history, aeronautics and writing.

Question: Tell us a little about yourself?

Yolanda: Well, I do a little of everything. I started out studying aerospace engineering. I was a student representative at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, then I participated in the coordination of student representatives for public universities at national level, and now I am a student representative at European level. I joined the Socialist Youth of Valencia at the age of 14 and at present I am responsible for the European area. I have enjoyed a grant from the European Space Agency. I have four subjects left to finish in my degree, but I have decided to take a break and, given my love of writing, I have decided to write a book. I have been awarded a grant from the Antonio Gala Foundation for creative young people. We are six writers and six painters, who are living together in a house in Córdoba and receiving visits from well-known artists to share their experiences with us. It is very exciting.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Yolanda: One of the aspects that has most attracted my attention is the educational issue. I interact with other students from countries that do not belong to the European Union. I belong to the Bologna generation and that makes it easier for me to work in any EU country without the need to process anything, work permits or visas which other students from countries outside the EU have to do. For me that mobility is extremely important and I have the feeling of being a European citizen.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU?

Yolanda: Since I was little I wanted to be an aerospace engineer, it was my great dream. And when I had the opportunity to submit to a research contest, I did not think twice. I got a scholarship to work in the European Space Agency in Germany which was a great experience, very interesting and positive.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Yolanda: My concept of Europe is federalist. I believe that there should be an Equality Law at a European level, just as there is in Spain. Mainly because, although the culture and the sensitivities are different depending on the country, agreements could be reached on common points, independent of political ideology. That is to say, a social policy should be agreed at a European level.

Q: How do you think citizens can influence EU public policy in relation to promoting gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Yolanda: To have education from childhood in relation to the European Union, to have information on the European Union included in school syllabuses, what it is, what it is for, how it is structured and what are its governing bodies. As a student representative of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, I applied for merchandising to the European Commission and they sent it to the University without any problem. We developed a series



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LOURDES MIRON

Biography

Lourdes Miron was born in Elche in Alicante, 39 years ago, but has lived in Valencia for 20 years. She graduated in Social Education from the University of Valencia and her professional career has focused on the management of non-profit organizations, and the promotion of social innovation and communication.

She is currently manager and the President of *Jovesolides*, a non-profit organization based in the neighbourhood of 'La Coma', in addition to the role of President and General Director of *Jovesolides*, she dedicates herself to issues related to development and organizational building such as strategic planning, fundraising, transparency and accountability, economic and financial management, human resources management and especially communications.

She is also currently a student of journalism. She has a strong interest in communication skills and aims to apply her knowledge of communications with a range of organizations within the third sector that she has collaborated or worked with. She sees journalism as a powerful tool for social advocacy and periodically publishes reflections and articles on various topics in her personal blog www.ahoraxuelo.me.

Q: Tell us a little about yourself?

Lourdes: I was born in 1976, the year the Spanish Constitution was approved. I am a social educator and have practically dedicated my entire professional career to the NGO sector, either working or through volunteering. Working in NGOs is something that I am passionate about. I work on issues of youth, inclusion, women, development for cooperation and social entrepreneurship. I have recently started to study journalism, as a hobby, since I am also concerned about issues related to communication.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain?

Lourdes: I work in an NGO (*Jovesolides*) that participates in European projects. This has allowed me to travel and make contact with people from other countries and other cultures, which has enriched me greatly. I was involved in a project called La Coma University College, in which I had the opportunity to live with people of more than 30 different nationalities, and this allowed me to verify that we are all very similar and it played a part in eliminating existing prejudices. That experience marked me a lot.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU? If your country is not in the EU what positive changes will you see for women as a result of belonging to the EU?

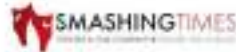
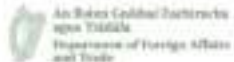
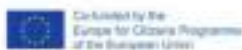
Lourdes: Within the European Volunteering program we have welcomed fifteen volunteers from different European countries, who are doing a great job and this has allowed us to get to know their different cultures. This type of European program opens your mind, they are very interesting. And as a woman, I would also highlight the programs on social inclusion in which we participate. In other words, my assessment of belonging to the European Union is very positive.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy. For example, what can the EU do to promote gender equality and human rights, are there any laws you want to see in place?

Lourdes: On gender issues, Europe must guarantee at least equal access for women, including quotas within institutions. It is the 'zero point', the starting point. Regarding human rights, my opinion is very negative. Thousands of people are dying in the Mediterranean and Europe is not doing enough. It should guarantee the right of asylum seekers and refugees. As for democracy, it is absolutely essential to guarantee freedom of expression, which has been decreasing and that makes democracy suffer a lot.



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Vera O'Connell



Agnieszka Szostak

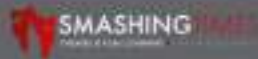


Vanessa Ochoa



Dilyana Mihaleva

Women in an Equal
Europe documentary



Lucy R. Jones, Miroslav Penev and Dilyana Mihaleva in Performance in
Prague performed by Juh Theatre, Serbia. Photo: Ute Roudis

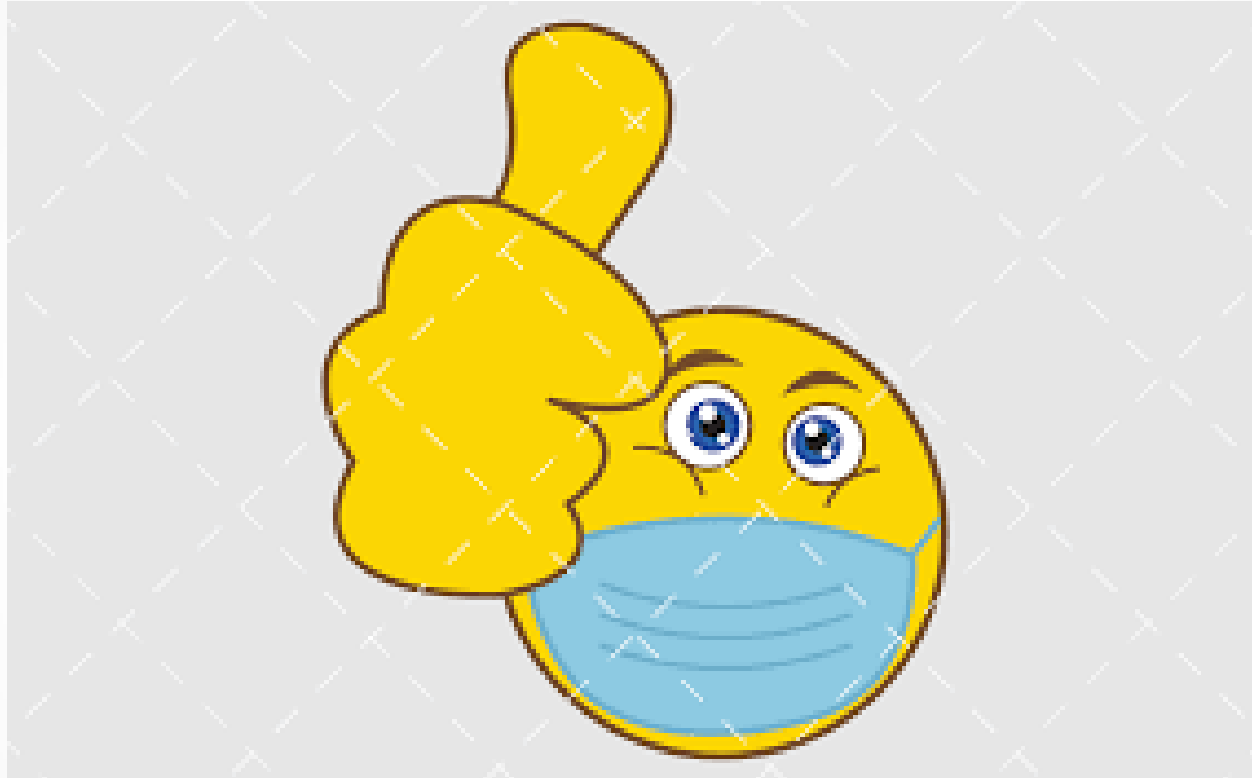


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***¡¡¡ MUCHAS GRACIAS POR
VUESTRA ATENCION !!!***