

LIEN

October '94 Nr 19

LIEN is a link between young women willing to share their ideas and experiences in order to reinforce the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the European exchanges.

I am writing to you as a woman of an older generation who - together with a group of young women of Sweden, France, Belgium, Italy - has been involved with LIEN since its beginning. I can say now that LIEN is the result of a bet on your generation - on your ideals and convictions, on your solidarity with other women, on your capacity to share across national boundaries. You have proved that the bet was a good one.

Do you realize that it is five years since LIEN has started ? It is sent now to 214 young women spread out in some 25 European countries. Most of you have written and/or participated in at least one of the LIEN european meetings. This is most important in our understanding of LIEN as a network.

Indeed, LIEN is meant to be an ALIVE current connecting young women who are interested in making a difference - and in making it **together**. If you feel part of this current and want to move ahead with others,

then, collaborate as often as possible in the LIEN newsletter by sending news, thoughts, meaningful experiences,

then, do participate during the year in the LIEN meetings held in your area or prepare yourself for one of the challenging summer programmes,

then, invite other young women you know (either in your country or abroad) to be part of the LIEN network and form with those who live near you a new LIEN group - someone from LIEN will visit and help you to launch that.

This year we are going to make a new step. In this newsletter, Luise Portner (from Germany) invites each of you to think about the all-embracing idea and feeling of "security". You may be aware that the same word is the cornerstone of the new international agenda for peace and development. By deepening its meaning out of your own experiences, you will be able to contribute to a global issue !

Yours, most cordially,

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo

P.S. If, for any reason, LIEN doesn't correspond to your present interests and concerns, please drop us a note, so that we may avoid the heavy mailing costs that the editors are supporting.



LET'S THINK

... about security

... This is not the advertising slogan of an insurance company !, but the topic I would like to propose for the next

LIEN meeting
on 3 and 4th of December '94
in Mainz, Germany

Here are some ideas for our reflection:

- ◆ What does the word *Security* mean to us? Material/emotional/social *Security*...?
- ◆ What does it mean in different cultures (for example in Eastern Europe) ?
- ◆ Who defines *Security* - us or the society around us ?
- ◆ At what point *Security*-thinking becomes apathy ?
- ◆ At what point (of concentration/oppression?) must we have the courage to take the risk and oppose/resist ?
- ◆ What kind of fear do we fight with *Security* ?
- ◆ Is there any relation between *Security* and religion ?



Please write or call as soon as possible if you can come to Mainz !
and bring some more ideas ...

Contact person and adress:

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Rheinallee 4
55118 Mainz - Germany
Tel. (49) 6131-678164.

You will be accommodated either at Luise friends' places or in the local Youth Hostel; costs for food will be shared among the group.

... Do not hesitate to contact Luise for further information ...

CULTURAL EXCHANGES

... some impressions

Here are some impressions on the Cultural Exchanges programmes held this summer in Uppsala, Sweden, and in Praia das Maças, Portugal.

Uppsala, Sweden

In July we met, a group of around 20 young women from 7 different countries. We (the Swedish group who organized the week) were particularly happy to see the group of Polish women, since we had had a special exchange with Poland during the year.

The theme of the programme was "Young in Europe today". The programme consisted of reflections in small and large groups, creative

exercises of various kinds, relaxing enjoyment of the Swedish countryside and visits to some places of general, historical and cultural interest in the Uppsala area.

The themes for reflection were the following: 'use of time'; 'women in my country'; 'My mother and I'.

Through creative exercises, we tried to have a more imaginative approach.

We, in Uppsala, feel that thanks to the programme we got to know young women from other places, in other life situations. It encouraged a reflection process on one's own life situation. We became able to look at it and to look at oneself from a somewhat different perspective.

We are looking forward to continuing the exchange...

*Kerstin Jacobsson
(Uppsala, Sweden)*

Praia das Maças, Portugal

The 12 of us, coming from 5 different countries were gathering, moved by a common desire: sharing an experience together.

One of the strongest moments was a creative exercise - the drawing of our Trees. What came out was that despite our different backgrounds, we did have a lot in common: we were searching for

our identities, we had a same aspiration for a spiritual dimension in our lives, a same will to participate in a better world of more peace, of more solidarity.

Apart from cultural visits or walks in the surroundings, we also got an insight into the Portuguese culture and history, with a focus on the role of women, their participation in society and its evolution.

A quiet evening of spiritual sharing brought another dimension to our exchanges. We valued this experience - new for some of us.

The links woven between us during this week will definitely get strengthened through LIEN. We do hope that others will feel encouraged to join us!

*Anne-France Beaufile
(Lisbon, Portugal)*



Sharing

Sharing
in nature
smell and colour
personal and cultural expressions
sharing

Nicole Postma (Amsterdam)

It was great to spend a week in a quiet place, very pleasant and close to nature. I have been quite happy to be with other young women who also want to work for a better world.

It has been nice to feel that sometimes they feel as overwhelmed as I do. It gives me strength to face my doubts. I am not alone!

Raquel Pato
(Almada, Portugal)



I remember well the creative exercise we did in Uppsala with the plaster mask: we made our masks from the shape of our faces and put together these white inexpressive faces, apparently empty and identical, in a circle. We chose out of them the one that had our features.

I will always remember this moment linked to the idea of coincidence - it was uncomfortable to try on a mask that was not our own, that was either too large, or too tight. There was only one that fit completely. The mask that we wore should mean harmony, coincidence, total identity. How could we find this mask of total harmony?

We were, at that stage, invited to paint the white masks, using various painting materials, in order to put on our mask what was personal, what was unique in us. The masks were differing more and more, not only in the shapes we had given to them, but now, also in the colours, tones, features and expressions each one of us had chosen, according to preferences, intimate symbols, fantasies.

I remember, apart from the laughters, feeling that the mask that coincides with our face comes from inside. The face is shaped everyday by rhythms, inner

breathings. According to what we feel and project, we smile or cry.

It has been scientifically proved that it is enough to think about a particular sound for some organs to adapt their shape according to that sound. If we think about a vowel, the body gets prepared, changes in order to be able to produce this sound. What is apparently static, and apparently not happening (not producing sounds in that case) is happening inside us.

The real face (the theme of the exercise was *Identity/Mask*) is neither the physical structure, nor the shape of the mask, nor decoration, but is indeed what enlightens it from inside, the dream that moves us, the strength of the glance, the certainty in the smile, the determination in the expression. The mask gets shaped in the intimacy of the sound that is to be said. What is this mask that is ours? Individual or common?

Isabel Figueira
(Belfast, Northern Ireland)

After a year of hard and stressfull work, I arrived in Praia das Maçãs for the LIEN summer programme, I was pleasantly surprised by the natural uncomplicated way everybody related to each other from the moment we arrived.

The programme was organized in such a way that we could share our personal and cultural ideas, hopes, beliefs on several levels, in different situations, either on the beach, in the house, or in the village, in the car going somewhere with a few of us.

Now, back in my everyday surroundings, back at work, I carry this feeling of being linked to others who share that same basic desire to contribute to a better future on whatever level you may choose.

This reflects now on everything I do, and gives me a basic confident feeling.

Nicole Postma
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

I have had the feeling that I was learning all the time ...

Carmen Maria Arcos Cañete
(Granada, Spain)



Since I have come back home, I can't stop thinking about the last meeting we had in Uppsala about "Women and power". I've been trying to understand how modern women realize that they possess power and how older women - our mothers and grandmothers - perceive it. I found out that there is a huge difference between the two.

In the past, women were mothers and "family keepers". They were the ones who gave birth and brought up their children.

This was the first "meeting" I could participate in and I had very positive and good experiences through it. It is in a way challenging to spend a week with a group of women and to reveal very personal thoughts and opinions. The more you want to share, the more you discover that the others also have that desire. You also discover from other people completely different points of view and you learn to accept them and talk about them without disrespecting the other person.

LIEN is also a good way to learn something about yourself and I can say I enjoyed those days very much.

Sabine Berger
(Vienna, Austria)

I am so glad I participated. I felt so at ease, understood, respected. The atmosphere of sharing was so enriching for me.

The little part in me which longs for solidarity, social involvement and spirituality opened up a little. I hope I keep in contact with it and cherish it in the future.

Kitty van der Berg
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Their power was only revealed on this very basic level of life and society. Now, educated women want to be conscious members of society. They want to be noticed. Family is not important any more. Now, women want to decide for themselves. That's the main difference between past and present times.

Malgorzata Baluch
(Katowice, Poland)



TWO DAYS IN KILCRANNY PEACE FARM

... some memories ...

A LIEN meeting took place last June in Northern Ireland, last June. Some participants wrote about their experience.

Right at the start, the people of the house - Peace People of Northern Ireland - the house itself and the surroundings contributed to make us feel comfortable and at ease. After several cups of tea, Niamh was giving us insights into Ecofeminism, a movement which embraces both ecological and women's issues. Whenever there were no more questions left to bombard Niamh with, each of us started to work on her personal inventory, something of which all of us were a bit scared. Yet, it turned out that the group was extremely helpful to everyone who was revealing things about herself which she would usually keep inside.

To me, such an occasion of self-analysis seems beneficial in that it reveals how a person's attitude and knowledge can change throughout life and in that it shows that we all share many similar experiences.

*Jannet Middleton
(Belfast, Northern Ireland)*

It was among a peaceful environment, removed from urban sophistication that we began to learn of each other and think of important social issues such as violence against women, environment, poverty, etc.

It was a small group of young women, coming from different cultures and

experiences, looking through different eyes with different minds. Yet, we found common ground through an open look at our own personal characteristics and role-models. I have learnt a lot and thank this group and the wider circle for instant acceptance, warmth and friendship.

This introduction to a group of LIEN participants has begun to open small doors in this long process towards total comprehension of self, and gaining unity with others.

*Julie Mc Antis
(Belfast, Northern Ireland)*

Surrounded by trees and fields of grass, the sea not too far away, we have been telling our own stories, and discussing the stories we have heard of women throughout the world. We discussed violence against women, human rights and women rights, mechanisms for promoting women.

Our problems are many and various. What a diversity throughout the world! Many sources of inspiration and hope, many reasons to continue ...

*Niamh Moore
(Kells, Rep. of Ireland)*

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