

# Women in politics – joint project of The Nordic Chamber and Forum 50 % on political mentoring

## About the Nordic Chamber

The Nordic Chamber in the Czech Republic is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to:

*... promote and contribute to the development of the business relations and business related initiatives and activities between the Czech Republic and the Nordic countries, and generally to increase mutual contacts between the Czech Republic and the Nordic countries.*

(from the Chamber's Articles of Association), The chamber has more than 150 company members in the Czech Republic.

The Chamber believes that profitable businesses are a driving force in shaping society and that Corporate Social Responsibility is an integral part of being a Leader in Business. We believe that the commercial sector also do have a responsibility in forming the public society and assist and support it in its development and improvement.

As part of its Equal Opportunity program, the Chamber has started a mentoring project to promote Women in Politics. It is our conviction that more women in politics on all political levels in the Czech Republic would improve the political dialogue, enhance the political environment's ability to make decisions and lead initiatives to completion. Furthermore we believe that it will have a positive impact on transparency in the public administration and can prosper the development of the Czech Republic. Furthermore it will naturally bring a better balance on the agenda for Equal Opportunities.

All the above issues will have a positive impact on the long-term business environment in the Czech Republic.

## About Forum 50 %

Forum 50 % strives for a society with equal representation of women and men in the public life. It is an NGO that was established in 2004. Forum 50 % addresses the situation where the insufficient representation of women in political life influences the quality of democracy and has a negative impact on the functioning of Czech society. We consider the low representation of women in politics as a breach of democratic principles (equal representation of men and women is a basic condition of democracy – not its possible outcome) and we will support discussion and measures leading to its solution.

Our aim is to achieve equal representation of women and men in all decision- making positions, both elected and appointed ones. To reach this goal we support all women who want to entry into politics or who are already politically active. Our primary goal is to surpass the level of 30 %, which is the minimum representation any group needs to reach in order to be able to advance its interests and to stop being a discriminated minority. Our long-term goal is to reach parity of men and women, which we consider to be the basic principle of democratic, pluralistic society. The main principle of our undertakings is apolitical approach - Forum 50 % is a strictly non-party association.

## Why a mentoring project?

The Nordic countries are, or at least perceived to be, on the forefront of equal opportunity between men and women – although many will argue that there still is a long way to go.

Whatever view one might have, in politics, there is no doubt that Czech Republic has a long way to go in order to reach the same level:

Women in Politics - Nordic countries	Parliament	Local
Denmark	39%	32%
Sweden	47%	43%
Norway	40%	38%
Finland	42%	46%
Iceland	40%	36%

Women in Politics - Czech Figures	Elected	Note
Czech parliament	19.5%	Election 2013 - up from 15,5% in 2006
Czech Senate	17,3%	Election 2012 – down 18,5 % from in 2010
Regional governments	19,7%	Election 2012 - up from 17,6 % in 2008
City Councils large cities	22,8%	Election 2010 - up from 19,7 % in 2006
Local governments - all municipalities	26,0%	Election 2010 – up from 24,9 % in 2006
Czech Government	17.6%	
No. of female mayors in local politics	18,0%	

In order to support Women in Politics in the Czech Republic, the Chamber and Forum 50 % have decided to start a mentoring project, which would help facilitate a knowledge transfer from successful female Nordic politicians to active female politicians in the Czech Republic.

Mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge. According to Wikipedia, one definition of is

*Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the mentee).*

Our hope is that the mentoring program also will create a long-term relationship between the participants and that it will help create a better understanding of the different views that exists between the countries.

Mentoring is a successful tool, which is being used in the private sector to support women and increase their representation in top management. There are several successful mentoring projects for women in business, for example Equilibrium from British Chamber of Commerce. Unfortunately there are no mentoring projects for politicians, not even within the political parties. Our aim is to fill in this gap and start political mentoring for women.

## Who will be mentors?

Mentors will be politicians from the Nordic countries with long-term experience from the political scene. The mentors are or have been active in local, regional and/or national politics and their experience may span over all political levels in one of the Nordic countries.

The mentors will be women who have influenced the political scene in their home countries. Some may have international experiences on their curriculum as well.

The Mentors are representing the political spectrum from left to right. They are not chosen due to their political party views, but their personal engagement, interest and skills.

The mentors will be chosen through a cooperation between the Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Forum 50% as well as the Nordic Embassies in the Czech Republic. Additionally support is given from the organization KVINFO - the Danish Centre for Gender, Equality and Ethnicity, who will function as advisors to the mentoring project.

## Who are mentees?

Mentees are Czech female politicians currently engaged in local, regional or national politics. They will be active politicians, but do not necessarily need to be elected at this moment to a public office. They will represent the political spectrum of the Czech political scene, and may be independent politicians (not member of a specific party), or may represent a party or grouping currently active on the political scene. The Mentees are chosen through an objective evaluation process carried out by Forum 50%, the Nordic Chamber of Commerce and with the support from the Norwegian and Danish Embassies in the Czech Republic.

## How will the mentoring program be carried out?

As Mentors and Mentees have been found they will be teamed up according to experiences, interests and political focus. This will be carried out in cooperation with relevant Czech organizations representing female politicians (like women fractions in the political parties etc.), as well as through close communication with the mentors and mentees.

The mentoring program will run for a period of eighteen months for each mentee, and will consist of three 6 month blocks. Although each mentor/mentee team will decide on whatever issues they feel are most interesting and pressing for them, each 6-months block will also have a certain political topic. At the start and the end of the block the specific topic will be discussed during a seminar with relevant speakers representing different aspects of the topic. The seminars will have two parts: a closed meeting of the mentors and mentees and a public part dealing with the particular topic discussed. The public part will primarily be open to other politicians in the Czech Republic. The seminars will be held in either the parliament or the senate of the Czech Republic.

During the eighteen month three major topics will be chosen for discussions and seminars. These topics will be defined jointly with representatives of the stakeholders in the program and could consist of social policy, employment policy, education policy, immigration issues, business and research policy, etc. The first topic have though been decided and will cover “efficiency and transparency of public administration”, which is a very important and broadly discussed issue in the Czech Republic.

For the second and third block we will let mentors and mentees decided, though we would already now like to propose the potential theme “Social and Educational Policies”, with a focus on children and elderly care.

The main working language of the project will be English. Fluent knowledge of English language will be a necessary condition for the mentors and mentees.

6 months political theme block	2 * personal meetings	Fórum 50 % coordination, organization, execution, supervision together with the Nordic Chamber, cooperation with embassies and ministries
	Linked in group discussions,	
	1 day seminar	
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The mentorship program will consists of:

- Two visits within each theme block between the mentor and mentee. Each second visit is held in the Czech Republic and each second visit held in the mentor’s country.
- Bi-weekly phone/skype communication on defined political topics.
- Communication via e-mail as needed.
- Communication platform via LinkedIn sharing views, topics and discussions.
- Inspirational documentation, articles collected by the Nordic Chamber, Forum 50 %, participants and other stakeholders and distributed to all participants forming a base for discussions.
- Full day seminar twice a year. The seminars will be held in the Czech Republic. Part of the seminar will be exclusively for the participants, whereas other parts of the seminar may be open to the public and therefore allow other politicians to benefit from the work performed in the mentoring program. This will also increase the impact of the whole project.

The seminars will consist of discussions and presentation by the mentors and mentees, as well as other interesting speakers with relevant knowledge on the particular topic, such as ministers, deputy ministers of the Czech Republic or some of the Nordic countries and/or

representatives from the European Union, other NGOs or other individuals. The first seminar will take place as the mentoring project is started, and will focus on the theme for the following 6 months. As the first block of mentoring has been concluded it will be followed by a closing seminar, as well as a starting seminar focusing on the theme for the following 6 months.

## Who leads the project and how is it financed?

The mentoring project is part of a much larger project focusing on Equal Opportunities called “Equilibrium between Women and Men”. This project is financed by Norwegian Grants, through the Czech Foundation Open Society Fund, who manages projects financed by the Norwegian State funds under the overall slogan “Give Women a Chance”. The mentoring part of the project is additionally funded through support from the Danish Embassy in Prague.

The “Equilibrium between Women and Men” project covers:

- direct support to women in decision-making (networking, mentoring, female experts database)
- analyses and research (public opinion survey, qualitative and quantitative research in the field of women in decision-making, analysing political parties and local municipalities from a gender perspective)
- international experience exchange and know-how sharing (international expert seminar focused on political mentoring for women, informing about promoting gender equality in Nordic countries, international mentoring for female politicians, study visit)
- awareness raising in the field of women in decision-making (conference about gender quotas in politics, publicizing, youth information campaign, lawmaking monitoring, preparing and disseminating publications)
- cooperation with stakeholders (work within government advisory bodies, cooperation with political parties, local municipalities and men; advocacy)
- gender mainstreaming in practice (current situation analysis, practical implementation of particular tools and measures, gender mainstreaming toolkit for local municipalities)

The overall project is managed by the Czech NGO Forum 50%, and the Nordic Chamber of Commerce is participating in the mentoring part of the project. The idea to the mentoring project came from Board Member Birger Husted of the Nordic Chamber of Commerce, who is actively representing the Nordic Chamber in the management of the project.

The responsibilities will in broad lines be split as follows:

- Forum 50 % will be responsible for applying for financing from various funds. The Nordic Chamber will be advising on which funds to address and will help facilitate where possible.
- The Chamber will manage the recruitment of mentors.
- Forum 50 % will manage the recruitment of the mentees.

- Forum 50 % will manage the program and coordinate activities between the mentor and mentee, if needed.
- The Chamber and Forum 50 % will jointly arrange the seminars and secure all issues connected to speakers, participants and locations, and ensure that information and documentation on the various topics are being shared and becoming available for all the participants.
- Forum 50 % will administer the LinkedIn group and function as a catalyzer for the communication.
- Forum 50 % will organize and coordinate travelling of participants (with the use of an external travel service provider), meeting programs for participants, participation of speakers at the concluding seminar for each political block.
- Further Forum 50 % will function as a secretariat for all participants as needed during the project on issues related to the project.
- The Chamber and Forum 50 % will ensure that summaries of findings and discussions at seminars are documented and distributed to all relevant participants and stakeholders.

## Timing of the project?

The Project was approved in July 2014 and the project is currently in the preparation phase. During August and September 2014 the mentors and mentees are chosen and in October 2014 the mentors and mentees will be connected and the project will be started with a seminar in Prague by KVINFO.

## How can YOU participate?

If you are interested in participating in this project as a Mentor then please contact Birger Husted (see below). If you would like to be a Mentee, then please contact Jana Smiggels Kavkova, (see below). If you would like to participate in any other way with expertise, support on financing, with good advice or any other way, then please contact any of the below mentioned.

## Further Information?

If you would like further information on the project, then please contact:

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