



"I AM SO HAPPY TO BE HERE BECAUSE AS AN ACTIVIST, I FEEL ISOLATION. THE REST OF EUROPE FEELS FEAR OF RUSSIA AND WE INSIDE RUSSIA DO NOT FEEL THE SUPPORT OF OTHER PEOPLE IN EUROPE. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO FEEL SOLIDARITY BECAUSE IT IS ALSO ABOUT FEELING THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE AND MAYBE THAT WAY WE CAN DO SOMETHING." CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT FROM RUSSIA

"I AM ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL FOR THE CONNECTION TO RUSSIA—IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, I'VE NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW RUSSIAN ACTIVISTS." CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT FROM CZECH REPUBLIC

When asked what they were leaving with, participants emphasized the feeling of solidarity created through the encounters at the conference: between countries, within countries, and between different activist groups. For some, the end of Communism had also meant the end of solidarity and interest amongst the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Others felt that the end of Communism meant the creation of new relations—for instance, new connections between OWEN and its partner organizations in the 1990s. The conference gave women a chance to take up both old and new threads of connection. Content-wise, more connections were discovered than expected. For instance, the Polish experience of fighting for women's rights such as the right to abortion was seen as crucial for all women in all countries because in all countries, the threat of a conservative or right-wing turn was perceived. However, other broader political topics also emerged as common themes. Those included the economic

and social consequences of the transitions of 1989/90 and environmental issues. The perceived similarity of the problems faced by women at the conference was seen as a base for solidarity and as a bridge to overcome the isolation felt by actors, especially those from Russia within their own country and within Europe.

Solidarity was also discussed as a vision for creating solidary communities, by way of changing existing social and power relations in response to people's basic needs that are also anchored locally. Here we encountered feminist approaches to searching for ways of changing patriarchal power structures. Some conference participants found a common vision of a necessary deep-rooted system change; others emphasized the necessity to widen the scopes of action for women within existing power structures in order to take on an active role in the transitions happening right now.