University of Oviedo, Spain

Marta Sofía Lopéz,
University of Leon
On behalf of María Socorro Suárez-Lafuente

Unfortunately no one from the partner organisation in Oviedo was able to take part in this conference for they have examination for their students. So I took the chance to get familiar with the European project group of “Making Women’s History Visible” and to contribute from my perspective to this interesting and challenging subject.

I am from the University of Leon, but I have belonged to the same Women’s Studies Seminar they have founded before 17 years. I am the co-founder and vice-president of the women’s studies seminar of my university, which I helped to create following to my academic “mother” María Socorro Suárez-Lafuente. She wrote the following message:

“The Delegation from the University of Oviedo has three members: Dr. Margarita Blanco Hölscher, Dr. Esther Álvarez López and Dr. María Socorro Suárez Lafuente. The partner team of the University of Oviedo belongs by extension to the Spanish Association of University Women’s Studies. Our group is interdisciplinary so that we each teach a lecture of our special field of knowledge but all of us with a gender perspective. We are in charge of undergraduate and postgraduate classes, masters and doctoral programs. From this year our seminar belongs to the first ERASMUS-mundos in Gender and Diversity. This is a European masters program with a gender perspective imparted by the universities in Oviedo, Granada, Bologna, CIU in Budapest, Vienna, Utrecht, and Köln. This is how we make women’s history and culture visible. Each lecture taking care of her field of her study: History, literature, criticism, psychology, cinema, art, philosophy, economy, medicine, law, science and sociology. As we keep growing we hope to cover more fields off knowledge in the next few years. The different members of our Women’s Studies Seminar at the university take part in different European nets and projects which brought us our knowledge, both as lecturers and as persons. Be-
Isabel I

• Among the few women who reigned in Spain’s Middle Age, Isabel I stands out as the queen who acted as such, with a display of her power and her might, and got away with it, even through History.

Dama de Elche

• The bust of La Dama de Elche was discovered in this city of Alicante (Eastern Spain) on August 4, 1897.

• The “Lady of Elche” is a type of funeral urn of Iberian style that represented sitting or enthroned ladies, said to symbolize a divinity like Hera or the Mother Goddess, which also symbolizes the fertility of the Earth.

• Due to the influence of diverse peoples in our peninsula, this figure could also be an Iberian version of the Carthaginian goddess Tanit, equivalent to Phoenician Astarté, in turn a Semitic version of Babylonian Ishtar, goddess of fecundity, animals, human beings and life in its most varied aspects.

• During Franco’s regime the statue of the “Lady of Elche” has been misused politically as an exaltation of the Iberian (Spanish) national character of women and so called “ideal femininity”.

The Seven Rooms of the Museum of Women’s History from a Spanish Women’s Perspective

ROOM 1
Matriarchal Cultures
40,000 - 3000 B.C.

Room 2
Women in the Encounter Cultures
3000 B.C. - 1350

Room 3
Women Leading the Way into Modern Times
1350 - 1550

Dama de Elche
(5th c. B.C.)

Isabel I
(I 1451 - 1504)

During the Learning Partnership we started to fill the seven rooms from our perspective, following the pedagogical concept developed by the “House of Women’s History”. In participating in the cooperation to give Room 5 a European face we contributed with our information about Concepción Arenal.

During the European Learning Partnership “Making Women’s History Visible” made a difference in our work. We now know have a broader perception of ourselves as individuals, we feel that we are part of a tradition. We also learned to look at our culture with European eyes, to feel that Spain is one part in the whole map and as such differentiated but essential. We also profited from the pedagogical dimensions of the spiral of history which we now use as background to structure our teaching modules.

Last but not least we enriched ourselves personally meeting such wonderful women from all over the project laughing, discussing, sightseeing; learning together was our common experience that glues Europe together for good.

The Seven Rooms of the Museum of Women’s History from a Spanish Women’s Perspective
Dolores Ibárruri “La Pasionaria” (1895-1989)

- Dolores Ibárruri was a transgressor even in her childhood, when she manifested her wish to go to school even though she was a girl. She had to work to get her education in the streets.
- She continued her life in the fighting for the rights of women and workers. In 1918, she participated in the First Feminist Congress of Spain, which already saw the beginnings of the female struggle.
- In 1937 she was elected President of the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party; the next year she presides over the I World Conference of Women. In 1938 she is elected Vice-President of the Spanish Democratic Republic.
- From a feminist perspective, Dolores Ibárruri has left off and is again elected as a member of Parliament for the less favoured. She is equally valued as a writer of articles and political pamphlets. Her prose turned her into a symbol of resistance.

Margarita Salas

- Margarita Salas is one of the few well-known contemporary women scientists. Born in Asturias, she got her degree in Chemistry at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. She worked with the Nobel Prize winner Severo Ochoa in the field of the DNA chain transmission of genetic information, and became a pioneer in enzymology. Salas’s work and influence has been determinant in the emergence and development of Molecular Biology in Spain.
- From a feminist perspective, Margarita Salas has helped to create a space for women in a mostly male (and manned) field, that of science, and, thereby, she has made visible the efforts of many women who were not rewarded, who were not paid, and who were not recognized. They were oddities, therefore not worth mentioning, but now they are notable stones in the path of the “Work done by Women in Sciences.”

We hope that we will get the chance to cooperate further in such an inspiring European project.”