



WECF | Women in Europe for a Common Future

Profile Marie Kranendonk-Schwartz, president WECF – Women in Europe for a Common Future

Marie Kranendonk studied Social Geography, Spatial planning and the Environment at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. She did research in West Africa on the social & economic position of women in rural and urban areas and worked several years in Nigeria to implement projects with women on the improvement of health, nutrition and the income situation of local rural communities.



Back in Holland she worked many years in NGO's in the field of environment and sustainable development. For a period of 18 years she was director of the national platform of Environmental NGO's, Landelijk Milieu Overleg. In this function she worked on strategy development, organised the policy and advocacy coordination of the member organisations and set up expert working groups on themes related to sustainable (economic) development, sustainable agriculture, health and environment and gender aspects of sustainable development. She also developed the external cooperation with development and social NGO's and trade unions, with scientists, farmer's organisations, women's

organisations, around policy themes that were of common interest to these different NGO's.

She took active part in the World Conference on Environment & Sustainable Development -UNCED – in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. During the conference and its preparatory meetings she particularly worked on the themes of sustainable agriculture and rural development and sustainable production and consumption.

The Rio conference also gave her the opportunity to expand her international activities and to work on building a coalition with NGO's in Eastern Europe around sustainable development, which resulted in the formation of two east-west NGO networks: ANPED (Northern Alliance for Sustainability) and WECF (Women in Europe for a Common Future). She was a board member of both networks and in 1996 she resigned as director of the National NGO Platform and dedicated her time fully to the further development of these east-west networks.

As president of WECF she helped to design and support practical cooperation projects with women in Russia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Armenia, Romania and other East European countries. In many of these projects issues as rural development, sustainable management of land and water, sustainable agriculture, improvement of health and environment, poverty reduction and income generating are of great importance.

WECF has developed into a large network of about 100 member organisations in 40 countries all over the European region. Based on the problems and solutions that its partners have to deal with, WECF and its members do a lot of advocacy work at national and international level. WECF also closely cooperates with NGO's and women organisations all over the world on sustainability issues.