The Käte Hamburger
International Centre
Work and Human Lifecycle
in Global History
2015—2023

re:work

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re:work Wall of Fame
Posters by SEVERIN WUCHER,
featuring portraits by MAURICE WEISS

Women and the Workplace: Activism and Politics in Central, East Central, and South-Eastern Europe, and Internationally, 1860s to 1990s

8–15 September 2017

The workshop 'Women and the Workplace: Activism and Politics in Central, East Central, and South-Eastern Europe, and Internationally, 1860s to 1990s' took place from 9–15 September 2017 in the beautiful Castle Oberstaad at Lake Constance, Germany. It was co-financed by re:work, the Institut für die Geschichte und Zukunft der Arbeit (IGZA) and Central European University (CEU), and convened in preparation for the ERC grant application of re:work fellow Susan Zimmermann (2018/2019). The workshop brought together future postdoctoral research team members with Vanda Mohácsi from CEU, and the international experts Dorothy Sue Cobble (Rutgers University, New Brunswick), Silke Neunsinger (Labour Movement Archives and Library, Stockholm) who had contributed to the project plan early on, and Conchi Villar (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona). During the first two days the experts gave precious advice and input; in one of the breaks, Susan Zimmermann and Vanda Mohácsi would translate Susan's key ideas on project design and research plan into figures entered into the miraculous budget calculation program on Vanda's tablet – and here was the first budget plan. Once the experts and Vanda had departed there were five full days to begin crafting the project proposal. Ivelina Macheva remembers that following her presentation where she mentioned "a 133-day strike in a Bulgarian match-producing factory in 1909, one of the participants wondered if the event might have been connected to the international conventions restricting night work for women and abolishing the use of white phosphorus in match production. Not only was the multi-scale approach established as a key feature of the project design, but this very example made it into the research proposal itself." The productive atmosphere also helped to come up with a meaningful project acronyom: The ERC-funded project ZARAH (2020–2025) is named after Zehra Kosova, an interwar Turkish-Greek labour activist, and Sára Rokon Tóth, a poor peasant woman and campaigner for peasant women's and democratic rights in pre–1918 Hungary. "The special thing about Oberstaad was", recalls Veronika Helfert, "that we could think about and discuss research questions in a condensed atmosphere without distractions. I very much enjoyed the combination between exchanging ideas with the many knowledgeable colleagues and the writing phases. The fact that we could jump into Lake Constance at any time and relax by the fireplace in the evening certainly didn't hurt!"

SUSAN ZIMMERMANN

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