

WEHC 2012, Stellenbosch, South Africa

## **Call for Papers**

Session

### **Early professional women, c. 1600–1850**

Session Organiser: Prof. Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, University of Turku, Finland

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The session will focus on early examples of economically active women who may be said to have anticipated, in one way or another, modern professional women. The papers in the session are expected to discuss women who were professionally ambitious, invested in developing their professional skills and qualifications, and may have taken economic or other kinds of risks in order to advance in their careers or in business. Socially they may range anything from elite women to women with middle-class or lower social background. The relevant period ranges from c. 1600 to c. 1850.

The aim of the session is to enrich and complete the received image of economically active women in the past. Today the image appears slightly biased in two ways. First, research on professional women usually deals with the period after the mid-19th century when women's professional opportunities started to multiply, at least in the West. Secondly, much of the research focuses on women of popular classes who worked because they had to work in order to make ends meet, but who cannot be said to have been professionally ambitious in the present-day sense of the word.

In Europe examples of early professional women include such as institutionally trained midwives: formally trained midwives worked under official responsibility, and in addition to work connected with childbirths, their tasks consisted of legal and even religious duties; the oldest regulations related to professional midwifery originate in the late Middle Ages. Another example is offered by professional women painters: as early as the 18th century, they were established in the art world, commissioned by European courts and admitted to art academies. Among early professional women feature even elite ladies: they could make a career as salaried ladies in waiting in a royal court.

We invite from all over the world papers that highlight early examples of professional women, in whatever form of economic activity they were involved in the society concerned. The deadline for papers will be end of May 2012.

Please send by the end of January 2012 an abstract of max. 400 words to the corresponding organiser: [marjatta.rahikainen@helsinki.fi](mailto:marjatta.rahikainen@helsinki.fi)