



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG  
**Deputy Director General**

## **EQUAL Conference**

### **Gender Mainstreaming Peer Review**

Graz, 9 and 10 May 2007

***"A Tool for Change"***

Address of Lenia Samuel, Deputy Director General  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

Sehr geehrte Nationalratspräsidentin Barbara Prammer;

sehr geehrte Landesrätin Bettina Vollath;

sehr geehrte Mitglieder des Steyermärkischen Landtags und der Landes- und Stadtregierungen aus vielen Europäischen Ländern.

sehr geehrter General Fant

meine Damen und Herren,

es ist für mich eine große Freude, als Vertreterin der Kommission an der heutigen Veranstaltung teilzunehmen.

Ich möchte insbesondere der Steyermärkischen Landesregierung für die Organisation der Veranstaltung danken.

Unser heutiges Seminar bringt Vertreterinnen und Vertreter aus 14 Ländern und Regionen zusammen. Es setzt den Anfang einer Reihe von "Peer Reviews" zu beispielhaften Lösungen im Rahmen des Gender Mainstreaming.

Lassen Sie mich unterstreichen, wie sehr ich den reichhaltigen und umfassenden Steyrischen Ansatz zum Gender Mainstreaming bewundere und schätze. Er führt die Gender-Dimension in alle Felder der regionalen und lokalen Politiken ein und verankert sie dauerhaft. Zudem werden Unternehmen ermuntert, das Gender Mainstreaming als einen wesentlichen Bestandteil ihrer Personalpolitik zu berücksichtigen.

**Die Erfahrungen aus der Steiermark sind ein hervorragendes Beispiel des Fortschritts in Sachen Chancengleichheit zwischen Frauen und Männern in Europa.**

Today:

- I would first like to give you an overview of the situation of equality of women and men in Europe and the most recent policy developments,

- Then to highlight the role of the ESF to support EU and national gender equality policies.
- And finally I will update you on how the Commission and the Member States are preparing for the new programming period.

### ***I. The situation of Equality between Women and Men in Europe***

The employment of women in the labour market has continued to make solid advances in recent years. The female labour force continues to be the engine of employment growth in Europe. Since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, six of the eight million new jobs created in the EU have been taken by women. Also the number of qualified women is increasing. But inequalities continue to exist and sometimes persist.

- The employment rates of women are still lower on average than those of men;
- There is a gender pay gap of 15%;
- The "glass ceiling" both in political and economic areas still remains; and
- The occupational segregation in employment and education is still evident, with women continuing to occupy their traditional professions predominantly in the civil service, education, health and social work. .

Gender Equality, **a fundamental right**, has always been high on the EU agenda. This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. We are also celebrating 50 years of Community gender equality legislation. But as I have already pointed out this has only brought us as far as we have come, **and this is not far enough**.

Gender equality policies have a role to play in the reformed Lisbon Strategy. Gender equality is a key element when it comes to improving competitiveness, creating more and better jobs, and mitigating the impact of Europe's ageing population and low birth rates on our social security systems.

### ***The main EU policy initiatives to promote gender equality***

This is why the Commission's commitment to gender equality has been stepped up. In 2006 the **European Roadmap on Equality between Women and Men** for the period (2006-2010) was drawn up and agreed after consultation of all relevant players. It covers all the EU's external and internal policies and aims, inter alia, at achieving economic independence for women and men, enhancing the reconciliation of work, private and family life, promoting equal participation of men and women in economic and political decision-making, and eliminating gender stereotypes in society.

Obviously, the Commission alone is not able to implement the ambitious objectives of the Road Map. It is for this reason that the Road Map also focuses on good governance. This means, in particular, to stimulate and strengthen partnerships between institutions, social partner organisations and European NGOs.

In parallel there is a strong **political** commitment by Member States to gender equality in the framework of the Lisbon strategy. The European Council in March 2006 adopted the **European Pact for Gender Equality** which reflects the priorities of the Road Map drawing on the objectives and instruments which already exist.

Another important development in 2006 was the creation of the **European Gender Institute**, which will be operational in 2007. The Institute will progressively provide technical support to the Member States and the European Institutions in order to optimise implementation of Community policy on equal opportunities for women and men.

### ***II. The ESF support of EU and national gender equality policies***

The work of the EU goes beyond laws and principles and translates into concrete actions. This is where the ESF has an important role. The European Social Fund has proved a key financial instrument for the support of the European Strategy, which is now an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy and its objectives. It is also, and by the same token, the key financial instrument for promoting gender equality. The renewed commitment to gender equality, as expressed in the Commission's Road Map and

the Council's Gender Equality Pact, is integral to the new Structural Funds Regulations. For the new period, from 2007-2013, the legal framework has been strengthened along three dimensions:

**Firstly, the links between the Funds and the policy framework have been reinforced** focussing resources more effectively on the objectives and targets of the "Lisbon Strategy".

In order to turn these objectives into reality, gender equality policies and actions play an essential role. To achieve full employment, the participation of women and older workers in the labour market must be boosted. This can only be sustainable if the work-life-balance of women and men is improved and the quality at work is enhanced.

The **second** important point is that the new Regulatory Framework puts **more direct emphasis on the promotion of gender equality.** :

- The General Regulation (Article 16) for the Structural Funds **requires** Member States and the Commission to ensure equality between men and women, - as indeed set out in the Treaty. Further, non-discrimination and the **integration of the gender perspective** are to be promoted during the various stages of the implementation of all of the Funds.
- The ESF Regulation develops gender equality along the policy lines of the dual approach to gender equality - **gender mainstreaming and specific action** - to enable progress for women in employment and to eliminate gender-based segregation in the labour market.
- It further requires Member States to ensure that ESF Operational Programmes include a description on **how gender equality and equal opportunities are promoted throughout the policy cycle**, i.e. in preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes.

- In addition, the ESF Regulation contains an obligation for Member States to **report annually on the implementation of gender mainstreaming** and of any gender specific action (Article 10).

Gender mainstreaming is not easy and it presents a challenge to successfully integrate it in the new ESF Operational Programmes. For me, there are 3 simple techniques:

firstly, do a thorough **analysis of the situation in terms of equality for women and men** in order to arrive at valid statements about the economic and labour market problems and about the measures which can impact on the differences between women and men.

secondly, set ambitious and realistic **gender equality targets** and indicators and develop one or more action plans.

thirdly, follow progress through a **monitoring and evaluation system**. This helps to prevent failures and enable further development on gender equality in any given field of policy.

When my colleagues assess the Operational Programmes of Member States, they pay attention to these criteria.

The **final** point I would like to make concerning the legal framework is that it pays tribute to the **lessons learnt from EQUAL**. This programme has served as the laboratory and test bed for new ways of delivering labour market and social inclusion policies, last but not least for gender mainstreaming models and tools. The ESF Regulation calls for integrating these lessons into ESF programming.

### ***III. Examples from EQUAL***

This morning, you have discussed specific experiences and good practice models developed under EQUAL, and exchanged strategies and approaches which have helped to make progress in gender equality. In fact, **EQUAL successes are numerous**. To give just a few:

- **Denmark has integrated a gender dimension into its legislation** governing the reformed system of vocational guidance. This means that gender aspects

become an integral part of the education and training of counsellors and guidance officers so that people are encouraged to leave the beaten tracks which lead to gender segregation.

- In **Spain** and **Netherlands**, concepts developed by EQUAL have helped universities to create and implement new personnel strategies. These institutions of higher education have been able to tap into the unused potential of women and ethnic minorities who are largely underrepresented in middle and higher level positions.
- And in **Sweden**, EQUAL has generated change to their support systems to business creation and growth by providing awareness raising and gender training to the advisory staff, but also specifically tailored support programmes for potential women business creators and those already working as entrepreneurs.

I would also like to highlight that EQUAL has taken gender mainstreaming to particularly difficult areas that are marked by high gender segregation, such as care services for children and the elderly. Projects have successfully tested gender balanced recruitment and selection procedures, training programmes and work organisation and made the care sector more attractive to the underrepresented sex: I mean men.

At the same time, EQUAL partnerships managed to involve key actors of staunch male domains such as the police and armed forces or fire fighting and rescue services. Participation on the work of these partnerships made the senior management of male dominated institutions understand that by tolerating huge gender gaps amongst their staff they were losing out on valuable female potential. Indeed I will be very interested to hear from Lt-General Fant about the gender mainstreaming scheme of the Swedish Armed Forces.

#### ***IV. The new ESF Programmes***

Let me now come to the last part of my presentation, the new programming period 2007-2013. We have received almost all of the Operational Programmes, around

117, with a total budget of around 76 billion euros. Regional programmes represent a good proportion. This is particularly the case for Italy, Spain and Germany.

We are not overly happy with all that we have found in the new Programmes. However, we see that some Member States make serious commitments to gender mainstreaming.

Let me give you a few examples from the **programmes** submitted to us:

- **Austria** has chosen a horizontal approach in all priority axes for gender budgeting where a target of 50% or more of women participation and budget must be achieved. Austria has also specified training and qualifications for women in non-traditional jobs.
- **Spain** has combined equal opportunities as a cross-cutting principle across all of their priority axes and reinforced a specific action in the priority for employment, social inclusion and equal opportunities.
- **Poland** has also chosen a horizontal approach for gender mainstreaming, particularly through employment, training and child care facilities

In addition, in some Member States, gender mainstreaming approaches at **project level**, tested successfully under EQUAL, have been transferred to ESF and other Structural Funds' programmes. For instance,

- **Finland** established under EQUAL a specific mechanism to apply gender mainstreaming at programme level, ensuring that this tool was implemented throughout the life cycle of all projects. This involves "buying in gender expertise" through contracting experts and providing simultaneously training for the staff of the National Support Structure, whose task it was to assess all applications. A gender mainstreaming plan was a precondition for the projects to be confirmed and in the future this will be standard procedure for the approval of ESF-co-funded projects.
- **Portugal** used a different avenue. It established a Thematic Working Group on equal opportunities for women and men whose remit was to find and promote concrete ways of including gender equality as a transversal objective into all Structural Funds programmes. Some of the main components have

become standard procedure and the obligation to promote gender equality has become a standard clause in all grant agreements or contracts co-financed by the ESF.

## ***V. Transnational cooperation***

So, as you can see, there are some good practices that can be shared and taken forward in this new period. To facilitate learning from one another, we have made transnational cooperation in the ESF not only a priority, but an obligation. This is especially relevant for gender mainstreaming where there is so much knowledge and experience that needs to be exchanged throughout the EU.

In March this year, we proposed an **action plan on transnational cooperation** which will provide support through a number of mechanisms, including the exchanges of experience, awareness-raising activities, events, and networking of Member States and regions.

The action plan proposes gender mainstreaming to become one of the first networks to be offered support.

The exchange platforms recently established in the framework of EQUAL on thematic issues and principles of good governance, such as the Community of Practice on gender mainstreaming that is organising this seminar, will serve as pilots for the Commission's future support of transnational cooperation. These platforms will test effective exchange and cooperation arrangements and establish commitment from Member States to facilitate networks between ESF managers and relevant stakeholders and develop a stable two-way bridge between good practice on the ground and policy issues at EU level.

## ***VI. The importance of this seminar***

This seminar is a very good example of how we learn from one another the good practices and successful policies that make gender equality a reality in the lives of

women and men. The presentations and discussions in the workshops have taught us how Styria's and other gender mainstreaming models throughout Europe made not only impressive inroads in terms of equal opportunities, but are also an important asset to territorial development.

Our hosts, the policy makers, the public authorities and the business community of Styria, who joined forces in two EQUAL Development Partnerships, have made optimal use of both EQUAL funding and its leading principles, namely mainstreaming, partnership, innovation, and transnationality. I am impressed by the firm political will and its on-going demonstration by top level political decision-makers. **Partnership and commitment** of the key players in different policy areas have enabled fruitful exchange and cooperation.

I hope the peer review results will help the **Styrian government, the City of Graz and other Styrian municipalities** to continue in their achievements of implementing active labour market policies and encouraging leading private sector companies to improve gender equality performance. In this way we will release the untapped potential of visions, talents, qualifications and skills of many women.

I am glad that you integrated gender mainstreaming **issues and perspectives in companies** into your seminar agenda. The ESF, through EQUAL, has helped some of the leading private companies to invest in supporting and promoting women for senior management positions and train young women for technical jobs in so-called male domains. These pioneers have also introduced family friendly working time arrangements and contributed to creating childcare in their local areas. I am convinced that these "flagship" companies, which are currently sharing their experiences with counterparts in the region, will succeed to convince other enterprises to follow suit.

## ***VII. Conclusions***

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

wie Sie sehen, sind die Dinge in Bewegung und das müssen sie auch sein. Das Glas der Chancengleichheit der Geschlechter ist noch halb leer. Weil ich Optimistin bin, sage ich, es ist bereits halb voll.

Ich bin mir sicher, dass die heutigen Ergebnisse auf ihre Art dazu beitragen, es weiter zu füllen.

Ich hoffe auch, dass die Ergebnisse des Seminars den Einsatz und das Engagement sowie das Zusammenspiel zwischen den Mitgliedstaaten und Regionen stärken werden. Dies ist notwendig, um die bereits entwickelten Politikansätze zur Chancengleichheit der Geschlechter im Rahmen des ESF und auch in anderen Bereichen zu bereichern und weiter zu entwickeln.

Ich fühle mich sehr ermutigt durch das Engagement, das ich am heutigen Tag erlebt habe.

Danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.