



Eröffnung 9.Mai 2007

Landeshauptmann Mag. Franz Voves

Opening May 9, 2007

Governor Franz Voves



Das Land
Steiermark

On behalf of the Region of Styria it is a great pleasure for me to open the Peer Review "Gender Mainstreaming: A Tool for Change". You will - during the next two days - share a wealth of good practice and successful policies aimed at making gender equality a reality in the lives of women and men in Europe.

As the member of our government responsible for European Matters, I consider this event to be an important contribution by Styria to the "Year of Equal Opportunities for All" held in 2007 throughout the European Union. Today, on the 9th (of) May, all Member States are celebrating the Europe Day in commemoration of the declaration by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, which laid the foundation for a peaceful and shared Europe in 1950, and which became reality with the Roman Treaties in 1957, thus celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Styria, too, has observed the Europe Day, which this year revolves around the 50th anniversary of the European Union and the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, in numerous events held last week.

We are, therefore, very proud that the Peer Review, on the one hand, marks the end of our Europe Day Week and, on the other, the beginning of a Europe-wide series of Peer Reviews in the context of the European Community Initiative EQUAL.

These Peer Reviews will form an important element of the European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming that has been launched at the end of 2006 by a group of seven Member States and Regions.

We are fully aware of the crucial relevance of Communities of Practice for the new programming period of the European Structural Funds, and particularly the European Social Fund (**ESF**).

Before you will start to share experiences and good practice FROM all over Europe and FOR a common European future, where the gender dimension is incorporated in all fields of regional and local policies, let me underline how much importance we attach to a comprehensive approach to gender equality in our Styrian government.

Our concept and the methods of implementation of gender mainstreaming are based on the achievements of two EQUAL Development Partnerships (Just Gem and POPUPGEM) which succeeded to anchor Gender Mainstreaming in a systematic way into regional and local policies and practices.

These projects created win-win situations which improved both the gender equality performance of public authorities, implementers of active labour market policies or private companies, whilst optimising the efficiency of their governance of budgets, programmes and services or – in the case of enterprises - their productivity and competitiveness.

Above all, Gender Mainstreaming is a managerial tool for organisational development which is used in implementing equality of women and men.

As an instrument of organisational development, Gender Mainstreaming must follow the systemic rules of organisations and functions.

The main aim is to bring about change of structures and processes within an organisation, and this needs an important insight: Gender Mainstreaming is the job of high-level executives and has to be implemented in a top-down method.

Strong political will, gender competence, know-how of Gender Mainstreaming procedures and the possibility to experiment and eventually generate success stories of good practice convinced the relevant bodies and decision-makers of the necessity of implementing gender mainstreaming.

In our experience here in Styria applying gender mainstreaming not only improved the gender equality performance of regional and local authorities, but also benefited their various tasks and endeavours at the same time.

The same is true for the enterprises that were encouraged to adopt gender mainstreaming as an integral part of personnel and development. They came to understand that business advantages can be gained from the using the talents, qualifications and visions of both men - and women, women whose potential had before been un-tapped!

To secure sustainability and lasting impact of the good practice generated thanks to EQUAL the Styrian Government decided to establish a pilot project for gender mainstreaming, empowered to monitor and control all strategies, programmes and measures which are developed and implemented by the different ministries and also to build up a well trained staff at all levels.

Success and substantial change that can be “seen” and “felt” by citizens as well as employees take a long time to be established and need detailed and focused work throughout the process.

Once we take Gender Mainstreaming seriously –and I do not mean not just token actions - it will be evident that real equality between women and men cannot be achieved over night.

But we are convinced that making the gender dimension an integral part of personnel policies and organisational culture is a proven and winning strategy to boost territorial development.

The next two days we will learn more about success stories regarding the integration of the gender dimension into legislation, systems of vocational guidance and training, personnel development strategies, education in institutions of higher education and support systems to business creation and growth.

The Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming will enable sharing of successful gender mainstreaming tools applied to public procurement procedures, total quality management and business excellence systems. The Web-Platform is designed to facilitate their transfer to regular ESF and other Structural Funds' programmes and helps to put these tools into practice in old and new Member States.

We are happy to be a Partner in the Community of practice on Gender Mainstreaming. Led by the Finnish Ministry of Labour, it establishes a partnership with EQUAL Management Authorities of Belgium (Flanders), Ireland, Italy, Portugal,

Spain and Styria. They all have committed themselves to create a communication and networking platform and are inviting other Member States and Regions to join.

I am proud to welcome you in Graz and I would also like to deliver the most heartfelt greetings of the Styrian government to you and wish you productive and wonderful days in our beautiful city of Graz.

Good speed. Viel Erfolg !