



GENDER EQUALITY IN EQUAL 2003-2004 A SUMMARY

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents the main results of the activities of the European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities (ETG 4) related to two of the themes of the EQUAL Community Initiative. These are Theme G - Reconciliation and Theme H - Desegregation. The activities were undertaken in 2003 and 2004 and led to the identification of the key components of policies and practices that can enable gender equality to become a reality in the lives of women and men. A total of 62 Development Partnerships (see contact list in annex) participated in Working Group meetings to share their experience in a peer-review process. The full report covering all of the outcomes of ETG4 is contained in the different chapters of its "Living Document": focusing on care and other family support services, work-life-balance policies in companies and organisations, desegregation, territorial approaches and gender mainstreaming.

1. THE "EUROPEAN MODEL" AT A GLANCE

The European Model comprises comprehensive approaches which combine strategies and concepts that aim to:

- Dismantle gender gaps and segregation within the labour market;
- Improve the reconciliation of working and private life for women and men;
- Introduce gender mainstreaming in employment policies and practices; and
- Overcome traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

The model is rooted in the innovation engendered by EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) and Transnational Partnerships (TPs) which is often not so directly related to their specific approaches to reconciliation and desegregation but to the synergy that is being created between these two themes and its potential to make equal opportunities a reality in the daily lives of women and men.

Based on the good practices of 62 DPs from throughout the Union, ETG 4 has constructed the European Model which incorporates two different levels of activities:

- At project level, a number of DPs have been testing and implementing an holistic concept in local areas, regions or economic sectors. Thanks to the EQUAL partnership approach, it has been possible to forge powerful coalitions where the usual gender equality players have joined forces with partners who are in position to use and disseminate the DPs' achievements outside the narrow confines of equal opportunities policies. These territorial alliances have brought about change that has not only contributed to gender equality, but also to economic development and to a general improvement in living and working conditions;
- At a virtual level, the model includes all the ingredients required to design and implement comprehensive gender equality policies and practices in a territorial context. The good practices that demonstrate the different components have been developed by a large variety of DPs from all over Europe. Thus, the model presents the "ideal" composition of avenues towards gender equality which so far cannot be found in any single Member State. It serves as a blueprint for policy makers who are committed to making gender equality a reality for women and men in the territory for which they are responsible.

2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN AND MEN

2.1. RECONCILIATION: STILL A WOMEN'S PROBLEM BUT FOR HOW LONG?

Reconciling a job and career with raising children and other family responsibilities and striving, at the same time, to participate in cultural and civic life presents an enormous challenge for many women in Europe. Reconciliation is still mainly perceived as a “women’s problem” and this is reflected in female employment patterns in almost all Member States. Existing disparities between women and men in employment¹ are mainly due to this persistent problem. Women who have been absent from the labour market for some time encounter major difficulties when trying to re-enter it. One of the biggest of these hurdles is the lack of adequate care services that are available to women with young children and/or ageing parents.

Even if the flexibility of work organisation has increased in recent years, it is often the needs of enterprises for improved production processes and market competitiveness, which drive this flexibility. Consequently, the resultant flexibility does not necessarily contribute to a better reconciliation of work and private life. The solutions chosen by many women in combining their different roles of employees, wives, mothers and homemakers are frequently hampering their employment and career prospects. For both unemployed and employed women, the fact that they are providing the lion’s share of unpaid care in the home exacerbates the problem of reconciliation. An equal distribution of family duties is still far from being a reality for most couples.

EQUAL DPs that focus on gender equality have tested a number of good practices that can help to facilitate the reconciliation between the different spheres of an individual’s life. In many cases, these DPs have combined a range of activities that address the different obstacles to establishing a more satisfying work-life-balance.

2.1.1. Developing care and other family support services

The creation of new care services has produced a double benefit: jobs for unemployed women with no/low formal qualifications and labour market access for other unemployed or inactive women, who previously could not seek gainful employment due to the lack of care services.

Particularly in Belgium, France, Italy, Luxemburg and Spain, EQUAL has been able to stimulate this kind of change through using a **multi-faceted approach**. The decisive factor in generating such change has been the combination of several, or all, of the following components.

Integrating **assessment and the validation of informal skills** into basic training for both childcare and care of the elderly has contributed significantly to the sustainable labour market integration of long-term, unemployed and inactive women. Valuing and certifying skills acquired, for instance, through raising a family and running a household has produced a recognised set of educational credentials for a target group that does not meet the entry requirements for the care training offered by tertiary education. These approaches not only promote these women’s employment prospects, they also create opportunities for further education and life-long learning; through:

- Using a portfolio method, where prior learning and new achievements are collected in an individual progress record;
- Accommodating the needs of inexperienced learners through schemes that are modular and shorter than regular training courses;
- Creating schemes that are largely work-based and combine practical training with theoretical instruction.

Training activities have been linked to the **setting up of additional care services**, which are both institutional and home-based. To prevent disadvantaged women from falling back into

¹ Joint Employment Report (JER) 2004/05: Gender gaps in employment : EU 15: 17.2 and EU 15 + ACC: 16.3 percentage points

unemployment or inactivity, the partnerships have managed to have the new facilities up and running as soon as the training has been completed. Close cooperation with local governments has helped both to expand the services of existing care centres and to establish new service enterprises and thus, to create a number of new jobs.

Preliminary studies have explored how the organisation of care and **other family support services** can boost female employment and help improve the work-life-balance of parents and other people with care responsibilities. Services that take on some of the daily housework or provide suitable transport have proved to be effective and have involved:

- Professionally led service agencies, set up thanks to EQUAL, in France, Italy and Spain that are converting domestic tasks into regular jobs, including “odd jobs” ranging from minor household repairs to accompanying children or old people to leisure activities or to doctors’ appointments;
- Inventing new ways of commuting in areas that are not well served by public transport, such as the use of mini vans and bicycle rental.

2.1.2. Securing the sustainability of the new services

To ensure the sustainability of these new care services, many projects have launched **public-private partnerships**, involving local and regional authorities, employers, social partners, NGOs and service-users. These partnerships have produced a number of positive outcomes such as:

- Benefiting from increased productivity and reduced absenteeism has led employers to understand that financial support for needs-tailored care is a good business investment;
- Realising that adequate transport enables people to take advantage of “more distant” job opportunities has stimulated municipalities and key players to take action to ensure the survival of the services;
- Two promising models of funding have been developed: one providing State Service Vouchers to disadvantaged families and single parents, the other marketing commercial services for people who can afford to pay for this kind of support, sometime with assistance from their employer.

2.2. WORK-LIFE-BALANCE POLICIES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS

The second major building block of EQUAL’s strategies to improve the balance between working and private life is the introduction of **comprehensive work-life-balance policies** in public and private enterprises and organisations. The models that have been developed include both new flexible work organisation and family support services.

Many companies, and particularly SMEs, shy away from the introduction of work-life-balance policies because they assume that they cannot afford the costs. To overcome the reticence of employers, EQUAL partnerships have been collecting and studying **success stories** from throughout Europe. Those good practices indicate that **employers can gain substantially** by providing work-life-balance packages.

2.2.1. Flexibility: to the advantage of both employer and employee

A careful analysis of employees’ and employers’ needs, in terms of **flexible working time**, has enabled EQUAL partners in all Member States to design and test a variety of different solutions, such as:

- Condensing a normal full-time working week to four days;
- Introducing periodic home working and tele-work;
- Combining longer and shorter days and working longer hours over a defined period to accrue non-working blocks of time;
- Redesigning work schedules, after a process of (re)assessing and reorganising working environments and job content: this led to the end of broken shifts in office cleaning and in hotel jobs.

These have proved to be **valuable solutions** both for employers, in terms of reduced staff turnover and absenteeism and increased productivity, and for employees in term of reduced stress in managing their family arrangements.

2.2.2. Meeting care and other family needs

Besides soliciting the financial support of employers to establish or improve care services for their employees, developing “**help desks** for family matters” has proved to be a successful approach to meeting family needs, while at the same time helping companies to attract and retain qualified staff. They “help desks” provide services such as support in locating the most suitable childcare or care for the elderly, in finding speedy solutions to almost any kind of **emergency**, or in developing personalised working time arrangements and career planning for parents and people with care responsibilities. Some of them that have become **permanent facilities** are also ensuring that **people on parental leave** can stay in touch with their company, through regular or occasional part-time work and participation in training.

Company “help desks” have been particularly successful when they have worked closely with regional initiatives for work-life-balance. This cooperation has widened the choice and availability of support measures and resulted in **lasting coalitions** of local or regional employers, municipalities and relevant service providers.

2.2.3. A process of cultural change

In some countries, such work-life-balance programmes were only the beginning of a long-term process of change. **Milestones** have already been reached and the progress made indicates that lasting impact will be achieved.

In several countries, EQUAL has involved the social partners in a geographical area or economic sector, and succeeded in influencing the content of collective bargaining. This has led to commitments from employers and unions to negotiate work-life-balance measures for women and men as part of collective agreements and to include relevant EQUAL achievements as some of these measures.

A large DP has developed a model for a four stage “**continuum of change**”:

- Complying with the relevant legislation and offering a small number of family-friendly measures mainly for women with children;
- Extending those measures to a wider group, involving fathers or people with other care responsibilities;
- Combining a set of policies that gradually becomes available to all personnel, as a response to business needs and as a way of attracting and retaining staff;
- At the final “mature” stage, an enterprise will be meeting its organisational goals and its employees’ work-life-needs without prejudicing the interests of either side.

All partners in the DP agree that cultural change is well underway and that their organisations are considerably different than they were when they began the endeavour.

2.3. TERRITORIAL ALLIANCES FOR RECONCILIATION

Many EQUAL partnerships have forged territorial coalitions aimed at turning a local area or region into a better place to live and work, particularly for people with care responsibilities.

2.3.1. Joining forces for change

Creating **local, powerful, pro-active alliances** has been the most important factor in promoting efficient, territorial, work-life-balance policies. The EQUAL partnership approach has proved to be the optimal way of enabling political decision-makers, public authorities, social partners, employers and citizens to come together around this issue. Investing time and resources in preparing the ground for the growth of activities in the areas detailed above has generated a lasting commitment on the part of the different players. Four strategies have proved to be particularly effective:

- Creating infrastructures or agencies for reconciliation and placing them under the direct responsibility of a mayor or a high-level regional decision-maker, as this demonstrates a political commitment to the issue;
- Pleading the business case;
- Setting up committees or working groups that unite the top decision-makers;

- Involving various groups of citizens at all stages of the process, from needs assessment to information campaigns.

2.3.2. Harmonising “city times”

By creating one-stop-shops, local and regional governments have generated a momentum for the all of the activities of their EQUAL partners. Based in a single location, **one-stop-shops** help people save precious time by catering for almost every type of demand from getting a copy of a birth certificate, through using health and social care services, to setting up an appointment with a careers guidance or placement officer. Thanks to EQUAL, one-stop-shops are becoming a permanent feature in many cities and regions and they offer:

- Opening hours that suit the work schedules of the population instead of the usual 9 to 5 rhythm of public administrations;
- A combination of services for families with children such as early childhood and educational activities, preparation for the new school year, financial aid, health issues including family planning, pregnancy care and they also support couples in crisis situations.

3. A SINGLE LABOUR MARKET FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Women are achieving better educational qualifications than men. They are outperforming men in secondary level attainments by 6 percentage points in EU-15 and 5 percentage points in EU-25. They represent the majority of graduates in the EU (55%) although their study choices still tend to demonstrate traditional patterns and career choices. However, visible inroads have been made, as in 2001, 36% of graduates in sciences, mathematics and information technology and 21% in engineering, were female;

However, all these inroads and assets are not yet mirrored by women’s position in the labour market. Both **sector-specific and occupational segregation** continues to be a major obstacle to the equal treatment of women and men in employment and in the pay that they receive. Some 48% of the women who were gainfully employed in the EU during 2000 worked in only four areas of activity: health care and social services; education; public administration and retailing. In contrast, only one third of men worked in four sectors of activity during the same year and these were: construction; public administration, retailing and business services.

3.1. HORIZONTAL DESEGREGATION

As EQUAL is a Community Initiative focusing on innovation, it has gone further than the more traditional interventions of the European Social Fund and has addressed gender stereotyping not only in vocational training but also in general education and that has been done from an early age.

3.1.1. Working in schools

Two Finnish DPs started the de-stereotyping process with children before they had even entered primary education:

- One operated in **kindergartens**, using role play, games and toys to encourage and to inspire girls to work with technology. The children had the chance to play with construction toys, create animations and use technical devices such as computers and digital cameras. They also explored domestic work and presented the results in surveys of mothers’ and fathers’ tasks and then discussed why these are being divided in a gender specific way;
- In cooperation with Finnish Technological Industries, the other DP launched regional and national competitions to design and construct a mobile toy of the future. This campaign stimulated the creativity and inventiveness of **girls and boys aged 6 to 12** and, at the same time, enhanced their team building skills and their perseverance.

Several DPs have recognised the need to organise **girl-specific activities** such as clubs, extra-classes or groups. All these have been based on **female ways of learning**. These are seen as acquiring knowledge and skills in a coherent context and for a specifically defined purpose that meets the learners’ needs, rather than trying to assimilate technical or isolated information for which they must detect a suitable use.

- In Germany, DPs produced **e-Learning materials** for both girls and their teachers to help them develop media competence in an interdisciplinary way and also set up **computer clubs** specifically targeted at girls, aged 14-15, who had few opportunities to access ICT. The main objectives of these clubs were to develop the girls' technological, media and social skills and to enhance their self-confidence.

Most of these activities were complemented by measures that also **involved parents**. DPs usually concentrated on providing information about, and raising awareness of, career opportunities in science and technology where women continue to be under-represented. Information and communication technologies were presented as a promising career path and it was stressed that competences in this area were indispensable transversal skills for many aspects of working and everyday life.

Supporting teachers in secondary education by providing them with materials, advice and expertise was another strategy used by DPs to help develop the technology-related skills of girls both in and outside school. For example:

- In Finland, the Network Technologies for Women prepared **female teachers and other educational staff** to use ICT and information networks and to apply various tools in developing e-learning materials;
- In the UK, a large partnership developed new **teacher training modules**, materials and methods geared specifically to teaching ICT to women including trouble-shooting and problem-solving, tools and approaches and e-learning.

3.1.2. Guidance and transition

Many projects have been focusing on the transition from school to vocational training or tertiary education and have developed a huge variety of activities such as information days, school-industry links, taster courses, summer camps, work-experience placements, group discussions, mentoring and specific awareness raising and training for guidance counsellors and teachers.

A cluster of DPs concentrated on the **individual support of young women** who were undergoing training in traditional male domains such as engineering or construction. The women were offered mentoring and coaching all the way through their educational itinerary to the early stages of their first job. In most cases, coaches or mentors were older women who had "made it" in a male dominated work environment. In others, peers who were second or third year students took the new trainees under their wing and passed on their experiences. In addition, the DPs orchestrated a number of activities targeted at parents and also at employers, social partners and mainstream training institutions with the aim making these key people aware of the need to create conducive learning environments for women.

A few DPs focused explicitly on the **role of career advisors and counsellors**, combining several lines of action. These included pushing for regulations that would require all guidance staff to follow modules on gender issues as a normal part of their training, developing material for continuing training such as the application of gender mainstreaming or gender sensitive counselling and tests and finally, developing practical tools to help break down stereotypical patterns.

- In Denmark, after studying the **perception of gender in the daily practice** of school-based career counsellors and young people's experiences of vocational guidance, one DP developed and ran in-service courses for guidance staff and teachers to raise their awareness of the importance of the gender dimension in their work and to improve their knowledge of the mechanisms that reproduce segregation in the labour market. Moreover, seminars were organised to sensitise parents about the gender stereotypes that play a role in young people's vocational choices and about how they could encourage and support both their sons and daughters should they consider a non-traditional career. Another DP organised seminars for career advisors **in universities and high schools**, focusing on the learning experiences of women engineering students and on the feasibility of reconciling working life and family life for these highly educated engineers.
- A Finnish DP operating in schools organised eight-day courses on Gender Sensitive Career Guidance, Recruitment and Counselling, targeted at counsellors and employment service staff.

- A UK partnership has trained trainers to provide continued professional development to careers teachers and guidance professionals across the country. Using case studies, role plays and interactive exercises, this training has equipped guidance professionals to **overcome their own stereotyping** and to challenging it in the behaviour of others.

3.1.3. Improving information and guidance for adult women

As in the strategies targeting girls and younger women, many DPs aiming to improve vocational information and guidance for mature women focused explicitly on the role of career advisors and counsellors and combined the same lines of action. In addition, they have often established Information or Resource Centres. Networking with other key actors in their territories has been a central feature of all these DPs that have been providing guidance for mature women as the first step in a longer process.

- An Italian DP has set up a network of 12 **Women's Information Centres** based in the offices of the Regional Equal Opportunity Commission and in the nine participating municipalities. The centres function as "one-stop shops" offering not only vocational guidance, to women, but also a platform where institutions, enterprises and trade unions can constantly up-date their expertise on gender equality.
- In Spain, one of the partnerships formed a **research, analysis and action group** to help guidance counsellors become more aware of gender issues and to train them to provide advice that is completely unbiased. Training sessions were organised for employment agencies, guidance services and human resources staff and a practical guide has been produced and disseminated widely.

3.1.4. Vocational training

Two approaches can be detected amongst those DPs that are focusing on women's training in non-traditional occupations. The first aims to **train women in mixed groups** while ensuring that:

- Gender sensitive methodologies are being developed, tested and used;
- Trainers are being sensitised to women's needs and also trained in equal opportunities;
- Flanking measures such as childcare and family friendly schedules have been agreed.

Most DPs that are concentrating on horizontal desegregation seem to be convinced that positive action is required to open up jobs in economic sectors and occupations that have huge gender imbalances. This second approach involves "**women only measures**", which contain all the elements mentioned above but, in addition, ensure that:

- Female trainers predominate and act as role models for beneficiaries;
- The training builds on the previously acquired skills and know-how (both formal and informal) of the participants;
- The most effective methods of women's learning are used;
- The training includes working on small projects, in a step-by-step approach;
- Science and technological subjects are demystified;
- Work placements are included in the programme so that trainees experience the reality of a male work culture and have the opportunity to prove that "women can do it";
- Networks and support groups are designed and fostered so that they continue after the end of the DPs' lifespan.

Only a small number of DPs concentrated on **initial vocational** training in male domains such as construction, transport and certain segments of ICT and they worked mainly to improve the training environment in vocational schools.

- In Sweden, a partnership has developed a multiple approach to de-stereotyping vocational training in the **construction sector**. The approach combines all girl classes (because the presence of boys can hold girls back in their learning progress) with the use of drama and interactive theatre to demonstrate the realities of life on construction sites and also to stimulate discussions on attitudes towards race, gender and desegregation.

The largest number of horizontal desegregation DPs have catered for the needs of **adult women**. Whilst aiming to exploit job opportunities in future growth sectors and male dominated occupations, they have tended to develop highly individualised training and support measures. **Individual pathways** have been created covering the route from the first information and counselling contact to, and often beyond, the labour market integration of the beneficiaries.

- In Spain, training has been focused on new technologies and **technology-related fields** and has been tailored to both the needs of the local firms and the profiles of different target groups. After the training, participants have been able to choose between a period of work experience in the firms, or producing a feasibility study for establishing their own businesses, both with continuing support and coaching from the DP.
- A Dutch partnership catered for women who wished to work either by taking on "**odd jobs in and around the house**" such as painting, construction and carpentry, electrical engineering and domestic engineering or by starting up their own "odd-jobs" company. Participants who were unemployed women aged between 18 and 50 were selected as a result of a rigorous four day assessment procedure that was designed to measure their motivation and suitability.

A number of DPs have been closely following recent developments on the labour market and have identified **trends in skills gaps and staff shortages** and also the emergence of new vocational profiles before these are officially recognised and integrated into mainstream training systems. Examples of these profiles that relate to knowledge management can be found in Germany and in Spain they concern environmental protection and the development of renewable energies.

Before working directly with beneficiaries, many DPs started by **training the trainers**. The knowledge and skills of the teams that will inform, advise or train the target groups have been updated in different ways such as:

- Training a 'pool' of trainers to deliver specialised training material on how to create conducive learning environments for women and on how to attract and retain women on courses. This one day programme was based on good training practice in the engineering, construction and technology sectors and delivered to learning providers and careers professionals (United Kingdom);
- Establishing a virtual campus to teach a social mediation master course through a programme designed from a gender perspective (Spain);
- Providing support to experienced female trainers to acquire new skills as "online trainers" with this nine-week training being completed by the design of an online course and a practical exam (Germany).

3.2. VERTICAL DESEGREGATION

Vertical segregation is not only related to top management, as in many cases women are already being confronted with invisible barriers or the "glass ceiling" during the early stages of their careers. In 2000, 10% of men employed in the European Union were classified as managers, compared to only 5.5% of women².

3.2.1. A variety of approaches

The number of DPs and TPs that concentrated exclusively on vertical desegregation and sought to break **the glass ceiling** was much smaller than those that focused on horizontal desegregation. However, several projects combined activities that aimed to combat horizontal and vertical desegregation.

EQUAL approaches to vertical desegregation included:

- Helping women to enter management and middle management;
- Developing strategies to open up the access of female managers to more senior positions;
- Increasing women's participation in decision-making within social partner organisations, local and regional developmental activities and even the world of politics.

Building the business cases for equal opportunities by **convincing stakeholders** of the benefits of using un-tapped female potential is at the core of these projects and a variety of other concepts were tested and implemented, namely:

² Eurostat: The Lives of women and men in Europe, A statistical portrait, 2002

- Introducing diversity management as a strategy to break the glass ceiling and, at the same time, to strengthen the positions of companies in rapidly changing markets;
- Establishing positive action plans;
- Providing continuing training to equip women with new management skills that are in demand such as quality management, international marketing and product development;
- Offering training in counselling, coaching, mentoring and networking skills to women managers at different levels of the job hierarchy;
- Integrating gender and diversity concepts into quality control systems;
- Introducing experts with “bridging” functions such as equality counsellors, work-life-balance agents and intercultural mediators.

Some DPs assisted the self-employment of “gender consultants”, as they expected employers to need, and therefore to pay for, this type of external expertise in the introduction of change processes. They also helped SMEs that can rarely afford this expertise, to use the services of these external consultants.

3.2.2. Raising expectations

EQUAL DPs that were tackling vertical segregation emphasised that female career ambitions should be encouraged from as early an age, or stage, as possible. These projects believe that combating gender stereotypes in vocational guidance should go beyond enabling women to choose non-traditional occupations and should involve raising girls’ and young women’s expectations of becoming senior managers.

- A Portuguese DP led by a Trade Union worked with **ten schools** to raise the awareness and improve the skills of the teachers. It also helped them to develop an equal opportunities curriculum and supported them in its delivery to pupils aged 15 to 18;
- In England, a partnership in the **transport sector** integrated a gender approach into a major national scheme of initial vocational training, called the Modern Apprenticeship programme. This was done in an interactive fashion using business games, topic groups, television and video clips.

3.2.3. Supporting women’s access to management and senior positions

Other DPs have been concerned with the situation of women who have acquired high-level qualifications in certain economic sectors but despite of all of their credentials and skills, become stuck at the very threshold of more senior positions of responsibility whilst their male counterparts climb above them on the career ladder.

- Research that highlighted the absence of women in the upper levels of the job hierarchy in **science, engineering and technology** led a Spanish DP to focus on training women as managers in these growth sectors. As the participants were already extremely competent in their respective technical areas, they received individualised training in management, human relations and personal skills.
- Similar research that revealed the absence of women at the top of the **tourism industry**, led a Greek partnership to open up management positions for women in the fastest growing sector in this country. With the support of Trade Unions and Employers’ Organisations, the DP designed tailor-made equality plans, as an integral part of human resource strategies of the tourist companies and hotels, and then followed up this work with an evaluation of the plans’ effectiveness and efficiency.
- A university-based DP gathered relevant data on the under-representation of women professors in three Dutch **institutions of higher education** and portrayed this information in a very visible, graphic form. It then worked on recruitment mechanisms, by developing a series of practical tools to support selection committees and providing training on recruitment procedures.

Careers in politics are another area where the glass ceiling really blocks women’s access to higher positions. An Italian DP addressed this issue in several ways, by:

- Establishing an Observatory on the presence of women in the decision-making investigated all the areas of political, social and economical power: parties, unions, trade associations, banks, financial and credit institutions;
- Influencing public opinion, institutional players and political parties, which are all, in some way, responsible for the low level of women’s participation in politics;

- Running short courses in a large number of schools, with quiz games, reflection groups and a competition to create an advertising tool to promote equality in democracy;
- Staging an awareness raising campaign in the airports in Rome and Milan over 90 days at the end of 2003. Then a second stage targeted the 2004 elections to the European Parliament with the message "Democracy needs women" and the slogan "More Italian women into the European Parliament" printed on a fan that showed the distribution of seats by gender in the Parliament. This campaign included press conferences, articles in daily and weekly newspapers, programmes on national and regional radio and television and advertising posters in Rome. Promotional material ranged from leaflets, stickers, postcards, and bills to fans, t-shirts and flags.

3.2.4. Coaching and mentoring

One of the difficulties that individuals experience when moving into a new environment is that they are not likely to have 'natural' access to relevant networks and nor will they be familiar with its specific culture and its unwritten rules.

- In Spain, a Basque DP set up a **coaching programme** for 100 women who were intending to break into non-traditional careers. This programme was intended to improve their negotiation skills, boost their self-esteem and increase their self-control through a competence based approach. The 40 male and female coaches also received training to prepare them for their new roles. Naturally, this focused on gender issues but provided the would-be coaches with support material and monitoring tools, as well as individual on-line and face-to-face support from the University team that had designed the programme.

3.3. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING TO REDUCE GENDER GAPS IN THE WORKPLACE

It is often stated that **Trade Unions** have a key role to play in gender equality issues, but their contributions do not always live up to these expectations. However, in Portugal, a Trade Union-led DP set out to develop positive actions in companies and organisations and to introduce **gender mainstreaming into human resources management policies and practices**. It recruited 19 organisations and then proceeded to:

- Carry out a gender analysis of each of the company's social record (employment, hygiene and security, training, additional social protection) and its staff situation (types of contract, qualifications, pay systems, working hours, etc);
- Undertake a series of interviews with workers' representatives and HR managers, on policies and procedures including recruitment, promotion, pay differentials, career planning, reconciliation and training.

In almost every organisation, cases of gender discrimination were found, analysed and discussed in depth. As a result, the organisations and the DP drafted specific company agreements that containing remedial measures to be implemented in the short and medium term and to be monitored on an on-going basis.

3.4. TACKLING THE GENDER PAY GAP

The gender pay gap is another persistent obstacle to the equal treatment of women and men on the labour market³. On average, women in the EU earn **only 84% of men's wages** – 89% in the public sector and 76% in the private sector - and they also make up 77% of the EU's lowest paid workers.

In EQUAL, there was only one DP that focused on the **gender pay gap**. It operated through a broad partnership and held employers' and employees' workshops to raise awareness of the issue and to build the capacity of employers, trade unions and employees to address the pay gap through the following **5-Step process**:

- Deciding on the scope of the review and the data that was required;
- Identifying where women and men are doing equal work: like work, work rated as equivalent, or work of equal value (using a job evaluation);

³ Source: Report on equality between women and men, 2004. European Commission. http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/com_04_115_en.pdf

- Collecting data on levels of pay to identify the existing gaps;
- Reviewing and monitoring the pay gaps, if they are free of discrimination;
- Developing an Equal Pay Action Plan, if the pay gaps discriminatory.

An **Equal Pay Action Plan** should include arrangements to:

- Provide equal pay if there are gaps between men's and women's pay for which there is no genuine reason and this should apply to both current and future employees;
- Change the pay policies and practices that contribute to unequal pay, within a given timescale;
- Introduce an Equal Pay Policy that commits the organisation to providing equal pay with clear accountability and regular monitoring and to devoting adequate resources for such reviews.

From the beginning, it was made entirely clear that this was not simply a data collection exercise, but that it entailed a **commitment to remedy any gender pay inequalities**. This meant that the review had to have the involvement and support of managers with the authority to deliver the necessary changes.

4. ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

Learning new and un-learning old gender roles was central to the activities of those DPs that focused on promoting equality in unpaid care and family work. They tried to develop concepts that would trigger **changes in roles and task sharing** between women and men who were part of the current generation of parents. In some Member States, these activities were combined with strategies that addressed young people and children and challenged stereotypes during those crucial stages when gender roles are largely determined.

4.1. MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

The most significant EQUAL media campaign was implemented in the Netherlands. It was designed just like a **marketing strategy** for any new commercial product. The idea was simple – *“if men were prepared to become more involved in tasks at home, more women would be able to enter the labour market and reconcile their working and family lives in a more satisfying way”*. Under the slogan “Men taking the lead”, a sophisticated mix of activities initiated “discussions at people’s kitchen tables” as the first decisive step in changing attitudes and behaviour. Members of the **general public** were bombarded with a series of TV and radio commercials, supported by many other activities such as press conferences, an Internet site, talk shows and countless events that were organised throughout the country.

4.1.1. Strong messages

The first message confronted men with the **excuses** that they invent to avoid taking on more responsibilities at home. After a while, the strategy was fine-tuned and concentrated more on motivation and inspiration than on provocation. This second wave of messages addressed the need for women to learn to let go of their **“household and care monopoly”** and of their strong beliefs about how things should be done. It also focused on the fact that most employers, male colleagues and friends do not react enthusiastically if a man undertakes more family work. The campaign encouraged men to start a **dialogue on the equal division of family tasks** with their employers, as well as their friends and peers at work. With the project’s assistance, this has resulted in many men making **“role sharing agreements”** with their partners and/or employers.

4.1.2. Good results

The impact of the media campaign was monitored in great detail and the results showed that:

- Three months after its launch, the campaign was known to, and recognised by, 55% of the Dutch population;
- During the same period, a change of in public attitudes was recorded in relation to the statement: *“If young children are part of the family, their mother should not have a job”* with a significant drop – from 40% to 25% – in the number of respondents agreeing with that statement;

- According to the final analysis in May 2004, 59% of men and 52% of women were reported to have discussed the division of family tasks at least once a month. Agreements on the sharing of tasks were mentioned as the most frequent result of such discussions.

4.2. LEARNING BY DOING

4.2.1. Men and fathers

Practical training in, and exposure to, **new roles and tasks** have proved to be particularly successful when account is taken of the specific cultural context and so, the approaches of EQUAL DPs have been very diverse and include:

- Workshops or "parents' cafés" that promote practical solutions to task sharing between mothers and fathers. The male participants claim that learning from peers who are more advanced in overcoming traditional gender roles has made them think more seriously about accepting additional responsibilities and perhaps even taking parental leave;
- "Men only" courses and project work that help men to assess and improve their skills in household management.

4.2.2. Children of all ages

In working with children and young people, EQUAL has highlighted the prevailing attitudes in the current generation of parents and explained the roles and the vocational choices that are, or might be, available to future generations of parents.

- The training and further education of **kindergarten and primary school** teachers that has been developed by EQUAL in many countries has enabled these teachers to help boys and girls explore existing gender differences and reconsider stereotyped perceptions of men and women. For instance, role patterns discovered in the kindergarten groups were linked to the analysis of the different tasks performed by mothers and fathers in the home.
- A partnership has created and tested innovative curricula for **primary and secondary schools**, which challenge traditional gender roles and also the subtle integration of the related stereotypes into science and technology. Rather than offering extra general courses in equal opportunities, these schemes use household processes, such as cooking, baking or ironing to explain certain phenomena in chemistry and physics.
- EQUAL also tested ways of addressing the topics of parenthood and gender roles in **secondary and tertiary education**, when career paths are being formed. Male engineers who were actually combining work with the care of their children were trained as a group of "ambassadors" for this new role model. They became visiting lecturers and passed on their "hard-won" experience to the students. All their experiences were synthesised and integrated into teaching materials and tools, including a training module to be delivered as part of technical education programmes at universities. These resources are now in growing demand within a number of educational institutions.

5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Since the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, the Member States and European Institutions have been obliged to undertake gender mainstreaming. The European Employment Strategy (EES) incorporates the principle of gender mainstreaming and in the face of persisting inequalities, the EES is also applying the so-called Dual Approach adopted by the Commission, which combines gender mainstreaming and specific actions for women. EQUAL, being a laboratory for new ideas that might be applied in the EES, is following the same approach. Whilst most of the ETG 4 DPs apply gender mainstreaming as an underlying principle in their activities related to either reconciliation or desegregation, a smaller cluster of projects is dedicating all its efforts to **introducing a gender perspective into mainstream policies and practices** at national, regional or local level. It is important to note that the DPs in this cluster have predominantly targeted public authorities and institutions in the following fields:

- Vocational guidance and counselling;
- Employment policies and practices at regional level;
- Management of higher education;
- Regional public authorities, the armed forces and the police.

5.1. SECURING COMMITMENT FROM THE TOP

Gender mainstreaming requires a **top-down approach**. To be successful, the top level decision-makers in any institution must be committed to the principle and must also accept that the implementation of the appropriate measures is a major priority for them and for their organisation.

Emphasising legal obligations or existing national commitments to gender mainstreaming was an important element in the DP's outreach strategies that aimed to influence top level players. Also, linking the introduction of gender mainstreaming to **current policy priorities and developments** proved to be a very strategic gambit. Two DPs focussed on change processes that were just emerging or underway in their respective countries: the reform of the vocational guidance system in Denmark, and a merger of higher education institutions in the Netherlands. In both cases, the projects provided valuable support to the key players who were in charge of those processes.

Highlighting the **advantages to be gained** through gender mainstreaming in terms of the public image and the overall performance of the relevant institutions proved to be particularly persuasive. Some examples of DP's arguments were that gender mainstreaming would:

- Enhance the competitiveness of Universities and enable them to attract the most promising students and outstanding members of staff and to introduce new teaching methods and learning approaches;
- Unlock the potential of women and thus contribute to tackle the increasing skills gaps in many parts of the Danish economy.
- Respond to problems in the delivery and effectiveness of active labour market policies that were a hot political issues, in the Austrian region of Styria.

5.2. ESTABLISHING A STATISTICAL BASE AND MONITORING PROCEDURES

Gender mainstreaming is a long-term process which requires **procedures and tools to measure and monitor change** at regular intervals. Thus, it is always necessary to gather data that will give an accurate picture of the situation at the starting point. Whilst national, regional and even local statistical offices are increasingly producing gender-disaggregated data, such a statistical breakdown is not always available within individual organisations. DPs have used various approaches to remedy this situation:

- A DP set out to collect exact figures that would show the numbers of men and women in the student body as a whole, in the different job positions and at various levels of hierarchy within the universities. This data is now being used to calculate the "Glass Ceiling Index" for the different faculties in the universities and these scores can be used to benchmark the performance of the faculties in terms of gender mainstreaming;
- Using existing gender-disaggregated data on population, economy, education and training, employment and unemployment, and also on participation in political-decision-making at regional level, a DP constructed gender equality indicators that are now being used in a monitoring and benchmarking system called "Gender Radar". This tool presents the levels of gender equality achieved in the various policy areas, and the overall gender equality performance indicators for all districts of a region can be calculated and presented graphically. Through comparing the indicators over several years, it is possible to indicate progress and/or failure both in specific policy areas and in the general performance of each district and of the region as a whole.

5.3. CARRYING OUT GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

DPs in ETG 4's Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming used various research methods to assess the gender gaps they aimed to tackle. This involved looking at representation and participation, access to resources and societal rules. **Unmasking incidences of gender stereotyping** was considered to be a pre-condition for positive change. In guidance, for instance, the research uncovered three types of attitudes:

- Gender blindness, i.e. gender is "invisible" and not considered to be a significant factor. Counsellors do not address how gender influences the possibilities and limitations that confront the individual. A gender-blind counsellor often acts rashly in a way that reflects traditional cultural perceptions of women and men;

- Gender consciousness, i.e. gender aspects are taken into account and this provides a base for enhancing the options available to boys or girls. Thus, the prevailing perceptions of what is masculine and feminine can be challenged;
- Gender neutrality i.e. a procedure believed to be neutral is applied, which intrinsically reflects gender stereotypes and thus fails to help young women and men to make the maximum of their potential.

5.4. SETTING GENDER EQUALITY OBJECTIVES IN A CHOSEN POLICY FIELD OR ORGANISATION

The different contexts and policy fields of the DPs required **different mechanisms** to identify concrete gender equality objectives. Thus, the overall objective of reaching a gender balance was often broken down into viable intermediate targets. In some cases, further fine-tuning was necessary to define the final goals whilst in others, the goals were so obvious that they could immediately be addressed.

In higher education, this meant:

- Introducing a “Tenure Track System” which entailed the faculty making a decision every six years on whether each existing member of staff should be reappointed or promoted;
- **Positive action** to improve the career prospects of female assistant professors, giving them priority access to a one year academic exchange programme with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology;
- Creating possibilities within the faculty to **reduce the under-representation** of female scientists.

In vocational guidance and counselling, the integration of a gender dimension into a **new law** was combined with a reform of the **national training programmes** for careers counsellors. Pilot programmes implemented by EQUAL DP influenced this new training in Denmark.

In regional employment policies and practices, gender equality objectives have been adopted at three different levels in the Austrian region of Styria:

- Building the **capacity for gender mainstreaming** in 30 organisations that were the most important in terms of developing and implementing labour market policies;
- Training gender agents so that they could formulate **organisation-specific equality goals** and take a leading role in implementing measures to attain these goals;
- Training staff members of sub-contractors operating training and/or employment schemes on behalf of the public authorities.

5.5. BUILDING GENDER COMPETENCIES IN MAINSTREAM INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Given the long-term perspective that is needed for gender mainstreaming and also the complexity of the process, it is vital that organisations have the capacity to implement and adapt on an on-going basis. To provide the necessary resource and knowledge, DPs set up carefully monitored pilot projects and trained men and women as change agents.

5.5.1. Training change agents

Within the thematic work of ETG 4, different concepts of training for “gender agents” or “change agents” emerged. The first drew on the experience of existing gender equality infrastructures, offering training to their staff members and supporting them in moving from positive action for women to gender mainstreaming. This involved converting bodies that had mainly been focusing on the situation of women, into resource centres that could take account of the needs of both women and men. At the same time, desegregation or reconciliation DPs also provided external gender expertise to public and private institutions and enterprises in their territory. By contrast, the gender mainstreaming projects have opted for **change agents to be recruited from within the organisations** that they are targeting directly, rather than from existing gender equality bodies. This concept is founded on the importance of middle management to processes of organisational change.

Creating a new profile for in-house experts These training courses targeted middle managers or advisors working directly with senior management. Their purpose was to enable them to coordinate the implementation of gender mainstreaming, as in-house experts, and to support the relevant senior decision-makers in optimising both the female and male potential in the organisation's workforce. These future change agents acquired project management skills and learned to look at their professional context in a "gender perspective".

Emphasising the link between gender skills and attitudinal changes The aim was to overturn the usual logic behind the development of equality plans namely, that they only have to be produced to comply with the organisation's legal obligations. According to one DP, this logic leads to superficial amendments and not to the systemic and cultural change that is needed. A more egalitarian world of work requires new attitudinal and behavioural patterns and not just the accumulation of relevant knowledge. Therefore, the training offered to 35 middle managers from chosen organisations was process-oriented and conceived as an in-depth personal experience for each individual participant. It gave participants ample opportunity to reflect on, and to find their own way of handling, the complex questions about gender and the gender impact of decisions on individuals, groups such as work teams and families and, last, but not least, the organisation.

5.5.2. Implementing pilot programmes

Testing the value of introducing change agents was an integral part of a DP's strategy to build gender capacity in organisations and institutions. Since most of these pilot projects are not yet completed, it is too early to assess the results. However, the rules and avenues established for making the maximum of these model schemes indicate that the principle of gender mainstreaming is becoming embedded in a number of institutions and/or policy fields.

Integrating a gender dimension in male and female domains One DP required all the participants in its training seminars to sign an "agreement for change", together with their employer. This included a commitment to start a local gender project addressing the specific needs of their organisation in terms of equality.

Pilots at city, district or region level. Examples of concrete projects included:

- A gender impact analysis of all products and services delivered by the Department for Sport and Physical Education and by the Department for Youth and Family;
- Introducing gender budgeting and an analysis of all subsidies paid to external service providers within these two policy fields;
- Development of tools and guidelines for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all municipal authorities;
- Development of specific qualifications for those employees who are responsible for planning and delivering the services offered by the municipality;
- Production of a Manual to assist municipalities in the introduction of gender mainstreaming into local policies and practices.

Trade Unions, too, carried out gender initiatives at regional level, such as:

- Undertaking a gender impact analysis of company level collective agreements, using a sample of SMEs and large enterprises;
- Organising awareness raising and training for members of works councils;
- Setting up a commission to develop guidelines for the integration of gender mainstreaming into collective agreements, with a particular focus on work-life-balance and discrimination based on gender and ethnicity;
- Developing tools to enable works councils to analyse and eliminate gender-specific career obstacles;
- Negotiating with a group of enterprises, model collective agreements that focused on gender equality.

6. PAVING THE WAY FOR FURTHER ACTION

The EQUAL good practices summarised in this document have generated **significant changes**, the full impact of which will only become visible over the next few years. However, EQUAL has successfully launched a process which incorporates the key elements of desegregation and

work-life-balance policies and practices in local areas and regions, as well as in the public and private organisations that have been involved in its Development Partnerships. DPs have demonstrated that it is possible to win over top level decision-makers and to get their lasting commitment to social and cultural change. This has become possible because EQUAL has established convincing business cases that have demonstrated the substantial advantages of the introduction of gender equality policies and practices in terms of the economic development of companies, organisations and even territories.

The EQUAL achievements include a wealth of curricula, methodologies and tools that can support administrations at national, regional and local level and also public and private organisations in their equality policies. These products provide important background information for those new DPs that will focus on reconciliation in the second round of EQUAL and, in most cases, the products be can accessed via the DPs' websites. A list containing contact information and the relevant web addresses is annexed to this document.

More information can be found on the gender equality pages of the EQUAL website.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/activities/etg4_en.cfm

ETG 4 – EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUP "EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES" – PARTICIPATING DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

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