

## ETG 4 LIVING DOCUMENT GENDER MAINSTREAMING DRAFT 4

### 1. THE POLICY BACKGROUND

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Since the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty<sup>1</sup> in 1999 gender mainstreaming is an obligation for the Member States and European Institutions. The principle of this process of gender mainstreaming is to incorporate equal opportunities for women and men into all policies and activities. The relevant communication<sup>2</sup> defines the objectives and describes the appropriate methods and measures to be adopted: "Gender mainstreaming involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them."

Gender mainstreaming is a "difference-based" approach, which presupposes the recognition of male and female identities and the willingness to establish a balanced distribution of responsibilities between women and men. This implies not only to achieve a quantitative gender balance in all societal spheres: "it is a question of promoting long-lasting changes in parental roles, family structures, institutional practices, the organisation of work and time, women and men's personal development and independence (...)". In the face of persisting inequalities, the European Commission has adopted the so-called Dual Approach which combines gender mainstreaming and specific actions for women.

### 2. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE CONTEXT OF EQUAL

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In EQUAL gender mainstreaming is one of the transversal principles that should be integrated at both programme and project level. This means, as emphasised in the EQUAL Communication and Guidelines, that the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men must be systematically considered and integrated in all activities. According to the Mid-Term Evaluation<sup>3</sup> gender mainstreaming and promoting equal opportunities between men and women is often understood in only a "formal way" that is promoting women as a certain percentage of participants rather than as taking a more comprehensive approach to gender.

However, the situation appears to be different for Development Partnerships (DPs) operating under the Equal Opportunities Pillar. According to the analysis<sup>4</sup> carried out at the beginning of the programme, slightly less than 10% of the DPs focusing on Theme G (Reconciliation) and Theme H (Desegregation) are exclusively dedicated to either developing gender mainstreaming systems or applying existing approaches to education and training, employment and support to business creation and SMEs.

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1 Legal basis: Article 2 of the EC Treaty: The promotion of equality between men and women is a task of the European Community; Article 3 of the EC Treaty: In all its activities the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women. Article 23 (1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: "Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay."

2 "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities" (COM(96)67final)

3 EU-Wide Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative 2000-2006, Mid-term Report, March 2004

4 DP Analysis: Pillar 4, Theme G and Theme H, May 2001

### **3. EUROPEAN THEMATIC WORK ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

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In the framework of its 2004 work programme, the European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities (ETG 4) has assembled DPs that are introducing gender mainstreaming in education and training systems, municipalities and regions, but also in large corporations and SMEs, clusters of enterprises and economic sectors. In most cases gender mainstreaming is also on the agenda of their Transnational Partnerships (TPs).

Led by Finland and Hungary, a European Thematic Group has been established to discuss and develop a strategy to include a gender perspective into all EQUAL themes. The Group has produced a Guide<sup>5</sup> that is supporting DPs to apply gender mainstreaming throughout their lifespan and to all their activities – from the first stages of planning to implementation and to monitoring and evaluation.

#### **3.1. DIFFERENT APPROACHES IN THE ETG 4 WORKING GROUP ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

The DPs that are members of the ETG 4 working group on gender mainstreaming are operating in different contexts and consequently their objectives and methods vary considerably. Three clusters with specific characteristics can be identified:

##### **3.1.1. Gender mainstreaming as main focus**

The first cluster consists of five DPs whose focus is predominantly to introduce gender mainstreaming in a national, regional or institutional context. Those DPs are proceeding in a way that has emerged over the last couple of years. The key components are:

- Visible commitment of top- level decision makers;
- On-going collection and evaluation of relevant gender-disaggregated data ;
- Transparency of the implementation process;
- Development of gender mainstreaming competencies linked to sector- or position-specific knowledge and skills;
- Monitoring und Controlling.

It is important to note that the DPs in this cluster are targeting almost exclusively public authorities and institutions.

- The Danish DP “Youth, gender and career” is aiming to make gender mainstreaming an integral part of the national system of educational and vocational guidance.
- The Austrian DP “Just GEM” is targeting employment policies and practices in the region of Styria. The approach is involving institutions and organisations with high political visibility and impact, including the Social Services Department, regional employment offices, Chambers of Commerce, the Municipality of Graz (the capital of Styria), several district governments, a regional development agency, the Association of Styrian Innovation Centres, a major trade union and a large charity.
- Working with three universities, the Dutch DP “Bridging the gender gap at Universities” is undertaking to introduce gender mainstreaming in those institutions of higher education.
- The Swedish DP “Gender Equality Developers (GED)” project has developed a method to increase knowledge about and commitment to gender equality in regional public authorities, the armed forces and the police, particularly through the work of change agents. The method is addressing three different levels: the individual, groups (work teams, but also the family unit) and organisations. GEDs are being trained to influence all three levels and to start gender equality projects in their organisations.

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<sup>5</sup> The Guide is available for downloading at:  
[http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/empl/equal\\_etg/library?l=/etg0/gender\\_mainstreaming&vm=detailed&sb=Title](http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/empl/equal_etg/library?l=/etg0/gender_mainstreaming&vm=detailed&sb=Title)

### 3.1.2. Gender mainstreaming as a basic principle of DP activities

The second cluster assembles five DPs working on reconciliation of work and family life or on desegregation. Gender mainstreaming strategies are applied to move beyond the concept of specific actions for women and to ensure that men are also addressed as target groups when it comes to tackling gender gaps on the labour market and/or the promotion of work-life-balance.

- The German DP “Gender Net” is trying to create a gender balance in parental leave, i.e. it is working to reduce the negative impact of parental leave on women’s careers and to encourage men to share this leave with their wives or female partners.
- The French DP “Développement des conditions favorables à l’activité des femmes en Finistère : pour une meilleure conciliation des temps de vie” is developing new models to improve the working conditions of women, both employed and self-employed. Work-life-balance is at the core of the project’s activities that are focusing on business creation and employment in agribusiness and the food industry.
- The Irish DP “Work Life Balance Network (WLBN)” is seeking to improve the reconciliation of work and family life for both women and men. Working with six large companies and public authorities it is geared to integrate a gender dimension in their personnel policies and to bring about organisational change in terms of diversity.
- Based in the UK(GB), the Fuirich Transport Development Partnership (FTDP) is addressing gender imbalance (and diversity in general) in the transport sector.

### 3.1.3. Preparing gender equality bodies to introduce gender mainstreaming

The DPs forming this third cluster are concerned with gender equality bodies and the role they can play to firmly enroot gender equality policies at local and regional level. Given existing gender gaps, their main focus are specific actions for women. At the same time they are creating and/or strengthening gender equality infrastructures and helping them to lay the foundations for gender mainstreaming in their territories through staff training and awareness raising for policy makers.

- Coordinated by the National Women’s Institute, the Spanish DP “Promociona” is operating in two regions (Asturias and Galicia). It is aiming to enhance the knowledge base and outreach of local gender equality counsellors. Successful strategies for sustainable labour market integration of women are being made fruitful for specific target groups such as women with disabilities and women business creators.
- The Italian DP “Ri.Do.” (Risorse Donne Venezia Gender) is setting up a network of local resource centres for gender equality in the Province of Venice. The DP is developing a comprehensive package of measures, including family-friendly new work organisation; setting up care and other family services; support for companies to introduce positive action plans; training for women in technical occupations and support for female business creation and entrepreneurship.

### 3.1.4. Change agents for gender equality as a key strategy

All DPs involved in the working group are training and/or supporting change agents that can play a crucial role in the process of making gender equality a reality in all societal spheres, and particularly in the labour market.

Taken together, good practice emerging from the three clusters demonstrates the development process from specific actions for women to gender mainstreaming. In fact, the ETG 4 working group on gender mainstreaming can be seen as a small laboratory which showcases a variety of different activities, which are all aimed at a common goal: making gender equality an integral part of the policy fields chosen by the DPs and stimulating a sustainable process of change that will continue after the end of EQUAL. Those DPs may be starting from different points of a long itinerary, be operating in different territorial or institutional contexts and targeting different

categories of key players, but they are all headed for gender mainstreaming in the literal sense of the word: integrating a gender dimension into the mainstream of education, training and employment policies and practices.

## 4. STRATEGIES TO PREPARE THE GROUND

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Careful preparation is required to introduce gender mainstreaming as well as to enhance “traditional” equality policies such as positive actions for women. DPs explored and implemented a number of concepts that were crucial to creating a supportive environment for their intended actions. This included:

- to emphasise the possible advantages an organisation, public or private, can gain from introducing gender policies and to create win-win situations strengthening both the organisation and gender equality;
- to link their strategies to current policy priorities and make use of “the right moment in time” to introduce gender mainstreaming;
- to bring top-level decision-makers on board and to secure their lasting support to concepts and implementation;
- to enable all partners of the DP to make a maximum contribution to launching, implementing, monitoring the intended activities and to evaluating both process and results.

### 4.1. EMPHASISING WIN-WIN-SITUATIONS

Most DPs found that pleading the business case for gender equality was the best strategy to convince decision-makers of the organisations they were targeting. In particular, private sector enterprises, although they were often in favour of the DPs’ endeavours “in principle” required a robust business case before committing valuable resources.

The Fuiric Transport Development Partnership (FTDP) that is being led by NTP Limited, the training institution of the British transport sector, decided to fully inform all private sector partners of the moral and legal case for the project, but overlaying this with a “bottom line” business case for their involvement.

*Preliminary research carried out by the DP helped to quickly identify the significant diversity issues, particularly those relating to the critical shortfall of women in the majority of traditionally male dominated occupations. This information was acknowledged by employers, but it was only considered as a priority when the demographics for 2010 were linked to it, that companies really began to take notice.*

*In brief, the “demographic time bomb” in the UK will result in:*

- only 20% of the workforce will be white, able-bodied, male and under 45 years of age;
- women increasing from 44% to 54% of the workforce;
- 80% of workforce growth will be women; and
- 73% of new jobs will go to women (although 88% of that figure will be in the service industries).

*Another example of the demographic information provided to DP partners in the Road Haulage industry, was that there will be an estimated shortfall of over 75,000 light goods vehicle drivers by 2010 unless firms diversify their workforce. These statistics, validated from government sources, were instrumental in gaining – and maintaining – private sector organisation support for the project.*

#### [Ukqb – 28 - Fuirich Transport Development Partnership \(FTDP\)](#)

The case of the Dutch DP “Bridging the gender gap at Universities” shows that “business advantages” are also a major driving force in the public sector. Current changes and challenges in the academic world are forcing universities to develop a more competitive edge to both attracting students and faculty members. At the same time the pressure to secure funding for education and research is growing. To involve three universities in its endeavour of gender mainstreaming, the DP used the following arguments.

Probably one of the most challenging developments is the ongoing trend towards globalisation. In the European Union there is a structural move towards developing a European context for research and education. In its policy document 'Making a Reality of the European Research Area: Guidelines for EU Research Activities', the European Commission makes a case for better use of national centres of excellence. It warns of the fact that Europe's investments in research and development are dramatically lower than those of the US and Japan. As research is a central element in the emergence and worldwide development of a knowledge-based society, structural changes need to take place in the organisation and culture of European research.

The competitiveness that accompanies these processes is also perceptible in academic education. A signal of this direction is the 'Anglo-Saxon turn' in the European-wide endorsement of the Bachelor-Master system, promoting flexibility and mobility among students. The struggle for students that is fed by the increasing demand for highly educated citizens stimulates a search for attractive educational approaches and teaching methods, electronic learning and international classrooms, flexible and contract courses and, finally, international exchange facilities. Implementing these new approaches demands flexibility and puts the traditional educational systems of universities under pressure.

In this context, gender mainstreaming can be used as an engine for innovation, since it is widening the pool of human resources of both students and staff.

[NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)

## **4.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMING**

Linking the introduction of gender mainstreaming to current policy priorities and development proved to be successful. Two DPs were strategically targeting change processes that were underway in their countries.

The Danish project Unge, køn og karriere (Youth Gender and Career), for instance, was conceived and implemented during the discussion and drafting of new legislation on educational and vocational counselling.

*It was the ambition of the DP to influence the legislation process and consequently the emerging new structures and future training for career advisors. The policy debate about the changes appeared to be an ideal moment in time to introduce gender mainstreaming. For years gender equality had not been an issue in the context of guidance and counselling. More than a decade ago Denmark had, as other European countries, been implementing specific actions for women to combat horizontal segregation on the labour market. The experience of this so-called "women in male dominated jobs strategy" was highly controversial. Generally, the approach had been seen as being too narrow, since it mainly concentrated its efforts on influencing women's choices. Counsellors were criticising the strategy because they felt it were unfair to put pressure on girls and young women to change attitudes without any job guarantee.*

*But now, both the career advisors and the Ministry of Education were more open minded than in the past, when it came to discussing a new gender sensitive approach. In December 2003, the Minister of Education invited a number of experts including two partners from the EQUAL DP to participate in an ongoing "Dialogue Forum" in order to follow and inspire the development and implementation of the new Act on vocational counselling.*

*At the same time a lot of discussions among career counsellors were going on, and there was a huge interest to participate in the DP's seminars and conferences. In addition, the project manager was invited to give a statement about the gender aspects of career counselling at several important policy events. The DP's mid-term conference in February 2003 "When dreams come true - about young peoples educational and vocational choices and the gender segregated labour market" attracted 250 participants and another 200 were on the waiting list.*



*The gender mainstreaming approach, targeting both girls and boys, is now perceived as opening up a new avenue to tackling horizontal desegregation: it is putting the spotlight on gender stereotypes and on non-traditional career choices, instead of only focusing on women. Thanks to its role in this debate, the DP became an important partner for other key players who are seeking to analyse and change practices in the area of career advising.*

#### [DK-14 - Unge, køn og karriere](#)

Clearly, the DP has influenced the new legislation. In April 2003 the Danish Parliament passed the new Act that came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2004. This law is reorganising the existing counselling provision in primary and secondary schools and also the vocational guidance services for young people and adults. In addition, a new education for all career advisors is introduced in the autumn of 2004.

In the Netherlands, the DP Breaking Gender Gaps at Universities is also taking advantage of an important change process: the merger between the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) and the Christelijke Hogeschool Windesheim. At the planning stage of the EQUAL project, preparations for the merger had just started and a Joint Executive Board had been formed from the executive boards of each institution. The VU, a partner in the DP, opted for applying gender mainstreaming to the process.

*For the EQUAL DP this offers a chance to get involved in a fairly new process which is opening up opportunities for new policy. The project perceives this process of change as an avenue to redress the vertical and ethnic segregation in higher education. At Dutch universities only 6 to 8 % of the professors are female, whilst more than half of the students are women. At both the VU and Windesheim only a small number of women and people from ethnic minorities are employed in senior positions, especially among the academic staff at the VU. Through its activities, the project is demonstrating to the institutions that gender mainstreaming can assist them in developing a reflective and proactive attitude that enables them to respond quickly to the internal and external challenges of change.*

#### [NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)

### **4.3. INVOLVING TOP-LEVEL DECISION-MAKERS**

Both gender mainstreaming and specific actions require a top-down approach, i.e. the top level decision-makers in any institution or organisation must be committed to the principle and enforce the implementation of the appropriate measures as a major priority. For the EQUAL DPs, this often meant to develop bottom-up strategies that would reach those top level decision-makers and convince them of the validity of gender equality strategies and their capacity to further the interests of the organisation.

The Irish WLBN DP, which is promoting work-life-balance for female and male employees, sees its activities as a strategy to instil a culture of diversity in both the public and the private sector. Generating this kind of change in its six partner organisations, including the national Civil Service, semi-state and private sector enterprises and a municipal authority, would have been unthinkable without the visible backing of their highest decision-making levels.

*At the outset of the project it was difficult to ensure participation from senior management representatives. In a bottom-up approach the DP organised "peer pressure" events to increase the participation of top level executives in each organisation.*

*Executive Breakfast Briefings for senior management proved very successful in bedding down management support for work-life-balance in general and the project in particular. The events were hosted by IBEC (the Irish Business and Employers Organisation), which increased their attractiveness and targeted the management teams in each of the six organisations. High profile speakers provided the opportunity to learn more about the importance of work-life-balance programmes to business and also at a personal level. Those lectures were also exploring the impact on companies that neglect to address the reconciliation of working and private life.*

The events were organised as closed sessions, specifically for senior managers in Dublin Bus, An Post, eircom, Dublin City Council, the Office of the Civil Service, Local Appointments Commissioners and Iarnrod Eireann (the Irish Railway). The “peer pressure” element arising resulted in a 89% participation rate.

In addition, the involvement of the Social Partners in the Steering Group of the DP and of union officials in the working groups established in each organisation ensured that there were multiple pressure points in the project.

It is important to note that the commitment from senior management kept growing over time, due to the project’s internal raising awareness activities. This included, for instance, on-going briefings held with senior management in the six participating organisations. Moreover, WLBN was engaged in a PR campaign prior to work life balance Day on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2004 which attracted a lot of media attention and had repercussions on top players.

#### [IE-20 - Work Life Balance Network \(WLBN\)](#)

Acting in a similar vein, the Austrian DP Just GeM started off with an event for the highest level political decision-makers that are responsible for employment policies in the Region of Styria.

*The aim of the event was that those key players should make a clear decision to apply the approach in their organisations and to visibly become leaders in the implementation process. DP managers explained the concept of gender mainstreaming and how it could enhance the general performance of their institutions whilst complying with the existing European and national legislation on gender equality. Participants were also informed what an eventual commitment to the endeavour would entail in terms of time and resources to be dedicated.*

*This launch was most successful, all top people holding key positions within the Styrian Employment Policy attended the event. They agreed to integrate gender mainstreaming into the policies and practices of their respective organisations and also that this should happen via pilot-projects. They also agreed to nominate a man or a woman in senior position to participate in the DP’s training course for “Gender Agents”. The course was aimed to enable participants to coordinate the implementation process as in-house experts and to support their management in leading the organisation towards gender equality.*

#### [AT-5-1814-Just GeM](#)

In its endeavour to gender mainstream the merger of two universities and to bring about an improved balance of gender and diversity in their personnel structures, the Dutch DP is also using a top-down approach.

*The efforts were targeted mainly at senior management, and particularly those who are in charge of developing the new structures, policies and teaching programmes for the future organisation. The DP’s activities led the Joint Executive Board, (which is linking the boards of the two universities) to adopt the proposed actions of the Equal Project and to implement them through the Office for Management Affairs, Personnel and Organisation at the VU. The latter has been a good decision, since the work of the DP has many common aspects with the tasks of this office. Thus information can easily be shared which facilitates cooperation. It also proved to be helpful that one of the employees in personnel has a responsibility for “emancipation matters”, and even more that the director is dedicated to the EQUAL approach. Next to the endorsement of the Joint Executive Board, this active role of the Director of Personnel and Organization was the biggest asset.*

#### [NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)

Besides providing information and know-how, DPs were also concerned with stimulating a personal commitment of the people they wished to involve. Specific sensitising and training activities were organised to bring about attitudinal changes, i.e. the willingness to let go of familiar and deeply rooted beliefs and become more open to adopting new options for dealing with

gender issues. To engage senior managers in the British transport industry the FTDP project chose a “theatrical” approach.

*This involved interactive events delivered by actors, illustrating issues of gender inequality, work-life-balance, glass ceilings and other aspects of diversity. Participating managers were asked to contribute to a role-play situation, where the audience controlled the actors. This methodology allows the audience to empathise with the actors by exchanging roles and considering a differing person’s perspective. The events were quite provocative and have stimulated interest in issues related to diversity and the workforce within a safe environment, which was very successful in engaging the commitment of senior managers to the project.*

#### [Ukqb – 28 - Fuirich Transport Development Partnership \(FTDP\)](#)

The PROMOCIONA DP that is aiming to strengthen the status and impact of gender equality agents in the two Spanish regions of Asturias and Galicia sought to establish the support of local policy makers and key players.

*Accompanied by an advertisement campaign in local newspapers and ample coverage of its activities in major radio stations, the DP organised awareness raising and training for mayors, elected members of city councils and their senior and technical staff. Key people from the local employment agencies and from existing gender equality bodies were also participating. At events the lack of female participation in local decision-making was highlighted and the alarming disparities were used to shock decision-makers into action and thus to influence the gender balance in those positions of leadership.*

*Another crucial message conveyed at the events was that comprehensive gender equality policies require both specific actions for women and gender mainstreaming as a strategy that is cutting across all policy fields.*

#### [ES-218-Promociona](#)

For the Swedish DP Gender Equality Developers (GED) the process of internalisation is a precondition to challenging the traditional gender perceptions at institutional and societal level.

*The DP assessed gender equality practices in Sweden and found that they mainly consisted of educational efforts at a “superficial level”, and that no real changes were achieved. Gender equality plans in public and private organisations were not seldom carried out just to comply with legal obligations, but without a deeper insight of why the actions should take place and how they could benefit employers and employees. According to GED there are two choices in working towards gender equality: the first is to give power to persons with the relevant knowledge and the second is to give knowledge to persons with power. The DP choose the second option and identified people with real power in each of its participating organisations. They were offered a special four-week training programme. The aim was that they should learn to apply gender mainstreaming not only as a technical method, but with growing insight, based on knowledge about gender, power, roles and expectations etc.*

*The training took part in small groups of a maximum of 12 participants, each facilitated by two trainers. Lectures were combined with intensive discussions about facts, values, attitudes and behaviour. Group dynamics played an important role. For some trainees it was really hard to start realising that there is a lot of inequality in their professional and social environment. Gradually, the training led them to see discriminatory practices they had not seen before, and sometimes even denied they existed. Feedback by trainers and other participants enhanced this developmental process. When the top managers went back to work between the sessions, they began to integrate a gender perspective into their decisions, or at least to keep asking themselves the crucial question at all times: what kind of effect will my decision have on men and women.*

*Although in the GED project the focus was on the professional side of life, the training ensured, that participants learned to see the connection between work, public and private spheres and to understand that inequality in private life and within the family structure has an impact on the situation of gender equality in the society and in the workplace.*



*The DP is confident of having initiated a new approach to gender mainstreaming, through which senior managers have integrated the dimension of gender into their value systems and decision-making processes. This enables the top-down introduction of gender mainstreaming to all levels so that it becomes a sustainable element of the organisational culture.*

*SE-59 - Gender Equality Developers (GED)*

#### **4.4. SUPPORTING ALL PARTNERS TO MAKE A MAXIMUM CONTRIBUTION**

After the initial agreement of the top, DPs invested a lot of time and energy to ensure the active participation of all partners through various information and training events. JUST GEM organised workshops for managers and senior staff of the organisations, which had been committed to gender mainstreaming by the decisions of their board of directors. All these organisations have a public mandate in the field of employment policies.

*The idea was to offer this target group an opportunity to become more familiar with the concept of gender mainstreaming, whilst the DP had the chance to get an impression of the general attitude towards gender equality in the different organisations. Moreover, the DP sought to assess the specific relevance of each organisation in the context of regional employment policies. Gender mainstreaming was presented as a process which can improve organisational development in terms of better performance and customer service which require organisations to:*

- *Work with result indicators aimed to open a new perspective of the organisation on itself, i.e. to look at their services with the eyes of its customers. The indicators are gender specific and measuring satisfaction of and benefits for customers who had been using the services of the respective organisation.*
- *Plan more accurately to enable “gendered” customer orientation.*
- *Make systematic use of the results of an on-going analysis of the organisations’ orientation towards gender equality to reveal positive, but also less satisfactory elements of progress.*
- *Adapt the organisation and its culture to the needs of its different customers (mostly women are perceived as “different”) to take better account of the diversity of female and male individuals.*
- *Address the increasing criticism of many citizens about the delivery of public services and the need for policy makers, authorities and organisations to prove to (female) customers and voters that they are committed to gender equality.*
- *Perceive gender mainstreaming as a sort of „lever“ for the step from political volition to an active change of existing conditions.*

*Those workshops were a stepping-stone to on-going communication between the organisations, which were then simultaneously carrying out the various pilot projects of the DP. Over time, they came to appreciate the intensive communication process which enabled them to learn from each other when working out the right strategies.*

[AT-5-1814-Just GeM](#)

Participative working and decision-making structures were key to success. The Irish WLBN DP created structures, at both DP and partner level, to ensure cooperation and transparency in the process of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

*In each of its participating organisations the DP set up a working group representing management, unions and staff. The presence of the different parties ensured that all stakeholders’ voices were considered when diagnosing the problems and identifying the solutions. Thus, all players can take ownership over the implementation phase, which*

*should in turn guarantee a greater level of buy in and support for project initiatives, and be equally responsible and participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the proposed actions. Approximately 50% of the WLB Groups' members assume management roles within their company in various business sections and grades, and 50% are representatives from the trade unions.*

*In the beginning of the project, targeting and recruiting trade unionists for those working groups presented a challenge, due to the strain on resources in terms of unions having smaller staff and heavy workloads. Raising awareness has been the key in highlighting the importance of work-life-balance as a trade union issue and the impact it has on a union's membership in addressing workplace conflicts. WLBN has, for instance, participated in the ICTU's Women's Conference where work-life-balance was addressed is a key priority. The project also held two workshops with trade union representatives to discuss their concerns and needs.*

*The social dialogue as established in the working groups in each of the six organisations is mirrored in the Management Steering Group of the DP:*

- *56% of the members represent management in the respective company;*
- *The Irish Business Employers Confederation (IBEC) has representation (included in 56%);*
- *44% of the Management Steering Group come from the trade unions;*
- *The Irish Congress of Trade Unions have representation (included in the 44%).*

#### [IE-20 - Work Life Balance Network \(WLBN\)](#)

Specific structures enabling partners to fully cooperate in the project were also created by the Dutch DP that is working with universities.

*At each of the participating universities a coordinator for the EQUAL activities was installed. For the work related to the merger between Amsterdam and Windesheim a taskforce was established. It consists of two professors of the VU, a member of the Joint Executive Board of the two universities, the director of the merger, the director of the Office for Management, Personnel and Organisation, the employee responsible for emancipation matters in that office, the two EQUAL coordinators and two members of the Work Councils (one from each organisation).*

*The chair of the taskforce, the so-called ambassador of the Equal Project, is a professor of Economics as well as an economic consultant. The DP feels that it is a good choice to have someone from the "hard" and "practical sciences" instead of, what would have been be more predictable, someone with a background in women studies.*

#### [NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)

Other approaches to building a stable and performing partnership took account of the fact, that some of the DP partners were working for the first time in the framework of a European programme. The FTDP project in the UK, for instance, which is assembling very different categories of road, sea and air transport companies, based throughout the country, ensured that all partners were aware of not just the aims the DP and the business case for gender equality and diversity, but that they also fully understood all aspects of ESF funded projects.

*The lead partner (NTP Ltd) adopted an intense regime of education and awareness raising with each partner – sometimes through plenary sessions and sometimes one-to-one. Initially NTP organised plenary ESF briefing sessions to ensure that every partner understood their own role, but also the vagaries of ESF bureaucratic jargon and requirements. These sessions were facilitated by external consultants and at the events each partner received a written "Briefing Pack".*

*During Action One and the early stages of Action Two, further, more in-depth, briefing events were held that focused on key aspects, including publicity, transnational activity, audit requirements and how each partner's role contributed to the overall achievement of the project's objectives.*

*These briefing sessions contributed significantly to the positive attitude of all partners, but also revealed the need to educate them on the equality and diversity agenda. Consequently, the lead partner undertook a Training Needs Analysis for every partner organisation in the first instance and then, on the basis of identified need, designed and delivered awareness raising seminars specifically tailored to the needs of the Partnership. These events were supported by one-to-one consultancy as required. Issues addressed included empowerment, legal requirements, jargon-busting sessions and plenary discussion groups.*

[Ukqb – 28 - Fuirich Transport Development Partnership \(FTDP\)](#)

The Just GeM DP assumes that to be really committed, people must take ownership, not only as representatives of their organisations, but also as individuals.

*In practice, that meant the DP identified people who might be able to influence decisions in favour of gender mainstreaming. To discuss the rationale of the project they were invited to meetings together with other players that were much less likely to do so. The idea was to emphasise the necessary co-existence of change and preservation, since a constructive development process needs both qualities.*

*When trying to turn key players into advocates of gender mainstreaming, a number of rules were observed and proved to be very helpful:*

- *It is less important to lecture people on existing inequalities within their organisations (thereby triggering possible feelings of guilt) than to induce representatives of organisations to asking themselves questions about gender equality and to envisaging possible first steps towards the formulation of equality objectives.*
- *Creating an atmosphere and organisational settings that take account of different degrees of concern about gender equality. For instance, representatives of municipalities, enterprises or trade unions worked in small peer groups to allow for discussion and development of ideas that were specific to their institutions or organisations.*
- *Appreciating prior efforts and knowledge of the organisations and the contributions of participants in the meeting.*
- *Making no secret of the fact that it is not possible to optimise individual services in terms of gender equality without affecting the basic principles of the organisation and its working methods.*
- *Obstacles on the way to building commitment have to be identified and dealt with in a strategic and sensitive way.*
- *Nothing can be proven by facts and figures alone; what counts are the conclusions that are drawn. It is therefore crucial to take account of (male) managers' perceptions of the roles of women and men, which are often related to age, socialisation and fear of change.*
- *The actual context of the process of interpreting relevant facts on gender equality is highly important. The personal interpretation of those facts is influenced by that person's role: Does she/he feel under pressure in a certain situation or because of certain expectations she/he may have come with? Is someone exerting pressure, directly or indirectly, on other participants? Are there patterns of visible or hidden power relations in the group?*
- *„Proclamations“ at the end of an event are not enough; lasting self-commitment must be the goal.*

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## 5. ENABLING PROCESSES OF CHANGE

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### 5.1. INTRODUCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

After the introductory stages explained above, the DPs focusing on gender mainstreaming in public authorities and institutions moved to the next step: the gender impact assessment<sup>6</sup>. This involved to find out whether the policies and practices they were targeting had a different impact on women and men, and also to do a similar exercise for their own intended activities.

Based on the results of the analysis, DPs developed equality targets, which were agreed amongst partners, but often also with external players having joined their activities.

In many cases, the implementation phase comprises training programmes for future change agents and also a series of pilot projects that were carefully monitored and evaluated. The task of those agents is to support organisations in designing and implementing gender mainstreaming in a way that is most suitable to their needs and interests, whilst at the same generating progress in their gender equality performance.

The Austrian Just GeM DP has developed a model with six steps to move from the gender impact assessment to the various stages of implementation. This model has been applied to planning and implementing all activities of the DP and is also being used to train the equality agents for the participating authorities and organisations. The six steps include:

- *The first stage involves a gender impact assessment of the chosen policy area, i.e. to find out how men and women are represented in the relevant decision-making processes and also how women, as compared to men, are benefiting from the various training and labour market integration policies. The exercise includes a screening not only of the respective budget allocations but also of other resources such as time, space and accessibility. In addition, the analysis must look into the differences between the life situations and circumstances of men and women and check if and how such differences have been taken into account by policies and practices. Another element of the gender impact assessment is to identify gender differences in societal rules and legal regulations and their relevance to equal treatment in the labour market. Then, based on all of the outcomes of the assessment, gender equality targets and a viable action plan are formulated.*
- *Stage two requires anticipation and analysis of the obstacles that are most likely to hamper progress towards the desired goal;*
- *The next stage groups a range of options that are considered to have the potential to overcome these obstacles;*
- *This is followed by a SWOT analysis that reduces the options agreed at Stage three to those that are the most realistic and viable solutions in terms of cost and benefits, available time and organisational context;*
- *Stage five presents the biggest challenge - during the implementation of the selected option(s), the gender dimension must be integrated into the management and control system of the organisation. Only if this is achieved, can stumbling blocks and deviations be detected and action taken to readjust the implementation strategy to the needs of both the organisation and its female and male “customers”;*
- *Last, but not least, Stage six establishes monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress between the situation of departure and the equality targets formulated at the end of Stage one.*

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<sup>6</sup> More detailed information: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/equ\\_opp/gender/gender\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/gender/gender_en.pdf)

### 5.1.1. Establishing measuring and monitoring procedures

Gender mainstreaming is long-term process which requires procedures and tools to measure and monitor change at regular intervals. To start monitoring, it is necessary to establish a basis of data reflecting the situation of depart. Just GeM, for instance, collected gender-disaggregated data related to population, economy, education and training, employment and political-decision-making for the whole region of Styria. The DP also constructed gender equality indicators that are being used in a monitoring and benchmarking system, which is called Gender Radar.

*The [Gender Radar](#) presents the levels of gender equality achieved in a number of crucial areas such as education and training, employment, unemployment and political decision-making in the different districts of Styria. Scores are between “0” = absolute inequality and “1”= gender balance. The distance between an achieved score and 1 represents the gender gap that must be bridged, whereas the distance from 0 stands for the degree of equality reached so far. The system allows to present both a comparison of the districts and the different areas. Moreover, an indicator of the overall gender equality performance of districts can be calculated and visualised. Through comparing the performance indicators from several years it is possible to show progress in the crucial areas and general performance.*

*In addition, Just GeM provides permanently up-dated [gender equality profiles](#) for the districts, the region and Austria. They consist of tables and explanatory texts. More detailed profiles and graphs can be generated upon request, if for instance a DP partner requires data on specific themes.*

[AT-5-1814-Just GeM](#)

Unlike data produced by national or regional statistical offices, figures to illustrate gender gaps in organisations were not always easily accessible and extra efforts were needed to collect them . This was the case at the Dutch universities.

*One of the objectives of the Equal project was to establish the exact numbers of men and women in the various positions and hierarchy levels of the institutions. This has not been done before, and the exercise revealed that some of the figures are that are supposed to form an important base for personnel decisions are quite patchy.*

- *The DP assembled the number of women and men in the different occupational groups, per faculty/department, permanent v. temporary appointments, age, full-time/part-time appointments, years of service and the number of male/female students in each department.*
- *Collecting figures for students and staff with ethnic minority background turned out to be a problem. Figures on students from ethnic minorities can be obtained from Statistics Netherlands. But ethnic staff members are not registered, so estimates from directors and personnel consultants were the only option.*

*The figures were used to draw attention to the fact that women and employees from ethnic minorities are underrepresented at the higher levels of staff. Data are presented in a special EQUAL publication, which will be sent to all management personnel at the VU and Windesheim. Confronted with these facts (for instance in a scissors-shaped diagram) management might realise that this is a problem after all.*

*The figures are also being used to calculate the Glass Ceiling Index for the different Faculties at the university and the departments at the Hogeschool. The scores for this Index are an excellent tool to benchmark the different faculties and departments. The project believes that, there is only so much you can achieve with talking about the seriousness of the situation regarding equal opportunities. Figures should do the talking and be powerful arguments. And they were .... in a way. At least, from now on, every year, the figures will be collected as introduced by EQUAL at both the VU and Windesheim.*

[NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)



## 5.1.2. Gender impact assessments

### 5.1.2.1. Methods

DPs in the ETG working group used various methods of scientific research to assess the gender gaps they aimed to tackle. The Just GeM project has imported the famous “3R-Model”<sup>7</sup> that has been developed in Sweden and adapted it to the Austrian context.

*The DP has added another “R” to the components of the assessment. By asking a number of key questions it is exploring the relevant differences between women and men concerning:*

- **Representation:**
  - ⇒ *How many women and men are involved in the decision-making concerning the policies and practices that are to be assessed (governments, public authorities, consultative bodies etc).;*
  - ⇒ *How many women and men are benefiting from the services and provisions related to employment supplied in the territory;*
  - ⇒ *What is the percentage of measures that are predominantly benefiting women or men (education and training, active labour market policies, childcare and elderly care, support to business creation and SMEs, etc.)*
- **Resources:**
  - ⇒ *How are different resources such as time, space, money being distributed to women and men?*
  - ⇒ *How much money is being spent on female and male activities in different policy areas ( such as training, employment, research)?*
  - ⇒ *How are the relevant public budgets distributed between women and men? Who is benefiting most from those budget allocations?*
  - ⇒ *How much space is being dedicated to female and male activities?*
- **Reality:**
  - ⇒ *What are the differences in the life circumstances of the women and men who are the beneficiaries of the policies and practices under observation;*
- **Rules:**
  - ⇒ *What are the gender differences in terms of societal rules and legal regulations?*

*Based on the emerging differences between women and men, gender equality targets are formulated.*

[AT-5-1814-Just GeM](#)

### 5.1.2.2. Outcomes and impact

The following examples demonstrate how both the process and the outcomes of gender impact assessments can influence policy development. The Dutch DP Breaking Gender Gaps at Universities is carrying out three gender impact assessments in the context of the merger between the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) at the Windesheim University in Zwolle. In one case the results had an immediate impact.

*The first assessment focused on a Business Studies programme, which was already part of the VU curriculum and has, from September 2003, also been taught at Windesheim (in Zwolle) by teachers from both institutions. The DP collected quantitative data such as the representation of women and men, people with ethnic minority background and native Dutch in teaching, but also figures on working hours performed by female and male teachers. In addition, qualitative data were analysed. These were obtained from 25 interviews in which the central question was whether the merger would influence the promotion prospects of male, female, ethnic and non-ethnic employees.*

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<sup>7</sup> Swedish Association of Local Authorities: The 3-Rs-Tool for gender equality in local government. On gender mainstreaming and the 3R method in Swedish municipalities. Stockholm 1999. Under the headings “Representation, Resources Realities” this model is assessing all policy fields in a municipality or region.

*The most interesting result of this assessment was the fact that teaching at Windesheim, where so far only under-graduate courses had been taught, was considered an unwanted time-consuming task by the teaching staff of the VU, whilst teaching at university level was an interesting career move for the Windesheim staff. The outcomes showed that relatively many women from the VU were engaged in teaching at Windesheim. Most of them do not yet have a doctoral degree and many are working part-time. No women from Windesheim were engaged in teaching.*

*Results were discussed with the directors and staff of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the Amsterdam University and this is also planned to happen at Windesheim. At the VU the outcomes functioned as an “eye opener” for the faculty, which proposed measures to remedy the situation:*

- *Introduction of the Tenure Track System which would entail that the faculty has to decide every six years whether a person will be appointed/promoted or not. Compared to the currently applied procedure, this system is more transparent and requires that people are being appointed on the basis of more objective criteria.*
- *Positive actions to improve career prospects for the female assistant professors from Business Administration who are teaching in Zwolle. The idea is to offer them the opportunity of spending one year at the MIT, which would help them catch up with their male colleagues.*
- *Look at possibilities within the faculty to reduce the under-representation of female scientists.*

*A second assessment will be conducted for a new programme “Health and Life”. Unlike Business Studies, this programme so far exists only on paper. If a decision is taken to develop it further the diversity aspects will be analysed by the Equal Project. A Gender Impact Assessment will eventually be drawn up for the organisation of the merger itself on the basis of reports from meetings and policy documents.*

*Although research during a merger is difficult because of the sensitiveness of the issues at stake, the DP found that sticking to certain rules can enhance the process. The rules include that people to be covered by the research are told in advance what is being planned and why. Keeping them informed of the progress, resulted in more open and supportive attitudes of everybody involved in the studies. This participative approach enabled fruitful discussions of final results and conclusions, which were generating forward looking strategies and proposals.*

#### [NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)

The Danish project Youth Gender and Career carried out a study that had a significant impact on the policy process.

*The first study “Gender-blind counselling?” which was based on interviews with 30 school-based career advisors identified three different approaches to counselling being used by the advisors: gender blindness, gender consciousness and gender neutrality.*

- *Gender blindness means that gender is “invisible” and not considered a significant factor. This does not mean that counsellors are unable to distinguish between boys and girls, but rather that they do not reflect on how gender influences the possibilities and limitations confronting the individual person. A gender-blind person often acts rashly in a way that reflects current cultural perceptions of women and men. Such cultural perceptions will often be archaic, i.e. “traditional.”*
- *Gender consciousness means to reflect on gender aspects and be conscious of the decisive role of gender. Gender consciousness paves the way for gender equality considerations, providing a base for enhancing the options available to boys or girls. Thus the prevailing perceptions of what is masculine and feminine can be challenged.*

*The point is that gender consciousness enables people to act actively and consciously in relation to gender.*

- *Gender neutrality means that a procedure believed neutral is applied, which is intrinsically reflecting gender stereotypes and thus failing to help young women and men to make the maximum of their potential.*

*Most of the Danish counsellors regard themselves as gender neutral but gender stereotypes are often below the surface. They are not 'neutral', i.e. supporting both girls and boys to make all kinds of educational and vocational choices, but tend to give advice that is in line with traditional male and female occupations. In reality they are "gender blind".*

*The gender conscious counsellors fall in two categories: the first reproduces gender stereotypes because the counsellors tend to perceive girls and boys as so different (especially if they are ethnic minorities) that gender-related occupational choices seem natural and unproblematic.*

*By contrast, the second category views the gender equality perspective as a significant part of their counselling and is very much aware of gender specific barriers for young peoples' occupational choices. They do not view the gender-segregated labour market as unchangeable and do not reject the idea that gender-conscious counselling of young people may influence their choice of occupation in a non- traditional way.*

*The study also revealed the need to update the knowledge of career counsellors on the gender aspects of the labour market, in particular on the mechanisms that reproduce gender segregation. In addition, the study drew attention to the fact that a few counsellors are clearly reluctant to work proactively for gender equality. A much larger group has a rather resigned attitude, because many of them have difficulty seeing how working with gender equality in their counselling can be of any use.*

*Based on all those findings, the DP formulated a proposal for the education programme of future counsellors that is addressing both attitudinal changes and content. It emphasises that the new programme must enable counsellors to determine and discuss their attitudes to including gender equality as part of their practical work. They must learn to take account of various gender equality perceptions and their ramifications, not merely for counselling but also for the development of the individual person, the workplace culture, the labour market and society in general. An aspect of this attitudinal work should also focus on confronting the counsellors with their own gender blindness. In that context, the interrelation between ethnicity and gender must also be on the agenda.*

*In terms of knowledge build-up the new education programme should focus on giving counsellors updated information about the actual barriers and problems related to being in the gender minority at a workplace, so that counsellors do not have to resort to obsolete stories or myths about what this actually involves. Finally, it is deemed of key importance to convey the message that non-traditional choices in terms of gender are not problematic and that such choices are not restricted to girls in skilled crafts.*

*The results of the study and the proposals re-introduced the theme of gender equality in the discourse on educational and vocational counselling and contributed substantially to the new education programme for career counsellors in Denmark.*

[Unge, køn og karriere – DK 14](#)

### **5.1.3. Training specialists for gender mainstreaming**

To introduce a gender dimension into policies and practices in an organisation or territory, specific competencies are needed at different levels of the hierarchy. In recent years, a market for gender mainstreaming specialists has been emerging in many Member States of the European Union. A number of DPs are following this trend and have developed qualification profiles for those specialists and designed new training programmes. The idea is to enroot

gender mainstreaming not only in the organisational development of public administrations and agencies, which are striving to comply with European and national legislation, but also to influence the personnel policies of private companies and organisations.

The “Gender Agents” course developed by the Austrian Just GeM DP is a modular training package in two different versions. The first is offered to the authorities which formulate the Styrian employment policy and are in charge of the budget and of allocating funds to chosen policy priorities. The second programme targets organisations that implement active labour market policy measures as sub-contractors of the authorities.

13 women and four men have been selected to attend the first version of the course. The majority of those trainees is at the same time developing pilot programmes in their organisations:

*The training programme is structured in four modules and highly work-based, i.e. whilst acquiring knowledge and skills the new gender agents are already setting up their pilots in the respective organisations.*

#### **Module I: Gender Mainstreaming and the Function of a Gender Agent**

*In this module, the theme of equal opportunities for men and women is examined from a range of very different angles. Whilst studying the historical development of equal opportunities and of gender mainstreaming, participants focus on their personal and institutional approach to gender equality. They learn how to look at their professional context in a “gender perspective”.*

*In addition, the role and tasks of a “gender agent” within the organisation are defined and discussed in the group.*

#### **Module II: Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming and Project Management**

*The implementation of Gender mainstreaming is carried out via pilot projects which apply the approach to development, planning and organisation of the Styrian employment policies. This module teaches the necessary project management know-how. From planning through to evaluation, participants acquire all the practical skills and then put their new expertise to immediate use in their own projects.*

*Apart from project management, the module addresses the status of gender agents as in-house consultants.*

#### **Module III: Gender Mainstreaming within the Organisational Context**

*Implementing gender mainstreaming requires a potential for change in the organisation. Based on the systemic approach of the DP, this module supports participants to examine developmental stages of their projects and which kind of change those stages will have to address. Trainees learn also how to anticipate and deal with the resistance that every process of change entails.*

#### **Module IV: Gender Mainstreaming as a Process (Tools, Methodology)**

*On-going analysis, monitoring and evaluation must be an integral part of gender mainstreaming. This module introduces participants to various tools and processes and provides support to apply them to given examples. Furthermore, the collection and use of available data and a critical approach to interpreting those figures is being covered.*

*Participants having successfully completed the course are awarded a certificate. The programme ends with a high level closing event at which the participants present the pilot projects of their organisations.*

*The **second training programme** is targeted at employees that are responsible for product development and planning in organisations, which are contracted to implement the Styrian employment policy. 16 people are currently undergoing training and 66 are on the waiting list.*

*The modules offer a similar introduction to equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming, but otherwise are more focused on the integration of a gender dimension*

into the process of planning, supervision and evaluation of the training and employment measures they conduct. As the client, the Regional Employment Office presents its gender equality objectives and the resulting requirements that are now an integral part of the contracts.

Furthermore, the course teaches how to handle to different methods and tools of gender mainstreaming. Participants learn, for instance, to analyse the current gender equality performance of their organisation as a pre-requisite for both the formulation of gender equality objectives and the planning of customised measures. The DP provides tools for this exercise such as [the Equality Scorecard and the so-called Quick Scan](#). Whilst the Scorecard is an in-depth diagnostic tool to assess the equality performance of an organisation and the requirements for change, the Quick Scan enables a first impression of the state-of-the art. In any case, the organisations must establish gender disaggregated data of their workforce by qualification and hierarchy levels, which is often not existing. Trainees acquire the skills to work with the official Styrian labour market data and to set up the necessary statistical procedures in their own institutions. This implies both the organisation and the measures they are implementing under the contracts with the Styrian Employment office, the Regional Government or district and city governments.

[Just GeM - AT-5-1814](#)

Besides training top level decision-makers as described earlier, the Swedish GED DP offered training to 35 middle managers from its partner organisations.

*As for the top decision-makers, the scheme was conceived as an in-depth personal experience for each individual participant. It was structured in four phases (modules) of four days each and lasting over a period of six months. This timing was considered as important to give trainees ample opportunity to reflect and find their own way in handling the complex questions about gender and gender impact of decisions on individuals, groups, such as work teams, but also families and on organisations. Meetings were taking place in a conference centre far away from peoples workplaces and daily life. Between the different training phases the participants had to do homework, which further stimulated the individual process of reflection.*

*While the first three seminars concentrated on the three levels mentioned above, the fourth focused on methods and tools that can help participants to disseminate and further develop the acquired knowledge and skills in order to start gender equality projects in their own organisations.*

*The GEDs worked in small constant groups of minimum eight and maximum 12 persons. The process and development in the group was facilitated by two tutors, one woman one man ,who have special skills in both group dynamics/processes and gender issues.*

*The DP describes the result of the training as "enlightening and inspiring" for all participants. Many things that they had taken for granted in their views on women and men were shattered and the GEDs recognised them as myths that are socially constructed and therefore could be changed. The training has convinced them of the fact that gender matters and they were highly motivated to apply their new competencies and insights to their organisations.*

[SE-59 – Gender Equality Developers \(GED\)](#)

#### **5.1.4. Pilot projects**

Running pilot actions to test the validity of the equality goals and plans that were emerging from the gender impact assessments and also the effectiveness of the training programmes for gender agents was a crucial step within the intended processes of change.

Nijmegen Universiteit, which is one of the partners of the Dutch DP Bridging the Gender gap at Universities, is running a pilot programme to improve the recruitment procedures for academic staff and higher management. The rationale is to make 'hidden' procedures and implicit arguments visible that are often influencing the selection or rejection of candidates.



The background and reason for the pilot scheme is the poor quality of recruitment and selection procedures at universities and the under-representation of women in higher academic positions. The activities follow the development stages that the DP has laid down in its Manual for Gender Mainstreaming:

**Stage 1: Identification of the target group and/or policy domain**

The target group of the project are personnel officers in faculties, faculty staff in their role as chairpersons of recruitment and selection committees and the Chairpersons of the faculties.

**Stage 2: Setting up measuring and monitoring mechanisms**

- Assembling data on the number of female staff per department in relation to target figures at university level;
- Proposing scenarios that increase the level of support and monitoring that personnel officers can provide to improve recruitment and selection procedures. Each faculty can choose its own level of support and monitoring.

**Stage 3: Creating a work structure and organisational framework**

To develop a proposal for a binding regulation on recruitment and selecting that incorporates a gender dimension, the pilot project created a taskforce that is closely working with the manager/coordinator of the DP. The proposal takes account of the different levels of support and monitoring by personnel officers in each department.

**Stage 3: Building awareness and ownership**

- Coaching of personnel officers and/ or chairpersons of recruitment and selection committees;
- Creating an exchange platform for personnel officers;
- Working conferences for staff (September 2003 & November 2004);
- Fact sheets as an important tool to support recruitment and selection. They are available on the university's website and focusing on:
  - ⇒ Sketching competence profiles;
  - ⇒ Composition of teams;
  - ⇒ Active recruitment of female applicants;
  - ⇒ Preparing selection interviews;
  - ⇒ Competence-oriented job-interviews.

**Stage 4: Training the key players**

- Training for personnel officers and/ or chairpersons of recruitment and selection committees (November 2004).

**Stage 5: Tailoring and transforming**

The project is defined as an example of gender mainstreaming because it focuses on re-designing general policies (in this case on: recruitment and selection; and on competence profiles for staff) with special attention to gender. Some departments implement positive action for some positions. This however does not compete with gender mainstreaming.

**Stage 6: Reflection on key aspects**

- Innovation: the content of this project is not innovative. Innovation lies in applying tools that are new in an university context;
- Adaptation: the aim of the project is to influence the performance of 30% of the personnel officers that are involved in the pilot project;
- Transferability: tools developed by the project are transferable to other universities/ non profit organisations.

**Stage 7: What are the success factors ?**

- One of the driving forces of the project lies in creating a win-win situation: personnel officers are keen to upgrade their position and to have the capacity of "management consultants"; the pilot enables them to do so at the price of getting engaged with the objectives of the project.

- Faculty staff who have to deal with recruitment and selection are aware that they are amateurs in personnel policies. They are in need of practical tools that can be applied immediately (= KIS: keep it simple).
- In focusing on recruitment and selection and on competencies required for academic staff, the whole spectrum of human resource management becomes an issue.

The pilot project generated a number of concrete changes. Each department has now appointed a recruitment and selection “director” who is accountable for support and monitoring. Those ‘directors’ are familiar with strategies and instruments to improve recruitment and selection, including special attention to female staff. Procedures and competencies required for recruitment and selection are recorded.

[NL2001/EQH/0003 - Bridging the gender gap at Universities](#)

The Austrian pilot actions are being undertaken in public authorities and organisations that have the decision-making power to fund and out-contract training and active labour market policy measures. 31 organisations<sup>8</sup> from throughout the region have applied for a pilot project, eleven have been chosen by the steering group of JUST GeM. Given the huge demand, the DP was in a position to apply strict selection criteria.

*On the base of the following five criteria the steering group selected eleven pilot projects.*

- Total cost/subsidies ratio of EQUAL funding and the financial and other resources contributed by the participating organisation;
- Impact on all policy fields covered by the organisation, i.e. a commitment to extend gender mainstreaming to all departments;
- Sustainability of the project in the organisation;
- Impact on Employment Policy;
- Mainstreaming and dissemination potential.

*Examples of pilots include:*

Municipality Graz:

- Gender impact analysis of all products and services delivered by the Department for Sports and the Department for Youth and Family;.
- Gender budgeting and analysis of all subsidies within these policy fields;
- Development of tools and guidelines for the implementation of gender mainstreaming;
- Skills development for the employees who are responsible for planning and implementation;
- Producing a Guidebook to help municipalities to apply gender mainstreaming to all local policies.

Trade Union:

- Gender impact analysis of collective agreements which is carried out with a sample of businesses and factories;
- Awareness raising training for members of work councils regarding the different needs and demands of working women and men;
- Setting up a commission that is drawing up guidelines for collective agreements that take account of the need to reconcile work and family life and also, more generally, to prevent gender based discrimination;
- Development of tools for work councils and shop stewards to help them analyse and eliminate gender-specific career obstacles;
- Negotiating collective agreements with selected companies factories as examples of good practice.

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<sup>8</sup> Trade Union; Chamber of Commerce & Industries; Municipality of Graz; Styrian Labour Market Services; District of Eastern Styria; Regional Development Agency of Liezen; County Government of Graz Umgebung; Major Charity Organisation; Social Services Department of Styria; Association of Innovation Centers; the District of Saggautal.

After their training the Swedish “gender equality developers” are embarking on their local pilot projects.

*In fact, when signing up for the education programme to become a GED, both the participants and their employers had to commit themselves to really push for change after the education. They promised to start a local gender project tailored to the special needs and context of their organisation.*

*In the Swedish police, examples of those actions include “friendlier” police uniforms for both women and men, a survey on absenteeism and sick leave rates of women and men, a training programme helping support persons who are working with crime victims to integrate a gender perspective. In the Armed Forces the new GEDs launched an analysis of the gender implications in international operations. As a result of this initiative, a new EQUAL partnership was formed that put forward a second round proposal.*

*Other pilots are addressing gender issues in institutions that belong to the typical female domains of the public sector. One is testing a sensitising and training scheme for fathers and mothers of new born children in a local hospital. Another is working with local schools and introducing gender equality in class rooms, involving students, teachers and parents. New teaching materials and tools to be widely disseminated are also being produced.*

*It is important to note that although these local projects are within the realm of the DP, their content and implementation depend on the performance of participants and the willingness of their organisations to embark on a process of change.*

*SE-59 – Gender Equality Developers (GED)*

## **5.2. PREPARING GENDER EQUALITY BODIES AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL TO INTRODUCE GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Many EQUAL DPs working in the framework of the Equal Opportunities Pillar are building on the experiences and achievements of gender equality bodies and/or gender equality counsellors. This is also the case of the Spanish Promociona and the Italian Ri.Do. (Risorse Donne Venezia Gender) DP, which are members of ETG 4’s working group on gender mainstreaming. Both DPs are aiming to strengthen existing infrastructures and also to create new resource centres. The idea is to support the equality experts working in those institutions to launch and improve positive actions for specific target groups of women, to take better account of the needs and roles of men and to lay the foundations for gender mainstreaming actions in their territories.

### **5.2.1. Linking specific actions and gender mainstreaming**

The DP Promociona - Local systems for equal opportunities is working in two northern regions of Spain, Asturias and Galicia and seeks to integrate the gender perspective in the policies and practices of local governments. through the work of equality agents. The project is convinced that that in order to do that both status and role of equality agents in local policies must be strengthened.

*The DP hired eight equality agents whose task is to develop and implement strategies to tackling gender disparities in local policies and services. At the same time, a network of equality agents is being created that is fostering cooperation between the agents and their local communities. In Asturias, the network is coordinated by three equality agents and covers 80% of the territory (nearly 95% of the population). The Galician network is run by five equality agents and covers 5% of the territory (11% of the population). Whilst equality agents in Asturias can rely on cooperation with other professionals that have been carrying out related tasks in the region for quite some time, their colleagues in Galicia are entirely on their own and have to lay the very foundations for such working relationships.*

*Promociona is linking three major strands of activities:*

- **Strengthening position and impact of equality agents**

*In the experience of the DP, the best way to empower equality agents is that the City Governments hire them in the capacity of a regular staff member responsible for gender equality. Placing them under the direct responsibility of the Mayor is the best way to enhance their work; they are close to the political decision makers and can also influence the various departments of the City Government in order to improve the different social services by taking better account of the different needs and interests of men and women*

*Usually, City Governments are not keen on creating this kind of specific equal opportunities responsibility. They believe that the proposed future work of the equality agents is already being undertaken by other staff members in the field of social policies. PROMOCIONA aims to demonstrate the difference that the presence of Equality Agents can make in a City Government's gender equality performance.*

▪ **Preparing municipalities for gender mainstreaming**

*To encourage the City Councils to include a gender dimension in their different policies and practices, the DP is offering financial incentives. Thanks to EQUAL, in addition to paying the salaries, technical and financial resources are also allocated to each equality agent. In fact, these incentives were a decisive factor for the municipalities to join the activities of the project.*

▪ **Building capacity for gender mainstreaming**

*Training seminars and working groups were organised to help the equality agents update their knowledge and skills. These events covered the theoretical concept and the various tools of gender mainstreaming, and also supported the agents in their capacity of planning, programming, implementing, monitoring and evaluation gender equality actions. Participants appreciated this package of continuing training and felt well equipped to face the various challenges PROMOCIONA had planned to tackle.*

*This included introducing gender mainstreaming in employment and social services in its territories of operation. To that end DP developed specific teaching materials that are used as a tool by the equality advisors who carried out training for career counsellors, social workers and local development agents, but also members of other EQUAL partnerships. Building lasting gender equality alliances with these territorial key actors is an important part of the approach. To make this inter-agency work sustainable "Cooperation Agreements" were drawn up that had to be signed by all participants.*

*PROMOCIONA's strategy is yielding visible results. Equality agents, empowered by the work of the DP, are now accepted as valued partners by trainers and other employment professionals in the territories. Gender equality strategies are recognised as an essential part of employment and social policies and the key players came to understand that working together and in a more coordinated way makes everybody win. All of them begin to have a "gender glasses" approach in their work.*

[ES-218-Promociona](#)

## **5.2.2. Linking gender equality to local development**

The Italian Ri.Do DP, which is operating in the Province of Venice has developed permanent infrastructures for gender equality at local and provincial level, the so-called Women's Resource Centres (WRCs). Research on gender equality bodies operating in the region has shown that those infrastructures are providing a considerable amount of decentralised services for women, ranging from counselling and guidance to training and support for business creation. But, according to the studies carried out by the DP, the process of mainstreaming those achievements is weak and must remain so, if the equality bodies are not reinforced, both in terms of human resources and reliable, permanent financing.

*For Ri.Do. developing the potential of women means contributing to local development. Compared to equal opportunities, local development policies have more influence and impact, since they are operated by permanent structures with decision-making power and adequate resources. To achieve a similar kind of sustainability and status, Ri.DO. is creating a link between gender equality and local development policies and fostering synergies among decision makers and staff in the two policy areas.*

The strategy has several components:

- to create and strengthen WRCs at local level;
- to set up a network linking those centres to enable exchange and mutual support;
- to provide training and further education to equality counsellors, both female and male, to enable personal development and better career opportunities;
- to stimulate and improve cooperation amongst local communities that share specific characteristics such as low population density, high level of urbanisation, island nature etc.
- to insure that the different local and regional decision-makers and stake holders are becoming active members of the network and can benefit from its activities, in particular in terms of local development;
- to turn this structure into “a system of resource centres”, which is establishing links and synergies at local, provincial, regional, national and even European level.

In practice, this involves two different profiles of resource centres:

- Those that are directly addressing the needs of people related to training and labour market access, employment, reconciliation of work and family life, business creation and entrepreneurship, The DP calls them “direct or level 1 resource centres”.
- Those providing advice and services to public authorities at local, provincial and regional level, social partner organisations, enterprises and other key players with responsibilities for equal opportunities and local development. They are called “indirect or level 2 resource centres”.

Led by the Resource Centre of the Province of Venice, the project initiated a process that is combining specific actions for women and gender mainstreaming. It is supporting the different members the network to design and implement equal opportunity actions, such as for instance labour market integration programmes that are jointly organised by the local resource centres and the employment services and helped a large group of women to access employment.

Ri.Do, is also reaching out beyond the Province of Venice. It carried out a survey to explore how equal opportunities policies are being implemented in the other provinces of the Veneto Region and which amount of financial resources are available. By setting up a permanent gender equality network amongst the Veneto Provinces the DP has created a platform for discussion, exchange and policy development and greatly increased the visibility of equal opportunity policies in local and regional policies. The network was instrumental to pushing successfully for regional legislation. The new law secures the sustainability of local gender equality bodies by stipulating that stable financing of those bodies must be an integral part of the budget of the Veneto Region.

[IT-G-VEN-003 - Ri.Do. \(Risorse Donne Venezia Gender\)](#)

### **5.2.3. Gendering local services for disadvantaged groups**

Gender mainstreaming implies that a gender dimension is introduced in all policies and services that are targeting different groups of women and men. In the framework of the PROMOCIONA DP one partner developed a number of actions that apply a gender approach to empowerment and support schemes for people with disabilities and function as “eye opener” for those implementing gender equality policies.

*This bundle of measures follows the overall commitment of the partnership to combining specific actions for women and gender mainstreaming. The strategy had several strategic elements that were reinforcing each other.*

*The DP developed and organised training courses on gender and disability for people working, paid or unpaid, in associations representing and/or supporting people with disabilities, for social workers, career counsellors, placements officers and gender equality agents. To ensure multiplication and sustainability training of trainers' courses of gender and disability were also developed and implemented.*



*To bridge the huge gender gaps in terms of advocacy and support for women with disabilities, the DP promoted the establishment of women's commissions inside the relevant associations, federations or grass-roots groups. Moreover, it organised meetings and seminars to encourage disabled women to create their own associations.*

[ES-218-Promociona](#)

### **5.3. ON THE WAY TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN COMPANIES**

For ETG 4 DPs whose remit is to tackle gender gaps on the labour market or to improve the reconciliation of work and family life, introducing a gender dimension into the personnel policies of private and/or public companies is a major part of their activities. In most cases this involves specific actions for women, but also some of the components of the gender mainstreaming process described above for the public sector.

It is important to note that in many Member States those policies are increasingly becoming part of diversity management concepts that companies adopt to develop and use the full potential of all their employees and thus to be able to respond to the demands of more diverse and global markets. DPs focusing on reconciliation or desegregation in private or public companies are also using this concept. Their efforts are geared to raising the awareness of management and work councils to gender issues related to desegregation and/or work-life-balance and to turn those key people into advocates of gender equality and/or diversity.

#### **5.3.1. Supporting companies to assess their gender equality performance**

The French DP » Développement des conditions favorables à l'activité des femmes en Finistère" is aiming to combat gender discrimination in agribusiness and the food industry. It is working with five companies operating in the Finistère area of the Brittany region. In general, this industry has a reputation of operating production systems that entail broken work days and other forms of precarious employment, but also high levels of turn-over and difficulties to attract and retain a qualified workforce. Through emphasising the possible impact of gender equality policies on tackling burning needs of HR development, the project succeeded to convince the employers to become EQUAL partners. To generate a clear picture of the situation of depart the DP undertook two different exercises.

*The first step was a study which was carried out by external experts who interviewed all workers (of which 85% are women) and analysed personnel data. Results revealed that gender gaps are considerable.*

- *For women employment in the food industry is rather a choice of convenient location of the enterprises close to their homes and also because there are no alternatives in the area ;*
- *Women have no plans concerning career development and education;*
- *They lack both positive self-image and professional identity;*
- *Social cohesion and territorial roots are factors of compensation;*
- *There are contradictions in their statements on reconciliation of work and family life. The women workers appear to be overestimating their capacity to do it all. A top level performance in the private sphere is seen as paramount. In fact, this is where they are most valued. For instance they refuse to be helped with household chores by other family members.*

*Concerning the personnel policies, it was found that the existing human resource potential is being neglected and work organisation discriminates against women .*

- *Women have hardly access to promotions which are often informal and by co-optation ;*
- *In-house training is rare and not an integral part of personnel policies. If training is offered, it is less accessible for women.*
- *Women are excluded from certain types of work, namely night work and ICT jobs ;*
- *A total lack of acknowledgement and appraisal of competencies and performance, of employees, particularly of women.*

*The second step was to support the enterprises to comply with the French gender equality legislation. Companies with more than 50 staff are required by law to draw up an annual report that is comparing the situation of women and men. The report must be transmitted to the labour inspection authorities. The DP provided the enterprises with a set of detailed grids facilitating the collection of data on women and men by age, job category and position in the hierarchy, income, working time and working conditions. A guidebook with lead questions, developed by the project, is helping employers and personnel managers to interpret the data and to detect direct and indirect discrimination. Companies are encouraged to fill in an in-depth version of the grids which are also looking into recruitment and promotion criteria, reasons for absenteeism and quitting jobs, access to different levels and types of training, etc.*

*The results of both exercises were discussed with the employers, before drawing up action plans to improve the situation.*

#### *F- 2001-BRE-10871- Développement des conditions favorables à l'activité des femmes en Finistère*

The WLB Partnership in Ireland produced a "Diagnostic Pack" to support its member companies and organisations to assess their status in terms of enabling a satisfying work-life-balance for women and men and to plan future development actions.

*The Diagnostic Pack is based on research, undertaken by the DP, on the current state-of-the-art in work-life-balance initiatives on both an international level and within the organisations forming WLBN. The pack consists of:*

- *A review of current literature and published training material and associated action programmes, obstacles, stages of development and tools of change management in the area of work-life-balance.*
- *Seven case studies on successful work-life-balance programmes in public and private organisations and a review of relevant websites and links.*
- *Data<sup>9</sup> from the performance assessment of the WLBN members and output of search conferences organised by the DP. This material acts as an internal benchmark and baseline against which to initiate change.*
- *A framework that sets out an evolutionary work-life-balance-model, called the continuum of change involves specific criteria and development stages. Diagnostic check-lists were produced that assist the organisations to recognise the stage of each continuum they are at and the most appropriate action to take to promote development.*

#### [IE-20 - Work Life Balance Network \(WLBN\)](#)

### **5.3.2. Action plans for equality/diversity**

Based on the outcomes of the screening process, DPs set up equality and/or diversity targets and supported the companies to draw up action plans. Again, ownership and active participation of in-house players in this process was paramount. Projects designed and implemented awareness raising events and training targeting senior and middle management, and members of work councils. Eventually, the action plans were agreed and so were the roles and tasks of the different players.

The French DP co-operating with the food industry in the Finistère region signed an agreement with each enterprise that has committed itself to a change process towards improved gender equality performance.

*The agreement includes the placement of an expert (chargé de mission) who will assist the executive management during 18 months to implement the action plan. In addition, participating enterprises are becoming part of a network that is enhancing the implementation through an on-going process of exchange and discussion taking place at meetings and training seminars. Companies are paying a contribution of 7 400 € each.*

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<sup>9</sup> So far unpublished because of its confidential nature.

*Given the gender gaps and discriminating practices detected, a major part of the plans focuses on specific actions for women. This includes that companies must publish upcoming job openings and that the lists of candidates for recruitment and promotion must present women and men. An analysis of strong and weak points of recruitment practices is undertaken in each enterprise, which will help personnel managers to better understand the obstacles to attracting and hiring women and to identify possible strategies to improve the situation.*

*Furthermore, guidelines for skills assessment and appraisals of female employees are established and the re-organisation of work teams is considered. This is another big issue addressed by the plans and clearly a step that would enable a move towards gender mainstreaming. The idea is to launch a dialogue with production managers on how a gender balance in work teams can be achieved. Defining the various skills required for certain jobs and eventually reorganising them is an important concept put forward by the DP. This would value and recognise the tasks carried out by women and facilitate their access to traditionally male jobs.*

*In France, employers setting up agreements on gender equality (contrat égalité ou mixité) to tackle occupational gender gaps and other actions to improve gender equality in the workplace receive subsidies from the State. The experts are helping the companies to move quickly through the necessary administrative procedures and to take advantage of these subsidies.*

*Close cooperation between the companies and local authorities is crucial element of the plans. Supported by the DP, joint efforts are being made to find solutions to the dilemma of reconciling work and family life. Priority issues being addressed are more flexible, family-friendly working hours, flexible childcare services as well as suitable transport.*

*[F- 2001-BRE-10871- Développement des conditions favorables à l'activité des femmes en Finistère](#)*

In the case of WLBN the action plans of participating companies and organisations are embedded in the framework of the “continuum of change” mentioned above.

*The aim is that organisations move through four stages that are described as formative, broadening, deepening and mature. Whilst at the first stage a company may be complying with the relevant legislation and offering a small number of family-friendly measures mainly for women with children, the second stage is likely to extend those measures to a wider group, involving fathers or more generally people with care responsibilities. Measures are still unconnected, not systematically monitored and often reluctantly granted after demands of employees and/or work councils. During the deepening stage a more consistent bundle of policies is emerging and becoming available to all categories of staff. Policies are now seen as a response to business needs and to attract and retain staff. At this point relevant HR skills are being developed and the up-take of programmes monitored. When reaching the mature stage an enterprise is meeting its organisational goals and its employees' work-life-needs without either suffering.*

*[/E-20 - Work Life Balance Network \(WLBN\)](#)*

### **5.3.3. Testing new approaches**

Pilot actions of both reconciliation and desegregation DPs are being implemented which test the validity and impact of gender equality policies on productivity and competitiveness of companies. Positive outcomes are already becoming visible and, sometimes, tend to make the new approaches sustainable.

#### **5.3.3.1. Pilots to dismantle sectoral and occupational gender gaps**

One of the pilot projects of the FTDP DP in the UK is integrating a gender approach into a major national scheme of initial vocational training: the Modern Apprenticeship programme. This learning intervention has been developed to promote the business needs and benefits of

diversifying the workforce to the potential managers of the future and to make them aware of how their actions can affect their peer group. All beneficiaries are in the 16 to 24 year old age range.

*The module is structured into 6 sessions of 1.5 hours duration. Content includes stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice and awareness raising of the issues, including year 2010 demographics, to ensure participants understand the diversity reasons for tackling skill shortages. Delivery methodology varies and includes presentations and business games.*

*Project work related to the learning is also undertaken and this includes analysing equality and diversity issues within their own working environments. The module is currently in the process of being formally accredited to enable it to be mainstreamed into the GB Modern Apprenticeship programme both nationally and cross-sectorially.*

*The pilot has been evaluated on an on-going basis and key reasons for its success identified. Briefly, these are:*

- *the use of business games to illustrate key stereotyping messages;*
- *the use of television and video to illustrate stereotypical role models and images of equality such as bullying at work; and*
- *the use of interactive topic groups to discuss issues such as “women are taking men’s jobs”.*

*Initial obstacles to the success of the intervention included:*

- *lack of support from management; and*
- *initially, delivering a module of training using very traditional methods and thus not engaging effectively with the beneficiaries.*

*All obstacles have now been overcome, and the module is being piloted throughout the UK.*

#### [Ukqb – 28 - Fuirich Transport Development Partnership \(FTDP\)](#)

The same DP is also piloting a “brokerage service” aimed at tackling gender gaps in the transport sector. The scheme is addressing the well known situation of women not finding regular employment after having been trained in a non-traditional occupation. It is based on sharing information between partners and undertaken by the lead partner, NTP Ltd.

*The concept of sharing information is not new, but the DP has developed the idea to incorporate data about individual partner recruitment of women into male dominated occupations to help other partners to meet their diversity recruitment targets.*

*In essence the process is as follows:*

- *Partner “A” advertises for new recruits and receives 200 applications for 10 vacancies. Of these, perhaps 30 are women;*
- *Partner “A” recruits 10 individuals – hopefully mainly women (!) and passes the data on the remaining 190 individuals to the lead partner;*
- *The Lead Partner passes on these details to Partners “B”, “C” and “D” for them to consider for the vacancies they have; and*
- *Partners “B”, “C” and “D” are also able to fill most or all of their vacancies.*

*Of course the system has to be very flexible and all partners must subscribe to the process. There are also Data Protection Act and confidentiality issues – and geographic location issues. Clearly, therefore, the process can only work in sympathetic circumstances after taking all of these issues into account. However, although the process is in the early stages of being piloted, results to date are encouraging. If this trend continues, the potential for mainstreaming into other sectors is good.*

#### [Ukqb – 28 - Fuirich Transport Development Partnership \(FTDP\)](#)

### 5.3.3.2. *Pilots addressing the work-life-balance of women and men*

In Germany, the Gendernet DP is taking the challenge to gender mainstream parental leave, which is, as in many other European countries, an almost entirely female affair. Parental leave in Germany is extremely generous in terms of time and much less so in terms of financial support for those taking this kind of career break. Parents can take parental leave for up to three years, and the time can be shared between mothers and fathers. The allowance provided by the state for a duration of two years amounts to 300 Euro and depends of the income. The income ceiling is 30.000 Euro for a couple and 23.000 for a single parent with one child. Each additional child raises the threshold by about 3000 Euro. It is possible to opt for a higher allowance of 450 Euro to be provided during the first year after the baby's birth, instead of two years. "Parental leave takers" are entitled to combine their off-time with part-time work of a maximum of 30 hours per week, and both parents can choose to do so at the same time. In total, 85 % of those entitled to parental leave are actually making use of it and are predominantly female. After the introduction of the part-time option in January 2004 the participation of fathers increased from 1.5 to 4.9%. 75 % of mothers decide to take the full duration of the leave and to abstain from any professional activity.

*The DP designed a multi-faceted strategy to convince fathers to either share the period of parental leave with their partners or to reduce their working hours and take on more family responsibilities. Both would enable mothers to avoid three years of total absence from the labour market. With a task-sharing partner at home, women could work part-time or shorten the length of their career break.*

*The DP particularly targeted men, who, according to surveys, claim to belong to the special breed "of new pro-active fathers", willing to overcome the male breadwinner model. To make parental leave more attractive to them, the project presented it as a career break that would not only establish a bond with their children from the very beginning, but also as an opportunity to (re-) consider and boost their career opportunities through counselling and training. At the same time, an awareness raising campaign was intended to improve work-life-balance policies in companies.*

*Besides channelling information through the local and regional media, outreach activities were directly addressing husbands or partners of women who are on maternity leave and taking part in the DP's training courses. Another strategy was to sensitise HR managers in the companies of the region and to distribute leaflets and invitations to information events to "expecting fathers" at their workplaces.*

*Not a single father could be recruited to join the project. The obstacles were multi-fold and include gender stereotypes such as the image of the "good mother" that requires women to take the major part of care responsibilities. The biggest blockage was, however, the difference between a man's salary and the parental leave allocation. A survey conducted amongst the female participants of Gendernet's support and training programme and their partners revealed that for those couples the only choice to secure a viable family income was that the mother – with her significantly lower salary - takes parental leave.*

*Moreover, the economic slump and high unemployment and the resulting fear of job loss obviously prevented „the new fathers“ to put their commitment to the test. For employers parental leave and part-time for men are not really an issue, most probably because men can't muster the courage to ask for it, despite of legislation entitling them to part-time work.*

*And so, the training and support programme for women and men during parental leave is benefiting only mothers. In incorporating a strong component of e-learning, the scheme is aimed to maintain and strengthen their employability and to enable both career progress or career changes upon return. In parallel, counselling and advice is being offered to employers and HR managers to remain in contact with their employees and to create family-friendly solutions to work-life-balance facilitating their return.*

[DE-EA-35821 -Gendernet](#)



