

*The information in this document reflects the situation when it was written in 2006. Please bear in mind that some contact information may since have changed.*

## CROSSING BORDERS BETWEEN NEW AND OLD MEMBER STATES

### COMBINING AVENUES TO GENDER EQUALITY



Between them, the members of the [WEGA](#) Transnational Partnership (TP) are addressing almost every crucial challenge to gender equality policies. Together, their national activities aim to tackle the lack of the gender dimension in education and training, the gender pay gap, the occupational and sectoral segregation of the labour market, the under-representation of women in senior management and decision-

making positions, the discrimination of migrants in social and working life and the fact that gender equality often does not play a role in the management of public and private enterprises and organisations. WEGA links partners from [Austria](#), [Italy](#), [Spain](#), [Slovakia](#) and [Slovenia](#) and each of their chosen avenues to gender equality. At the beginning of their cooperation, the partners identified common issues and built the TP's work programme around these shared commitments. Four thematic clusters emerged from this process:

- Awareness raising for equal pay, including paid and unpaid work;
- Gender budgeting and the impact of gender equality policies;
- Quality standards for gender training and cooperation with key players;
- Multiculturalism and gender.

For the participating EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs), the decision on which cluster they should join was closely related to the expected added-value of transnational cooperation that might be used to reinforce activities and mainstreaming potential at home. To make the work programme viable, the four clusters operate through working groups with different partners taking the lead and organising meetings and events in their countries. These group meetings involve the national and/or transitional coordinators of the participating DPs, experts, practitioners such as teachers, trainers or guidance counsellors and, in certain cases, key players who are in a position to transfer WEGA achievements into mainstream policies and practices.

### MAKING THE MAXIMUM OF TRANSNATIONALITY

The approach of the TP combines the exchange of information and experience, the transfer of methods and tools that are being developed in parallel within the DPs and the joint development of transnational products that mirror common objectives and are relevant to European policy objectives. Given the size of the TP and the differences in the national activities, it was agreed that the working groups did not have to include representatives from every partner.

### A GROWING POOL OF IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES

Sharing information on current and past activities and achievements is an exciting two-way exercise for all WEGA partners. In particular, those from the new Member States feel that this wealth of information is greatly enhancing their knowledge base both for now and for the future. Ida Dedič who is responsible for transnationality at the Slovenian DP called "With Excellence to Gender Equality" is convinced of the positive impact: *"The exchange of ideas is very important and their inclusion in different activities enriches our national project. Our DP does not have a lot of experiences and so knowledge and information from our transnational partners is boosting what we can do nationally. We are pleased that we can participate in international comparisons."*

All this strengthens our operative abilities at home, particularly at the local level.” Her colleague Jana Juranova from the Slovakian DP “[ruzovymodrysvet.sk](http://ruzovymodrysvet.sk)” (pink and blue world) could not agree more: “The most important experience comes from the Austrian campaign to tackle the gender pay gap. In our project which is focusing on gender sensitive pedagogy, we are working with teachers, who are mostly women and generally underpaid in Slovakia. What we learned can be a useful tool for raising the awareness of teachers. Also, the Instituto de la Mujer on the Canary Island, which is coordinating the Spanish partner project, is highly interesting for us. The Instituto is a state institution and quite different from those in Slovakia, ministries and others, with whom our experiences are not good.”



Yet, the exchange is similarly relevant to the projects from the old Member States. The Austrian “[Klara!](#)” and Spanish “[Ariadna](#)” DPs appreciate the intensive and continuous exchange of experiences gained in related activities. [Austria](#) is implementing an innovative mentoring scheme for migrant women, whilst the Spanish partners have incorporated multicultural work as a transversal principle in their project. “We have discussed our activities”, reports Hannah Steiner, one of the Klara! coordinators, “and we both agree, that this has been very important. We face similar problems and the exchange helped us to find solutions”.

Even if not all the ideas can be used at once, by the EQUAL projects, they will not be lost. “In the same way as we are using experiences from former projects now, the fruits of the present DPs will serve in the future,” says Hannah. “Some ideas which have been discussed in our transnational cooperation are growing into new projects. For example, the Institute Sofia, the KLARA!’ partner that is implementing our training course on equal pay has started a small project on gender budgeting in a municipality of Lower Austria, funded by the Gesellschaft für Politische Bildung, an NGO focusing on political education.” This was sparked off by a transnational workshop on gender budgeting, and sometimes such a “spark” is revitalised much later and ignites a new project.

### IMPORT-EXPORT CONNECTIONS

Transferring approaches, methods, materials and tools from one country to another is probably the most frequent transnational activity within the WEGA partnership. A large number of good practices have already been imported and exported and these pro-active, often bilateral, connections will continue during the remaining lifespan of the TP. The list below shows the potential of this aspect of WEGA’s transnational work:

Methods, materials and tools	From	To
Indicators for gender equality performance of enterprises	Slovenia	Spain
Indicators for quality and impact assessment of gender equality policies	Spain	All
Indicators for pay discrimination of women	Spain, Austria	All
Awareness raising and training in schools	Spain, Slovakia	Austria, Spain
“Il Manifesto” a document to be to be signed by key players, committing them to gender equality	Italy	Spain, Austria
Assessment and validation of formal and informal skills	Austria	All

Methods, materials and tools	From	To
Competence assessment and development system	Italy	Slovenia
Focus Group method	Spain	Austria
Training and awareness raising methods to mobilise social agents such as trade unions	Italy, Spain	Austria
Gender budgeting	Italy, Austria	All
Quality assessment of gender training	Austria	All
Piloting programmes to dismantle labour market segregation	Spain	All
Methods for gender equality networking	Austria	Spain

Sometimes these import-export activities take place in the framework of a transnational meeting or conference where the partners possessing special thematic expertise run workshops for their colleagues from the other DPs. For example, during the first round of EQUAL Austria had developed a training course on skills assessment and validation for the staff of counselling centres for women and girls. This know-how was offered to the second round transnational partners who had just started working in this field and they now plan to use the method in different contexts, such as in public and private enterprises and organisations.

In other cases, trainers or trainees go on exchange visits if more time is required to learn or master a particular method or tool. The Austrian Klara! and the Slovakian Pink and Blue World benefit from their close proximity. Vienna and Bratislava, where the two projects are located, are just 65 kilometres apart. So, it was easy for Jana Cvikova, a member of the EQUAL team at Aspekt, a feminist education centre and publishing house that coordinates the DP, to participate in KLARA!'s continuing education programme which enables gender equality specialists to acquire qualifications as "equal pay agents". Jana's proficiency in German made things easy for her and opened up a good opportunity for her project to access skills in training such agents. Klara! also provided gender training to different Slovakian partners and key players, including school teachers, the faculty of pedagogy at the Bratislava University and the team of a puppet theatre which is addressing gender stereotypes through its plays. *"The idea was to present experiences from another country as a "neutral" learning field and to offer a kit of methods for the DP partners to choose what would be most useful for their own needs."* Itta Tenschert and Hannah Steiner, the two trainers found working in a new Member State was a challenge: *"Not only did we underestimate the language problem – we do not understand a word of Slovakian, and this was quite different from other training where participants speak a language that we master actively or at least passively, also our "training style" seemed to be strange for them. For instance, we tend to be generous with giving participants time to become familiar with a topic we deal with. This was not appreciated by the participants who seemed to prefer the speedy delivery of information. We also think it is still a fact that we are lacking knowledge about the new Member States, although they are our neighbours. What is their story, their experiences, their perception of feminist and gender issues? We know that the pay gap was less than in our countries, that there was less segregation of the labour market, that they had better child care in the times of socialism. How exactly have things changed since then and what does it mean to the everyday life of women? We have learned a lot during the seminar and we believe that further working together will help to answer those questions and we will understand each other better."*

But the Austrians were also at the receiving end. Vega Rodríguez, the coordinator of the Spanish partner project, ran a training seminar that enabled the Klara! staff to use a method of Focus Groups which helps to collect huge amounts of information in a relatively short time. The Klara! team is also eager to import a game for school children developed by the Ariadna project as a strategy to combat gender stereotypes, which has meanwhile been mainstreamed in all schools on the Canary Islands. In Austria, the plan is to integrate the game into the gender tool kit that Klara! is developing, which is to be used by the 30 counselling and resource centres for women

and girls that operate throughout the country. The “Manifesto” to commit key players to gender equality which the Italian partners are developing will find its way into Spain and Austria and be adapted to those different national contexts. The “Manifesto” is a contract to be signed by policy or decision makers in local and regional governments, social partners, public and private enterprises and organisations.

## JOINT DEVELOPMENT: AWARENESS RAISING AS TOP PRIORITY

Building on previous transnational cooperation in the first round of EQUAL, the Spanish [Ariadna](#) DP and the Austrian [Klara!](#) DP made awareness raising about pay discrimination one of the top issues for the TP. “We try to create a real big bang for equal pay in our countries or regions and to make the shocking differences between women’s and men’s incomes much more visible”, says Hannah Steiner. “Yet, from the very beginning we believed that the awareness raising campaign for equal pay should not only be designed by the two lead partners, but filled in with ideas from all the other partners as well.” These contributions from partners were gathered at the kick-off event “Xchange - The Long Way to Equal Pay” that was organised, in Innsbruck, in spring 2006.

Different methods were used to collect the facts and figures that underpinned the campaign. For instance, the Ariadna DP organised discussion groups of women who work at different levels of job hierarchy and could be classified as earners of low, middle or high incomes. Participants in these groups did not know each other and the group interviews focused not only on their incomes, but also on their career development and promotion prospects and reconciliation between their working and private lives. In parallel, the DP held telephone interviews with companies to explore their job classification and pay policies, as well as their perceptions of equal pay. The Austrian partner imported elements of this method and that were fruitfully used in the context of its own preparatory work for the equal pay campaign. Besides compiling the existing official statistics, these qualitative findings also helped to lay the ground for the Austrian and Spanish versions of an exhibition and the key messages that the campaigns conveyed in the respective countries.

**Die Berufswahl entscheidet über das Einkommen.**



**Frauen verdienen mehr!**

Refining the messages and putting them into words and images turned out to be a big challenge and, at the same time, a highly creative process. For instance, the slogan of the Austrian campaign, “*Frauen verdienen mehr*”, is based on word play. It can be read as “women earn more,” and also as “women deserve more,” as the German verb “*verdienen*” has both meanings. The slogan carries the alarming message that women deserve more than they are actually paid and is intended to encourage key players and women themselves to work for a future situation in which pay equity will be

established. But how can you transfer or translate this message into Spanish? It proved to be impossible and the partners settled for a slogan that plays with the proverbial sameness of certain things: “*Test your perception: Can you spot the difference between the two loaves or the two flower pots.*” There is, of course no visible difference. But a caption states “*the woman who produced the bread or flower pot on the right side sees the difference every month in her pay check. She earns 27% less than the man who made the products on the other side. Pay discrimination is no game.*” The experience of working intensively on the language, probing into the origin of words and figures of speech led to a deepened intercultural exchange. “*Working group members came to better understand and appreciate cultural differences, which is, for me, the basis of successful transnational cooperation*”, says Hannah. Vega Rodríguez, her Spanish colleague agrees: “*The joint work was very dynamic, and the results were surprising and tremendously positive and had a great social impact.*” The Spanish campaign suddenly made the gender pay gap an issue of public interest and debate. The media covered the topic and the Instituto de la Mujer received lots of phone calls and letters from people who wanted to know more about it. “*Trade Unions have asked us for the results of our gender pay gap research, in order to become involved in this field*”, reports Vega and also mentions a personal experience that shows how much the campaign has alerted the population: “*Just three days after we had put*

*up our posters in the streets, on public phone booths, buses, in bars, banks and supermarkets, I took a taxi home after work. The taxi driver said: 'excuse me, lady, but do you know that women earn 28% less than men for the same work? This is incredible, in 2006! And why did we not know about it until now? If it is your case, you have to tell your boss that it is forbidden, I saw the information this morning!' .....I just sat there in the taxi, with a huge smile on my face!"*

Even if the awareness raising campaign of the Italian Ess.Er.Ci. DP is focused on different issues, its project coordinator Sara Danelon appreciates the added-value gained as a result of her involvement in the meetings with Spain and Austria. The Italian approach promotes gender equality in political decision-making and in family and working life. It works through sensitising seminars targeting key players at local and regional levels from political parties, academia and NGOs. The second element is a laboratory, in the framework of which, experienced women politicians mentor other women, who intend to stand as candidates in future elections. The third major activity that has already been mentioned is the development of the Manifesto and this will be presented at a huge visibility event with more than 1000 participants. The Manifesto is expected to become an open-ended process that will bring on board more and more key people who are both willing and able to bring about change.

The three partners had planned to use different tools for their campaigns. These included large posters in popular locations, free (post) cards to be disseminated widely, a travelling exhibition, videos, and advertisements on television and in cinemas, plus visibility events and training seminars. *"In the end, we choose what we thought would be really new and attractive"*, explains Sara Danelon, *"we are producing free cards and will distribute them in public places, cafés, discos and also in town halls and training and counselling centres. This has never been done in our region.*

*But of course the choice depends also on the price of the various communication tools and the budget that we have available."* For instance, the Austrian project could not afford the real huge posters in subways or to advertise in the most popular squares of big cities whereas in Spain where these methods were financially viable. However, the Austrians produced a movie in German instead and then invested in English and Spanish sub-titles.



A second product that is being jointly developed by all partners is a DVD entitled "WEGA. Ways to Equality". The aim is to show five typical situations of discrimination against women and successful strategies to prevent and/or combat such discrimination. Film footage was produced in the all participating countries and these clips feature contributions on political decision-making (Italy), the world of enterprises (Slovenia), schools (Slovakia), gender and multiculturalism (Spain) and equal pay (Austria). All these national contributions have already been completed and have been sent to the Spanish partner who is in charge of the editing. The final product will provide the possibility of listening to the sound track in each one of WEGA's five languages, plus English. It will be ready by April 2007 and, as Ida Dedič from Slovenia puts it, *"will present to our own countries how other Member States deal with the problems of gender discrimination and what successful gender equality strategies look like."*

## ADDED VALUE FOR NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Clearly, transnational work has boosted the national activities of the five EQUAL partners. They also think that the members of the project teams gained a new perspective on their work, as they *"feel it makes them part of something bigger"* and this raises their motivation and creates a perception of really co-owning the national project. At the same time, the partner agencies and organisations within the DPs have benefited from cross-border exchange in terms of gaining both gender and intercultural expertise. Undeniably, transnationality has also increased the visibility and influence of those NGOs whose work is exclusively dedicated to gender equality and whose value is often underestimated by key players and society.

It is still too early to see whether the ideas and good practices that have been imported have taken root outside the activities of the EQUAL DPs' partners. There are, however, some indications that, thanks to transnationality, decision-makers and key players have become more open to

adopting approaches or methods that have been invented elsewhere. Participation in transnational visits has also helped them to understand and appreciate the gender equality policies and practices of other countries. Both project partners and key players have discovered how much they can benefit from learning from counterparts in other Member States. Meanwhile they see their transnational work as being an asset for future development of related initiatives and projects.

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