

THE TRANSNATIONAL GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOL FACTORY

JOINING FORCES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING – GM

“We created a strong culture of working together and this is why we were able to generate added value through our transnational cooperation.” This statement was made at a steering group meeting of the Pro(e)quality Transnational Partnership (TP) and it is a sentiment shared by all its members. The TP linked EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) from five countries. More than 20 organisations including NGOs, companies, universities, employers’ organisations, trade unions and public authorities were involved in the national DPs that worked together for a time span of three years. They were all committed to making equality a reality for women and men, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Although the national projects that were implemented in [Austria](#), [Germany](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#) and [Slovakia](#) had different priorities, they complemented each other in ideal ways. Between them, the DPs covered the most crucial gender equality issues and developed instruments to help different key players to face structural change, whilst taking account of gender equality. The tools, which were developed jointly, are designed to promote and reinforce action in four major fields:

- tackling barriers to implementing gender equality at company and institutional level;
- strengthening women’s labour market participation and overcoming horizontal and vertical segregation through positive action;
- facilitating the use of gender mainstreaming and/or diversity management in personnel departments of companies and organisations; and
- promoting strategies for achieving gender equality on the labour market and in all spheres of society.



The five DPs established three types of working structures for the smooth running of their activities and to ensure that these led to optimal outcomes. These included the Transnational Steering Committee (SC), four Working Groups (WGs) and an evaluation team. The TP insisted on the balanced involvement of all countries, and so all the DPs shared the tasks through, for instance, rotating the SC Secretariat and taking on different responsibilities in the WGs. These structures and a well-defined work programme clearly enhanced the intercultural competencies of, and the communication between, TP members. *“It was interesting to learn about different national traditions and current political developments and debates, and how these aspects influence the respective gender mainstreaming and diversity approaches”*, says Irina Meyer, the transnational coordinator of the German DP DiverCity and describes some results of that learning process: *“We learnt to be sensitive to language and terminology, especially terminology. Even between Austria and Germany there*

have been differences when the participants were speaking of quality criteria, gender or diversity, because the theoretical concepts differ.” Barbora Kachniková from the Slovakian DP Centrum Rodových Stúdií emphasises the same point: *“The understanding of other partners is crucial, explanations of concepts and discussions on different professional and cultural backgrounds are important and also to spend enough time on communicating interests, needs and ideas at the very beginning to avoid misunderstandings later on.”*

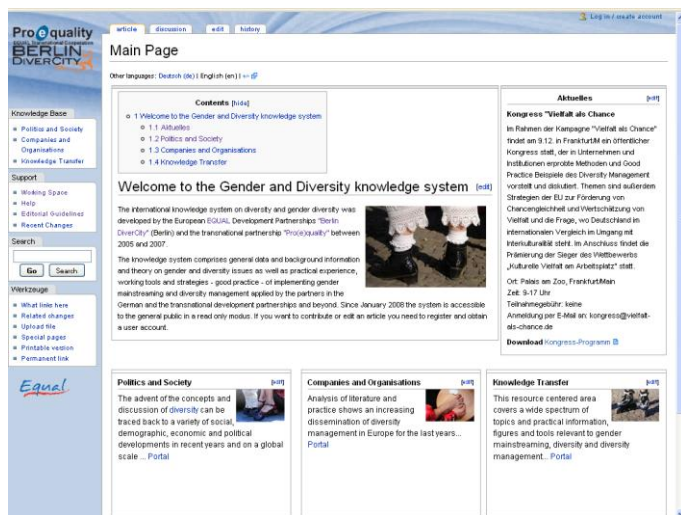


TOOLS, TOOLS, TOOLS

When asked what they see as the added-value of transnational cooperation, all TP partners came up with the same answer: *“Placing the joint development of gender mainstreaming tools at the heart of the partnership was simply the best thing amongst all the valuable experiences we made”*. Four tools¹ have been developed. Three of them are guidebooks that are provided as print products and PDF downloads from the TP partners' websites. Currently these documents exist only in English, but translations in Portuguese, Polish and Slovakian will soon be available. .

- [Principles for the successful implementation of Equality measures](#) (Gender Mainstreaming and Diversity Management) into Enterprises/Organisations;
- [Acting Pro\(e\)quality: Quality standards for Gender Equality and Diversity Training in the EU;](#)
- Glossary on public procurement and gender diversity quality criteria.

Tool number 4 is a web-based “International Knowledge Management System on Gender Diversity” which will be available on a learning and communication platform that is organised as a [Wiki system](#). The system is a [common product](#) of the German DP and the Pro(e)quality TP. The coordination of the development process is handled by the German project and considerable input has already been provided by its partner organisations. Transnational partners have also fed the Wiki with background information, learning materials and best practice examples related to gender equality, gender mainstreaming and diversity management. During the final period of the projects' lifespan they are all busy storing national and transnational achievements on the



Wiki and to also adding a vast array of background information related to theoretical approaches to gender mainstreaming, relevant legislation, policies and practices existing in the participating Member States. *“Now is the time to broaden the range of the Wiki even further”*, says Duscha Rosen the DiverCity DP's products coordinator: *“A lot of activities have taken place, (...) lessons were learnt in the framework of the national projects. We would like to see them all on the Wiki, learn from them and disseminate them in a European context.”* For the time being the Wiki is available just to the members of Pro(e)quality who are currently

testing it. Once the test runs are completed the system will be open to a wider public such as people who are interested in gender equality and diversity issues. After the end of EQUAL the Wiki stands a good chance to receive funding from the German Telekom and thus be able to survive and grow.

The TP was very aware that producing ready made tools would probably limit the scope of their application. *“By developing principles and criteria rather than tools we tried to facilitate transfer to different fields of action”*, explains Veronika Weisskircher, the transnational coordinator of the Austrian *qe→gm* (Qualitätsentwicklung Gender Mainstreaming) DP. She goes on to explain *“to avoid remaining on a merely general level – which may be the danger when developing principles – the application of our principles is illustrated through case studies from all the countries involved. The quality criteria for gender and diversity training can be used in a large variety of training contexts, as can those for national practices of public funding which also exists in a large number of fields.”*

A PERFORMING PRODUCTION PROCESS

Each tool was developed and tested by a working group which consisted of project managers, experts and representatives of the DPs' operational, and in some case also strategic, partners. This arrangement had two major advantages. It allowed each project to involve a significantly larger number of partners than would have been possible if just those in charge of transnationality had been participating. *"Everybody benefited from this approach"*, says Veronika. For her the main asset was the opportunity to create common products in an international team *"as operational partners we gained new insights and skills through a very goal oriented exchange of experience in the course of defining and clarifying different approaches and agreeing on a common product that all partners consider useful in the context of their national work."*

Moreover, the working group included people who were from those key players or organisations that are being targeted by the different tools. Their contributions helped to define and fine-tune aims and methods of the intended tools. They were also "guinea pigs" when it came to assessing whether the new products were attractive and meaningful for the target audiences. Marta Rawluszko who is the transnational co-ordinator of the Polish Gender Index DP emphasises the benefits for those who were actively involved in the production process: *"They saw a direct link between transnationality and better development of their everyday activities, for example, in the case of the tool on quality standards in gender training that has been produced by working group 4, the Polish partners very often work in training and adult education so that, on the one hand, they could provide the working group with their expertise and experiences in the field, but on the other hand, they possess now a transnational product that enriches their work."*

Anita Sares, the SG member representing the Portuguese *Diálogo Social e Igualdade nas Empresas* project pinpoints what the joint production process meant to her: *"It was a very interesting and important experience, a process of learning, sharing and agreement, not only in terms of contents but also of understanding of the different ways to work and think about the issues. It was a great opportunity to exchange experience and knowledge."*


In some cases national partners involved in transnational cooperation considered the development of the transnational products as the most interesting part of the whole EQUAL project. According to Marta Rawluszko this is due to key features of that work such as multicultural environment, different experiences, new ideas and new approaches to topics of common interest.

Lat but not least, it is also important to note that the strategic partners in the various countries which supported the DPs but were not directly involved in their activities highly appreciated being provided with products that reflect an international state-of-the art on the discussion of quality in Gender Mainstreaming and Diversity Management.

SYNERGIES BETWEEN TRANSNATIONAL AND NATIONAL TOOLS

For all partners the link between national and transnational activities was an important priority. Not everybody chose like Austria and Germany to participate in all transnational working groups. Other projects selected one or two working groups whose intended outcomes sounded promising and likely to improve what had been planned "at home".

There are many examples that show how the rationale of give and take applied by the TP has provided advantages for current and future activities of the national partners. The Austrian DP

 provided the concept of the "Circle of Gender Diversity Management" which was used as kind of blueprint for the definition of the ten principles presented in the guidebook "Principles for the Successful Implementation of Equality Measures". Austrians and Germans introduced their proven approaches to successful knowledge management into the development of the Wiki system and the Germans benefited from the Austrian experiences with introducing a gender dimension into public tendering. In terms of expertise in gender training, partners from the old Member States supplied a wealth of good practice to those which had more recently joined the EU. However, Slovakia and Poland brought fresh perspectives to the discussions on training, especially as they were both represented by experts in gender issues. The main focus of the Portuguese and Polish DPs on establishing gender equality in the daily reality of private companies was of high interest to all other partners,

since it is the business world that has the most important role to play when it comes to implementing equal treatment in the labour market.

For instance, a study tour undertaken by a Polish group to the Netherlands (the Dutch partners withdrew early from the TP) yielded fruitful lessons and practical tips for improving the training programmes entitled “How to manage an equal opportunity company” developed thanks to EQUAL. *“These programmes are provided to Polish employers in the framework of our national activities”,* reports Marta Rawłuszko and explains that *“the concept of diversity management is little known in Poland. Moreover, as we have little experiences with offering training to employers that is related to gender equality and the workplace, transnational partners gave us deeper and very practical insights into these issues. They also shared some very useful educational and training materials. We were also inspired by the Dutch example of the so called “Ambassadors’ Network”. This is a high profile group of Chief Executives that promotes, by their examples and advocacy, the idea of gender equality in the workplace among other employers. At the moment, we are planning something similar in Poland.”* Already now it is visible how the training agenda and materials were improved by the transnational experience. The evaluation of these training courses states that they met participants’ expectations, received a good response from the business sector and that participating employers were very satisfied with the outcomes.



This training is just one example of how the intermediate target groups of the DPs at national level benefit from the outcomes of transnational cooperation. Whilst employers are very important, these target groups also include decision makers in organisations, trainers, consultants and policy makers in public institutions. The TP partners are convinced that new insights will make it possible for these groups to develop effective high quality measures and that the publications which have been produced will contribute to a wide debate on the topic of quality in equality practices. Barbora Kachniková from Slovakia emphasises the importance of new EU members including quality criteria in gender equality practices from the very beginning. She believes that *“The gender trainings are still expecting their ‘boom’ on the market in Slovakia. We think it is crucial to prepare the quality criteria as a tool for an umbrella organisation and the outcomes of the training. We want professional and ‘useful’ trainers in this field, and the organisations seeking this service should be able to select the most suitable trainer or consultant to meet their expectations.”*

GROWING ROOTS IN MAINSTREAM SYSTEMS



Achieving lasting impact and sustainability in the ‘regular’ training provision, labour market and economic development systems of the participating Member States is the big challenge for the TP partner projects. However, it is evident that their national mainstreaming strategies are benefiting from transnational work. *It raised the visibility of our national activities (...) among the enterprises associated to our project and helped with “marketing” our good practices”,* confirm Anita Sares and Natascha Cabral from the Portuguese DP. *“The involvement of enterprises is a*

strategy for the sustainability and the mainstreaming of processes and products developed by our project. To bring these enterprises to the transnational final conference was a strategy to raise their awareness of the importance of transnational exchange of experiences and knowledge in this domain. This awareness will help the full integration of transnationality into future projects.”

Barbora Kachniková agrees and describes how making the national team members work on the transnational products and present their experiences and outcomes continuously on the national level has gradually developed that awareness. Also, being able to present the transnational products at the visibility event organised in Vienna and Bratislava by Austrian and Slovakian partners in April 2007 triggered the interest of a wider audience. *“There is time to keep working with dissemination and mainstreaming strategies since our project shall last till March 2008”,* she says and Veronika, her Austrian colleague underlines *“that the visibility of the national concern on quality in equality measures was enhanced through the fact the new tools were not only presented but also commented by international experts.”* The linking of the two locations by a “floating conference” that took participants on a boat trip from Vienna to Bratislava really caught the imagination of a number of key people who had not been involved in the DPs’ EQUAL activities.



This final visibility event was an important component of the steering committee’s dissemination and mainstreaming plan. This included, first of all, the identification of and outreach to target audiences at the national level, but also, and not least, EU policy makers and those in charge of implementing the new ESF programmes. Renate Wielpütz, the director of FrauenComputer Zentrum Berlin (FCZB) that coordinates the German DP is confident: *“The transnational tools focusing on gender mainstreaming in public procurement and gender-diversity quality criteria will support decision makers in Berlin and – hopefully – in other regions and Member States of the EU to improve the implementation of gender mainstreaming and diversity strategies in Structural Funds programmes. The Federal State of Berlin, for instance, will use this transnational product to incorporate two transversal objectives in the Operational Programme, namely ‘gender equality’ perceived as dual approach of gender mainstreaming and positive actions and ‘labour market integration for migrants’.”* Dissemination and transfer of those valuable tools to even more regions and Member States might also be enhanced by the results of a special programme evaluation of the German EQUAL DPs that focussed on the interconnections of gender mainstreaming strategies and innovation.

Whilst gender discrimination may be an old and persisting problem, the experience and achievements of this TP prove that those committed to promote equality have enormous potential for pushing social innovation and to driving social change.

Contact:

Irina Meyer
Renate Wielpütz
FrauenComputerZentrumBerlin (FCZB)
Cuvrystraße 1
D - 10997 Berlin
Tel: + 49 30 617970-0 Fax:+ 49 30 617970-10
E-mail: wielpuetz@fczb.de meyer@fczb.de
Website: <http://www.berlin-divercity.de>