

Set to make a difference

Fewer than 10% of working women in the United Kingdom hold jobs in SET, or in other words, in Science, Engineering and Technology. For the EQUAL Development Partnership (DP) JIVE this figure highlights not only a major lack of equal opportunities for women in these growth sectors, but also the fact that employers are missing out on talents and skills that are urgently needed to boost productivity and innovation in the UK.

Led by the Let's Twist Initiative, (Let's Train Women In Science and Technology) based at both Bradford College and the Sheffield Hallam University, JIVE has forged a powerful coalition of women's training centres, employers' organisations from the most segregated sectors of the labour market, mainstream training and educational institutions, careers services and the National Equal Opportunities Commission.

Regional hubs: a source of innovation

Working together for the first time, these partners created a network of regional "Desegregation Hubs". Three such regional "hubs" have been established in the South-East, Yorkshire & Humber, and Wales, offering a range of services that aim to open up career paths for women in male domains of the labour market and to help employers establish a more diverse workforce.

One of their activities, for example, has been to train higher education staff working in the fields of engineering, construction or technology. Used to dealing with

large groups of male students, lecturers and trainers are often ill equipped to tackle issues that arise when women enter such a learning environment. The new gender equality courses help participants to understand the need for gender inclusive learning and to acquire skills to encourage, support and coach female students.

Partnerships generate widespread interest

At national level the JIVE DP has established partnerships that guarantee a long-term commitment to achieving gender equality across sectors where women are under-represented.

A national mentoring scheme achieved great success, for example. Developed in cooperation with a national women's organisation specialised in women's training and education and gender equality, the scheme operated in schools, learning providers and enterprises. Its basic philosophy was to create a "learning partnership" between the mentor and the mentee. Each mentor was selected on the basis of her capacity to act as a role model for a less experienced woman.

Given the huge demand for the scheme across the country, JIVE created the position of "super mentors". These women were trained by the DP to build and coordinate regional mentoring networks and to supervise other mentors in their area.

Cooperation with the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) also proved fruitful. Given alarming projections of skills gaps, the ECITB is seeking to integrate gender equality and diversity into its largest training programme, the National Apprenticeship Scheme for Engineering Construction. With JIVE's support, the ECITB's training organisation has set up support networks and mentoring for women apprentices. Taster weeks for school students, tested under EQUAL, are also now becoming regular events. And nearly all the training board's personnel including senior managers, head office administrators and field staff have received gender equality training.

Other Industrial Training Boards are now following ECITB's example. Let's Twist, as the "mother organisation" of JIVE and now increasingly the regional hubs, are experiencing a growing demand for gender and diversity training, particularly from work-based training providers.



JIVE: Challenging gender stereotypes in the labour market



The gender and diversity audit called "Culture Analysis Tool" (CAT) developed by JIVE and piloted with ECITB companies has been well received. According to Project Manager Ros Wall, "CAT not only delivers the analysis of recruitment processes, training environments and working practices, but also functions as a catalyst for discussion around any change needed within the organisation. Thanks to EQUAL, such change processes could then be further supported by JIVE."

Steering the gender equality agenda

The involvement of the national Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) ensured that JIVE achievements contributed to relevant policy priorities. Indeed many of the EOCs recommendations on eliminating labour market segregation are inspired by the work of JIVE. And with support from EQUAL, the EOC is now leading, together with JIVE, a national information campaign to encourage young women to consider a career in engineering, construction, information technology or the craft sector.

Another major achievement is the opening of a National Resource Centre for Women's Training in Science, Engineering and Technology in February 2005. Its mission is to promote best practice in the recruitment, retention and progression of women in SET and the built environment by providing information and advisory services to all key actors. The Centre has a central role in driving forward the UK government's strategy to increase the number of women in SET.

Participation in two transnational partnerships also proved immensely important to the impact of the JIVE DP. For example, in a common effort with the German partner, JIVE used its mentoring model to develop a good practice manual and European guidelines for mentoring and careers guidance. The transnational activity has not only facilitated exchange of ideas and best practice, but

"This is a time when government and others are recognising the importance of addressing the equality, stereotyping and segregation agenda for the success of their vocational skills programme and for individual success. We believe that the products of JIVE can support positive change in culture and practice and reduce occupational segregation. We hope to help in the process of joining the key delivery agencies with JIVE products and services so that good equality and anti-stereotyping practice is built into mainstream provision as the norm." Ann Madden, representative of the EOC in the EQUAL partnership.

also served to raise the profile of the DP partners, and strengthen their influence on decision-makers.

A more detailed version and other EQUAL success stories can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/activities/search_en.cfm

Country: United Kingdom
Regions: Wales, London, Scotland, South East, Yorkshire & Humberside
Project name: JIVE
Project duration: May 2002 – November 2005
ESF priority area: Equal opportunities
ESF funding (€): 4 750 337
Total funding (€): 13 994 611
National EQUAL partners: Oxford Women's Training Scheme, Sheffield Hallam University, The Open University, The Women's Workshop
Transnational partnership with: Germany, France, Finland, Denmark
Contact details:
JIVE (Joint Interventions Partners)
Ros Wall
Department of Engineering & Construction,
Bradford College
Great Horton Road
UK-Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD7 1 AY
Tel: +44 (0) 1274 433355
E-mail: R.Wall@shu.ac.uk
Website: www.jivepartners.org.uk
National Resource Centre for Women's Training in Science, Engineering and Technology:
www.setwomenresource.org.uk
National information campaign:
www.knowyourplace.org.uk