Experiences, good practice and lessons for evaluating gender equality outcomes in Structural Fund programmes.

Evaluation for Quality,
Conference Edinburgh 17/19 September 2000
The use of quality enhancing approaches such as quantification, benchmarking and thematic analysis to improve accuracy and effectiveness of evaluation

*Rona Fitzgerald*

*Rona Michie*

European Policies Research Centre
University of Strathclyde
40 George Street
Glasgow G1 1QE
Tel: +44-141-548-3672
Fax: +44-141-548-4898
e-mail: eprc@strath.ac.uk
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction
   1.1 The Structural Funds and Equal Opportunities
   1.2 The Virtuous Cycle: Building Equality into Programming
2. Preparation of the Programme
   2.1 Wales and Scotland: introduction to the case study regions
   2.2 The Regional Profile: Setting accurate baselines
   2.3 Definitions: making terms and intentions clear
   2.4 Identifying and setting targets and indicators
      2.4.1 Gender Indicators
      2.4.2 Gender indicators and Structural Fund programmes
      2.4.3 Benchmarking the development of indicators
      2.4.4 Networking and exchange of information
      2.4.5 Best Practice Recommendations
3. Implementation
   3.1 Ensuring a supportive institutional framework
   3.2 Training
   3.3 Monitoring and evaluation
      3.3.1 Monitoring
      3.3.2 Evaluation
4. Concluding remarks
1. INTRODUCTION

The General Regulation on the Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006\(^1\) contains substantially new features on the integration of equal opportunities for women and men. This means that an equality perspective must be brought to bear on all programmes and at all stages of programme development: from strategy development to marketing and information provision, from project application, through to monitoring and evaluation. In order to measure outcomes, a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation must be in place. These requirements present a challenge to programming authorities in terms of applying equality considerations and frameworks to the process of implementing and evaluating Structural Fund interventions.

This paper draws on the experiences of programming authorities in Wales and Scotland in preparing for the 2000-06 round of Structural Fund programmes, and addresses issues of relevance to Objectives 1, 2 and 3 programmes. EPRC has been involved with both regions during the process of programme preparation and continues to be part of ongoing work with both regions. The paper will also highlight how networking between regions at European and national level has added impetus and expertise to the process.

In Wales, the groundwork for integrating Equal Opportunities into Objective 2 (1997-99) programmes was initiated by the European Equality Project. The work done during this period has been evaluated and has provided a set of lessons and recommendations for the current period. This paper will draw out some aspects of the systematic approach to providing baseline data, benchmarking, indicators for monitoring and evaluation which has been elaborated for the forthcoming Objective 1 programme.

In the Scottish context, the recognition that regional managers, partners and project sponsors are now working in a changed environment prompted the Scottish Executive and the Equal Opportunities Commission to identify the information, skills, policy frameworks and tools that would be necessary to achieve gender mainstreaming. A Toolkit\(^2\) was commissioned to act as a resource for the preparation of all the Structural Fund programmes in Scotland. This paper will examine how the Toolkit has been utilised in preparation for the Scottish Objective 3 programme and how the West of Scotland Objective 2 region, through its Equal Opportunities Focus Group, is institutionalising the process of gender mainstreaming for the 2000-06 round of programmes with respect to target setting, identifying indicators and adapting the monitoring and evaluation process to the need to measure equality outcomes.

---


The paper begins with an overview of the Structural Fund cycle and the systematic intervention required to provide a solid basis for monitoring and evaluating the impact of regional interventions in the promotion of gender equality and in maximising the participation of women and men in regional economic activity. Successful evaluation is part of a process; it is dependent on the other interventions being addressed in a methodical manner. In the case of the Structural Fund cycle, the paper will chart the good practice lessons and benchmark the systematic intervention needed at all stages of the process. Alongside the Scottish and Welsh experience, the paper will draw on some lessons and experiences of this process from other EU Member States and from Canada.

1.1 The Structural Funds and Equal Opportunities

For some time now European institutions and EU Member States have made clear their commitment to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the operation of the European Structural Funds, and in activities financed through the Funds. At first, this commitment was pursued through the inclusion of so-called “vertical” priorities to support equal opportunities, which were written into the guidelines and objectives of various EU programmes. This equal opportunities commitment has most often been translated into practice through Member States adopting positive action measures to enable women to overcome the barriers that many face in accessing services, training and the labour market.

In 1988, the Structural Fund regulations made no specific reference to equal opportunities, nor was gender mainstreaming yet an official policy dimension of Structural Fund programming. Dedicated, mainly ESF-financed, programmes did emerge in response to identified issues, with the objective of undertaking positive action to create or facilitate opportunities for women and other disadvantaged groups. However, Objective 2 programmes did not contain a systematic equal opportunities dimension, either in terms of the regional analysis they undertook or the resultant policy and project responses.

Following the Amsterdam Treaty’s reinforced and strengthened focus on the achievement of equal opportunities, the use of vertical priorities – that is, a priority which is essentially contained within a particular programme’s aims and activities – is to be underpinned by a European-wide horizontal priority to integrate equality objectives throughout the programming process.

This approach, known as “mainstreaming”, had already been adopted in the guidelines for preparation of the Objective 2 programmes. By the 1997-99 period, Objective 2 programmes had a greater equal opportunities content. However, while the Commission’s requirements resulted in many programmes placing more explicit emphasis on this theme, responses overall were limited, with only 16 out of 73
programmes taking full account of the DG XVI guidelines according to Commission analysis\(^3\), and many responses appearing superficial or ‘tokenistic’.

Mainstreaming involves the use of vertical priorities for specific projects on gender equality \textit{and} a horizontal priority specifically integrating equality objectives into all general policies and measures. This means that an equality perspective must be brought to bear on all programmes and at all stages - from strategy development to marketing and information provision, from project application, appraisal and selection through to monitoring and evaluation. It will now apply to all interventions co-financed by the Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006.

Mainstreaming not only \textit{allows} for positive action, but also \textit{underpins} such actions as part of a burgeoning EU-wide infrastructure to assist Member States and European institutions themselves to achieve equality objectives. A range of activities can be included under the positive action banner - special single-sex training initiatives either to equip people to work in jobs more often carried out by members of the opposite sex, or to return to work after a period at home looking after children or other dependants. In the United Kingdom, positive action under existing legislation can be targeted at either men or women.

Strategies for equality and inclusion have been refined over the last thirty years as greater priority has been given to the achievement of economic and social cohesion. Mainstreaming represents a further evolution in the search for equality. It is a holistic strategy that requires a pro-active approach to making equality considerations a regular part of policy-making - in this case Structural Fund programming. In respect of gender equality, it encapsulates the notion of positive action - both are part of the infrastructure to achieve equality. Mainstreaming also offers an important link with the sustainability of economic and social cohesion by adopting a social justice approach to potentially economic and socially divisive inequalities.

1.2 The Virtuous Cycle: Building Equality into Programming

Regulations for the new round of Structural Fund programmes specify a number of requirements that regional actors must meet in order to mainstream equal opportunities in the development, management and implementation of programmes. These requirements apply equally to all Objectives and Funds, notably the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund, and concern four areas:

- preparation of the programme
- monitoring and evaluation
- the institutional framework

\(^3\) Wulf-Mathies M (1998) \textit{Information Note from Mrs Wulf-Mathies to the Members of the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and Women’s Rights}, DG XVI, Brussels, 24.2.98.
In order to draw out lessons from Structural Fund implementation, EPRC has suggested a virtuous cycle of Structural Fund management and implementation. The process can be conceptualised as a circular process from the diagnostic and strategy development stage, through project generation/marketing, project assessment and selection, monitoring of implementation, and evaluation. The progress made at each stage of intervention feeds into the next stage in an incremental manner. As reported in the 1999 review of experiences and lessons from the Objective 2 programmes, it has been noticeable that those programmes which have made the most progress in equal opportunities to date are those which have embraced the issue most actively as an integral part of programming.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES: EMBRACING THE ISSUE**

A range of guidance and action plans has been elaborated in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In Wales, the work of the European Equality Partnership has been documented in an Evaluation Report and lessons and recommendations widely disseminated. In Scotland, the Toolkit drew on the good practice in Wales and provided a reference points for all those involved in programming from the Managing Authority, through programme management to project sponsors. In Ireland, a report on Gender Proofing and the European Structural Funds was commissioned by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform drawing on international good practice in the area.

---

4 This systems approach was initially elaborated in the IQ-Net thematic paper on Generating Good Projects (R. Fitzgerald and C. Promé (1996)) and refined by Sandra Taylor for the paper on Employment Creation and the Structural Funds (S. Taylor and R. Fitzgerald (1998)).

2. PREPARATION OF THE PROGRAMME

It is important to consider the requirements for mainstreaming gender equality at the plan preparation/strategy development stage, building them in rather than on to the process. If systematic consideration is not given to the requirements at this stage, then the link with all aspects of the programme cycle from project selection/appraisal to monitoring and evaluation will not be documented. Reflecting this holistic approach, it is worth noting the context for the current round of programme preparations in Wales and Scotland.

2.1 Wales and Scotland: introduction to the case study regions

In October 1997, the European Equality Partnership was launched with the aim of integrating equal opportunities into Structural Fund programmes in Wales. The overall objective was to develop new measures to mainstream equal opportunities in the economic development of Wales. The specific objective for the partnership was to begin this process within the European Structural Fund programmes operating in Wales. Building on the work pioneered by Chwarae Teg, the project was initiated at a conference in 1997. Part of the working method of the network is to provide expertise, guidance and training for Programme Partners. The Partnership used regional workshops to provide practical assistance at every stage of the programme, and provided guidance notes for the previous round of Structural Fund implementation. These included a training pack, a digest and a regular newsletter.

Preparations for the 2000-2006 programmes took place in a changed environment, with a number of institutional and policy changes. These include the election and inauguration of the National Assembly for Wales and the reform of the Structural Funds, including the designation of Objective 1 status for West Wales and the Valleys. A number of important factors emerged from this changed environment: firstly, the scale of Objective 1 funding and the link with the Economic Strategy for Wales resulted in close supervision by the Economic Development Committee of the Assembly; secondly, the fact that programme management has been reinstated within the office of the National Assembly for Wales.

The systematic work done by the European Equality Partnership in the 1997-1999 period, and the continued activities of the Partnership, allowed them to act as a resource in terms of benchmarking good practice with regard to programme preparation, setting targets and indicators and in respect of the implementation of the

---

6 Chwarae Teg (Fair Play) is an organisation set up to expand the role of women in the workforce. It was set up in 1992 with an action plan to tackle the barriers restricting women’s participation in the labour market. It provides a service to women wishing to expand their participation in the workforce and a service to employers, matching their needs with the needs of potential female employees. It has the dual aim of helping SMEs become more efficient and competitive by aiding the recruitment/retention of female staff and developing new and existing businesses run by women. The scope of its projects ranges across Business Development, Women’s Enterprise Development and Childcare Development.
new programme. The Partnership worked with Assembly Committees and civil servants throughout the preparations, negotiations and finalisation of the forthcoming programmes.

There is also a changed political and institutional environment in Scotland, with the election and inauguration of the Scottish Parliament, the reform of the Structural Funds (resulting in the change in status of the Highlands and Islands to Objective 1 in transition) and the increase in local responsibility for the management and implementation of the Objective 3 ESF programme. In addition, because this may be the final round of Objective 2 funding, there is a perceived need to maximise the impact of this round of Structural Fund interventions. In Scotland, the Scottish Co-ordinating Team, managed by the Scottish Executive, undertook the process of central co-ordination with regard to preparations for the 2000-06 Objective 1, 2 and 3 programmes. Recognising that regional managers, partners and project sponsors are now working in a changed environment prompted the Scottish Executive and the Equal Opportunities Commission to identify the information, skills, policy frameworks and tools that would be necessary to achieve mainstreaming. As already mentioned a Toolkit was commissioned to act as a resource for programme preparation.

The Toolkit adopted an exercise approach throughout. The intention was to prompt a brief checklist of tasks to be completed, and to draw on good practice examples from other EU Member States. The aim was to highlight options and successful practice for those involved in managing and accessing Structural Funds. In states where mainstreaming gender equality is part of public policy-making, the most successful approach has been to engage a wide range of actors in the process and to communicate and exchange information about progress and barriers.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOCUS GROUP**

In the West of Scotland Objective 2 area, the West of Scotland European Partnership (WSEP) set up a focus group to provide a resource for the plan team and for the programme managers at the preparation and implementation phase. The Focus Group met for the first time in March 1999, and was made up from Partnership nominations and individual invitations. It includes partners with equal opportunities expertise, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, and partners with knowledge of key economic development themes such as business development, transport and training.

The range of activities undertaken by the Focus Group have included: developing information sources; holding an awareness-raising seminar; developing an action plan; considering guidance and experience from other organisations; and undertaking a process of strategic equal opportunities assessment of the Programme, through all its stages of development. The Focus Group followed the Commission’s lead in examining the needs of both women and men, but also took the view that equal opportunities should be considered as a wider issue, encompassing gender, race, and disability. The Focus Group also acknowledged that the lack of statistical data in all areas, but especially race and disability, would impact on the ability to understand issues fully and design objectives to tackle them.
2.2 The Regional Profile: Setting accurate baselines

The identification of patterns of gender inequality is an essential first step to developing targeted gender-oriented policies, introducing gender sensitivity into other policies and establishing baselines from which to monitor the gender-differentiated impact of programmes. The quality, completeness and relevance of the data is essential for plan preparation. A wide range of indicators is needed, not only describing employment and unemployment rates, but also differences in the quality of employment experience.

Where possible, the Regional Profile should have the following information:

- rates and experiences of unemployment and underemployment participation in the formal labour market (including horizontal and vertical patterns);
- participation in informal labour and domestic work;
- education and training (including skills and qualification levels);
- participation in economic development support measures (e.g. self-employment, training, reintegration); and
- the availability of services important to equal opportunities, including care services for dependants and public transport.

Where deficiencies are encountered in available statistics, three steps are recommended to programme managers:

- describe the data limitations faced;
- highlight known issues or use ‘next best’ statistics – e.g. for the region as a whole;
- make the deficiencies known to the relevant authorities and those charged with the collection of statistics; and
- where possible, allocate funding for practical solutions to resolve the deficits in the medium term.

THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT, WALES

In 1998, the Welsh European Equality Partnership produced a Statistical Digest. This represents one of the few systematic attempts to provide equality information to feed into Structural Fund programmes. In preparation for the 2000-2006 Objective 1 programme for West Wales and the Valleys, the National Assembly for Wales commissioned an update of the Statistical Digest and produced a report entitled Labour Market Equality Statistics 1999. In line with the broader definition of equal opportunities in the UK, the report provided statistics in relation to gender, race and ethnicity and disabled people.
As already stated, one of the most important issues is the availability and comprehensiveness of baseline data. In the international arena there are a number of good practice examples in this regard, notably in Canada, Sweden and at the level of the UN.

**BASELINE DATA: INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE**

In Canada and Sweden the statistical authorities have been mobilised and involved in the process of providing baseline data, of identifying gender equality indicators and in reviewing the data requirements and the scope of indicators.

A major symposium was held in 1998, hosted by Statistics Canada with a contribution from the Swedish statistical authorities. The theme was gender equality indicators and the purpose of the symposium was to critically assess the link with public policy-making.

### 2.3 Definitions: making terms and intentions clear

It is vital that Single Programming Documents and Programme Complements follow through on the mainstreaming message, by defining terms and by including a clear statement of intent. SPDs should state that the programme is committed to mainstreaming gender equality and recognises that this requires systematic intervention at every stage of the process of managing and implementing Structural Fund programmes. Some definition of mainstreaming should be included.

The requirement to take gender issues into account should then be translated into the Programme Complement, applicant guidance and application forms.

### 2.4 Identifying and setting targets and indicators

Reliable and comprehensive baseline data and systematic disaggregation of data by sex is the basis for clear targets and indicators and is a necessary prerequisite for a more rigorous monitoring system. Some data will be easily available, such as sex-disaggregated statistics for labour force activity at national level, or data on qualifications and skills. Important sources of sex-disaggregated data and information on equal opportunities are likely to be:

- national and regional statistical offices;
- departments dealing with employment, education, training and social services;
- equality organisations and women's networks and resource centres;
- regional and economic development organisations;
- chambers of commerce and industry;
- research institutes;
- universities and academic studies; and
professional organisations.

### 2.4.1 Gender Indicators

Gender indicators have long been used in the international development field. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) develops gender sensitive indicators as a key feature of results-based management, to measure the effectiveness of the Women in Development and Gender Equity Policy at the programme and project level (CIDA 1996).

The United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Development Index (GDI) takes the UNDP’s standard Human Development Index (HDI) measures of life expectancy, educational attainment and income, and compares women and men for each of these measures for each country. The UN also uses gender differences in income, professional, technical, managerial and administrative jobs, and percentage of parliamentary seats held by women and men to calculate its Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) for each country (UNDP, 1995).

Young et al. (1994) developed 21 gender inequality indicators based on the United Nation’s Women’s Statistics and Indicators (WISTAT). The Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a Gender Management System Handbook and Resource Kit which includes information on gender-sensitive indicators for gender mainstreaming within government departments (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997).

Canada too has made its contribution to this field of gender indicators with the *Economic Gender Equality Indicators* released in 1997.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The indicators</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total after-tax income index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total earnings index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total workload index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid work and unpaid work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work distribution patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degrees granted index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training participation index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training time indices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational return on education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One lesson learned from the work is that progress is being made in developing indicators with significant potential to improve gender analysis capacity and policy effectiveness. Much more needs to be done, especially in the area of analysis. Understanding what is behind the aggregate numbers and how current and future policies might influence them requires detailed analysis and additional information.
2.4.2 Gender indicators and Structural Fund programmes

One of the key challenges for programme managers is to keep indicators simple and relate them to a range of priorities and measures. However, for the purposes of Structural Fund programmes, they need to measure progress both in terms of economic and equality objectives. This is a more complex task and requires good baseline data and a capacity to interrogate the data. The economic gender equality indicators utilised in Canada and at UN level are social indicators, in that they measure progress over time toward the goal of gender equality, and highlight disparities and inequality between women and men.

According to the Structural Fund Guidance Note on gender equality issued by the European Commission, indicators should measure:

- the extent to which the disparities between women and men (in the labour market, in education and training and qualifications and skills, and in enterprise creation and management) are reduced during the period in question, and

- the extent to which equality for women and men in social and economic life is improved, for instance concerning desegregation in the labour market and participation in decision-making.

The guidance provides a matrix with three kind of indicators - output, results and impact outlined in the context of four equality objectives. The table below outlines the indicators specified for the equality objective ‘improved equality of participation of women and men in the labour market’.

| Equality objective: Improved equality of participation of women and men in the labour market |
|---|---|
| **Output indicators** | Reduced disparities in participation of women and men in labour market assistance schemes by occupational status, sector and occupation. |
| | Increased proportion of firms or institutions supported who implement equal opportunities strategies. |
| **Results indicators** | Reduced disparities between female and male beneficiaries of schemes in relation to placement rates into employment. |
| | Improved labour market status of women relative to men after participation in employment aid schemes. |
| | Reduced segregation of female and male employees by occupation in firms or institutions receiving support. |
| | Improved take-up of professional status by spouses in farm and family businesses. |
| **Impact indicators** | Reduced disparities in activity rates of women and men. |
| | Reduced gaps between women and men in rates of unemployment and long-term unemployment. |
| | Reduced vertical and horizontal segregation of women and men by economic sector (NACE) and occupation (ISCO). |
| | Reduced gaps in earnings between women and men. |

---

This is important as a reference point for programme managers, but there also a need for more specific indicators relating to the range of activities funded through Structural Fund programmes. While many of the priorities and measures will be tailored to the needs of the region, common themes can be identified. In addition, although the programmes are quite context-specific and operate within different legal and institutional jurisdictions, there is scope for sharing lessons, expertise and methodologies.

During the 1997-99 period, Objective 2 programme measures contained few gender-differentiated targets and indicators. The few which were in place were unsophisticated and rarely quantified. Even where there was quantification (present more consistently for the ESF), the utility of the figures was limited by the failure to set out current rates of participation by gender as baseline comparators. Targets tended to refer to the percentage of women to benefit from direct interventions, such as training or employment subsidies, but this is almost meaningless without statistics on the typical gender breakdown of such interventions to date. In the absence of information on which to base their decisions, some programmes simply set gender targets of fifty percent of beneficiaries being male and fifty percent female. These send out a message in the first instance, but should be replaced with more meaningful targets as baseline information becomes available.

**Gender-related targets and indicators in 1997-99 Objective 2 programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure type</th>
<th>Gender-related targets and indicators – project level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall principles</strong></td>
<td>Percentage of all jobs created which will benefit women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills development (ESF)</strong></td>
<td>Number of women participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of training participants/researchers trained who are female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of women involved in science and technology projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career prospects of the female beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender breakdown of those benefiting from recruitment subsidies or skills analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of jobs created which go to women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour market studies (ESF)</strong></td>
<td>Number of studies undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entrepreneurship (ERDF)</strong></td>
<td>Number of businesses started by women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of seminars and events held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage increase in women taking up self-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business development (ERDF)</strong></td>
<td>Number of interventions favouring the recognition of the contribution of spouses to family firms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of consultancy projects pursuing equal opportunities issues or benefiting businesswomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studies and planning (ERDF)</strong></td>
<td>Number of studies into equal opportunities in economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Care services (ERDF)</strong></td>
<td>Number of child or elderly care facilities created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of grants to improve or create child or elderly care facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of care places created for children and the elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in the employment of ethnic minorities and women resulting from training and awareness-raising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.3 **Benchmarking the development of indicators**

**BENCHMARKING: A BASIC GUIDE**

Benchmarking - identifying and implementing best practice - is now standard international practice. There is a real need for a systematic approach to benchmarking as the development of gender-relevant indicators is at a learning stage. A basic model of the idea behind benchmarking is as follows:

- find an organisation (another Structural Funds programme) which is best as what your own (Programme) organisation does - combine with other programming authorities to share experience and best practice;
- study how it achieves its results
- make plans for improving your own performance
- implement the plans; and
- monitor and evaluate the results and share them with other partners/programming authorities.

In Canada, a number of *Best Practices* have been codified for the development of indicators. They reflect current practice in some EU Member States, however, as the earlier virtuous cycle stressed, intervention must be systematic and gender analysis must be part of the initial phase of agenda setting, plan preparation and strategy development and must build in a gender perspective rather than build onto an existing programme or plan.

Several of these lessons can be adapted for the European context.

- To build real commitment to gender equality indicators, ownership must be based within the community and throughout the institutions involved in policy and programming. Consultation and participation are crucial.
- Indicators can be used to build consensus around social and economic priorities because they refocus discussion from the abstract and anecdotal to the concrete and quantifiable.
- Gender analysis can assist in the design of effective policies and programmes. (e.g. To consider a proposal to increase the minimum wage, it would be important to know whether women or men stay longer on this wage. Studies in Canada report that women do. If the objective is to improve the income of poorer women, then this is a useful proposal. The knowledge yielded through gender analysis will be useful in designing solutions and in targeting more effective policy interventions.)
- Indicators development is an ongoing process which requires communication, transparency and confidence.
- Gender analysis requires strategic thinking directed towards the accomplishment of goals and outcomes. (e.g. In ESF programmes, it may be found that more women than men are on training courses. However, if those courses are shorter and provide a lower skills level, then the employment/wage earning possibilities will be limited and the objective of equality will not be realised.)
2.4.4 Networking and exchange of information

Networking and exchange of information can be added to the best practice table, but it is worth documenting here because of the valuable exchange that has taken place among Member States and between regions at national and EU level. The learning curve for many regions has been very rapid and the exchange of experience, seminars and materials exchange has been very important. Increasingly, there is a need to move away from general lessons towards specific information about a range of issues, from committee representation to indicators, scoring and appraisal and monitoring and evaluation.

2.4.5 Best Practice Recommendations

Without a body of systematic impact evaluation, it is impossible to say where it is most important to place the emphasis in Structural Fund programming documents. However, it would seem broadly advisable to make the equal opportunities dimension of an SPD more visible throughout, following through from principles and objectives to expected practice. Several recommendations can be distilled from good practice to date.

- For the benefit of partners and applicants, programmes should explain the scope of their equal opportunities role, clearly setting out the difference between positive action and gender mainstreaming and the importance of both.

- Gender-disaggregated statistics should not only be presented, but also interpreted to ensure that their implications are clear.

- Inclusive language is a simple and direct way to emphasise their openness to applications from people of both sexes – ie. referring to ‘men and women’ in describing the scope of measures. What should certainly be avoided is mono-gender vocabulary to describe a measure available to both men and women (eg. businessmen should be preferred to businesspeople).

- In the Programme Complement, the following should be considered for measure descriptions.
  
  - In the same way as measure sheets increasingly include a dedicated paragraph on potential environmental impacts, they should also set out potential positive and negative impacts on gender patterns. This imposes a stage of reflection for each measure which may generate further ideas, and would make the issue more concrete for programme actors, guiding them in what to look for or to avoid in projects and illustrating how negative impacts could be mitigated. Such analysis demonstrates that few measures are in reality ‘gender neutral’.
  
  - Where relevant, explicitly highlight a wider range of possible positive-action project types in measure sheets to help bring forward projects for which there is demand but which may previously not have sought finance under Structural Fund programmes. A review of other SPDs or good practice studies can help to highlight examples.
- Project selection criteria could be exploited more systematically as a means of influencing project design and assessment. Among the selection criteria could be a specification that applicants should have explicitly considered the potential of their project to take forward (and certainly not to regress) equal opportunities issues.

- Consider offering variable intervention rates, with higher rates for projects having a positive impact on gender outcomes.
In the West of Scotland, consideration of equal opportunities has been a consistent feature of programme development. As already mentioned, the Equal Opportunities Focus Group acted as a resource and support throughout the process.

Formal Strategic Equal Opportunities Assessment has taken place at three main stages:

- Firstly, broad equal opportunities issues were mapped against different economic themes (infrastructure, enterprise, learning, and inclusion) in advance of the priorities and measures being drafted.
- Secondly, a more detailed assessment of the scope of priorities and measures was undertaken. As a result suggestions were made and incorporated into the body of the Programme.
- The third stage of the assessment shows the final position and is summarised below; key interactions are identified, with positive action for equal opportunities incorporated into the description and scope of measures accordingly.

The key interactions identified are:

**Measure 1.1 Competitive Business Base** will have a positive impact on the Equal Opportunities Objectives to Extend and Focus Entrepreneurship. The impact in terms of focusing entrepreneurship is likely to be over the long term and the extent of impact will be contingent on the targets set and criteria adopted for assisting new and existing SMEs.

**Measure 1.2 Competitive Location** will have a positive impact on the Equal Opportunities Objective to ensure equality of access to economic opportunities through development of the physical and social infrastructure of the region (encompassing location, transport, safety, security, dependant care) and in particular access to new Information and Communication Technologies.

**Measure 1.3 Competitive Workforce** is likely to have a positive impact on issues such as labour market segregation.

**Measure 2.1 Community Area Regeneration** has a potential for significant positive impact across all equal opportunities policy themes, in particular Access, contingent on the incorporation of equal opportunities into SIP strategies.

**Measure 2.2 Addressing Barriers to Economic and Social Exclusion** will have a positive impact on the Equal Opportunities Objectives of Balanced Labour Market and Access.

**Measure 2.3 Routes to Opportunities** will have a positive impact on the Equal Opportunities Objectives of Balanced Labour Market and Access.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION

Mainstreaming requires that those involved in the process of managing and implementing Structural Fund programmes know how to apply equality considerations and frameworks to that process. In addition, mainstreaming also requires that target groups and other interest groups participate in the process - this means changing both programme committees and management processes to accommodate a range of participants and views.
3.1 Ensuring a supportive institutional framework

Mainstreaming also requires that target groups and other interest groups participate in the process - this means building wider consultation into programme management. In the LEADER II programme, some regions have included animation as one of the selection criteria for projects - this means that project promoters have to explain the project to the local community and provide a forum for discussion. Consultation with local groups could also be part of the evaluation process. Local consultation can ensure that the concerns of affected interest groups (including those who are not actually organised in groups) are integrated into the process from the beginning. There have been a number of transport and infrastructure projects where consultation could have saved time and resources.

SCOTTISH OBJECTIVE 3 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE

The Scottish Objective 3 Programme Management Executive has been in operation since May 1998. It was set up with the aim of making the best use of the limited resources available for supporting the Programme, thereby improving the service to applicants. This improved service is demonstrated through wider dissemination of information and higher visibility of the programme through a newsletter, website and a series of thematic seminars covering key issues. Partners are involved in a wide range of aspects of the programme, including monitoring and evaluation.

As well as being an active member of the Steering Committee for the Scottish Toolkit, the Objective 3 Programme Management Executive has developed a number of good practice examples with regard to mainstreaming equal opportunities. For the current round of funding, a wide range of sources of information was explored, to provide as much baseline data as possible in respect of equal opportunities. This provided a more comprehensive picture of the regional situation than had existed previously. In addition, because the timescale for Objective 3 was ahead of that for Objective 2, this data acted as resource for other programme managers. However, the Executive did identify limitations in the available data and has suggested that further work needs to be done to provide the data necessary for policy targeting at Scottish level and within the UK.

The new Structural Funds regulation provides for balanced representation on programme committees. This can be interpreted as a quota system for committee representation. While the European Commission explicitly refers to gender balance, this could also be applied to representatives from disability groups and from racial/ethnic groups. It is important that target groups get an opportunity to build up expertise and confidence through participation in Committees. On the other hand, it will be important to ensure that representatives on Committees have the necessary skills. This issue can be addressed through the provision of training at every level.

Training could encompass capacity building for all members of the Monitoring Committee drawing out the skills necessary for applying equality frameworks, as well as general training on aspects of regional economic development. The representation/participation of target groups on the committee can be increased incrementally with a target set over the programming period. In addition, the use of shadowing - the twinning of a potential member of the Monitoring Committee with an existing member - could be used as part of the training programme.
In preparation for this round of programmes, many programming authorities gave consideration as to how to achieve balanced representation on committees.

**BENCHMARKING BALANCED PARTICIPATION IN WALES**

In Wales, an advisory note was prepared for the Objective 1 Monitoring Committee meeting on 21 July 2000. The note provided benchmark data regarding balanced participation on government and committee structures in a number of EU Member States. The percentage of women represented in government ranges from 56% in the National Assembly for Wales, 35% at UK government level to 25% across EU states. Committee representation ranged from 44% in the Finnish public sector, 40% in Merseyside PMC and in Irish European committees to 15% in the Cornwall PMC. A target of 40% was agreed for equal opportunities representation on the Monitoring Committee with a timescale for achievement outlined and agreed – 25% to take immediate effect and 40/60 within 6 meetings or 12 months, or by the next re-election of representatives (whichever is the sooner).

In order to guard against the perception that women, disabled people or ethnic minorities have sole responsibility for achieving equality, it would also be useful to include a commitment to mainstreaming in the terms of reference of all Committees dealing with programme management and implementation, including Monitoring Committees and Advisory Committees. This would include a definition of mainstreaming and an acceptance that this requires systematic intervention at each stage of the process.

One of the key lessons from successful mainstreaming programmes relates to the allocation of overall responsibility to an individual within the programme management team. Ideally, this person should work through and with a dedicated working group of partners, some but not all of whom have specialist gender expertise.

Until mainstreaming is a regular part of programming and indeed a regular part of public policy-making, it is important to have clear responsibility and also a clear resource/reference point for programme managers and partners.

### 3.2 Training

It is crucial to undertake an active programme of knowledge and skills development among the wider partnership, including encouragement for the experts associated with the programme to actively disseminate core skills. A variety of mechanisms could be used here - presentations at committee meetings, programme newsletters, themed ‘action days’. In addition seminars aimed at encouraging the development of and specifying requirements for Equal Opportunities projects would be a useful way of conveying expertise to partners and programme managers.

As previously mentioned, the European Equality Partnership was launched in Wales in 1997 with the aim of integrating Equal Opportunities into Structural Fund programmes. Part of the working method of the network is to provide expertise, guidance and training for Programme Partners. The project used regional workshops to provide practical assistance at every stage of the programme. The training was based around a number of elements. The central element was a compliance model with case studies from equality legislation. This approach enabled the inclusion of the
range of equality issues covered by the United Kingdom definition of equal opportunities - gender equality, racial equality and disability equality.

| TRAINING: BEST PRACTICE LESSONS  
THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY PARTNERSHIP, WALES |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considerable resources in terms of finance and time are necessary to provide training that is comprehensive and effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The target group for training must be decision-makers and change agents - organisations cannot be allowed to send participants, usually just because they are female, who are not involved in the management and implementation of Structural Fund programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training should be comprehensive, on-going and progressive, relating to the different stages of the Structural Fund cycle and giving participants a chance to explore new mechanisms for achieving equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal and evaluation should be built into the training in order to identify lessons and recommendations for future training sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of trainers is very important, e.g. engaging 'champions' to help deliver accredited, consistent Equal Opportunities training. The recommendation from Wales and the Equal Opportunities Commission suggest that a ‘team’ of trainers representing the ‘line, human resource and equality specialists’ should be targeted so that an effective and credible message would be communicated. (During 1999, the Equal Opportunities Commission in Scotland ran a series of Training for Trainers: Equality in Training courses, funded through the Scottish Objective 3 ESF Partnership, in four centres in Scotland. The courses were very successful, attracting a large and representative attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be selective updates on training and information - echoing the point that the training needs to be relevant to the various stages of programme management and implementation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Monitoring and evaluation

3.3.1 Monitoring

To ensure that more systematic account is taken of equal opportunities, programming authorities are being required to:

- establish baseline data on gender;
- set gender-disaggregated targets;
- monitor them on an ongoing basis; and
- inform project sponsors and partners of their responsibilities in this regard.

The requirement to provide quantified objectives and monitoring indicators concerning equal opportunities again highlights the necessity of establishing the baseline situation and obtaining appropriate data and information. Having established these baselines and set targets it is crucial that a rigorous and responsive monitoring system is put in place. The monitoring requirements can be specified in the SPD, in the Programme Complement and in all programming literature.

Once the monitoring system is in place, it can benefit from ongoing modification. Several programmes have established structures to facilitate this. In Wales, one of the
key tasks of the European Equality Partnership during the last period was to contribute to this process and to regularly update guidance for project promoters.

Following project approval, applicants’ obligations with regard to gender monitoring can usefully be reinforced. The offer letter can be used to reiterate the message. Applicants should also be asked to spell out their methodology for monitoring, e.g. the percentage of the projects to be monitored should be indicated with a minimum agreed at say 10 percent.

In collecting monitoring data, quantitative information can usefully be supplemented by a qualitative dimension. Valuable additional insights would emerge from asking projects to report on how they took Equal Opportunities issues into account and what effect this had.

3.3.2 Evaluation

This is another area where training is important. Many of the evaluation reports on the last round of Structural Fund programmes were very poor and yielded very little useful data. This was partly because of lack of systematic quantification and target setting at an early stage. But it was also because many evaluators did not have relevant skills.

The Council resolution of 1996 on mainstreaming has strengthened evaluation requirements, stating that evaluations should, in future, ‘measure the extent to which the principle of promoting Equal Opportunities has been taken into account, with particular regard to the involvement of women in general measures and to the implementation, the relevance and the outcome of such measures’, subsequently making appropriate changes as required.

The new Structural Fund regulation specifies the following for the ex-ante evaluation: ‘an ex-ante evaluation of the situation in terms of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work, including the specific constraints on each group; an estimate of the expected impact of the strategy and assistance, particularly on the integration of women and men into the labour market, on education and vocational training, on the establishment of women in business and on the reconciliation of family and working life’.

Ensuring that Evaluation Committees have skills and knowledge in evaluating Equal Opportunities impact will be crucially important - they will be able to set a clearer specification for the external evaluators. They will also be able to identify specialised evaluators with appropriate skills in the relevant fields. The terms of reference for evaluators must specify the need for expertise in equality evaluation and review. In addition, they should set out clear expectations in terms of what is expected from evaluation process. This might usefully include local consultation.

To fill in gaps in knowledge and to provide a framework for future analysis, it is worth considering dedicated gender studies as part of the evaluation process. This could provide more systematic information and be part of a learning process in terms of evaluating gender equality interventions. Although frequently used at regional level
in several Member States, (e.g. France, Germany, the UK), thematic evaluations are undertaken less frequently at national level. Such evaluations can be relevant to multiple programmes, there may therefore be value in organising them at national level (e.g. as in Finland).

The Scottish ESF Objective 3 Operational Programme for 2000-06 sets out an evaluation framework and programme of work. While still at the draft stage, the section on Equal Opportunities makes the following points:

**EVALUATION FRAMEWORK: SCOTTISH ESF OBJECTIVE 3 OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME**

The mainstreaming of equal opportunities is a key principle underpinning the operation of the Objective 3 Programme. The data derived from the claim form will enable each of the indicators under each of the Priorities to be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and whether and individual has a disability. Accordingly, it will be possible to assess the outcomes and results under each priority in relation to their performance with regard to equal opportunities. However, further research may be required to ascertain the effectiveness of new developments such as:

- Research into the introduction of an equal opportunities pro forma and monitoring systems in terms of their impact on the equal opportunities policies of applicant organisations,
- Research to consider the degree of success in mainstreaming equal opportunities across the programme and the experience of under-represented groups obtaining ESF support in order to obtain a better understanding of the factors affecting participation within ESF supported activities amongst under-represented groups. Such research would enable recommendations for good practice to encourage equal opportunities on ESF projects to be made.
- Research to assess the impact of the mainstreaming of equal opportunities within the Programme through an assessment of the impact of the implementation of the Objective 3 gender mainstreaming plan.

The research identified as necessary by many programme authorities will complement the work being done at EU level, notably through the MEANS programme to provide methodologies for evaluating gender equality outcomes. A number of academic papers and tools for evaluation have been addressing the issue in a systematic way – among documentation that was used to animate and inform this paper was work done in Canada at academic and governmental level, and in the EU context where Lisa Horelli and Mary Braithwaite have set a standard for analysis and progress.

---

8 MEANS programme (Methods for Evaluating Actions of a Structural Nature), prepares handbooks on monitoring and evaluation issues and organises regular training and exchange seminars across Europe.


In addition, there is a lot of useful analysis available from both ex-ante and interim evaluations – helping to establish clearer baselines in terms of gender imbalances and their causes, and the gender participation and outcomes of specific interventions, against which future performance can be measured. Additionally, interim evaluations also provide an opportunity to adjust targets and to identify additional indicators across the range of priorities funded through the programmes.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The virtuous cycle/circle approach sets out the systematic intervention necessary to mainstream gender equality in Structural Fund programmes. As stressed at the outset, evaluation is part of a process and is dependent on all the other elements being in place. If a systematic approach is adopted, progress/gains made at each stage of the cycle feed into the next stage culminating in an evaluation that can then feed back into the next round of programmes or policy targeting. This incremental approach also provides a comprehensive framework for programme managers, partners and project sponsors who face a complex task within a pressurised and limited timescale. It is important to set realistic targets, to measure and to monitor progress and to evaluate outcomes, by doing it in an incremental manner targets can be met and the expertise, skills and tools necessary for success can be developed in a sustainable way.


