

# **PROJECT - Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality**

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**Report  
Project Coordination Meeting  
15 - 17 December 2006  
Königswinter/ Germany**

## **Group of Project Partners:**

**ACW – Belgium  
AZK – Germany  
AFB – South Tyrol (Italy)  
BASE - F.U.T. – Portugal  
CSDR – Romania  
CST – Spain  
Fondazione Luigi Clerici – Italy  
LDF – Lithuania**



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**European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities,  
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**European Centre for Workers' Questions, Königswinter**

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## **1 Context of the project and the project coordination meeting**

The concepts of the European Union for improving the equality between women and men with regard to sociopolitical, economic and labour-political framework conditions in Europe are often largely unknown - especially at local levels.

The project "Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality" aims to address this lack of information and promote dialogue and exchange of experiences.

Above all, different target groups of local actors should be provided with information, made aware of the topic and given the opportunity to establish networks. Stakeholders from the following areas will be addressed by the project:

- ▶ Schools, kindergartens
- ▶ Companies
- ▶ Community-based institutions and groups, local structures of the partners of the Social Dialogue (trade unions, employers associations)
- ▶ Civil society associations

During the project coordination meeting from 15 to 17 December 2006 at the Arbeitnehmer-Zentrum Königswinter (Germany), the contents and the aims of the project were discussed in detail and a joint working plan was agreed for the individual activities of the eight project partners. All issues concerning contents, organisation and administration were discussed thoroughly during this meeting.

## **2 Dimensions of equal opportunities for men and women in the European Union**

First of all, it was necessary to brief the partners about the dimension of the project, to showcase existing propositions and empirical data and to incite plenary discussion. For this purpose, the relevance of gender equality in the European Union was highlighted and the respective definitions were presented.

So gender equality is achieved "when the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured and do not give rise to different consequences that reinforce inequalities."

**Gender equality policies** are represented and evaluated by the following European institutions:

- a.) European Parliament**
- b.) European Commission**

a.) In the European Parliament gender policy is mainly centred in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), established in 1984, which has about 35 to 40 members. The responsibilities of this Committee include the definition, evaluation and promotion of women's rights in the Union and in third countries.

- ▶ promotion of gender mainstreaming in all political areas;
- ▶ removal of discrimination based on sex;
- ▶ development of policies and programmes for women;
- ▶ follow-up and implementation of international agreements.

b.) On behalf of the European Commission, the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities / Unit G.1 / G.2 is responsible for gender equality policies at European level. The Directorate-General has the following tasks:

- ▶ Promotion of gender equality;
- ▶ Introduction of specific activities and programmes to improve the situation of men and women (initiatives for legislative proposals, etc.);
- ▶ Coordination of the five-year Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (with funds amounting to approx. €50m);
- ▶ Cooperation with the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (structure: 40 representatives from national ministries of gender equalities, employers' and employees' organisations, representatives from the European Women's Lobby and (inter)national professional organisations and associations).
- ▶ Practical involvement and counselling

Since the foundation of the European Economic Community in 1957, the principle of the equal treatment of women and men has been enforced and included in **treaty provisions**. Through the Treaty of Amsterdam it has become primary Community law (1 May 1999).

**Legal provisions and directives** have been subject to constant advancement and evaluation from 1975 to today, creating essential prerequisites for gender equality within the European Union. The area of legal provisions and directives ranges from the topic of Equal Pay (1975) to the Goods and Services Directive.

€50m are allocated for **funding** activities to promote gender equality (2001-2006) within the EU Framework Strategy. Funding aims to:

- ▶ Promote and disseminate the values and practices underlying gender equality;
- ▶ Improve understanding of gender equality issues by evaluating, monitoring and assessing pertinent policies and practice;
- ▶ Develop the capacity of players to promote gender equality, in particular by supporting exchange of information and good practice and networking at European level.

The following fields are considered as key areas to achieve these goals:

- ▶ Economic life
- ▶ Equal participation and representation
- ▶ Equal access and full enjoyment of social rights
- ▶ Civil life
- ▶ Gender roles and stereotypes

The definition or term of Gender Mainstreaming was adopted by the European Parliament on 5 May 2003. According to the concept of gender mainstreaming, policies always have to be assessed with regard to their impacts on the lives of both women and men and, if necessary, re-addressed. This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men.

The term is associated with the following strategies:

1. Continuation, improvement and extension of women-related activities;
2. Monitoring, evaluation and change of gender-specific impacts in all political areas and at all levels;
3. Addressing discrimination by means of an ongoing process of improvement and campaigning for equal participation of women.

Gender equality must be achieved in various **political areas**. In the field of **employment policies** the aim is the elimination of gender gaps on the labour market.

The *Lisbon Strategy* (2000) aims at making the EU into the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy within ten years - by 2010. With regard to employment in Europe, with this strategy, the EU is convinced that "in the context of the global objective of sustainable development, [it] can be a beacon of economic, social and environmental progress in the world".

The European employment strategy is founded on a Four-Pillar model. This model is based on a gender mainstreaming approach and aims to achieve full employment, high-quality jobs and productivity together with social cohesion and social inclusion.

As far as (political) **participation** and **decision-making processes** are concerned, women are largely underrepresented. This fact has been taken into account, while a follow-up through empirical research and documentation is needed to analyse and address this inequality.

In the field of the **reconciliation of work and family**, it can be observed that employment rates for women with little children continues to be 13.6% below those of childless women. More childcare institutions and more flexible working time models which suit the needs for better reconciliation of work and family shall entail more gender equality.

In the field of **social inclusion**, the social systems must take into account the special needs of women and reduce the poverty risk faced especially by women.

When thinking of **future initiatives towards gender equality**, the following situation must be considered. For 2005-2010 the application of equal opportunities to all society members is a priority target within the framework of the EU's new Social Agenda. This refers above all to the following permanent challenges and objectives: \_

- ▶ Gender pay gap
- ▶ Participation of women in the labour market and in vocational training
- ▶ Participation in decision-making processes
- ▶ Reconciliation of work and private life for both genders

### **3 Time table and project activities**

During the Königswinter project group meeting the partners scheduled the activities and seminars. The project duration is from December 2006 to February 2008. The following activities by the respective partners are planned within the framework of the project:

ACW, 07 – 09/12/2007, Elewijt, Belgium  
AFB, 25 – 27/01/2008, Brixen, South Tyrol/Italy  
AZK, 15 – 17/12/2006, Königswinter, Germany  
Base – F.U.T., 01 – 04/11/2007, Faro/Algarve, Portugal  
CSDR, 14 – 16/09/2007, Bucharest, Romania  
CST, 09 – 11/02/2007, Madrid, Spain  
FLC, 20 – 22/04/2007, Milan, Italy  
LDF, 01 – 03/06/2007, Vilnius, Lithuania

#### **4 Working groups on the topic**

In different working groups the participants dealt with the topic of gender equality more in detail. The question which instances are necessary at different levels to promote and implement gender equality in all social areas was a central issue at the level of the partners' working groups and for the development of strategies for the respective activities of the project partners.

Moreover, it was discussed which instances are currently available at national levels to ensure gender equality and what the situation is like with a view to legislation, policies and voluntary commitment. Likewise, the working groups assessed which structural conditions are key at national levels to create more local instances for gender equality in the future.