

Project: **Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality**



Report

International Seminar: 20. – 22. April 2007

Varenna, Italy

Group of Project Partners:

Base –Frente Unitaria de trabalhadores / Portugal

Arbeitnehmer-Zentrum Königswinter (AZK) / Deutschland

Lithuanian Work Federation (LDF) / Lithuania

Centro Socila de Trabajadores (C.S.T.) / Spain

Arbeiter-, Freizeit- und Bildungsverein (AFB) / Italy (South Tyrol)

Democratic Trade Union Confederation of Romania (CSDR) / Romania

Fondazione Luigi Clerici (FLC) / Italy

Koepel Van Christelijke Werknemersorganisaties (ACW) / Belgium



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1) Context of the Seminar

The principle of equal rights for women and men (gender equality) in the European Union has been fixed as a treaty provision since the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957.

The project, "Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality", which is supported by the European Commission, aims at promoting gender equality; particularly in regard to such challenges as gender-specific wage differences, the participation of women in the work-market or in vocational training, their participation in decision-making processes, as well as the compatibility of work and private life for both sexes.

The goal of the project is in first place to raise awareness for the meaning of local gender equality questions, for life in society, and for the development of appropriate structures and instances. The European approaches in the areas of employment and gender equality as well as in the area of local gender equality questions should be promoted and the "European Employment Strategy" should be made better known.

At the beginning of the project there is, above all, a stocktaking of the local gender equality situation and an analysis of the framework for actions to achieve gender equality at the local level in order to be able to develop strategies for sustainable actions. Thus, after exchanging information about the different initial situations, possible solutions and alternatives for action should be discussed and the activities of the partners in their countries should be coordinated.

Above all, the project aims at reaching "multipliers", for example in schools, kindergartens, companies, at the community level, as well as in social dialogue. For this purpose, in the course of the following meetings an educational and strategy concept should be developed, a European Global Conference carried out, as well as an action-plan model and further recommendations for activities worked out.

2) Contents of the Seminar:

The Situation of Gender Equality in Italy

The international seminar within the framework of the project "Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality" began with an introduction about the development and the situation of gender equality in Italy. The participants received information about the situation of gender equality in Italy and Europe from Emanuela Abbatecola, who reported on the subject of "The Strengths and Weaknesses of Equal Opportunity in Italy", Adriana Opromolla, of Caritas Europa, Paolo Cesana, who examined the subject "Training for the Equality of the Sexes: Projects and Experiences", Maurizio Ambrosini, whose subject was "Immigrant Women and Equal Opportunity: a Challenge for the Coming Decade", and Irene Riva, who spoke about "The Province of Lecco: Aspects of the Programme and the Organisation of Gender Policy". After the speeches were discussed and the present situation was examined and reviewed,

the seminar units turned their attention on Saturday, April 21st , 2007, to the best-practice examples of each country.

Best-Practice: Experience at the Local Level in Europe

The different experiences and best-practice examples were presented, analysed, and evaluated by the representatives of the different countries.

The Romanian colleague presented examples which have been carried out in cooperation with the government to sensitize society for the idea of treating men and women equally and to assert the principle of gender-mainstreaming at the national level through programmes also in politics. A main point was an awareness-raising campaign that was carried out in the year 2006 that operated with video clips, posters, flyers, and a statistical analysis. The second project that was presented, "COJES Giurgiu", which was carried out in cooperation with Bulgaria, was concerned principally with advancing the professional status of women. Within this framework a study was written and, this subject was made public through various activities.

The representative from Lithuania presented the "Vilnius University Gender Study Centre", the main goals of which are research and information through seminars. Within this framework, for example, projects on the subjects "Equality for Local Development" and "Innovative Educational Strategies for Social Partners" were carried out, which, above all, aim at raising the awareness of the public. But also, coordination and awareness-raising measures were carried out with representatives of trade unions and NGOs. Generally speaking, there are many small projects at the local level.

The Spanish expert presented the new law on gender equality. Just recently passed, it sets a quota of 50% women in the lists of candidates for the election of administrative boards, deals with the subject of maternity and/or paternity leave, and supports projects for training courses for "new fathers" in rural areas. It would be desirable to do work in awareness-raising to minimize possible risks.

The Portuguese representative presented various small projects that deal with the subject of gender equality. For example, a company for garden tools was named, which wishes to support the balance between job and family life through special services such as a kindergarten and a primary school for children of employees as well as further training courses, discussion circles and flexible working-hours for parents. Moreover, an air transport company, a water supply enterprise, an advertising agency, a savings and loan institute, and plastic industry enterprise were presented.

The Belgian representative presented the project "Equal Opportunities Policy: and Instrument", which bears the name "LEER" (Local Emancipation Effect Report), and is being carried out in the city of Brügge. It deals mainly with the analysis of political measures and resources as well as with an information brochure. Moreover, the work within the ACWs was presented. It is their goal to achieve a better balance between the sexes and to promote equal opportunities and the integration of gender equality through training courses and information on the subject.

The expert from Germany presented a project on Girls' Day for boys which deals with a course for boys on baby-sitting, and which received good feedback. It is intended to change certain concepts within society, and boys who have learned so-called "soft skills can have an advantage in their later professional lives. The web site www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de offers further information on this subject. As a second project, Networking on the Job for Women was presented, in particular the founding of a women's network called "Siebengebirge", whose goals are networking, distributing orders/commissions, assistance, etc., and which also received good feedback.

The expert from South Tyrol presented the project "Audit Family & Job – Initiative of the Committee for Equal Opportunity of the Medical Supplies Enterprise Bozen", the objective of which is an honour award for family-friendly personnel policy in companies. For this purpose, an audit-model was developed, and an audit-board with representatives from trade unions, organisations for employees, experts and others was founded. A further project dealt with strengthening the situation of parents and married and unmarried couples. The project will also be concerned with the special problem of men's actually intending to realize the father role, but running the risk of falling back into traditional role behaviour after the birth of the first child. For this reason, a questionnaire was developed which deals with the wishes and ideas of working fathers. Furthermore, a project with the title "Don't be Afraid of Car Problems on the Road!" was presented. This is supposed to help women in connection with car-technical questions, and the programme also provides for a self-assertion and self-defence training course for women.

The expert from Milan/Italy chose to present a baby-sitters' service, a pilot-project that affects all communities south of Milan. Within this framework, a network was first built up for awareness-raising and to help change the traditional picture of women. The goal should be to offer a babysitting service that includes fathers as babysitters.

Evaluation of the Work

The closing appraisal of the seminar made clear that the collecting and listing of problems is an important step towards the identification of solutions. Important subjects seemed to be, principally, the weak representation of women in politics, the discrimination of women in the working-place, above all in reference to antenatal and postnatal rights, earnings, career and flexible working-hours, the compatibility of family and job as an individual problem of women, the integration of men in the family, raising the awareness of young persons, as well as the picture of women in the media. Educating society, in particular men and children, could be supported by positive male and female roles and pictures, dissolving typical societal clichés, also in reference to women's domains like, for example, child care, awareness-raising among pupils, school teachers, and kindergarten teachers, as well as cooperation with the mass media to avoid the use of clichés. Attention should also increasingly be paid to enabling, for example, women in part-time jobs to have leading positions and to increasing flexible working-hours. Moreover, producing new training modules would be an appropriate step in this direction.

To sum up, one should work on the critical aspects and analyse the best-practice examples and, if suitable, incorporate them in one's own work or/and one's own sphere of influence.

Further Planning for Project Continuation

There is for certain the need for taking action on the levels of education/vocational training, the role of men, and politics. The seminar in Lithuania should serve to develop educational concepts for three different target groups.

- 1) Target group: Educational institutions (multiplicators in these institutions)
- 2) Target group: Multiplicators in businesses, trade unions and associations for employees
- 3) Target group: Local actors at the community level

For this purpose, ideas should be developed that are directed towards the following structural criteria:

- ⇒ Problem description and elaboration
- ⇒ Seminar title
- ⇒ Description of contents and methods

Examples:

For target group 1: Multipliers from local target groups (e.g. kindergarten)

⇒ Development of a game (Gender Memory: with pictures that break with classical concepts and without language barriers)

For target group 2: Multipliers from businesses (e.g. women and men in trade unions/businesses)

⇒ Gender empowerment training courses

For target group 3: municipal politics (employees in municipal administration)

⇒ Planning game for understanding which should motivate the employees to use in their work

Prospects for the Next Meeting

Where & when:

Lithuania 01. - 03. 06. 07

Possible guests/speakers should offer assistance in developing educational concepts. However, enough time should be allotted for elaborating on the concepts. The seminar should serve to develop these educational concepts.

The project-phase of exchanging information should be ended now after these first three meetings.

How shall we continue?

⇒ What could educational concepts for the defined groups look like?

- Collecting ideas, elaborating

As "homework", the participants have decided to collect all possible ideas for the three target groups and to present them at the next seminar.

For target group 1: FLC, AZK, AFB, Base-Fut

For target group 2: CSDR, LDF

For target group 3: ACW, C.S.T.