

Project:      **Development and implementation of strategies for the foundation and optimisation of local instances of gender equality**



## **Report**

**International Seminar 01–03 June 2007**

**Vilnius, Lithuania**

### Project Partners:

Base –Frente Unitaria de trabalhadores (BASE-FUT) / Portugal  
Arbeitnehmer-Zentrum Königswinter (AZK) / Germany  
Lithuanian Work Federation (LDF) / Lithuania  
Centro Social 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**

Since the founding of the European Economic Community in 1957, the principle of gender equality has been codified in the treaties of the European Union.

The project "Development and implementation of strategies for the foundation and optimisation of local instances of gender equality", supported by the European Commission, aims at promoting gender equality and addressing special challenges like gender-related pay gap, participation of women in the labour market or vocational training, participation in decision-making and the reconciliation of work and family life for both genders.

The primary objective of the project is to raise awareness of the importance of local gender equality issues for social life and the establishment of the respective structures and instances. The European approaches to employment and gender equality and to local gender equality issues shall be promoted, while knowledge of the "European Employment Strategy" shall be spread.

The beginning of the project was marked by an inventory of the local situation with regard to gender equality and an analysis of the framework conditions for local gender equality activities to be able to develop strategies for sustainable action. After pooling the information about the different points of departure, possible solutions and alternatives for action were supposed to be discussed, coordinating the activities of the project partners in their respective countries.

Above all, the project shall reach stakeholders in the field of schools, nurseries and companies at local level plus persons involved in the Social Dialogue. For this purpose, during previous activities, an educational strategy concept has been developed and recommendations for action have been made, which will be further elaborated and made available at the European Global Conference to be staged in Portugal.

## **2) Contents of the seminar:**

### **Current state of the project**

At the beginning of the seminar "Development and implementation of strategies for the foundation and optimisation of local instances of gender equality", that took place in Vilnius, Lithuania from 1 to 3 June 2007, the participants were welcomed by LDF President Vydas Puskepalis and the Chairwoman of the Women's Committee Daiva Pagirytė. Subsequently the Project Coordinator Alexandra Hepp, who is leaving office for job reasons, introduced Grit Terborg, who will take over responsibility from July 2007. After the participants had presented themselves, Alexandra Hepp highlighted the previous project activities and the future planning. With this seminar the project has entered into its 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, which is about developing different educational concepts for various target groups. The strictly informal part of presenting the situation in the individual countries is now over.

## **Working groups for the preparation of the different educational concepts**

In the run-up to this seminar the individual working groups, established at the last seminar in Varenna, Italy in April 2007, had developed educational concepts with the following three target groups in mind:

- Stakeholders in educational institutions
- Stakeholders in companies, trade unions and employee federations
- Stakeholders at local levels

These concepts were meant as a preparation for the three working groups at this seminar and were presented to the plenary.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Working Group**

#### **Target group: Stakeholders in educational institutions**

A number of suggestions was made, like training men to become educators or awareness-raising games. However, problems with regard to the implementation in the individual countries showed up due to differing situations/initial conditions.

Therefore the educational concept "Snow White and the others. How to decipher gender-related stereotypes" was developed and elaborated more in detail. This concept is tailored for the target group of educators and teachers.

The theoretical part of the concept is based on explanations about gender-related stereotypes which are developed in childhood. Mainly, these stereotypes go back to pictures and the use of language in children's books, advertisements or to specific toys.

Boys are predominantly depicted as active and courageous, while girls are mostly nice and obedient - leaving them with only two choices: adopt the traditional pattern or imitate men.

For this reason the educational concept wants to make teachers and educators aware of these stereotypes and sexist language through seminars and teaching materials and to prepare and train them for the adequate use of children's and youth literature.

To achieve this purpose, a list of "correct" children's books and guidelines for gender-neutral language plus a collection of materials would be especially useful.

The educational concept aims at establishing training guidelines, that is the structure of a standard seminar.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group**

#### **Target group: Stakeholders in companies, trade unions and employee federations**

The second working group presented a concept for training senior trade unionists to enable them to combat gender discrimination and evaluate the gender situation within trade unions.

This could be achieved for example by a seminar on the topic of "Gender Awareness raising for Trade Union Activists". This would include readings, small working groups, case studies, questionnaires, discussions, individual works, games and work in pairs.

The educational concept is based on a training of trainers who shall be responsible for the training of fellow trade unionists later on, so they can disseminate/pass on their knowledge through seminars and working materials.

For more information please refer to the annexed document.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Working Group**

#### **Target group: Stakeholders at local levels**

The third working group presented two results: on the one hand, a list of recommendations for action (see annex), on the other hand, a presentation containing background information plus suggestions for action.

The focus of the presentation was the deliberate training of local stakeholders by means of special tools and materials. It was stressed that this training could also be used for other target groups.

Two objectives were in the centre of this training:

1. A gender-balanced representation (through networking, empowerment, etc.)
2. Creative policies (through training of round tables, tool kits, awareness-raising)

This could be achieved by means of a seminar for politicians where these objectives are imparted with a focus on the Social Dialogue and through a brochure with the elementary ideas.

A concept combining brochures, existing strategies and charters could be developed for this purpose.

### **Evaluation of the work**

After the discussion about the educational concept of the third working group, the general progress of the project was discussed at length. In this context remarks were made above all with regard to the following topics:

#### **Public relations:**

Public relations is a key issue of the project. Media about this work could include the publication of messages on websites, press releases and women's networks that are already active in trade unions, parties, etc. Media partners play an important role in our work: Should an educational concept be developed for them? Could women in politics pass on information to young people? An argument against the development of guidelines was that there are already plenty of them, so little attention can be expected.

#### **Communication:**

Communication is sometimes difficult at international seminars. Technical terms have different connotations, so misunderstandings are caused. The suggestion was made to agree on a strict definition of terms beforehand to avoid such problems.

#### **Targets from the working plan:**

I Development of educational concepts

1. What strategies must be developed to establish and institutionalise local instances of gender equality?
2. What strategies must be developed to optimise local instances of gender equality?

II Preparation of document for Global Conference:

Recommendations for action/identification of target groups

**Results/Objectives achieved?**

The objectives of the project working plan have been reached in so far as working groups 1 and 2 have developed drafts for educational concepts, while working group 3 has concentrated on recommendations for action - because of the requirements of this specific target group.

Up to now, the educational concepts concentrate strongly on the optimisation of local instances (Working group I - Target group educational institutions) and on strategies to establish and institutionalise instances of gender equality at local level (Working group II - Target group trade unions).

Recommendations for action were developed by Working group III.

With regard to this aspect, the exact target groups still need to be identified during the next meeting in Bucharest in September 2007. Moreover, the document about the Global Conference, containing recommendations for action, still needs to be revised in Bucharest.

### **Further schedule of the project**

After the development of educational draft concepts in Vilnius, the priority is to finish these concepts and to prepare a concrete working paper for the Global Conference in Portugal that should include recommendations for action.

The further development of the educational concepts will be done by the individual groups in the meantime in order to prepare the next seminar; there they will be evaluated and prepared with a view to the Portugal conference. The partners make arrangements to find way to cooperate outside the scheduled seminars.

At the Portugal conference it is planned to develop a model action plan that includes a collection of the project results plus develop a collection of materials in the form of ways of action, schedules and checklists for planning.

EZA will inform the participants about the further procedure.

### **Outlook on the next meeting**

#### **Where & when:**

Romania: 14—16/09/2007

#### **Objective:**

The priority of the next meeting in Romania will be to finish the educational concepts and revise the preparative document for the Global Conference including the recommendations for action.

In Bucharest the final design of the educational concepts and of the documents with the recommendations for action will be decided.

A strategy concept developed for the seminar will be made more concrete in a joint effort and written out.

Other points on the seminar programme in Romania will be to finish the preparative document for the Global Conference in Portugal in November and to prepare the press conference in Portugal with the respective materials like press kit and project results.