

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



Report

International Conference 2 – 4 November 2007

Portimão, Portugal

Project Partners:

Base –Frente Unitaria de trabalhadores (BASE-FUT) / Portugal

Arbeitnehmer-Zentrum Königswinter (AZK) / Germany

Lietuvos Darbo Federacija (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.

2) Introduction to the Project / Attendance at the International Conference

The international conference on "**Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality**" took place in Portimão, Portugal between the 2nd and 4th of November 2007. It was the highlight of a research and action project, which was part of the work of the International Platform for Equal Opportunities, brought to life by the European Centre for Workers Questions (EZA).

Friday, 2nd of November 2007

The opening words of the conference were delivered by the national coordinator of BASE F.U.T., João Paulo Branco and the Deputy Secretary-General of EZA, Francisco Rivas, as well as the town councillor of Portimão, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the town mayor. After the opening speech, the project was presented to the attendants, together with the results which had been elaborated by the different teams from the participating countries, namely Belgium, Italy, Germany, Romania, Spain, Italy and Lithuania.

The discussion leader, Carmen Ionescu (CSDR) from Romania, and the project manager Sabine Moeller (EZA) from Germany referred to the educational concepts used in this project, gave recommendations for actions which need to be taken, and explained the various documents which had been elaborated and which are intended for publication.

The speakers explained to the more than 60 participants at the conference that, in the context of compatibility of family and work, the current 'Development and Implementation of Strategies for the Foundation and Optimisation of Local Instances of Gender Equality' project was a follow-up of the previous 'Men and Fathers' project. Both are part of the larger topic area of equal opportunity.

The important role of the target group of the project was pointed out, and a special focus was given to the importance of labour union representatives, local politicians and, no less important, the network of social and cultural agents. In the same way, it was pointed out that a database of best practice examples on a local level needs to be elaborated.

Afterwards, the participants were divided into three work groups in order to analyse in greater detail the topics related to the project, and to study the "Declaration of Portimão".

One of the groups dealt with the topic of "**Language – recommendations for the action plan**".

A second group dealt with "**Gender-specific violence – recommendations for the action plan**".

The third group elaborated several propositions to help implement the "**Declaration of Portimão**" on both the local and national level.

In a plenary session under the leadership of Vincenzina Zanetti (FLC, Italy), the three groups presented a number of suggestions, which aimed to provide working material for the action plan.

Special mention was made of the importance of eliminating all stereotypes with regards to the role of women at home, in society and, most importantly, at the workplace. Everyday written and spoken language was given a special focus.

The topic of domestic violence and violence at the workplace also received special attention, and it was stressed that awareness needs to be raised among the target groups. This applies to women in particular, but also to the authorities.

3) Declaration and Agreement of Portimão – Symbolic Actions of Political Commitment

Saturday, 3rd of November 2007

Work started under the leadership of Danguole Boguseviciene (LDF, Lithuania). Participants were given an introduction to the “Declaration of Portimão”, the aim of which is to serve as an accepted guideline and binding commitment for the organisations that took part in the conference.

In this first session, the goals of the declaration were highlighted again (see appendix), and participants had the opportunity to comment on the subject. The propositions of the declaration were accepted unanimously.

Cesário Borga, a journalist working for the Portuguese radio and television channel ‘Radio Televisão Portuguesa’, then lead a panel discussion on the topic of “Europe and Equal Opportunity”. The following speakers were present: Jamília Madeira, member of the European Parliament, Giuliana Caminetti, delegate of the town of Lodi, Italy, whose area of responsibility is Equality and Youth Policy; Moseratti Aguilera, social services delegate for Toledo, Spain, and Henrique Toledano (CST), who had come on behalf of Susmozas Ortíz, municipal and equality officer of the Union Sindical Obrera, one of the Spanish labour unions.

Jamília Madeira made a speech, elaborating on the historical background of the long but steady struggle for gender equality in Europe. She gave special attention to the topic of wages and political decision-making power.

Giuliana Cominetti presented best practice models from her local municipality, and Henrique Toledano elaborated on Spain’s current situation regarding equality of opportunities, and explained the goals of the labour union USO. He made special mention of the injustices suffered with respect to salary levels and the access to positions of power.

Montserrat Aguilera analysed the role of public administration and bureaucratic measures in the struggle for and promotion of equality and equal rights.

During the following debate, participants were allowed to ask questions and present their own point of view regarding the discussion topics.

The topic of the second debate, which was moderated by Piergiorgio Sciacqua (MCL Italy), was "**Portugal's current situation with respect to equal opportunity**". Fernando Gomes, member of the executive commission of the general Portuguese labour union (CGTP) participated in this session, as well as José Ribeiro, who spoke on behalf of Paula Viseu, member of the permanent committee of the labour union UGT.

The participation of a member of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as well as a representative of a business federation from the Algarve had also been planned, but unexpected circumstances, on which the organisers had no influence, made it impossible for them to do so.

The officer of the labour union presented statistical data relating to Portugal's current situation with respect to equal opportunity, informing the participants about the objectives the labour union has set and the actions they were planning to take.

The member of the general Portuguese labour union also presented a number of suggestions and political demands, and explained the position of the central office regarding these ideas.

During the debate, some of the participants urged the unions to give the promotion of equal opportunity more importance, especially when it comes to collective agreements and the inclusion of gender-related questions in the wage claims. They also asked the unions to intensify their demands regarding the compatibility of family and profession, and work-related health policies.

It was suggested that it is necessary to establish a gender culture with a special focus on immigrants and religious communities.

After that, project coordinator Grit Terborg (EZA, Germany) explained the future actions of the project, including the results that had been obtained at the conference. Meetings between the various project officers are planned in order to assess the success of the conference and to work out an action plan with specific measures that partners can implement both individually and collectively.

The Declaration of Portimão was signed jointly by Civil Governor Dr Isilda Gomes and Teresa Guerreiro, town councillor of Portimão, after which the document was handed over to the responsible government representative.

Another document which was signed and presented at the conference was the **Algarve Agreement**, which aims to include and involve various municipalities and local instances in partnerships designed to promote gender equality.

João Paulo Branco, co-coordinator of BASE-FUT and Roswitha Gottbehüt General Secretary of EZA had the opportunity to stress the symbolic value of the documents and their political dimension. Speaking on behalf of the promoters of the project, they urged the various organisations leading it to strengthen their commitment to implement the directives of the document on a local level.

The Civil Governor of the Algarve as well as Portimão's town councillor assured their dedication and enthusiasm to further the cause of equal opportunities and to make the Declaration of Portimão and the Algarve Agreement work on a local level.

The conference was then concluded with closing words from the various heads of organisations that were present. All of them stressed the importance of the project, highlighting the need to continue to work in the right direction, and commenting positively on the outstanding quality of the conference.

3) Evaluation of the International Conference

Sunday, 4th of November 2007

Three aspects must be particularly emphasized when trying to evaluate the conference:

- The degree of the political impact
- The depth of analysis of the topic areas
- The organizational level

As regards the political ramifications, we need to remember that the conference had a considerable impact on the participating organisations and institutions representing the Algarve and other regions in Portugal. A number of municipalities were notified, and they committed themselves to signing the Algarve Agreement. The presence of representatives of the Portuguese Government and the handing-over of the declaration was also deemed as very significant.

As far as the Portuguese participants are concerned, it needs to be said that people from all over the country were present. They were mostly women who are involved in the struggle for equality and equal opportunity. Among them were journalists, labour union representatives, social services technicians, local politicians, artists and leaders of different associations.

As for the depth of the materials presented and analysed, there were positive moments, and participants highlighted the quality of the team work. Mention was made in particular of the first panel debate dealing with the topic of 'Europe and Equal Opportunity'.

On an organisational level, the conference went very well, despite certain difficulties that were experienced because of the language barriers that had to be overcome, and because organisations had to work with partners from a number of areas which are situated at considerable distance from one another.

Portimão, 4th of November 2007