



MAGAZINE



**DOSSIER: CREEPING AT SNAIL'S PACE
TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY**

**DOSSIER: ONE YEAR OF CORONA – A YEAR OF
ACCELERATED DIGITISATION**

BREXIT AND THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

ISSUE 01/2021

Dear Readers, Dear Colleagues,

Perhaps some of you may know the film „The Divine Order“. It gives a disturbing, revealing and at times humorous description of the social process involved in introducing women's suffrage in Switzerland in 1971. Yes, you have read that correctly: 1971! Many of the achievements that have been made in terms of gender equality are not very old. When I was born, wives in Germany were obliged by law to run the household; husbands could forbid their wives to go out to work.

This issue of our EZA Magazine is devoted primarily to gender justice issues.

The timing is not pure coincidence: after all, 8 March is International Women's Day. The EU also still has a lot to do with regard to gender equality. It is probably in terms of unequal pay received by women and men that gender discrimination is most obvious. The European gender pay gap is 14.1%. When men earn €1, women on average have to content with 86 cents. To put it in symbolic terms, in 2020 women worked unpaid as from 10 November to the end of the year, compared to their male colleagues!

There are many well-known reasons for the gender pay gap. Even so, far too little has been done hitherto to change things for the better. In the last eight years, the pay gap has been reduced by just 1%. If things continue at this speed, women will have to wait another 84 years for equal treatment!

One year ago, the European Commission presented its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Twelve months on, it has now put this strategy into specific terms with its proposal for a directive on pay transparency: binding rules are to reveal discrimination so that effective measures can be taken to fight such discrimination. Further discussions will definitely be needed about the exact form of the proposed instruments. Even so, the proposal is a step in the right direction. But the fact that paper is patient and laws have to be implemented in order to take effect is demonstrated by the fact that the EU is still talking about this issue in 2021, although equal pay for equal work has been enshrined in law in the EU since 1975. It will be up to European society as a whole to overcome stereotypes and outdated power structures in order to show that gender inequality is not a divine order - quite on the contrary! It fundamentally contradicts the divine concept of woman and man being made in God's image.

Sigrid Schraml
Secretary General



CONTENTS

4-13

DOSSIER: CREEPING AT SNAIL'S PACE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY:

Gender Equality Index: a Europe of inequality

Interview: Professor Yvonne Benschop on the causes and consequences of inequality

Presentation: EZA's IPEO platform plans to collect data on inequality

14-17

DOSSIER: ONE YEAR OF CORONA – A YEAR OF ACCELERATED DIGITISATION:

EZA goes online seminar: an overview

Progress report: 2020 in the Nell-Breuning-Haus

18

BREXIT AND THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES:

Kevin Flanagan about the current situation at St. Antony's Centre in the United Kingdom

20

IMPRINT

A EUROPE OF INEQUALITY

Gender equality is one of the central issues for EZA and has been put on the agenda by the kick-off seminar in the education year 2020/21.

The EZA Magazine features a special dossier that looks at the subject in greater depth, particularly in view of the fact that the COVID-19 crisis threatens to reverse some of the progress that had been made hitherto in terms of equality.



TEXT: Lukas Fleischmann

PHOTOS: Shutterstock

The dossier presents figures and statistics relating to inequality and also includes an interview about various aspects of inequality with a renowned academic. It also introduces an initiative by EZA's IPEO platform (International Platform for Equal Opportunities).

The risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to previous achievements that had been made in terms of equality is one of the central statements emerging from a corresponding study published by EUROFOUND in December 2020 (cf. also EZA Magazine 2/2020). At the same time, the EU Commission launched its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 that aims to bring about a significant improvement in gender equality by 2025. The strategy contains ambitious targets such as ending the gender pay gap or establishing gender balance in decision-making processes and politics. However, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) based in Vilnius, it would take the EU until 2080 to achieve real gender equality if the efforts made by politics and civil society were to continue at the same rate as hitherto.

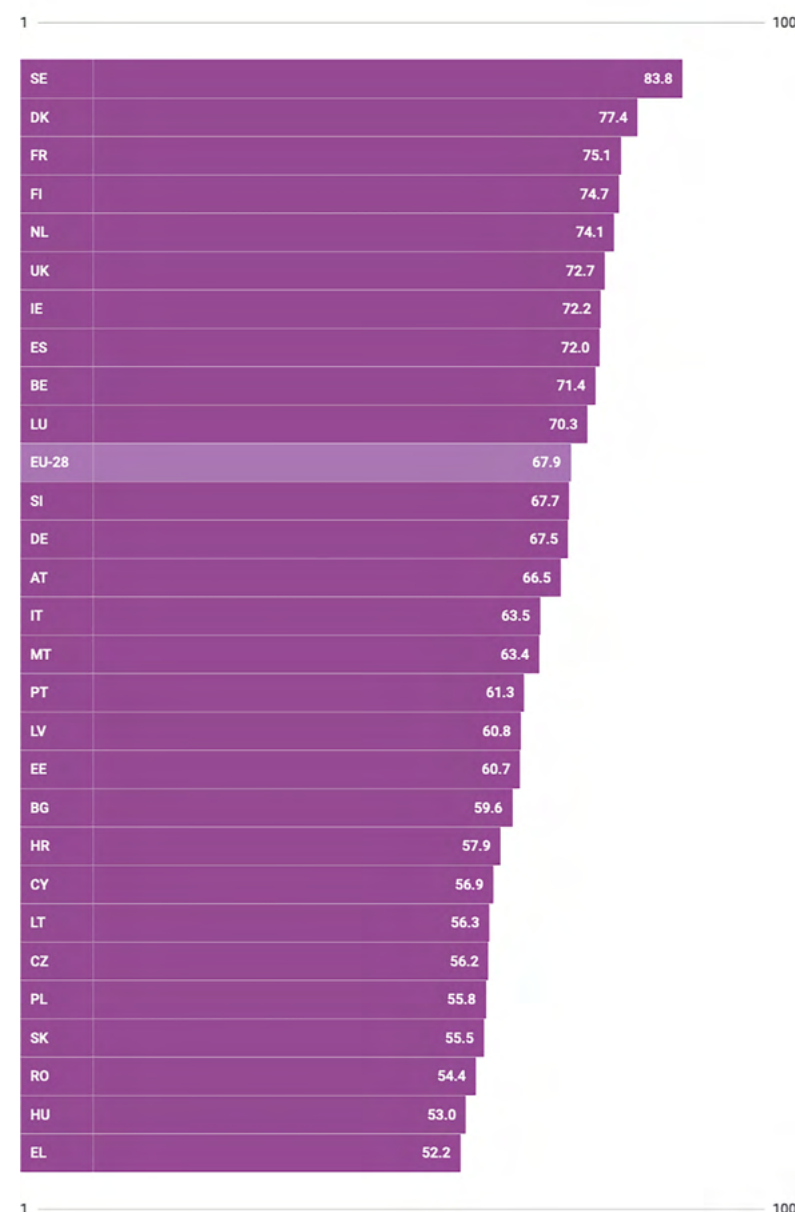


CREEPING AT SNAIL'S PACE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

Last October, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in Vilnius presented the fifth Gender Equality Index. The index is seen as a key component for monitoring progress in gender equality in the EU. It measures a series of indicators referring to work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. It also integrates two additional areas: violence and intersecting inequalities.

TEXT: Lukas Fleischmann

GRAPHIC: European Institute for Gender Equality (Index 2019)



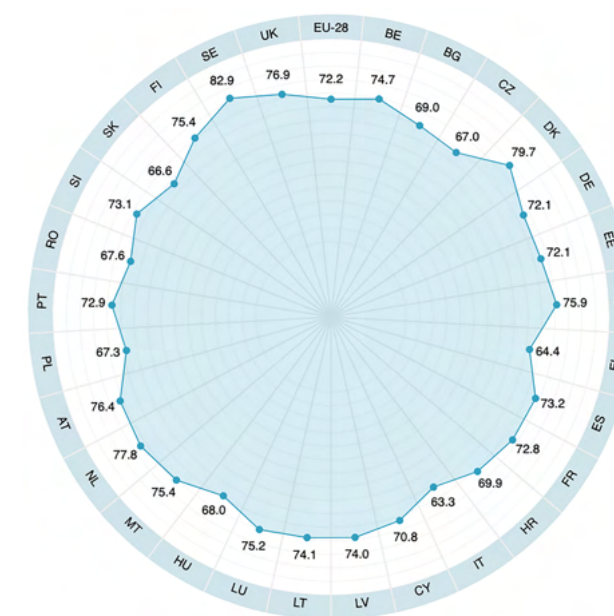
GENERAL OVERVIEW

In the general overview, Sweden performs best in the equality rating with 83.8 points out of 100. Greece brings up the rear followed closely by Hungary and Romania with scores of roughly 50 points. The EU average is 67.9 points. In other words, the EIGE has calculated that the EU is around 60 years away from complete gender equality if the current pace does not change.



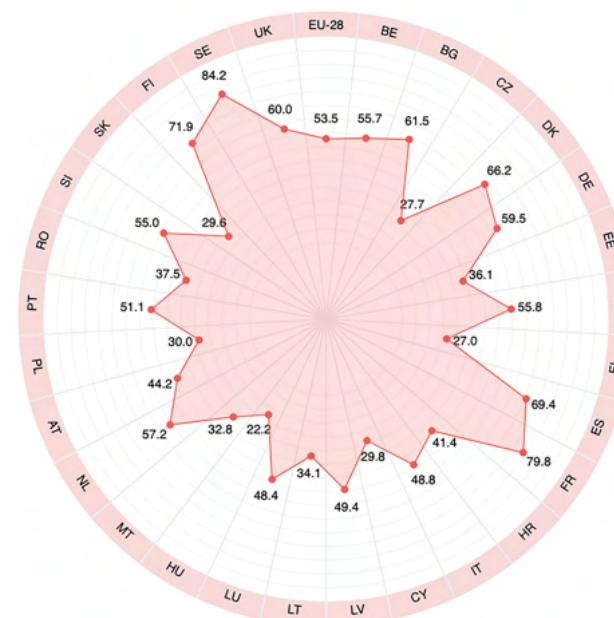
THE DOMAIN OF WORK

The index for the domain of work differentiates between general participation in employment on the one hand and gender segregation and quality of work on the other. While women participate in employment to an only slightly lesser degree, there is striking inequality in terms of the gendered division of labour and quality of work. Here again, Sweden leads the ranking with Italy in last place. The current gender pay gap in the EU is on average 14.1 percent. In other words, women earned 14.1 percent less on average for doing the same work as men.



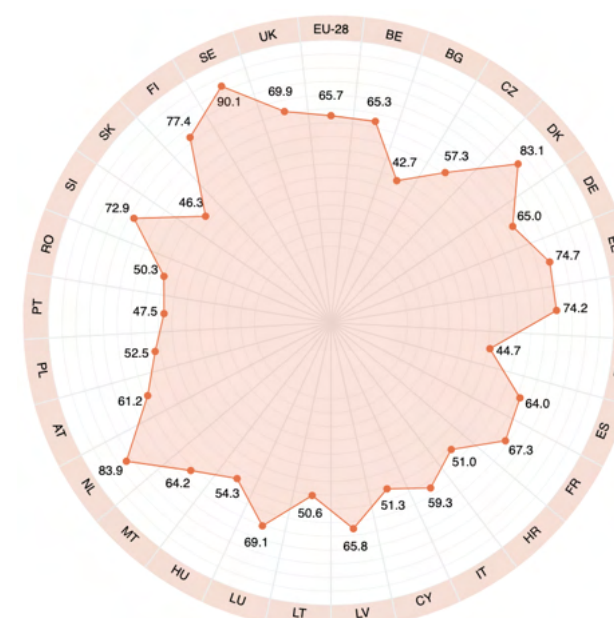
THE DOMAIN OF POWER

This diagram illustrates the index in terms of power and influence. The figures combine sub-indexes for power across the political, economic and social spheres. There are two clear outliers in this domain: Sweden and France. In the sub-domain of economic power, France takes the lead, while Hungary brings up the rear with just 22.2 of 100 points. This domain is where women experience the greatest inequality with the EU achieving just 53.5 of 100 points on average.



THE DOMAIN OF TIME

Gender inequality in the domain of time is broken down into time spent on care and domestic work, and time spent on social activities. It illustrates inequality experienced by women in domestic and social activities because they need more time for this on average. In terms of gender equality related to time, Sweden once again takes the lead, way ahead of Denmark and the Netherlands. Bulgaria comes last in this index.





"IT IS TELLING THAT EVEN A SECTOR THAT PREDOMINANTLY EMPLOYS WOMEN IS STILL RULED BY MEN."



PROFESSOR YVONNE BENSCHOP

Professor Yvonne Benschop on inequality in the workplace, the resulting dangers, and how politics and society can counteract it.

INTERVIEW: Lukas Fleischmann
PHOTOS: Professor Yvonne Benschop

EZA: The index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) paints a rather bleak picture in terms of gender equality. The years 2020 and 2021 do not seem to be game changers due to the pandemic, which disproportionately affects women. Before we go into more detail about the reasons, perhaps we should clarify what gender inequality actually means. Can you give us examples that one might not even think of?

Yvonne Benschop: Gender inequality refers to the systemic disparities between women and men in power and control over goals, resources and outcomes in society and in organizations. It is connected on the one hand to positions of women, men, and non-binary persons, and on the other hand also to the meanings of masculinity and femininity. Gender inequality is not only about gender, but always about gender in intersection with other relevant social categories, such as class, ethnicity, age, sexuality and dis/ability. Even today, in 2021, there are multiple gender inequalities at play. These are obvious in labour market statistics and figures about the wage gap. But informal contacts, for instance, also tend to produce inequalities. People in power engage in informal networking with people similar to them because of their opportunities to meet them in their line of work and because they seek out the same people. Chances are high that the information and social support in those networks circulate only in the circles of highly educated, white cis-men, which facilitates opportunity hoarding among these men.

EZA: Although most workers in the healthcare sector are female, decisions about how to tackle the pandemic have been mostly taken by men. What does that tell us about gender inequality?

Yvonne Benschop: It tells us that gender inequality is not obsolete, not a problem that we have overcome, although

"GENDER INEQUALITY REFERS TO THE SYSTEMIC DISPARITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN POWER AND CONTROL OVER GOALS, RESOURCES AND OUTCOMES IN SOCIETY AND IN ORGANIZATIONS."

we maybe would like to believe that we have. It is telling that even a sector that predominantly employs women is still ruled by men. But gender inequality is not just a problem of the representation of women: there is much more to it. It has to do with norms about work and workers, norms that present care work as typical feminine work and women as ideal care workers. On the other hand, we also see references emerging about women's superior leadership skills in the pandemic, so it is not all gender inequality anymore.

EZA: According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, segregation in education is one of the major reasons for gender inequality in 2021. Some countries such as Germany and the Netherlands have even seen a decline in the general situation since 2010, which means that girls and young women face even more challenges in getting the same education, especially in the STEM sectors. What are the reasons for that?

Yvonne Benschop: Education is a factor in inequality, certainly, and segregation in education does not help bring us closer to gender equality. But this is a matter of horizontal segregation, with division over different sectors. Vertical segregation, with differences in levels, shows something else. We observe that more women than men acquire university degrees and that they do better in terms of grades and timely graduation.



“PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A VERY SLOW PROCESS. ONE HAS TO BE WILLING TO TAKE A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND LOOK BACK OVER A COUPLE OF DECADES TO SEE THIS PROGRESS, AND MANY INEQUALITIES REMAIN TODAY. ”

EZA: In contrast to that, women are at higher risk of losing their employment, face more unpaid work, and take on more responsible for looking after family members. Especially during the pandemic, women suffer far more negative consequences than men. Are we at risk of losing the progress made in recent years?

Yvonne Benschop: Progress towards gender equality has always been a very slow process. One has to be willing to take a historical perspective and look back over a couple of decades to see this progress, and many inequalities remain today. Not all inequalities are visible as inequalities, especially not for those in privileged positions. And there is always the risk of backlash and opposition against gender equality, so we have to be on guard to protect the progress made.

EZA: Let's get practical. How can employers achieve more equality in the workplace? Which measures can be taken?

Yvonne Benschop: There is no quick fix or silver bullet that will help all employers. It is hard work to change structures, work processes, norms, and people's mindsets. It helps if there is a clear ambition to make changes, and a top manager or top team that takes the responsibility to advocate gender equality explicitly and repeatedly. They can make sure that there is a generous budget and an infrastructure for gender equality work, so that a tailor-made gender equality plan can be designed to address the specific gender equality problems of that organization.

EZA: How can equal pay for equal work be achieved and what role do politics, companies and workers' organizations play in this process?

Yvonne Benschop: This is one of the core things that still needs to be done. The laws and regulations on equal pay for equal work are there, but they are not being enforced. Governments need to play a part here to put this injustice on the political agenda. Workers' organizations need to push for it, making it a priority in their negotiations with employers. There are examples of companies that take their responsibility and correct their wage gap, and this example can and should be followed.

EZA: Finally, inequality starts at home. What exemplary measures can be taken within the individual family? How can men support gender equality?

Yvonne Benschop: Inequality is a multilevel phenomenon, at work in the global world, in society, in the workplace and in our private lives. For heterosexual families, it is important to think about the gendered division of labour at home. Negotiations about how work is shared out may not be seen as romantic, but they are necessary for anyone who does not want to end up with a traditional division. Generous parental leave for young fathers can facilitate their involvement in childcare from the start. Men need to take up these opportunities, and support and stimulate their partner's career ambitions to do their part towards gender equality.

EZA: Thank you very much for the interview!

Yvonne Benschop is Professor of Business Administration and Organizational Behaviour at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. She heads the Department of Business Administration and the multidisciplinary research hotspot „Gender and Power in Politics and Management“, in which more than 20 researchers from the fields of business administration, political science, economics and geography, planning and environment work together. She is an Affiliate Professor at the Center for Gender in Organizations at Simmons School of Management, Boston, USA.

VISIBLE AT LAST: WOMEN ON THE LONG ROAD TO EQUALITY

The International Platform for Equal Opportunities (IPEO) has started a data project to illustrate the status of equality in various countries of the EZA network.



HEIDI RABENSTEINER, IPEO
(INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR EQUAL OPORTUNITIES)



“ALTHOUGH DURING THE LAST CENTURY, EUROPEAN SOCIETY STARTED TO TAKE FUNDAMENTAL STEPS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN STILL HAD TO FIGHT LONG AND HARD TO ACHIEVE INITIAL SUCCESS AND TO GET IT LAID DOWN IN LAW.”

TEXT: Lukas Fleischmann/Heidi Rabensteiner

PHOTOS: Heidi Rabensteiner

Bolzano: even in 2021, the road to gender equality stretches out a long way ahead. Although during the last century, European society started to take fundamental steps towards gender equality, women still had to fight long and hard to achieve initial success and to get it laid down in law. EZA's IPEO platform (International Platform for Equal Opportunities) is launching a new information project to draw attention to the history and development of statutory equal opportunity measures in the EU member states. IPEO chairwoman Heidi Rabensteiner invites interested organisations to take part in the project. „During the EZA seminars, we have noticed that it is sometimes quite difficult to compare gender equality across national borders due to the highly individual nature of every country's history and traditions“, says Rabensteiner. „Our aim therefore is to create a framework that lets us do exactly that.“

The aim of this data collection is not just to gather information but also to provide a basis for future recommendations. „People who know about their rights and the respective origins will then have the necessary self-confidence to demand and claim these rights“, says Heidi Rabensteiner from South Tyrol, who has already set up a historical data-based outline for her home country of Italy. This is to be published from September 2021 and complemented with reports from other countries. „We encourage all our member centres to get involved in producing the documentation“, says Sigrid Schraml, EZA Secretary-General. „In this way we

Time for equal opportunities to be embedded in the system

hope to create an important basis of data that can be used for our educational activities targeting workers.“

The initiative wants to make a contribution towards factual equality, encouraging women to keep insisting on gender equality in companies, associations and trade unions. „Society must become more aware of the strategic role played by equal opportunities along the lines of gender mainstreaming“, says Heidi Rabensteiner. In the context of the General Assembly and other EZA projects, the IPEO offers committed men and women from various EU countries a platform for regularly sharing and exchanging views and opinions about the development of equality policies in employment and in social security systems. Among others, attention is drawn to the discrepancy between formal equality and actual working conditions, as well as the additional burden placed on women in childcare and looking after elderly family members, the lacking recognition of „system relevance“ and inadequate pension contributions.

Information + creating awareness = empowerment
„Gaining insights into other cultures and legal systems is an exciting way to become immersed in the European project“, says Heidi Rabensteiner. „It helps to see the similarities between real problems in employment, family organisation and the social fabric.“

Equal opportunities for women on the labour market: impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and prospects will be a central topic at the next IPEO seminar, which will probably be held in December 2021. The contents will feature the role of women during the pandemic with the fear that their role on the labour market could revert back to former traditions. Attention will also focus on women as essential workers and the jobs performed in this respect. For more information, please go to www.eza.org.



ONE YEAR OF CORONA – A YEAR OF DIGITISATION

In the 35 years of EZA's existence, never has an education programme gone through quite so many changes like the 2020/21 education programme due to the constant updates that were necessary to take account of the coronavirus crisis. But there is also a positive side to all of this: undreamt-of digitisation.

TEXT: Lukas Fleischmann
PHOTOS: iStock

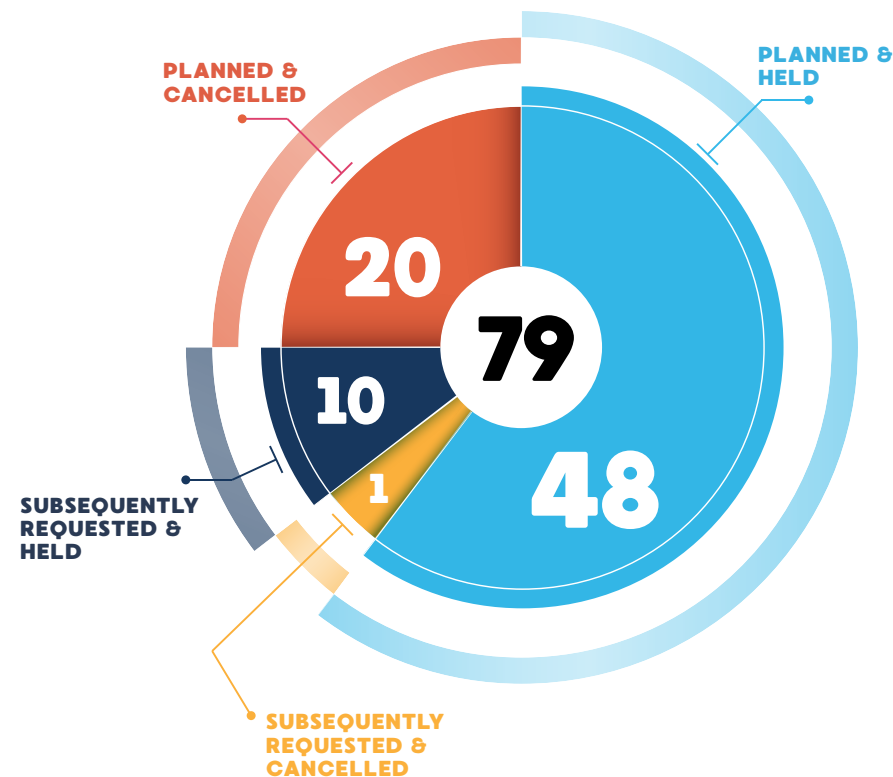
The EZA network and its seminars live from personal contacts and personal sharing. The roughly 70 educational activities organised every year by EZA and its partners offer possibilities for fostering European solidarity and for advocating labour rights in the EU and beyond. The crisis made it impossible to hold face-to-face events for many months, confronting the network with challenges to which it has come up with hopeful answers. While all seminars were face-to-face events in the past, in the last academic year altogether 58 education activities were held mainly online or in a hybrid format.

This meant a steep learning curve for both the EZA Secretariat and for the respective member organisations, extensively enhancing the digital skills of the colleagues involved. Meanwhile EZA and its member centres have acquired the capabilities needed to organise multilingual seminars with participants playing an interactive role. At the same time, formats have been developed to hold seminars as hybrid events. Moreover, important Council and committee meetings have been held online, thus confirming EZA's decision-making capabilities even during a global pandemic.

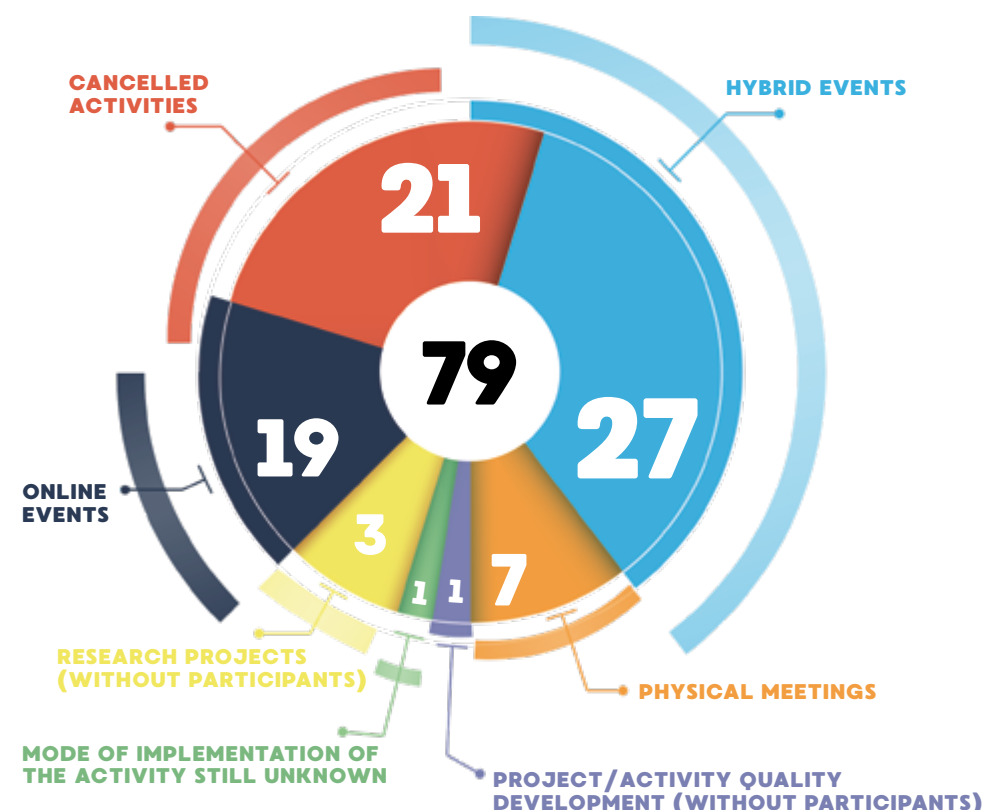




NUMBER OF SEMINARS



TYPE OF EVENTS



„HYBRID SEMINARS ARE THE WAY FORWARD“

Improvising and adapting to the new circumstances was also the motto for the EZA member centre Nell-Breuning-Haus in Herzogenrath (Germany) – a progress report for the turbulent year 2020

TEXT: Rainer Rißmayer

One of the news reports on the morning of 26 February 2020 read as follows: „The coronavirus has now also been confirmed for the first time in North Rhine-Westphalia: the infection has been diagnosed in a man from Heinsberg district.“ Up until that day, this virus was always somewhere else. On the following weekend, we held an event with the German Trade Union Confederation, the Catholic Workers' Movement and the Diocese of Aachen for our volunteer counsellors involved in helping the victims of bullying. Suddenly faced with 50% cancellations, we could only hold our seminar to a limited extent. All at once, the „somewhere else“ had come „right up close“. In addition to the dreadful impacts on the affected people and families, it was soon clear that COVID-19 would also change our educational work. Even so, I was still going through denial and for a while I thought we'd be able to carry on as before. In other words, traditional education activities as face-to-face events with the important aspects of informal learning. Making a virtue of necessity, I actually offered a few online sessions in March – I wouldn't like to call them real seminars at that stage. Even though the summer made a few things possible again and our EZA seminar in cooperation with the EZA member centre Podkrepa (Bulgaria) was actually held in the usual way as a face-to-face meeting, I have had to accept that radical changes in the educational landscape are here to stay.

Together with the rest of the team, we taught ourselves what we needed to know and organised a set of training sessions with a focus on digital project and seminar management from online conferences to webinars, as well as didactic design for digital courses, energisers and tools for digital work and gamification of educational work. Armed with this knowhow and a contract with a data-protection-compliant platform, in the autumn we relaunched our programme of NBH seminars – but

online this time. In December and January, we managed to offer many courses for workers' representatives.

Inspired by the seminars held by the EZA member centres Fidestra (Portugal) and DAKE (Greece), we have now taken first steps towards hybrid seminars. It has transpired that this will be the way forward for me and my colleagues, regardless of the pandemic. In future, offering a combination of people attending in person with the possibility for other participants or speakers to take part online will play an important role in educational work. This is why, after ensuring that the educational staff have received the necessary training, we have now also upgraded our technical equipment and fitted two training rooms with 86-inch touchscreens, room microphones and cameras, as well as purchasing new laptops for hybrid events. Together with colleagues from the EZA Secretariat and the technical expertise of Cologne University of Technology, Arts and Sciences, we have put our new skills and knowledge together in a new course for EZA partners, other trade unions and worker organisations in Europe. The first of these seminars was held as a hybrid event in December and we look forward to further repeats and possibly follow-on in-depth courses during 2021.

But this does not mean that developments for us here in the Nell-Breuning-Haus have come to an end: at the moment we are converting a former workshop into a film studio where we can produce training videos, input contributions, greeting speeches etc. Other progress is sure to follow, also with a view to European educational work in the social dialogue. At the moment we are looking at multilingual aspects of digital educational work with a special focus here too on its significance for social dialogue.

BREXIT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Brexit has been completed for a few months now and both the EU and the UK have to get used to the new situation. The EZA member centre St. Antony's Centre from Manchester reports on current challenges.



TEXT: Kevin Flanagan
PHOTOS: St. Antony's Centre

In 2019, St. Antony's Centre celebrated its 40th year as an organisation providing support for those in the world of work, the unemployed or those with low skills. Little did we think that 2020/21 would provide such a dramatic context for the rolling back of the gains made by working people and communities as a result of COVID-19 and more recently the implementation of Brexit. Our National Health Service and the care sector rely on EU migrant workers; many are returning to their countries of origin as a result of low pay,

poor terms and conditions of work, and a requirement to obtain Settled Status documents by June 2021. The NHS and the care sector face a current and worsening recruitment crisis and with forecast job growth in this sector across the EU, UK employers will struggle to compete and attract the necessary staff, particularly as new migrants to the UK are required to prove they are moving into jobs paying at least £30,000 p.a. (well above most salaries in the NHS/care sector).



ACCRINGTON-TRAINING

Evidence of a negative Brexit impact on UK employment and businesses is growing. Road hauliers report significant import and export problems as a result of confusion about the paperwork required for border controls. As I write, over 50% of lorries returning via Dover are empty, affecting jobs in distribution and warehousing. Haulage companies are seeing an increase in direct costs. Significant concerns remain in the fishing industry, especially among those who export to the EU, with trawlers being grounded or taking catches to European ports, again impacting on local jobs.

For more than 25 years the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund/Structural and Social Investment Funds (ESF/ESIF) have been mainstays of investment in both infrastructure and skills in the UK economy. The European Social Fund, in particular, has been critical to improving the skills and life chances of UK residents, especially those living in areas of greatest deprivation. While current ESF programmes have been extended to address the impact of the pandemic, we do not know what, if anything, will replace them after 2022. It is highly unlikely the UK government will invest in the same way, which will impact disproportionately on the poor and low-skilled as well as many community initiatives and charities funded by European programmes, such as St. Antony's Centre. Domestic policy decisions are not helping; the new UK Skills White Paper launched a new National Skills Fund which will give entitlement to a full Level 3 qualification for adults who do not yet hold it. However, the qualifications are limited to certain industry sectors, with no reference to funding of the kind ESF consistently provided to help those with lower-level skills find or stay in work. It is not clear what pathways the White Paper proposes to support adults with fewer skills and qualifications in gaining the essential skills that would allow them to take advantage of the Level 3 entitlement. Compared with the wider aspirations of ESF, the current UK framework for skills conspicuously lacks any

emphasis on promoting social mobility and reducing widening inequality. The government view is to give employers a greater say in the new funds. However, employers in some sectors invest least in education and training.

In November, the government announced the closure of the Union Learning Fund (ULF) from April 2021. This annual £12m fund created in 1998 is distributed by the Trades Union Congress to unions to facilitate and encourage adult skills and learning in workplaces, supported by union learning representatives. The fund, which also co-finances ESF initiatives, employed over 600 support workers, all of whom now face unemployment or redeployment at a time when COVID-19 has significantly increased demand for the service.

The ULF has been scrapped despite a high and sustained rate of success in bringing hundreds of thousands of employees with no skills back into learning. Working with the GMB North West part of the General Workers' Union (www.GMB.org.uk), St. Antony's Centre has used this fund to improve access to learning for UK workers lacking basic skills in English, maths and IT. Through our Reach Out team we have also extended employment support to some of the poorest communities in North West England. In areas like Blackpool and Accrington with high levels of poverty, the Centre in recent months has helped more than 400 unemployed people with advice, training and practical support to survive the crisis of inequality affecting the UK, a crisis revealed starkly by the pandemic and the growing industrial relations case load. The Centre's work is still grounded in Catholic social thinking in action. We believe the need for European solidarity and dialogue is even more important post-Brexit, as we see a radical shift in the UK economy with devastating effects on people and communities, including the growth of insecure work and poverty impacting the old and young.



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