



Gender training: Factors contributing to its effective implementation and challenges

'When it comes to gender training, bad training is often worse than no training at all.'

Isabel Romao, Commission for
Citizenship and Gender Equality, Portugal

Excerpt from EIGE's online
discussion on gender training, 25/26
September 2012

Gender mainstreaming has been on the political agenda at international and European levels since 1995. Whereas it is a policy commitment for most EU Member States, responsible staff for its implementation often lacks gender knowledge and the specific skills to implement gender mainstreaming. EIGE is currently carrying out a study on Gender training in the EU: Mapping, research and stakeholders' engagement (2012 - 2013). The aim of this study is to improve the quality of gender training in the EU by sharing knowledge, tools and experiences. Based on evidence gathered throughout EIGE's project, this sheet outlines some examples of approaches to gender training that have worked and points to the main challenges that need to be addressed when planning to support gender mainstreaming with training activities.

What factors contribute to effective gender training?

Integrating gender training into national gender equality policy

Some EU Member States are demonstrating a commitment to gender mainstreaming, backed up by the explicit recognition of competence development of staff as a precondition for its successful implementation. These commitments are set out in detailed national action plans.

Finland: Training for gender mainstreaming, as well as strengthening information provision on gender equality, forms a key part of the Finnish gender equality action plan. All ministries are required to provide training on gender mainstreaming for their directors and staff.

Luxembourg: The National Gender Action Plan for 2009 - 2014 includes a commitment to further develop training in gender mainstreaming. Since 2011 all new civil servants undergo 6-8 hours of gender training.

Portugal: The Action Plan for Equality – Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination (2011-2013) calls for the dissemination of gender mainstreaming and the training of public officials in gender mainstreaming and equality.

Proper resources should be allocated by all EU governments and Croatia to support their gender mainstreaming goals, including gender training that goes beyond generic, one-off courses.

Tailoring gender training to the context and participants' needs

Gender training will have the most impact and relevance when it is designed for the professional, social and cultural context where it is being conducted. It should also take into account the background and needs of those being trained. Participatory and experiential learning approaches to gender training are often more effective than learning from textbook modules, as they enable more personal reflection and discussion. Where possible practical examples from participants' own experiences should be used, and there must be enough time to discuss any questions that arise.

There is a need both for generic and more in-depth gender training to address the different needs of training participants. Training should focus on the practical application of gender mainstreaming by developing the capacity of trainees to integrate gender considerations into their respective field of work. Tools, good practice and activities that are tailored to the policy areas of trainees facilitate individual commitment and contribute more effectively to behavioural, organisational, political, and programme level changes that are at the heart of gender training.

Spain: Professionals responsible for planning and managing health services and those responsible for the health area of equality bodies can participate in a course, which consists of four units that focus on gender perspectives in areas such as health, health research, public health interventions in health care, and gender mainstreaming in health policy.



Recognising power imbalances is an essential part of gender training

The approach taken towards effective gender training should engage both women and men in training activities and have open discussions about the way gender stereotypes and social expectations affect both women and men. Good gender training combines theory and practice, recognising gender hierarchies and promoting an understanding of how they are perpetuated, in order to make changes at institutional and individual levels.

'We have to do the training in a way that both women and men can understand.'

Tomas Wetterberg, Men for Gender Equality, Sweden

'I see a risk when we talk about men in terms of "they" and "us". Masculinity and femininity are not rules, but rules us... And we have to present gender equality so it is for everyone, and that it affects all of us in a different way.'

Kajsa Svalery, Municipality of Gävle, Sweden

A key element of gender training is the recognition that gender intersects with other elements of individual identity (e.g. ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, religion). The policy shift towards intersectionality and diversity that can be observed in some countries reflects a growing demand for placing more emphasis on the structural causes of inequality. More information on and practical exercises of both intersectionality and diversity concepts can be found in EIGE's database of gender training resources (available at: <http://www.eige.europa.eu>).

Basic competences for gender trainers

The basic competences for gender trainers to successfully engage in these processes include:

- an understanding of social processes, group dynamics, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion,
- an understanding of the role of leadership and governance, and
- an awareness of how one deals with 'diversity' within oneself.

Compendium of Theory, Practice and Quality Standards for Gender Workers.

A Gender Worker Development Programme, GemTrEx project Available in EIGE's database of gender training resources at: <http://www.eige.europa.eu>

What factors can improve the provision of gender training?

To develop the competences of key actors involved in policy-making:

- A proper budget needs to be allocated;
- The relevance of training needs to be demonstrated to staff;
- Competent gender trainers need to be employed;
- Sufficient time needs to be allocated to training;
- Managers need to demonstrate their commitment to developing staff competency on gender issues.

'In our country gender stereotypes are still alive and to fight them political will is necessary.'

Ines Palacios Campos,
Spanish Women's Institute

Excerpt from EIGE's online discussion on gender training, 25/26 September 2012

About the study:

This reference sheet provides practical information on the provision of gender training. It summarises research findings from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) project on gender training in the European Union. The project collected information about gender training across the 27 EU Member States and Croatia. The project aims to facilitate dialogue between policy makers, trainers and researchers on how gender training can be used to support informed policy making in the EU and Member States.

The information is based on desk research and stakeholder interviews conducted by ICF GHK in all EU Member States and Croatia between February and April 2012 as well as an online discussion that took place in September 2012. Neither EIGE nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the content of the information contained in this publication.

About EIGE:

The European Institute for Gender Equality is an EU agency that supports policy makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality, by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable information on gender equality in Europe. More information: <http://www.eige.europa.eu>

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