

Gender training in the European Union: ESF Jämt, SWEDEN*



ESF Jämt, SWEDEN

Background and general information

Name of the Organisation	THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD IN SWEDEN
Contact person	Laila Berglund, ASF Jämt national coordinator Monica Forsman, ASF Jämt project supporter
Period	2009 - 2012
Context analysis	In Sweden, gender mainstreaming has been the guiding principle for achieving gender equality since 1994. Currently, at the national level, policy goals set out for gender equality policy are to be reached through the systematic integration of a gender equality perspective with all policy areas, at all levels and stages, and by the actors involved in the policy making processes. The policy focus is divided into four specific objectives: 1) equal distribution of power and influence, 2) economic equality between women and men, 3) equal distribution of unpaid care and household work, and 4) men's violence against women must come to an end. In addition, the official statistical office is stipulated to present all official statistics concerning individuals or groups disaggregated by gender.

* 'ESF Jämt, Sweden' was selected as a practice on gender training in the European Union with potential based on the research findings from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) project on gender training in the European Union. 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 collected for the study is based on desk research and stakeholder interviews conducted by ICF GHK in 2012. Other outputs from the study include online databases of gender trainers and training tools and resources available on EIGE's website at: <http://www.eige.europa.eu>



Achieving these gender policy objectives plays an increasingly important role since the European Commission recognised that gender equality policies are vital for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. The Swedish European Social Fund (ESF) programme for 2009 - 2013 stipulated that 'all projects supported by the ESF are expected to integrate gender into their work'. Yet, to successfully address this requirement, some challenges had to be faced.

According to the baseline study conducted by the County Administrative Board before the implementation of the ESF programme for 2009 - 2013, the lack of clear objectives and problems related to the on-going monitoring of gender mainstreaming in the ESF-funded projects restrains gender mainstreaming at national and regional levels. At the project level, a considerable knowledge gap has been identified, which limited the effectiveness of the projects implemented.

In order to tackle these issues, a three year project called ESF Jämt – which provides support to gender mainstreaming within the ESF (hereafter referred to as ESF Jämt) – was launched in 2009 with the financial support of the ESF. It is a joint initiative of the Swedish County Administrative Board aimed to integrate a gender perspective in the ESF-funded projects. The main purpose of ESF Jämt is to offer regional level support in the form of counselling, training and monitoring activities for existing and prospective ESF-funded projects in order to increase the quality of gender mainstreaming within these projects¹. Currently, eight project supporters working at the regional level and a national coordinator provide services within the ESF Jämt initiative. There is also a steering group composed of gender experts, a chairman, and a national coordinator that is responsible for discussing the strategic decisions of this initiative.

Evaluation criteria

'WORKS WELL'

(Gender equality) objectives

ESF Jämt was established to support the infusion of a gender perspective into the ESF projects by putting into practice and cementing what gender equality and gender mainstreaming actually means and how they can be integrated into the projects. The specific objectives of ESF Jämt are as follows:

- Increasing the number of projects eligible in the ESF assessment by incorporating the gender dimension into their core activities;
- Reaching a customer satisfaction index of 95 % among the participants of the workshops and gender trainings organised to support their activities;
- Arranging seven basic trainings or workshops in the regions for ESF projects' applicants and approved ESF projects (i.e. project managers, and steering and management groups);
- Providing individual counselling for 25 projects each year and enhanced support for 4 or 5 projects per region, as well as working along the strategic impact objectives defined by the steering group.

Regarding the expected outcomes, ESF Jämt should:

- Increase the knowledge of gender mainstreaming among the organisations responsible for the implementation of the ESF programme;
- Increase the awareness of actors involved in the implementation of ESF projects on gender mainstreaming;
- Increase the quality of the ESF projects.

This is to be achieved, among other issues, through an enhanced collaboration between institutions involved in the processes aiming to support the ESF projects, as well as the dissemination of good practices and results among local, regional, national and international actors. Such an approach reflects the acknowledgment that gender equality plays a pivotal role in the development and growth of every region.

Target groups

ESF Jämt targets the prospective and granted ESF projects, including project leaders, the steering group of the project that would guide the project team, the project owners, as well as other key actors, also from state institutions, involved in the project cycle. During the period 2008 - 2011, 833 projects have been granted by the ESF involving more than 153 000 people.

Aims, methods and tools used

The analysis undertaken by the County Administrative Board in 2008 highlighted the lack of knowledge and understanding with regards to the theoretical and practical dimensions of gender mainstreaming within the ESF projects. Therefore, ESF Jämt emerged as a response to the need to implement a specific mechanism that offers practical tools along with theoretical learning to increase the quality and target achievement within the ESF projects. To support this process, tailored trainings, tools and methods and other assistance for the effective implementation of a gender mainstreaming perspective in the projects have been developed. In general, the assistance is offered on an on-going basis and involves a mix of theoretical and practical tools. The theoretical tools usually involve national gender policy and objectives, gender theory and the presentation of statistics disaggregated by gender. The practical instruments are mainly tailored discussions about specific issues emerging from projects and possible solutions to overcome them. During this process it is important that the participants understand the potential of integrating a gender mainstreaming perspective into their work.

The form of support that is provided depends on the stage of the project development, the knowledge of a target group on gender mainstreaming, and other specific needs related to the project. For instance, there is a wide range of tools such as guidelines to the regional ESF office, manuals for project implementation, or workshop material (e.g. the book 'Momentum! Gender mainstreaming and ESF Jämt'²), which have been developed by ESF Jämt, the Swedish Government, consultants and gender trainers. There are also briefings on ESF funding, individual consulting including telephone and email support, and training in basic gender knowledge and skills. Persons managing the projects, project leaders and steering groups of the projects financed by the ESF can request gender trainers' support. This is often the case when there is a lack of knowledge to achieve the requirements of the Swedish ESF Council in relation to the gender mainstreaming components of the projects. In addition, workshops, seminars and conferences are also organised to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and exchange of experiences.

An interesting aspect of the ESF Jämt support mechanism is coaching and mentoring the projects towards innovative ways of delivering services. The methods and tools used to determine the overall strategy of the projects include a SWOT analysis with a gender perspective and the 4R method. The latter method is a further development of the 3R method and stands for representation, resources, realia and realisation. It helps to develop a general picture of how the operation is run and financed and explore what changes are required to meet differing needs of women and men³. Its goal is to integrate the gender dimension in different activities through quantitative surveys and qualitative analyses.

Gender equality results (long term and short term). Outcome/specific changes as an actual result of the process/activity

The main achievement of the ESF Jämt project can be summarised as follows:

- 700 training sessions offered,
- 2 000 counselling sessions undertaken,
- 7 000 women and 3 000 men taking part in all training sessions.

Overall, the project has contributed to the development of knowledge on gender equality among its participants and the effective implementation of a gender perspective in the ESF projects at all levels. The training offered as a part of ESF Jämt has increased the projects' quality and contributed to a better analysis of the project work through different gender analysis methods.

With regards to the impact of ESF Jämt at policy level, the Swedish ESF Council has submitted 10 proposals to the Government for the ESF programme 2014 - 2020. It has been noted in the evaluation of the ESF programme 2009 - 2013 that ESF Jämt strongly contributed to the development of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Evaluation of good practice

The quality of the support offered is discussed on a continuous basis with the project supporters, by the steering group, and with external observers⁴. Since the beginning of the project, a group of evaluators have been involved in ESF Jämt on an on-going basis. The following tools are used in this process:

- questionnaires submitted to the participants after every training session,
- case studies,
- in-depth interviews with the people engaged in the project, gender trainers, ESF administrators and other actors contacted in relation to the support they have provided.

The criteria used for the evaluation are directly linked to the objectives of the project. Currently, the results of the evaluation are presented by the coordinator to the steering group on a regular basis (not available for the public)⁵.

In addition, in 2012, four to five projects, which have been selected in each region to receive an enhanced support, will be used to show long term results and learning examples on integrating a gender perspective into the ESF-funded projects. The questionnaires developed to assess these initiatives are designed to grasp an understanding of specific behavioural aspects, such as beneficiaries' opinions on the support, as well as the main benefits related to it. Based on the responses collected, eight projects will be selected for further in-depth interviews with people in direct contact with the support group of the project, such as trainers or representatives of the regional ESF offices.

Ways in which the good practice/activity could have been improved

There following aspects could improve the effectiveness of the practice:

- providing support on a long-term regular basis instead of temporary assistance for projects,
- providing ESF Jämt support not only at the project level but also at the programme level,
- strengthening the collaboration between the managing authorities and intermediate bodies / the ESF Council.

These aspects will be addressed in the next programming period for 2014 - 2020 (e.g. gender mainstreaming support implemented at the programme level).

Plans to gather financial resources and/or institutional arrangements

The project is funded by the ESF and the total amount of resources spent on gender training in 2012 amounted to SEK 8.8 million⁶. The ESF Jämt organisers plan to apply for its extension in 2013 to be financed in full from the ESF. Yet, the budget is only half in comparison to an earlier year, which will affect the drawing of the updated project plan. At the moment, there are no other financial resources gathered to continue the project. It also not known in what way the target group will be offered support in gender mainstreaming in the future.

**TRANSFERABILITY****Success factors**

- The Swedish ESF Council requires the ESF-funded projects to integrate a gender perspective. This resulted in the **more systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming** in the ESF projects.
- **The gender mainstreaming perspective of ESF Jämt is compatible with both the Swedish Government and the European perspective.** Thus, it is not perceived as a 'new obligation' by project applicants and beneficiaries.
- The eight project **supporters work in all ESF regions, which allows gaining a good knowledge on the peculiarities** of each area.
- **Direct contact with gender trainers** contributed to modifying the project through different gender analysis methods (4R and SWOT analysis)⁷.

Main obstacles

General obstacles faced at the national level include:

- **An inadequately developed working model for gender mainstreaming.**
- **Insufficient reviews of the project work from a gender equality perspective.**

Specific challenges faced at the project level:

- **The support structure** for gender mainstreaming within the ESF **remains a temporary solution.**
- At this stage **ESF Jämt support is provided only at the project level** and not at the programme level.
- There is a **lack of monitoring and evaluation within managing authorities and intermediate bodies** / ESF Council.

These challenges are considered as risk factors, which may affect important aspects of a sustainable gender mainstreaming process⁸. Several measures have been developed to tackle these problems, including a seminar with ESF managers in the second half of 2012 and a conference at the end of November 2012 to share knowledge through the dissemination of learning examples.

Actual replication or spin-off effects

The ESF Council is expecting and planning to also offer the support to the target group in 2013 and the project's steering group is preparing for this extension at the moment. At the moment, there are no plans for similar activity after 2014.

LEARNING**Lessons learned from the process**

- In order to design an effective gender mainstreaming project, it is important that the gender perspective implemented at the project level is compatible with the national and the European perspective.
- For a proper implementation of the gender mainstreaming perspective into the ESF-funded projects, the gender perspective should already be taken into account at the stage of conceptualisation of the programme and not only at the specific project activity.
- Gender training should be tailored according to the specific needs of the ESF-funded projects. The identification of these needs can be more accurate if a gender trainer (i.e. gender supporters in the project) is familiar with the demands of the participants and the local context (e.g. cultural specifics).

Sources

Empowering women on the labour market, Case study compendium by prof. Gill Scott, June 2010.
Momentum! Gender mainstreaming and ESF Jämt, Örebro County Administrative Board in collaboration with the other County Administrative Boards, 2011, http://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/Socialfonden/Process%C3%B6d/J%C3%A4mt%C3%A4lldhetsintegrering/DRAGKRAFT_ENG_Webb.pdf
Project Cycle Management Guidelines, Aid Delivery Methods, European Commission, 2004.
Web site of the European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming, <http://www.gendercop.com>

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 the European Union. More information: <http://www.eige.europa.eu>
Neither EIGE nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the content of the information contained in this publication.

Footnotes

- 1 'Empowering women on the labour market', Case study compendium by prof. Gill Scott, June 2010.
- 2 http://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/Socialfonden/Process%C3%B6d/J%C3%A4mt%C3%A4lldhetsintegrering/DRAGKRAFT_ENG_Webb.pdf
- 3 Gender Mainstreaming Manual (2007), published by the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research.
- 4 Momentum! Gender mainstreaming and ESF Jämt.
- 5 The results of the evaluation carried out by ESF Jämt will be completed by the end of 2012.
- 6 Information given by the national coordinator.
- 7 The identification of success factors was based on the evaluation carried out during the ESF Jämt project.
- 8 European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming is available at: <http://www.gendercop.com>

