

Gender training in the European Union: Support structures for sustainable gender mainstreaming within the ESF, GERMANY*



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Background and general information

Name of the Organisation	AGENTUR FÜR GLEICHSTELLUNG IM ESF (AGENCY FOR GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN THE ESF)
Contact person	Renate Wielpütz, Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF (Agentur für Gleichstellung im ESF), Germany
Period	March 2009 – 2013
Context analysis	<p>In March 2009, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Germany contracted the Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF (hereafter the Agency) as a support structure for achieving gender equality - a desired outcome of the European Social Fund (ESF). It was created in response to the lack of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming within the German federal ESF in the previous funding period.</p> <p>The Agency is a private organisation involving four internal gender / ESF experts, the founders of this initiative, and three external experts specialising on the strategy, labour market policy, and gender budgeting.</p>

* 'Support structures for sustainable gender mainstreaming within the ESF, Germany' 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>



The Agency aims to ensure that gender mainstreaming is coherently integrated in the structures and procedures of the Operational Programme (OP), including the analysis, strategy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The approach also encompasses gender budgeting as a means for monitoring gender equality and focuses on the policies outlined in the ESF programmes.

As the support structure, the Agency has committed to building transferable gender / ESF skills and competences of the responsible actors. This is to achieve a coherent integration of gender equality and gender mainstreaming and deliver impulses for the national gender equality and labour market policy. To achieve this, the organisation fulfils the following sets of tasks and objectives:

- Consultancy – ESF cycles (OP and programme level) on structural, process and ESF thematic issues in the form of trainings, workshops, seminars, coaching and consultancy, thematic expertise / studies, including data and statistics and gender budgeting analysis and reports;
- Public relations – website (<http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de>), newsletter, and conferences;
- Networking – at the national and international level, e.g. with federal states (running their own ESF OPs), or the Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Mainstreaming – an EU learning network for Managing Authorities (<http://www.gendercop.eu>).

The demand for the Agency's services has changed over time. Whilst at the beginning its work focused on supporting the implementation of the ESF programmes, at the moment it is more orientated towards supporting the planning and preparation of the next funding period. This is done, for example, by counselling the responsible actors.

Evaluation criteria

'WORKS WELL'

(Gender equality) objectives

The Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF in Germany provides comprehensive support for gender mainstreaming in the ESF. Based on the needs analysis of the OPs, supplementary documents, and the different ESF actors carried out in 2009, the primary objectives of the Agency are the following:

- To build the capacity of relevant actors at different levels of ESF implementation, monitoring and evaluation, to systematically mainstream gender equality in the programmes and their respective projects; and
- To increase the know-how and competences of relevant actors in order to take a coherent approach to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the ESF from the OP to programme and from the programme to the project cycle.

Given its relatively recent life span, an impact assessment of the Agency's services is not yet available. The main outcomes that are expected at this stage include:

- To raise and deepen the awareness of all ESF actors at different levels of ESF implementation about the need for specialised support for the gender mainstreaming process in the ESF on the federal level in Germany; and
- To raise the capacity of the responsible actors for implementing gender mainstreaming in the sectors covered by the OP (or programmes under the OP) in the country by building their 'action competences' for gender equality. Such competences entail:
 - Understanding the objective of gender equality and the approach to gender mainstreaming (and specific actions), i.e. that gender mainstreaming is a strategy to contribute towards gender equality in the society which relates to both women and men in their diversity (e.g. ethnic / educational / other background etc.); and
 - Understanding gender equality objectives (e.g. economic independence, tackling gender stereotypes etc.) by simultaneously looking at integrating gender equality aspects into thematic issues of the ESF.

Target groups

The Agency supports the Managing Authority, the implementation bodies (e.g. intermediary organisations), as well as the ministries running the ESF programmes and involved in the programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ESF. The officials which the Agency consults include the Managing Authority, ESF coordinators and programme managers in ministries, actors or organisations responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the OP and related programmes¹.

Aims, methods and tools used

All kinds of training offered by the Agency to the ESF actors are designed to integrate gender equality and gender mainstreaming into structural, procedural, or thematic issues related to the ESF management and implementation. Other methods of capacity building, organisation and personnel development, used by the Agency's advisers, are coaching and counselling, which can be provided individually as services that are process-oriented and / or tailored to the specific tasks of the responsible actors.

Process-oriented counselling is concerned with the phase of the programme implementation, tasks and relevant needs at this stage. Accordingly, the task-related coaching or counselling may include:

- Advising the Managing Authority in drafting the OP with regard to the mainstreaming of gender issues (e.g. into socio-economic analysis, objectives, indicators, SWOT analysis, investment priorities, etc.);
- Providing training to programme managers in ministries or intermediary bodies to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all programme cycle requirements;
- Advising the organisations that evaluate the OP and ESF programmes and / or their respective projects on gender equality aspects of their work.

The tools used to coach the Agency's clients are prepared individually and are available only to the relevant actors. The level of support depends on their familiarity with the gender perspective. At the first stage, the essential knowledge, insight, and assistance is provided on how to implement gender mainstreaming. Then, at the later stage of the counselling process, the Agency's support decreases and further guidance is provided on demand, for example, when task-related questions occur.

The Agency has also put in place commonly applied training standards and definitions of 'gender equality', 'gender mainstreaming', the 'dual approach to the promotion of gender equality' and its coherent integration into programmes and projects in Germany². The Agency has also developed techniques to guide the responsible actors to achieve coherent gender mainstreaming in the ESF programmes. The key questions that refer to this process are structured in the following way:

- Analysis – What is the problem? Is it the same or different for men and women? What do the statistics show regarding the target population? What are the causes of inequalities?
- Objectives – What will solve the problem or contribute to the solution? Are the objectives specific and realistic?
- Planning – Do all aspects of the documents include gender equality objectives and indicators and gender mainstreaming requirements? Are all actors involved and do they possess gender mainstreaming competence?
- Operationalisation – What do the indicators show regarding e.g., access to ESF measures and the participation of men and women in terms of their diversity, the context / subject, resources?
- Implementation – setting up a tender, a call, guidelines, the project selection, redesigning the application procedure, etc.
- Monitoring – What is programme monitoring? Can the programme be steered or stopped? Is the steering committee committed to gender mainstreaming / equality?
- Evaluation – Why programme evaluation? What was the problem, objectives, output, outcome, effect and impact of the programme?³

A good example of the Agency's support for gender mainstreaming in practice is the ESF programme 'Education, Economy, Employment in the Neighbourhood (BIWAQ)⁴, managed by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development⁵. The BIWAQ programme aims to promote projects in deprived city quarters with the objective to integrate long-term unemployed men and women and to strengthen the local economy. During the second round of BIWAQ calls for proposals in 2010, the Agency was asked to provide advice on where and how to integrate the gender dimension in planning, tendering and selecting procedure⁶. The approach of the Agency in this case consisted of the following steps:

- Needs analysis by reviewing all existing BIWAQ documents, guidelines, questionnaires, etc. and selecting good / bad practice examples from 10 project applications;
- Task related, practical gender mainstreaming training for all programme staff;
- Conceptual redesign of all BIWAQ-related documentation with a clear integration of gender mainstreaming / equality / budgeting, including drafting FAQ on the relevant concepts, revising a template for application, drafting detailed guidance for applicants on integrating the relevant concepts, and revising a template for the submission of Annual Project Reports, etc.;
- Dividing the programme cycle into individual (sub)phases / work steps;
- Drafting calls for papers on sex differentiated information on target groups, problems in the quarter, etc., and special selection process for experts assessing the call.

In addition, a gender mainstreaming coach was assigned by the Agency as a permanent contact person for the programme manager to assist the advice-giving process.

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

It is expected that the potential success, impact and sustainability of the Agency's work will become visible in the next funding period (2014 – 2020).

The examples of results that the Agency has achieved so far include:

- Support provided to those ESF actors who were committed to the issue of gender mainstreaming, but did not know how to implement it in practice.
- The essential knowledge and insight provided to actors who required a clear view of how to implement gender perspectives in their field of responsibility.
- Support provided to the EU Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Mainstreaming in the form of key policy messages in the gender equality field with regard to EU 2020, the flagships, the drafts of the CSF Regulation and the ESF Regulation on integrating gender equality and the dual gender equality approach into the relevant documents.



Evaluation of good practice. The evaluation of the Agency's work has commenced recently and the results of this process are not yet available.

Ways in which the good practice/activity could have been improved Given its relatively short life span, the results of the Agency's work are less likely to continue if the Agency ceases to exist or if a new support structure is not established in its place (after 2013). Similar support structures could be also created at the project level of the ESF implementation in Germany, which is currently not covered by the Agency's activities.

Plans to gather financial resources and/or institutional arrangements The Agency hopes that the Managing Authority of the federal ESF will tender a new call for the funding period 2014-2020 to ensure that the support for gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the ESF will continue.

TRANSFERABILITY

Success factors

- **The expertise, experience and service orientation** of the Agency staff.
- The **process-oriented approach to coaching / counselling**, which in some instances can take two years.
- The work on **different levels of the ESF management and implementation** (except from the project level).

Main obstacles

- **Resistance of some ESF actors to change persists** despite the efforts made by the Agency.
- **The lack of time or limited time frame these actors have for external counselling**, which is often seen as an additional workload to their regular duties.
- One solution to overcome the above challenges might be a clear top down approach set by the Managing Authority.

Actual replication or spin-off effects Some elements of the theoretical part of the seminar have been used as a general awareness-raising on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

LEARNING

Lessons learned from the process The Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF in Germany has contributed towards gender equality in the federal ESF programmes. The main features for learning and capacity-building, as well as the strategic methodological recommendations which have emerged from this initiative include the following:

- The overall approach to coaching or counselling of the Agency, which is *individual, process-oriented and tailored* to the specific needs and tasks of their clients;
- The practical support the Agency provides on how to link gender with the *specific ESF procedures and themes* and the emphasis placed on helping clients to develop action competences for gender equality;
- The work of the Agency at *different levels of the ESF management and implementation* which contributes to a coherent integration of gender mainstreaming across all structures and procedures, as well as thematic issues.

Sources Further information about the Agency and its activities can be found at:
<http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/102.html>

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 The structure of the target groups can be found on slide 7 of the following presentation: http://www.gendercop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/8_Renate_Wielputz_Agency_for-GE_within_the_ESF_Germany.pdf
- 2 For further reference please see <http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/105.html>
- 3 For further reference please see: <http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/102.html>
- 4 For further reference please see: <http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/102.html>
- 5 For further reference please see: <http://www.gendercop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/5.-The-Implementation-of-Gender-Mainstreaming-in-BIWAQ-Eva-Maria-Wilke-and-Henriette-Meseke.pdf>
- 6 During the first round of BIWAQ calls for proposals in 2008 the Agency was not yet operating.

