

# Gender training in the European Union: Gender glasses, FINLAND\*



## Gender glasses (SUKUPUOLISILMÄLASIT), FINLAND

### Background and general information

<b>Name of the Organisation</b>	THE EQUALITY UNIT AT THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH (TASA-ARVOYKSIKKÖ / SOSIAALI- JA TERVEYSMINISTERIÖ) IN FINLAND
<b>Contact person</b>	Reetta Siukola, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Malin Gustavsson, Ekvälita Ab (Phase 3)
<b>Period</b>	Phase 1 'Introducing gender glasses!' (Sukupuolisilmäläsit käyttöön!): 2007 - 2008 Phase 2 'Using gender glasses' (Sukupuolisilmäläsit käytössä): 2008 - 2009 Phase 3 'To better results with gender glasses' (Sukupuolisilmäläseilla hyviin tuloksiin): 2011
<b>Context analysis</b>	Even if Finland performs well in international comparative studies on gender equality, there are still some areas, where further action is needed to achieve gender equality. These refer to more specific problems, such as equal pay, as well as broader issues focused on translating gender mainstreaming theory into practice in all spheres of policy and decision making. As shown by the review of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2006), one reason for this was the limited understanding of the objectives and methods related to gender mainstreaming among the representatives of the national administration (ministries) <sup>1</sup> .

\* 'Gender glasses (SUKUPUOLISILMÄLASIT), Finland' 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>



Taking this into consideration, gender mainstreaming has become a priority for the Finnish Government. This is well reflected by the last three Government Action Plans on gender equality, where gender mainstreaming was highlighted as a central part of the national gender equality policy. For example, the Gender Equality Action Plan (2008 - 2011) committed the Government to ensuring that gender perspectives are included in all areas of decision-making and that gender mainstreaming is integrated into all the processes of the national administration. It also encouraged ministries to organise training on gender mainstreaming for their directors and staff. The latest Action Plan (2012 - 2015), while having similar objectives, goes even further in that it states that gender mainstreaming is to be integrated into the induction / basic training offered to all new civil servants, including directors.

Having said that, important barriers have also been experienced in fulfilling the training related objectives. For example, whereas all ministries have been requested to set up a working group on gender equality, it has been difficult to mobilise these groups and ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into the ministries' activities<sup>2</sup>. One of the most important challenges to tackle this issue has been the lack of resources / budget dedicated to the Action Plan. This means that ministries had to find the money from their own budgets to implement related training measures which – to a certain degree - limited the range of measures that have been implemented<sup>3</sup>. In this context, the Gender glasses project appears to be particularly important because its first two phases benefited from co-financing from the PROGRESS programme of the European Commission, and the third phase from funding from the Equality Unit at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

## Evaluation criteria

### 'WORKS WELL'

#### (Gender equality) objectives

The overall goals of the Gender glasses project were to equip the national administration staff with a basic understanding of: 1) gender mainstreaming principles and 2) how to assess / evaluate the gender impact of policymaking. The project also sought to develop and 'mainstream' methods, guidance and training related to gender mainstreaming.

The specific objectives of the project were different for each of the three phases, becoming progressively more ambitious, advanced and tailored to the needs of each ministry taking part in the project. They are:

- to develop and deliver tailored training on gender mainstreaming for every ministry, and to develop material to support training efforts in this field (Phase 1);
- to support the launch and institutionalisation of new working groups for gender equality in the ministries (Phase 2);
- to strengthen the knowledge and skills related to gender equality and mainstreaming by developing training, resources, and information tailored to the exact needs of ministries taking part in the project (Phase 3).

Expected outcomes and impact were not specified in an explicit manner and no quantitative targets were set.

#### Target groups

The first two phases were aimed at all ministries and the final phase was aimed only at the three ministries that decided to take part in Phase 3. Overall, all staff (civil servants) employed in these ministries were targeted by the project activities, but some tailored training and training materials were also developed for specific groups of employees (e.g. directors, all staff, gender equality working group members).

#### Aims, methods and tools used

Due to the length and progressive nature of the training project, a range of different training activities have been delivered in a course of this initiative, such as face-to-face training seminars, information events and meetings. Also, training materials have been developed. The information on methods and activities used is presented below.

Phase 1. The training consisted of general awareness raising / training in all of the ministries. It took the form of large-scale seminars, with the first set of seminars held with the ministry leadership and the second with the rest of the staff.

In addition, a brochure on gender mainstreaming was prepared and then disseminated to all staff at the central administration level as a background material for training events. It provides tools, a checklist and key questions to take into consideration when integrating a gender perspective into the work of ministries.

A web site (<http://www.sukupuolisilmalasit.fi>) was also developed to provide practical information on gender mainstreaming. Through the application of uncomplicated language and the provision of numerous practical examples this web site aimed to address some concerns related to the complex and unpractical way of approaching the topics, which have been considered as a general weakness of training sessions and materials provided in the past.

Phase 2. The four thematic training seminars that were held during this phase of the project aimed mainly at the members of the equality working groups at each ministry. However, the seminars were open for all staff interested in the topic. Each seminar had a different focus, for example on what the national action plan requires the ministries to do.

The final seminar was also aimed at individuals in charge of budgeting within the ministries. A practical handbook on the development of gender mainstreaming within ministries was also prepared.

**Phase 3.** As part of Phase 3, training and consultancy support was offered for three ministries: the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Interior. Training and consulting services were provided by a specialist consultancy Ekválita Ab and affiliated experts / academics.

The training was designed after a consultation and needs assessment carried out within each ministry.

At the Ministry of Education the training focused on methods of instruction and the promotion of gender equality in the performance management of agencies under the jurisdiction of the Ministry (e.g. how to treat boys and girls in a gender sensitive manner). In the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health the training focused on looking at the importance of gender in poverty, health problems and exclusion, specifically through statistics. This approach was to help the Ministry to integrate a gender perspective into the national flagship programme to combat poverty and social exclusion that was being developed. At the Ministry of Interior, the training focused on violence, security and gender, and exploring the new security plan from a gender perspective.

In addition, two joint training sessions were organised: one for the focal points of the gender equality working groups, and the second one for all members of the gender equality working groups to plan their work for next year.

New working and training methods and practices were also piloted, which can be used by the gender equality working groups in their own trainings. For example, the 'future initiative' exercise in the last training seminar aimed to encourage the participants to 'dream' and freely come up with ideal scenarios about the future while forgetting the barriers related to public administration. It resulted in many new and innovative ideas.

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

Some of the immediate results / outcomes of the training include:

- Improvement in general awareness among staff and directors of the principles, terms and methods related to gender mainstreaming;
- Improvement in the availability of tools and materials to support training efforts in this field;
- Re-activation of gender equality working groups, for instance by increased motivation among members of the working groups, and sharpening the objectives and working methods of the groups;
- Starting strategic work on gender mainstreaming and systems to monitor progress;
- Improvement of links between gender equality actors in different ministries; and
- Increased visibility for gender mainstreaming.

Some of the longer-term results include:

- Tools to support the work of gender equality coordinators and working groups in the ministries;
- Strengthening the assessment of gender impacts when drawing up new or / and modifying existing legislation; and
- Lifting gender mainstreaming into ministries' agendas, reminding staff that gender mainstreaming is mandatory.

**Evaluation of good practice**

The project relied mainly on self-evaluation:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health prepared a final report at the end of the Phase 2. This evaluation concluded that the training materials and training itself received mainly positive feedback from participants. The beneficiaries praised the colourful and succinct form of the materials, though they recommended that in the future more practical examples that are directly relevant to the work of officials in different ministries could be included. This was taken into consideration in the second and third phase of the project. The project also succeeded in raising the visibility of the topic among those colleagues who took part in different training sessions. Further practical support in implementing gender mainstreaming in every day work of ministries and more support for gender equality working groups was requested.
- Consultancy Ekválita Ab prepared a final report at the end of Phase 3. This evaluation concluded that the aims and objectives of the project had been achieved and that the third phase of the project had a particularly positive impact on the gender equality working groups as the activities implemented during the project helped to activate and motivate them. It was also highlighted that all ministries still need practical support to integrate gender mainstreaming into their core activities.
- Feedback was also obtained from the beneficiaries of the trainings through online surveys. Overall, the trainings seemed to have matched the expectations of the participants. They were satisfied in terms of the training having been useful for their work, although there were quite a few participants during the first phase (when the training was aimed at all staff), who felt that gender mainstream was not relevant for their work<sup>4</sup>. The results also showed that training has to be developed according to specific ministry needs and that the needs assessment carried out at the start of Phase 3 (before launching any training or other support activities) proved particularly useful in this regard. Participants also emphasised the need for practical, concrete tools and good practice example and this was taken into consideration in all phases of the project.



In terms of beneficiaries who took part in the training, they included: 130 directors and 220 staff during Phase 1; 188 participants, mainly members of gender equality working groups in ministries, during Phase 2; and 100+ staff (mainly, but not exclusively, members of gender equality working groups) during Phase 3.

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

In broad terms, the project found it difficult to attract senior staff, and especially male staff, to attend the training. Better ways to entice senior staff, and in particular male staff, could be taken into consideration in the design and conception of future training activities in this field.

#### Plans to gather financial resources and/or institutional arrangements

The first two phases of the project were implemented with the support from the EU's PROGRESS programme. The third phase was financed from the national sources.

The lack of funding does have an implication on future training activities in the ministries. While the National Gender Equality Action Plan does emphasise the importance of gender training, no separate budget is devoted to the Plan and each ministry has to find its own funds to develop further work in this field.

### TRANSFERABILITY

#### Success factors

- **Training sessions were designed to be short** (from around an hour to a half a day), providing a realistic reflection of time available among staff to attend such training.
- The **training sessions were designed to be progressively more elaborate, tailored and practical** as the project went on, starting with the basics and moving to the provision of individualised training in the form of consultancy support for individual working groups and ministries.
- The **project built into learning accrued during previous phases** of the project.

#### Main obstacles

- **Gender mainstreaming still remains a responsibility of few individuals** in the ministries, often members or secretaries of gender equality working groups.
- The implementation was somewhat slowed down by **general bureaucracy** in public administration in terms of rules and procedures that have to be followed.

#### Actual replication or spin-off effects

- The third phase of the project – fully funded from the national sources - is in itself a spin-off activity of the first two phases which were co-funded by PROGRESS.

### LEARNING

#### Lessons learned from the process

- Training on gender mainstreaming in national administrations must attract senior officials and those directly in a position of drafting budgets, laws and programmes in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into every day practice at the ministries.
- It is important that training programmes on gender mainstreaming take into consideration the evolving needs of participants (in this case, of ministry officials) and progress from fairly generic, basic forms of training to more individualised approaches.
- Gender training benefits from the inclusion of practical examples, which are linked as closely as possible to the actual work of participants.

#### Sources

- Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö (2009) Sukupuolisilmäläsit käyttöön! Loppuraportti. 2009:43, <http://www.stm.fi/julkaisut/nayta/-/julkaisu/1440201#fi> [in Finnish]
- Consultancy Ekvalita Ab prepared a final report at the end of Phase 3: Ekvalita Ab (2012) Sukupuolisilmäläseilla hyvin tuloksiin -hanke 15.2.-31.12.2011. Loppuraportti, [http://www.stm.fi/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=833479&name=DLEF-18351.pdf](http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=833479&name=DLEF-18351.pdf) [in Finnish]
- Gender glasses web site, including a range of other related documentation, [http://www.stm.fi/en/gender\\_equality/gender\\_glasses](http://www.stm.fi/en/gender_equality/gender_glasses)
- Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö (2009) Sukupuolisilmäläsit käytössä. Käsikirja ministeriöiden tasa-arvotyön tueksi. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön julkaisuja 2009:13, [http://www.stm.fi/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=39503&name=DLEF-10430.pdf](http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=39503&name=DLEF-10430.pdf) [in Finnish]

#### 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 Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö (2006), Sukupuolinäkökulman valtavirtaistaminen Suomen valtionhallinnossa. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä 2009:77.
- 2 Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö (2009), Sukupuolisilmäläsit käyttöön, Loppuraportti. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä 2009:43.
- 3 Final progress report on Finland's Gender Equality Action Plan 2008-2011. <http://www.stm.fi/julkaisut/nayta/-/julkaisu/1559221#fi>
- 4 Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö (2009) Sukupuolisilmäläsit käyttöön! Loppuraportti. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä 2009:43

