Gender training in the European Union

Reflections from the online discussion

European Institute for Gender Equality

Foreword

Dear participants in the online discussion, colleagues and friends,

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) hosted a first online discussion on gender training on 25 and 26 September 2012. The experience was well worth it. Allow me to thank especially all the participants. More than 30 gender experts, trainers and policy makers very actively shared their thoughts, experiences and ideas on gender mainstreaming and gender training. Many more people followed the discussion as the number of registered participants amounted to 90. This discussion served as an online forum for professionals in gender training to reflect on the state of the art, the challenges and the needs to be addressed and results to be achieved in order to make gender mainstreaming in the European Union more effective. We hope that this first online discussion will be a good start for the future online platform of EuroGender where professionals will be invited to contribute to debates on different aspects of gender equality.

Over a period of two years EIGE has been developing a comprehensive set of methods, tools and good practices for gender mainstreaming. It was in 2011 that the Institute decided to put forward gender training as one of the key tools for gender mainstreaming.

For that purpose the Institute collects findings on gender mainstreaming in the Member States, in international and EU Institutions, applied by social partners and practitioners. The collected information is processed and compiled in reports, country and thematic reference sheets, databases and good practices. Discussing and sharing experiences with the community of decision makers, experts, participants in electronic forums and during conferences will provide additional feedback to the results of EIGE's work.

The reflections from the Online Discussion will primarily serve as an additional background paper for the European Conference 'Advancing Gender Training to Support Effective Gender Mainstreaming' on 13 and 14 November of 2012 in Vilnius. The feedback and open discussions will contribute to more effective policy making and more efficient gender mainstreaming in the European Union.

Virginija Langbakk

Director

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Background of the online discussion

'I always start my sessions asking the audience if they stand behind human rights, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights", and everyone raises their hands. Then I just say: "good – a room filled with feminists, what a nice day this will be…"' Kajsa Svaleryd, Gender Trainer, Sweden

This document reflects the process and the views expressed by several participants of an online discussion held on 25 – 26 September 2012. The discussion was conducted as part of the study on Gender Training in the European Union: Mapping, Research and Stakeholders' Engagement (2012-2013), undertaken by ICF GHK on behalf of the European Institute for Gender Equality. The participants used EuroGender – a new online platform that EIGE is developing for its stakeholders.

The online discussion was facilitated by Kelly Shephard, Editorial Manager, IDS Knowledge Services and supported by members of the research team.

Gender equality experts were invited to express their opinions on the following questions:

- **What are the experiences and needs in relation to gender training in Europe?**
- **How can we improve the standard of gender mainstreaming training in Europe?**

Over 30 people actively participated in the online discussion submitting a total of 220 responses from across Europe.

Online discussion in brief

Thanks to the participants who were quick to engage, share their knowledge and opinions the discussion was lively and well received. Contributions were received on the following headline issues:

- Identification of pre-conditions of gender training;
- Methodological considerations of gender training programmes;
- Suggestions on how to measure the effectiveness of training programmes;
- Reflections on whether there is a need to standardise the quality of training programmes and introduce an accreditation system; and
- Consideration of the value of knowledge sharing and online forums to debate issues.

These are presented in turn below.

Identifying the need for training and ensuring political will are pre-conditions for gender training

Identifying the need for gender training and ensuring political will were the two pre-conditions that participants recognised to be essential.

Kajsa Svaleryd from Sweden gave an example of how a trainer can work with commissioning authorities of gender training to identify the problems and the outcomes that they wish the training to address:

'I often start with the digging process, to find something in statistics, attendance rates, existence of sexual harassment, who is attending public meetings, why only boys visit the youth recreation centre, why girls in the upper secondary school are so stressed and so on…'

'When we (me and the director together) have defined a problem, find a black hole, they are anxious to learn more, analyse and use some of the tools to get a bigger picture of the issue. So I don't start with training, but with a lot of questions to make sure that the service we provide is for everyone and with the same quality for everyone.'

Good gender training also relies on the political will of an organisation. If you have support from the top then you will have greater buy-in.

Claire Wohlschak from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports shared the details of a compulsory training programme that has seen 50 % of men participating in training:

'I can tell you that the participation of 50 % of men at that Gender Field Advisors (GFA) course was a big benefit! And I think it is necessary to get a general overview. I would like to inform you that we

> *have a compulsory basic gender seminar for EVERY (male and female) contributor of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports (officers, non-commissioned officers and civilians). Further, we operate a special gender course in preparation for every person who participates in a military mission.'*

Whilst this example demonstrates the impact that political will can have on the take up of training, others also discussed its role in overcoming preconceptions.

Gender training should be tailored to the participants' area of work and national context

The group discussed the pros and cons of generic versus tailored training. There was general consensus that there is a need for both types of training, but where generic training is carried out it is best if it is followed up by workshops and in some cases guidelines where appropriate.

A mixture of formal training and on the job training experience was suggested as the way forward:

> *'We give too much focus on formal training. In my company we use the 70: 20: 10 approach for development – 70% is on the job training (secondments, rotation, 360 feedback, new roles, etc.), 20% on developing relationships (mentoring, coaching, networks) and 10% is formal development (courses, seminars, reading books, publications). Real learning for a civil servant would be if an individual from the finance ministry rotates into the gender mainstreaming department and learns everything on the job by starting to do things,'* Edite Kalnina, Latvia.

Providing evidence about the socioeconomic impact of gender inequality was also considered to be a powerful way to raise trainees' awareness about the need to address these issues:

> *'The training session is necessary to be able to use different methods/tools but it´s first when people see what impact inequality have and when they do something concrete that things happen. So, a training session is not enough,'* Katarina Jakobsson, Sweden.

Some participants underlined also the need for training tools that could be easily adapted to the national specificities:

> *'I am not aware of a complete training package, but there are some pilot tools (CIG Portugal, for example, has interesting tools). [By] having a "pattern module", one can easily tailor it to the national or local [specificities] or target group specifics,'* Margarita Spasova, Bulgaria.

Recognising power imbalances is an essential part of gender training programmes

The approach taken towards effective gender training must cover women, men, boys and girls and their relative positions to each other. Contextualising training so that it relates to real life situations and power dynamics was seen as essential to achieve effective gender training.

It was thought that ensuring that gender training is about men and women is an important factor to achieve success. Considering gender alongside a perspective of power, and allowing participants a chance to explore the issue in relation to their own lives seemed to have good results.

> *'We have to do the training in a way that both women and men can understand,'* Tomas Wetterberg, 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 effects all of us in a different way,'* Kajsa Svaleryd, Sweden.

Monitoring the effects of gender training programmes should be part of a continuous evaluation process

Monitoring the effects of gender training programmes was seen as being important. Gender awareness should not end after a short course, but rather should be part of a continuous process of evaluation.

> *'I've had good experiences with "follow-up" results like guidelines concerning, e.g., gender neutral language / gender sensitive media design / gender and funding,'* Bente Knoll, Austria.

Online discussion participants explored how one can measure the effectiveness of gender training programmes.

The need to define the desired outputs, outcomes and impacts and choose the right route to achieving them was made clear. Evaluation techniques such as peer reviews and requirement score charts were discussed.

Alyson Brody asked, *'How do we make sure that gender training and mainstreaming translate into more gender aware policies and programmes without just evaporating? I think a more integrated approach across Europe could help. For example, could there be a country peer review process that would assess countries' progress in developing more gender mainstreamed planning and policies? If all countries are reviewing one another this should allow for greater motivation and transparency/ willingness to share.'*

Isabel Romao from Portugal went on to add, *'The goals of gender training must be defined not only in terms of the competences developed, but in terms of outcomes, that is, in terms of the change obtained in the organisation and in terms of the services delivered.'*

To maintain quality there is a need for the standardisation of training programmes

Online discussion participants further explored the need for quality assurance and the standardisation of gender training programmes. It was widely accepted that:

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

Recognising this risk, participants argued that in order to maintain quality there is a need for quality assurance procedures. However the procedures need to be adapted to national contexts. They must:

- Be flexible enough to provide creative training that meets the needs of the audience;
- Provide minimum standards in terms of the structure content and process of training;
- Remain focused more on outcomes than contents; and
- Provide a core set of general principles.

Isabel Romao from Portugal described the Portuguese experience of quality standards in gender training programmes:

'Portugal has set training standards or "referential", as we call them, at national level. Entities who want to apply to public funds for delivering gender training or to train trainers have to comply with these standards. The problem is that these standards are too tight and do not always allow [us] to adjust the training to the specific target groups. They are defined more in terms of contents than in terms of outcomes...'

Isabel went on to make an interesting point about training standards based on outcomes rather than content:

'When you define standards in terms of outcomes it gives the trainer the possibility to better adjust to the group of trainees and the needs of the potential commissioning organisation, to better adjust your methodologies. We cannot have "one size fits all" when it comes up to gender training!'

Other participants contributed to the discussion on standardisation providing examples from their own work.

Bente Knoll from Austria, commented:

'Standardisation is needed regarding:

- *structure (minimum two days and follow up),*
- *content (gender theory/studies, gender and organisational development, gender/diversity strategies, e.g. gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, diversity management ...),*
- *process (integration into professional practice).'*

Alyson Brody from the United Kingdom suggested that there should be a core set of gender principles across the EU:

'The principles could include things like core agreed definitions and concepts relating to gender equality and mainstreaming – for example, the importance of challenging norms and stereotypes, the need to frame 'gender' in terms of men and masculinities as well as women, and to think about intersections with other forms of disadvantage.'

Discussion participants also explored whose responsibility it would be to take the accreditation system forward. This led to a discussion on the role of formal institutes and universities in establishing good practice in the field of gender training.

Despina Charalambidou-Solomi from Cyprus commented on a previous post about the role of universities:

'Would the universities be able to cater for the needs of all types of training? Should we have a standard certification at EU level (core subject) and then opportunities for further "specialisation" in various broad areas like education, public service, private companies/organisations?'

The discussion moved on to think about who would be suitable providers of training. Online discussion participants underlined that mapping the skills and competences of suitable gender trainers is part of the quality assurance process.

'In Portugal we have been trying to define the competence profile of the people who work actively to promote gender equality in different institutional contexts. We have called them "Agents for gender equality". These are people operating in central and local public administration, NGOs, trade unions, enterprises, schools, universities, research centres, or in other contexts. They can be technical staff or managers, but all of them facilitate, promote or implement gender equality in and by a given institution.

Therefore, we have been trying to define identity first their nuclear competence profile and second, the other more specific competences deeply linked to their specific functions and context they are operating in. We have identified the domains of activity and corresponding activities they were engaged in [in] their capacity as agents for gender equality and in a second step we have defined the different categories of competences they had to possess to perform them with quality. The purpose of this work was, among others, to define competences in order to define training contents and approaches for gender training.' Isabel Romao, Portugal.

Picking up on the point made about 'agents for gender equality' many recognised the difficulty of institutional buy in and expressed concern that all too often 'gender champions' in organisations can feel squeezed.

'I like the idea of having champions within organisations that ensure gender equality and mainstreaming remain on the agenda, but I also know from experience how tough a job that is. The most important thing is getting institutional buy-in and support and encouragement from managers to enable staff to attend ongoing training sessions and to have the time and space to think about how this affects their everyday work and to implement changes.' Alyson Brody, United Kingdom

The competences of gender trainers should not be limited to their expertise on gender issues and knowledge of different policy areas. While delivering gender training individual trainers need to challenge their own gender stereotypes.

'We cannot assess the gender impact of a policy or measure if the questions we ask in reality are biased by our own gender stereotypes. We cannot be actors for change if ourselves we are not motivated. I must stress that gender equality is a policy area and a political commitment, therefore actors must possess knowledge and technical skills, but since gender mainstreaming relies upon the engagement of each actor, it also takes an individual commitment to this goal and this strategy', commented Isabel Romao, Portugal.

Knowledge sharing is an effective wayto improve the quality of training

Knowledge sharing and having the space to debate issues was seen as being a useful way to take gender training forward and to ensure its continued relevance. A clear role for EIGE was identified in this thread.

'I personally think we should encourage more discussions of the kind happening here as a way for people to feel more connected and part of a community. If a web page could also be established where trainers and people commissioning training could post examples of good practice or ask questions that would be a very useful resource, I think. The issue is [the] funding and maintenance of these types of spaces, but EIGE could perhaps take the lead.' Alyson Brody, United Kingdom.

The participants seemed pleased to learn that EuroGender, the European network on gender equality, online platform would become fully functional in 2013. Overall providing spaces for informed discussions and the sharing of best practice was agreed as a good step towards the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality.

Isabel De la Mata clearly articulated this objective when she said:

'We can do a lot of training, but the final objective has to be to change policies and programmes.'

Meanwhile Marusa Gortnar from Slovenia, reflected, *'There is a need for continuity in implementing gender mainstreaming throughout sectoral policies, which is difficult to ensure if the critical mass of the public servants is not trained in gender issues.'*

Conclusions

To summarise, during the two day event online discussion participants expressed considered views on the preconditions of gender training, training methods and methods to measure the effectiveness of gender training programmes, the quality of training programmes as well as the value of knowledge sharing.

The following points emerged from the discussion:

- Identifying the need for training and ensuring political will and commitment are pre-conditions of effective training.

- From a methodological perspective, there is a need for both generic and tailored gender training. A mixture of formal training and on the job training were seen as a good combination.

- In terms of the content of training programmes, discussion participants thought that gender should be considered alongside a perspective of gender power imbalances. Allowing participants a chance to explore the issue in relation to their own lives seemed to have good results.

- Monitoring what happens after training was also seen as being important. Gender awareness should not end after a short course, but rather should be part of a continuous process of evaluation.

- To maintain quality in gender training participants thought that there is a clear need for institutionalising quality standards.

- Knowledge sharing and having the space to debate issues was seen as being a useful way to take gender training forward and to ensure its continued relevance.

Raising these issues, online discussion participants thought that gender training should not only be about capacity building. It also needs to be about challenging stereotypes whilst linking to organisational / institutional development. Most participants thought that only when this happened, could it lead to change at policy level.

'Training needs therefore, to provide not only knowledge and skills but also to question gender based individual stereotypes and representations in order to produce motivation, personal commitment and engagement', commented Isabel Romao from Portugal, closing the online discussion.

References

In addition to a strong discussion participants provided a number of examples of the tools that can help commissioners of training to identify the best training for their needs. The online discussion also shared practical examples of effective training methods.

The documents and tools referenced in the discussion are captured here:

3R method http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/08/19/82/3532cd34.pdf

The Macho Factory http://machofabriken.se/-Informationssidor-/In-English/

Gender training tool, Sweden http://jamstall.nu/en/#&panel1-2&panel2-1

Equality-Do-Learn, Sweden http://www.fhs.se/sv/utbildning/uppdragsutbildningar/ledarskap/jgl-jamstalldhet-gora-lara/om/

European Social Fund Jämt, Sweden http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/varmland/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/jamstalldhet/esf-jamt/Pages/default.aspx

Requirements profile for reviewer in makEQuality:

http://en.makequality.eu/Data/Sites/1/Requirements%20profile%20for%20reviewer%20in%20makEQuality.pdf

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European Institute
for Gender Equality

www.eige.europa.eu

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