

Institutional Transformation

Gender mainstreaming and institutional transformation

The focus on an institutional setting means that gender mainstreaming is to be conceived as a strategy which is pursued as a systematic and planned process for organisational learning within an institution in order to achieve gender equality both internally and especially in regard to working results and outcomes.

The strategic goal of the process is to integrate gender equality into the regular rules, procedures and practices of an institution. A successful gender mainstreaming implementation will lead to the transformation of an institution, thus also impacting on the organisational culture.

Gender mainstreaming is therefore understood both as a process as well as a state. If gender equality as a common goal is eventually mainstreamed into an institution, gender equality will be an integral part of the objectives and daily work routines within an organisation.

Eventually, and idealistically, it will not be necessary to put additional effort into the implementation of gender mainstreaming because gender equality will become part of ongoing procedures and will infiltrate the entire organisational culture. Gender mainstreaming is therefore a strategy whose ultimate aim is to become dispensable.

We can thus identify three phases of mainstreaming gender in an organisation:

1

Introduction phase

Planning the process of change and taking initial steps with the aim of enabling an institution to anchor gender equality as a guiding principle in all procedures and practices in an organisational setting.

Please note: This module should be understood as a guide to plan and implement gender mainstreaming in this specific phase of organisational change. The execution of all 13 steps of the Guide is prerequisite to entering the implementation phase.

2

Implementation phase

Necessary regulations and procedures are in place; gender equality is anchored in an institution by applying specific gender mainstreaming methods and is supported by a gender mainstreaming support structure. For example, tools and methods appropriate to the specific tasks within an organisation have been developed and are constantly being applied. However, there is still the need to take action and to apply certain methods in the context of the gender mainstreaming implementation to ensure gender equality.

This phase comes after the guide of this module has been employed.

3

Consolidation phase

Gender equality is part of all regular procedures. There is no need to apply specific gender mainstreaming methods because gender equality has been merged into the organisation's standard procedures. It is an unquestioned requirement, similar to other principles such as saving costs or working efficiently. Gender equality is sustainably anchored within an organisation's culture.

Origin of the gender mainstreaming idea

The idea of mainstreaming of a gender perspective originates from development policies and the United Nation system (Razavi/Miller 1995; Walby 2005: 453f.). The Beijing Platform for action states:

...United Nations system and all other relevant organisations should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective, inter alia, in the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes,

UN 1995, Inst.Mechanisms, para 292.

Following this, the European Union has adopted the notion of mainstreaming gender as its approach to gender policy and has developed the idea further. In its 1996 communication on gender mainstreaming, the European Commission defines the basic principle of “mainstreaming” as:

...mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women (gender perspective),

EC 1996: 2

In 1998, the Council of Europe published one of the most widespread definitions of gender mainstreaming:

gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking

EG-S-MS (98) 2rev., p.15

This definition makes it clear that mainstreaming a gender perspective is also a matter of reorganising institutional settings.

In the light of persisting gender gaps the European Union follows a “dual track approach”: gender mainstreaming plus specific actions to advance women. This means that on the one hand an institution should implement policies or programmes specifically addressing gender equality, like for example special projects for empowering women. At the same time, gender equality should be also mainstreamed within an institution.