

# Supporting coherent gender mainstreaming in the ESF



## Agentur für Gleichstellung im ESF

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*Support structures for sustainable gender mainstreaming within the ESF*

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### In brief

The Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF was contracted from 2009 until 2014 by Germany's Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as a support structure for gender equality. Its staff comprised four internal and three external experts. Its job was to ensure that gender mainstreaming was coherently integrated into the structures and procedures of Germany's federal ESF operational programme (OP), throughout the phases of analysis, strategy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The agency worked at operational programme and programme level, but not directly with projects. It offered various sorts of training, consultancy and coaching, and published policy recommendations and guidelines for gender mainstreaming in programme and projects. It was an active member of the EU-wide Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Mainstreaming, an EU learning network for Managing Authorities. Nevertheless it came up against some resistance from time-pressed administrators, which would take a strong top-down lead to overcome.

Strong points of its work are that it gave individualised and process-oriented coaching, linked to the specific ESF procedures and priorities, to develop practical action competences among ESF managers. It also worked at the various levels of the ESF system, from operational programme down to programme and project, to ensure that gender mainstreaming was implemented coherently.

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## A support structure at OP level

In March 2009, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Germany contracted the Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF as a support structure for achieving gender equality, one of the objectives 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.

The agency is a private organisation involving four internal experts, who founded it, and three external experts specialising in strategy, labour market policy, and gender budgeting.

The agency aims to ensure that gender mainstreaming is coherently integrated into the structures and procedures of Germany's federal ESF operational programme (OP), including all the phases of analysis, strategy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The approach encompasses gender budgeting as a means of monitoring gender equality and focuses on the policies outlined in the ESF programmes.

As the support structure, the agency is committed to building transferable gender/ESF skills and competences among the responsible actors. To achieve this, it offers consultancy at OP and programme level on structural, process and thematic issues, in the form of training sessions, workshops, seminars, coaching, thematic studies, data, statistics and gender budgeting. It communicates through its website (<http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de>) and through a newsletter and conferences. It networks nationally with the federal states (*Länder*), which run their own ESF OPs, and internationally as part of the Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Mainstreaming, an EU learning network for Managing Authorities (<http://www.gendercop.eu>).

The agency supports the Managing Authority, the implementation bodies (e.g. intermediary organisations) and the ministries which programme, implement, monitor and evaluate the ESF. It consults the Managing Authority, ESF coordinators and programme managers in ministries, and organisations responsible for monitoring and evaluating the OP and related programmes.[1]

The demand for the agency's services has changed over time. Whilst at the beginning its work focused on current implementation, more recently it has turned its attention to preparing for the new 2014-20 funding period.

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## Building capacity and competences

The agency provides comprehensive support for gender mainstreaming in the ESF. Based on a needs analysis of the OPs, supplementary documents, and the various ESF actors carried out in 2009, it set the following objectives:

- To build the capacity of relevant actors at different levels of ESF implementation, monitoring and evaluation, to systematically mainstream gender equality in programmes and projects; and
- To increase the know-how and competences of relevant actors so that they can take a coherent approach to implementing, monitoring and evaluating gender mainstreaming in the ESF from the OP to programme and from the programme to the project cycle.
- The agency uses process-oriented and tailored coaching and counselling to build individual and organisational capacity. This 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.);
- Training programme managers in ministries and intermediary bodies to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all programme cycle requirements;
- Advising the organisations that evaluate the OP and ESF programmes and projects on gender equality aspects of their work.

The tools the agency uses to coach its clients are prepared individually and are available only to the relevant actors. The level of support depends on their familiarity with the gender perspective. Initially, it provides the essential knowledge, insight and assistance needed to implement gender mainstreaming. Then, at the later stage, its support decreases and further guidance is provided on demand, for example, when task-related questions occur

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## The analytical framework

The agency has put in place common 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 Germany. It developed guidance techniques based on the following series of issues:

- 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 have 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, context, subject, resources?
  - Implementation – issuing a tender, a call, guidelines, 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 and equality?
  - Evaluation – Why programme evaluation? What were the problems, objectives, outputs, outcomes, effects and impacts of the programme?
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## Gender mainstreaming in BIWAQ

A good practical example of the agency's support for gender mainstreaming is the ESF BIWAQ (*Bildung, Wirtschaft, Arbeit im Quartier – Education, Economy, Employment in the Neighbourhood*) programme, managed by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development. BIWAQ supports projects in deprived city neighbourhoods which integrate long-term unemployed people and strengthen the local economy. During its second call for proposals in 2010, the agency was asked to advise on where and how to integrate the gender dimension in the planning, tendering and selection procedure (the agency was not yet in place at the time of the first BIWAQ call in 2008). The agency's approach consisted of the following steps:

- Needs analysis by reviewing all existing BIWAQ documents, guidelines, questionnaires, etc. and selecting good and 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 FAQs on the relevant concepts, revising the template for applications, drafting detailed guidance for applicants on integrating the relevant concepts, and revising a template for the submission of annual project reports;
- Dividing the programme cycle into individual (sub)phases/work steps;
- Drafting calls for papers on sex-differentiated information on target groups, problems in the neighbourhood, etc., and a special selection process for experts assessing the call.

The agency assigned a gender mainstreaming coach as a permanent contact person for the programme manager. (See presentation.[2])

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## European policy recommendations

Given its short life span, an impact assessment of the agency's services is not yet available. One expected outcome is that all ESF actors at different levels are more aware of the need for specialised support for the gender mainstreaming process in the ESF. A second outcome is to build the capacity of the responsible actors by building their 'action competences' for gender equality. This means that they should:

- understand 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 society, which relates to both women and men in their diversity (e.g. ethnic, educational, other background etc.); and

- understand gender equality objectives (e.g. economic independence, tackling gender stereotypes etc.) by simultaneously looking at integrating gender equality aspects into the ESF's thematic work.

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). Examples of its results so far include:

- Support provided to ESF actors who were committed to gender mainstreaming, but did not know how to implement it in practice;
- Providing essential knowledge and insight to actors who required a clear view of how to implement gender perspectives in their field of responsibility;
- Supporting the EU Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Mainstreaming, by formulating key policy messages on integrating gender equality and the dual gender equality approach into the Europe 2020 strategy, its flagship initiatives, the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) Regulation and the ESF Regulation.

The agency hopes that the Managing Authority of the federal ESF will appoint gender advisers for the funding period 2014-2020 to continue its work. Similar support structures could also be created at the project level of ESF implementation in Germany, which the agency has not covered.

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## Leadership is needed

The agency's success is due to the expertise, experience and service orientation of its staff, who take a process-oriented approach to coaching and counselling, which in some instances can take two years. They work at the various levels of ESF management and implementation (except at the project level). The main obstacle the agency has faced are that some ESF actors are resistant to change despite its efforts. They lack the time to take external advice, and often see it as an additional workload on top of their regular duties. This might be resolved through a clear top-down approach set by the Managing Authority.

The Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF in Germany has contributed towards gender equality in the federal ESF programmes. The strong points for learning, capacity-building and strategy that have emerged from this initiative are:

- The overall approach to coaching or counselling, which is individual, process-oriented and tailored to the specific needs and tasks of their clients;
- The practical support provided 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 ESF management and implementation which contributes to the coherent integration of gender mainstreaming across all structures, procedures and themes.

[1] See slide 7 of presentation at: [http://www.gendercop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/8\\_Renate\\_Wielputz\\_Ag...](http://www.gendercop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/8_Renate_Wielputz_Ag...)

[2] <http://www.gendercop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/5.-The-Implementatio...>

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## Contacts/Further Information

### Contacts

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### Further information

[Website](#)



[Gender mainstreaming guidelines \(English\)](#)



Gender mainstreaming guidelines for ESF programmes (German)



Gender mainstreaming guidelines for in ESF projects (German)



## NB image copyright

Agency logo from its website: <http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/>

BIWAQ logo from its website: <http://www.biwaq.de/>

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## More good practices

EIGE's collection of good practices



EIGE's approach to good practices



## Downloads



Support structures for sustainable gender mainstreaming within the ESF - Germany

EN (PDF, 169.15 KB)

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## Metadata

TOOL: Competence development