Quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the European Union

Reflections from the online discussion

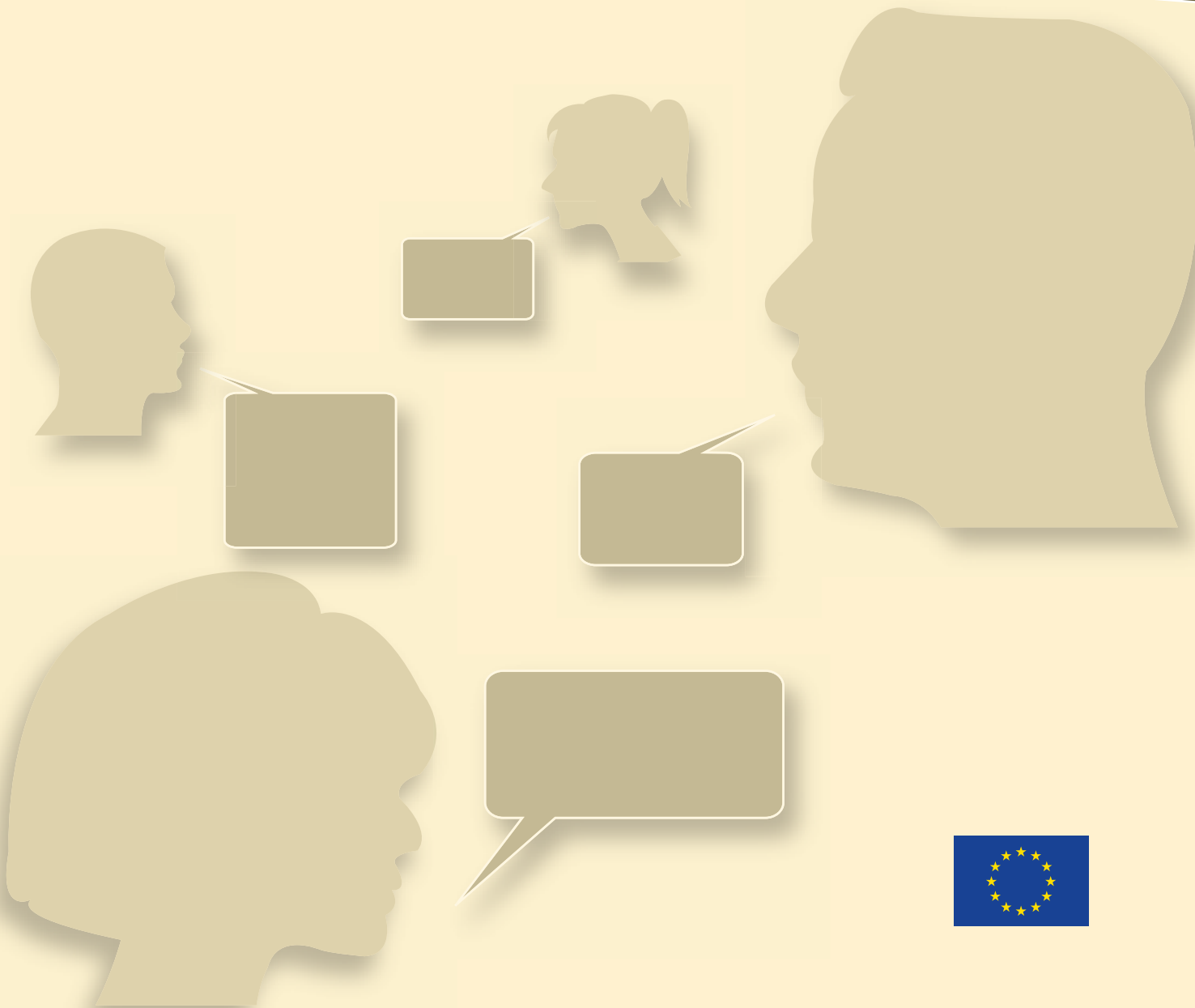# Quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the European Union

Reflections from the online discussion

Foreword

Dear colleagues,

This document reflects the views expressed by a range of participants in an online discussion on quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the European Union (EU) that took place on 18 and 19 September 2013. This was the second online discussion held as part of the study 'Gender training in the European Union: Mapping, research and stakeholders' engagement (2012–13)'. The discussion used the online platform EuroGender (¹) that EIGE has developed for its stakeholders. Discussion participants included gender training practitioners, gender training researchers and members of EIGE's Thematic Network for Gender Training. Over 30 people participated actively in the online discussion and an additional 50 followed it. A total of 167 responses were posted, from 16 countries across Europe as well as from the United States (US) and the Caribbean.

Sufficient gender equality competence of staff at all levels of public administration is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming. It is of particular importance to make sure that the quality of training is adequate and that it is fit to address the knowledge and skills gaps of civil servants across the EU. Looking for ways to make sure that gender equality training meets the needs well and is organised in an effective way is challenging, but necessary at the same time.

We thank Hazel Reeves, an independent gender consultant, and Jenny Birchall, from the BRIDGE team at the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom, who facilitated the discussion. We also thank all the participants, who have devoted their precious time to express views and give ideas with regard to the quality standards for gender equality competence development. Your engagement is greatly valued and your thoughts will undoubtedly contribute to the improved quality of gender training initiatives across the EU.

Virginija Langbakk
Director
European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Background to the online discussion

'Due to its strategic position, the European Institute for Gender Equality could contribute to the ongoing debate on quality standards for gender training at an EU level by building bridges between gender trainers, academia and policymakers.

Reflections from the conference 'Advancing gender training to support effective gender mainstreaming', 13 and 14 November 2012 (²)

The discussions on the need to establish minimum quality standards and accreditation mechanisms on gender training in the EU have been around for a while. This topic inevitably came up as an issue during the first online discussion on gender training organised by EIGE in 2012 (³). Back then the participants were outspoken about the need for quality assurance and standardisation of gender training programmes and accreditation systems that are flexible and adaptable for audience needs, focus on outcomes more than content and provide minimum standards and general principles to follow. Similar ideas where expressed during a number of further occasions, including expert meetings organised by EIGE and a European conference 'Advancing gender training to support effective gender mainstreaming' organised on 13 and 14 November 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

This time the discussion centred on the following questions.

- Why is there a need to introduce quality assurance mechanisms in gender training?
- What are the options for quality assurance mechanisms to improve the quality of gender training in Europe?

2   'Advancing gender training to support effective gender mainstreaming: reflections from the conference': http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/advancing-gender-training-to-support-effective-gender-mainstreaming-reflections-from-conference

3   'Gender training in the European Union: reflections from the online discussion': http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/gender-training-in-the-european-union-reflections-from-the-online-discussion

Why do we want quality assurance mechanisms?

Online discussion participants identified three main reasons why we need quality assurance mechanisms in the European Union:

- to improve the quality of training;
- to ensure that training leads to better gender equality outcomes;
- to improve the process of commissioning training.

To improve the quality of training

Research findings from the study on gender training in the EU suggested that gender training is diverse: approaches to gender training differ and quality and results often vary. Taking this into consideration, most online discussion participants thought that quality assurance mechanisms for training would be useful. Currently anyone can call themselves a gender trainer and any organisation can offer gender training. The premise of this online discussion was that the gender competence of public administrators and policymakers is of paramount importance if gender mainstreaming is to work. Assuring quality of the competence development processes therefore deserves specific attention.

If we are talking about training for institutional capacity development — quality of training is closely related to the quality of the overall institutional capacity development strategy and its relevance to the very specific context of people's working environment. So yes, there is need for quality assurance of the training design, delivery and evaluation process: relevance, inclusiveness, (potential) impact on behavioural change. (Benedetta Magri, ITC/ILO, Italy)

To ensure that training leads to better gender equality outcomes

A common theme emerging from the discussions was that gender training — if it is of real quality — should have clear objectives, including in relation to attitude and behaviour change. We were reminded that gender training requires strong political commitment and is not only a technical process.

There is a lot of training being done of very diverse quality with very diverse results. For GTC [UN Women Global Training Centre] the quality of gender training is directly linked to its desired end result/impact, i.e. gender equality. Therefore we refer to 'training for gender equality' … a transformative process that aims to provide knowledge, techniques and tools to develop skills and changes in attitudes and behaviours. We envisage it as a long-term continuous process that requires political will and commitment from all parties involved (both decision-makers and trainees) with the objective of creating an aware, competent and gender equitable society. (UN Women Global Training Centre, Dominican Republic).

There was agreement that a quality assurance mechanism that involves just ticking boxes around the process will not necessarily lead to better gender equality outcomes. Any mechanism should be embedded in organisational learning and development processes. It should serve the end goal of improvements leading towards gender equality, including transformative behaviour change, and help to keep gender equality as the focus of policies.

To improve the process of commissioning training

Some participants felt that quality assurance mechanisms (whether in the form of certification or standardisation) could benefit trainers in their negotiations with those commissioning training, providing legitimacy. And in turn, they would assist bodies commissioning training to understand more about quality training and the outcomes it could achieve. They would also provide a clearer picture with regard to what qualifications good gender trainers should possess.

I believe that one solution could be to help companies and municipalities to know what to ask for. Some sort of demands on what to expect from a gender equality consultant would be more helpful than [giving] the consultants certification. (Jenny Claesson, Add Gender AB, Sweden)

I'm all for quality criteria in themselves: they would offer a tool to organisers of gender training and help them verify the quality of the training modules that are offered. I see these quality criteria that I as a trainer could use in my negotiation with those interested in organising gender training. Very often the quality of gender training is not what it could be, not so much because of the trainer or the lack of quality of materials and methods, but because of the often very restrictive demands of the organiser (budget, training length, etc.). (Katlijn Demuynck, Genderatwork, Belgium)

What are the key issues in relation to quality assurance mechanisms?

Participants identified the following areas where further discussion is needed before we start developing a quality assurance framework in the European Union.

- We need to clarify why quality assurance mechanisms are wanted.
- We need to define 'quality of training' and agree on who sets the standards.
- We must take into account the importance of context.
- We need to systematically evaluate existing training programmes.

Clarifying why quality assurance mechanisms are necessary

In their comments, contributors stressed that we possibly jumped to discussing the different types of quality assurance mechanisms before we were clear what purpose quality assurance mechanisms serve. They underlined that the broader context of quality assurance needs to be considered first.

I think it would be helpful if we made clear what we specifically want to promote with quality assurance mechanisms — as this is still not really clear to me. Not that we should all agree, by any means … And I am not saying that we have to define quality. Instead, I think it would be useful to know — what kind of changes in the training happening now does each trainer believe quality assurance mechanisms will make? Or what kind of changes should they make? (Krini Kafiris, Greece).

It emerged that there is not yet any common understanding on some basic terms and the language to describe certain quality assurance mechanisms.

… we have different approaches depending from which perspective we are talking. It's interesting but hard to discuss so openly when you are not sure everyone means the same with 'quality', 'certificate', 'gender training' or even 'gender equality' for that matter. (Alice Marshall, Add Gender AB, Sweden).

Not everyone was convinced that quality assurance mechanisms are the answer for improving gender equality outcomes, given the frequent lack of resources and political will behind building gender competencies.

There is increasingly limited time and funding for gender training and little political commitment to it — at institutional but also individual levels. This includes participants … How can gender training be developed with these issues in mind so that it can make a difference? I am not convinced that quality assurance mechanisms — as I understand them at least — [are] the way to go. (Krini Kafiris, Greece)

Defining 'quality of training' and agree on who sets the standards

Participants did have some concerns around the idea of quality assurance mechanisms. They wondered who would define quality, who would set the standards and who would monitor and evaluate them. In addition, questions were asked about the relationship between standardisation, quality assurance and effectiveness. Are there dangers in setting a minimum quality standard? Will the hands-on experience of gender trainers be sufficiently recognised?

We believe that quality standards of gender training are required at both a national and EU level. However, standardisation does not always lead to quality assurance. How do we even define 'quality'? Based on which criteria? Standardisation does not entail quality assurance, and even if quality is assured, this does not necessarily lead to effectiveness. (Panayiota Chrysochou and Floria Valanidou, Cyprus)

Similar concerns were raised by another participant from Sweden.

My biggest issue with certification of the consultants is who will hand [it] out? Who can get it? In Sweden we have people that have been working with gender equality for so long that gender studies did not exist in the university. So do we need to force them back to school or should education not be one of the criteria to get the certificate? How do you measure knowledge? (Alice Marshall, Add Gender AB, Sweden).

Quality assurance mechanisms must take into account the importance of context

There was discussion around what standardisation means both in principle and in practice. While some participants felt that standardisation of the basic elements of gender training would be useful, others were concerned that standardisation might cause training to become fixed and inflexible, limiting the ability to tailor training for different contexts.

Participants spoke about the context for gender training in their countries, noting the differences, with some countries not having an official body coordinating gender training or any equality legislation making capacity development for gender mainstreaming compulsory. Such differences of context need to be considered in the design of quality assurance mechanisms.

In some countries gender training is compulsory and on an extensive basis, in others it is not compulsory or on a very limited basis. For this reason, at least at EIGE level, this diversity should be taken into account in order to decide on standardisation and quality assurance. (Despina Charalambidou-Solomi, Cyprus)

It was agreed that there is no 'one size fits all' training method or content. Potential areas for 'standards' might be the 'basics' of training or the development of quality criteria.

We could start with ensuring the quality of the basics, that is the quality, experience and motivation of teachers/trainers and the types of pedagogy (i.e. the curriculum and teaching strategies) they use. This will lead to an improvement in the quality, equity and efficiency of training. (Mary Koutselini, Cyprus)

I'm all for quality criteria in themselves: they would offer a tool to organisers of gender training and help them verify the quality of the training modules that are offered. I see these quality criteria that I as a trainer could use in my negotiation with those interested in organising gender training... I'm not for a type of quality criteria that would fix, for example, content elements or specific methods and such. Gender [training] is in my long experience always very sensitive to context and should be constructed as such. (Katlijn Demuynck, Belgium)

A valuable illustration of the complexity is the UN Women Global Training Centre, which has experience of widely varying contexts and training and hence works towards minimum quality criteria for gender training.

In the UN system, and in the countries there is wide diversity of training in terms of content, quality and scope, not always with clear results. TfGE (training for gender equality) is implemented in an incredible variety of socioeconomic and political contexts and cultures. Standardising represents therefore a major challenge. Rather than standardisation seen as one size fits all training, we foresee a minimal quality common denominator. (UN Women Global Training Centre)

Mechanisms must not serve as barriers to skilled trainers

Some participants were also keen to stress that mechanisms such as certification or accreditation should not serve as a barrier to trainers (for example, through charges which freelance trainers or small organisations could not afford). Trainers need support in order to excel, especially if they are to compete with large organisations.

I agree that some sort of standardisation would be good. It just needs to be in a way that doesn't make it harder for equality companies to start up and grow. (Add Gender AB, Sweden)

Existing training should be systematically evaluated

There was also a concern that there is not sufficient evidence of what works in terms of gender training. More systematic measurement of training outcomes and impacts is needed before meaningful quality assurance mechanisms can be developed and implemented. Evaluations of gender training should go beyond the assessment of participants' learning processes to measure the impact of the training.

I have also come across an issue that I think would need to come before the question of standardisation or quality assurance, namely the lack of evaluation of existing gender training. If the commissioning institutions don't measure the outcomes (let alone impact) of the gender training, it seems difficult to establish quality assurance mechanism. (Karin Heisecke, Germany)

It seems to me that quality assurance mechanisms are put in place in order to improve outcomes and impacts. However, in some kinds of training at least, we don't really know what those are. Evaluations are very limited and there is little opportunity for follow up over longer periods of time. There is also little independent/academic research on these issues. So, if we don't know exactly what gender training has resulted in, how do we know how to improve it?' (Krini Kafiris, Greece)

What quality assurance mechanisms are available?

During this part of the discussion, some examples of quality assurance mechanisms were highlighted from the preparatory paper written by Marianne Dauvellier and Thera van Osch. This paper lists a number of mechanisms for capacity development related to gender mainstreaming and/or gender training, including the European Quality Mark, GemTrEx Quality Standards for Gender Workers/Trainers, and the Gender Equality Score Card. In addition, several examples of existing mechanisms and/or ideas for new mechanisms were shared by participants, including those for gender-specific training and for integrating gender issues into non-gender-specific training.

Standards and/or minimum criteria for gender training and competencies for gender trainers

The discussion was lively around the concept of 'standards' and the desirability of using 'minimum' standards or criteria, and questions of who sets the standards/criteria. Examples of these types of quality assurance mechanisms shared by participants included ideas for quality criteria from the UN Women's Training for Gender Equality (TfGE) approach:

We propose identifying and defining minimal criteria including:

* *responsive to international norms and agreements (starting with CEDAW, Beijing Platform, regional agreements, resolutions, etc.);*
* *relevant to the context and needs of the audience (content, examples and case studies, trainers, language and methodology);*
* *state-of-the-art knowledge on the specific topic;*
* *learner-centred, participatory and transformative methodologies;*
* *competent, culturally sensitive trainers that can respond to the needs of the audience and training objectives.*
(UN Women Global Training Centre, Dominican Republic)

There was discussion about whether such standards should be set by institutions or groups of institutions, or by gender trainers themselves. EIGE shared the example of the Madrid Declaration on Advancing Gender+

Training in Theory and Practice, which emerged from a group of gender trainers, training commissioners and gender training experts.

Participants also raised the question of whether quality standards should only apply to gender training programmes or to other training programmes as well.

Should quality standards only be developed for gender training? Or should we also develop quality standards for gender mainstreaming in other training? Or should we do both in a kind of twin-track approach? At the moment [the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation — EuropeAid] is doing both: for example they have mainstreamed gender in the core training on project cycle management. And they developed gender modules for other core-training, including water and sanitation, energy, climate change, anticorruption, peace and security, justice and democracy. In this way [the DG] tries to reach EU officers and staff who never would attend gender training. (Thera van Osch, OQ Consulting, the Netherlands)

Certification of trainers and/or training

During the discussion mixed views were expressed about certification, particularly of trainers. For some, it was the obvious, and easiest, option. For others, certification was not a global panacea — quality is reliant on the motivation of the individual trainers and whether they apply effectively the knowledge and skills they have acquired.

We understand that certifying trainers would be the easiest. For UN Women Global Training Centre, the ideal authority to standardise trainers would be a pool of renowned institutions working in TfGE that commonly develops minimal criteria for that purpose. Without overlooking other already mentioned important factors for quality training, the trainer plays a key role in ensuring the quality of the training and the impact on the trainee. (UN Women Global Training Centre).

The relation between individual motivation and certification was further discussed by a participant from Cyprus.

It all comes down to the question of motivation — both extrinsic and intrinsic. Via certification it is possible to ensure extrinsic motivation but what about intrinsic motivation? This takes us back to people's belief systems, attitudes and perceptions. Just because gender educators and teachers receive the adequate training, skills or certification does not mean that they will apply the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in order to effectively influence their trainees' actions, beliefs and perceptions. (Mary Koutselini, Cyprus)

There was a warmer reception for the idea of certification if it is embedded in learning processes and based on peer review.

Certification could be the result of peer-to-peer reviews within the learning community according to a certain procedure. Once you are certified, it helps to increase demand for gender training. (Thera van Osch, OQ Consulting, the Netherlands)

Quality checklists for training in institutional settings

Examples of checklists and self-assessment tools included the ITC/ILO Gender Marker, which is a simple checklist developed to help training managers when they design, plan, deliver and evaluate non-gender specific training courses, with the aim of making them gender sensitive.

The checklist is just a little part of the story because we have trained all our colleagues in their use through an organisation-wide 'participatory self-assessment' where each training unit was actively involved in a self-reflection exercise. We provide them with technical assistance (gender analysis of topics, names of experts, resources, revision of training material) and direct inputs in their courses when required. The gender marker is used as a self-assessment tool, but we monitor the scoring to make sure that no one uses it inappropriately. (Benedetta Magri, ITC/ILO, Italy)

The ITC/ILO Gender Marker has been developed further with the Learn4Dev Quality Scorecard.

Our idea is that gender sensitivity (or more) is an important element for overall quality of any training done in the field of development cooperation. It is not an easy task and we meet a lot of resistance but we have managed to work and apply it in two quite important 'mainstream' courses. (Benedetta Magri, ITC/ILO Italy)

Participants also heard about EIGE's 'A step-by-step approach to quality in gender training', which is intended to guide institutions when they plan gender training. The five steps are: ensuring commitment from top-management; ensuring standards; addressing needs; getting started; and measuring impact and evaluation.

Databases of selected trainers who meet certain criteria

Some participants shared their initiatives involving databases and rosters of selected gender trainers, which could have the potential for quality assurance functions.

UN Women has a roster of consultants organised by UN Women strategic areas that includes specific sections for trainers. In addition to professional qualifications and experience (there is a profile to register in the roster) there is a test on training that candidates need to pass to be included in this specific roster (for trainers). We have recently launched the roster and are populating it. The roster envisages in the long run a post-training confidential evaluation by commissioners. Also, members of the roster can ask for endorsement references from colleagues, trainees, supervisors, etc. which can act as an additional quality assurance mechanism. We cannot provide further details at this stage but we can say that there has been a great demand from candidates and [we] have received more 2 500 applications in 5 months. (UN Women Global Training Centre)

EIGE has introduced a similar initiative with a European focus.

We have a gender trainers' database available through EuroGender. The database features up-to-date profiles of gender trainers and organisations offering gender training across the EU … This database was created to help in finding gender trainers with specific thematic knowledge, skills and expertise to design training courses tailored for different needs and policy areas. While trainers who currently are in the database were identified through a specific project, EuroGender seeks to serve as a platform where trainers will be able to advertise their work. Of course, here comes again the question of standardisation and certification. (Katarzyna Pabijanek, EIGE)

Spaces and networks for reflection, learning and standard setting among trainers

One of the areas that was of most interest to discussion participants was the importance of support and learning networks, or communities of practice, for gender trainers and their development.

In my experience it has to be a quality assurance for trainers which is considered a learning cycle and not a fixed certificate. I feel it is important to set up a community of practice where trainers have the possibility for constant reflection and peer review on a supportive basis, not as a control! (INDERA Gender Consultancy)

A similar approach was taken in Sweden.

In Sweden, we have started a business network called Genusföretagarna (gender workers) and through that network we are trying to make the equality business more professional. (Alice Marshall, Add Gender AB, Sweden)

There were some mixed feelings about the potential of communities of practice (COPs) — in terms of their potential to promote greater quality of gender training, and views about whether this potential would be recognised by commissioners of training.

Networks and communities do provide an important legitimacy for training commissioners. We are doing both — offer training [sessions] ourselves and commission them. And if we are looking for appropriate trainers we first look if they are active and known within the gender training community. This is for us personally more important than a certificate. (Ursula Bauer and Jana Schultheiß, Austria)

Even though it was agreed that networks have a learning potential, the extent to which they can assure the quality of a trainer was questioned.

Although I strongly support CoPs with a purpose and some funds to make them work, I am afraid that just the fact of belonging to a CoP cannot assure the quality of a trainer... I think having a formalised process of peer review on the basis of some broadly established criteria would still be needed. (Benedetta Magri, ITC/ILO Italy)

We would like to share our experience with the Global Training Centre CoP. We don't think that the CoP, as an open space that anybody can join, can legitimate quality of trainers per se. The aim of the CoP is to provide an opportunity to share knowledge, tools and experiences, and meet other trainers or stakeholders... It has to be a safe environment for horizontal knowledge sharing and learning between peers. This is the added value of the CoP: the diversity of viewpoints, ideas and profile of participants. (UN Women Global Training Centre)

Improved training methodologies and practices

Participants shared ideas and experience on training methods and practices that can act as quality assurance mechanisms. For example, the UN Women Global Training Centre has developed a participatory quality assurance methodology for course design.

Through this methodology a group of experts and practitioners (and sometimes end users as well) is involved in the definition and development of content from a very early stage, revising and giving feedback in the definition of the topics and the design of the course content. They accompany the whole process ensuring collective learning and bringing in the different perspectives. The participatory nature is crucial for UN Women in order to ensure that diversity in terms of contexts, development levels and gender equalities realities (legislations, roles, participation, etc.) is factored into the courses. It is time consuming, requires negotiations and may involve additional costs. From our perspective this approach is coherent with the fundamental principles of gender equality. We aim to 'walk the talk' in all our activities. (UN Women Global Training Centre)

Examples were also given of quality assurance processes being used in training design at the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation (ITC/ILO), which involve training needs assessments and developing the curriculum by including experts and target groups, country and context specific curriculum design and training of trainers.

An option that has always worked is the coupling of an 'international expert' mastering the curriculum with a national expert really conversant with the topic at hand in the country. (Benedetta Magri, ITC/ILO Italy)

A Swedish example that was shared involves gender training that includes time for applying what has been learned. Training participants from the public sector across Swedish regions have 2 days' gender training, which is tailored to their field. They then go away and engage in 'change work' where they can begin to put their learning into practice. Later they return for a 1-day follow-up session. This is seen as a way to promote

sustainable change on gender equality. Over 1 000 participants have so far been through the process and researchers are currently evaluating it. In terms of quality standards for the trainers running these sessions, plans are in place for a list of trainer competencies, train the trainer sessions, and then annual follow-up training. (Example shared by Marie Trollvik, Sweden, in advance of the online discussion.)

Accountability frameworks and mechanisms

Examples of gender equality accountability mechanisms, in which quality of training is included and necessary, were also shared. These might come from the international, state or regional levels.

We would like to share the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP), an accountability framework designed to measure, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards to which to aspire and adhere for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It applies to all entities, departments and offices of the UN system. UN entities are to meet all the UN SWAP performance standards by 2017. The SWAP includes six elements, two of which address training for gender equality: developing and/or strengthening staff capacity and competency in gender mainstreaming; and ensuring coherence/coordination and knowledge information management at the global, regional and national level. Each element has corresponding performance indicators. (UN Women Global Training Centre)

Quality assurance mechanisms need not be 'top-down' only, and can be multidimensional and overlapping

It was recognised that there are many different options for quality assurance in gender training and that they don't necessarily have to be 'top-down' but can be multidimensional and overlapping. We should not rush to select one quality assurance mechanism.

From my experience it is important not to put one mechanism over the other and try to find the solution in one aspect. We have to see it from a multidimensional perspective... we need to look at the different aspects and interlink them in order to assure quality... For me a community of practice is a very important tool (if I may call it like this), but it cannot be the only one … it is for me a central one because it gives us the possibility to review other established tools constantly and from diverse perspectives (such as procedures, training material, capacities, programmes, etc.). (INDERA Gender Consultancy)

Many discussion participants agreed that 'top-down' quality assurance mechanisms alone would not be helpful, and there was clear support for additional 'bottom-up' mechanisms. This led to the sharing of several examples and ideas on the best ways to go about this.

[In the Czech Republic] there are no quality assurance mechanisms applied specifically to gender training/expertise. The only existing one is a 'top-down' mechanism applied to courses for public administration. Therefore relevant parties (gender NGOs, academic departments and also companies focusing on the topic) are planning to introduce 'bottom-up' mechanisms reacting to current situation and together establish a professional association or at least a gender trainers/experts network. The 'gender' community is not big therefore the first phase will probably be based on personal contact and knowledge of the work and expertise of the others. But in order to create more a sustainable network/association we are planning to introduce some mechanisms such as certification. The question is to which extent it will be recognised by the state authorities and other 'clients'. (Veronika Šprincová, Czech Republic)

How we can work together to take the agenda forward

The final part of the online discussion focused on possible routes forward, how participants could work together in the future and the potential roles of specific institutions such as EIGE. There was care first of all to take stock of gender training: what types of training there are, what works and what doesn't work. There is also ae need to work towards finding a common language around training and quality assurance mechanisms, and to clarify what purpose quality assurance mechanisms serve.

Perhaps a first step for EIGE could be to generate outlines based on a review of existing training and the categories already established by entities like UN Women and the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation — EuropeAid (whose approach of creating gender units for all other training modules sounds great!). Once there is an outline of the key areas and types of training we're subsuming within the term 'gender training', a systematic approach to evaluation could be developed... After that, a comparative set of evaluations could be undertaken with an emphasis on clearly identifying the specific goals of each kind of training, and the lasting impact/degree and kinds of change resulting from training. Once the findings of this kind of evaluation are analysed we might then move forward more confidently to a discussion of quality assurance/certification issues. (AnnJanette Rosga, US)

There was clear support for EIGE taking a lead role in developing a community of practice of gender trainers, building on the first steps made by this online discussion.

I would very much like EIGE to look at the possibility to open up and support a CoP on gender training, but with a true commitment of the people and a working program based on reflexivity. Being a member of this CoP can also represent a quality assurance on international level and the quality is based on constant peer-review and the commitment of the people. (INDERA Gender Consultancy, Spain)

Conclusions

During the online discussion, participants expressed a range of insightful views on quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the EU. Discussion focused not just on specific mechanisms that could be put in place, but also the enabling conditions that it is necessary to consider and recognise before more detailed discussion on quality assurance can take place. Participants felt there was a need to consider the broader context for quality assurance first. Thus the discussion went back to reconsider the basic questions on why we want quality assurance processes, whom they should serve, who they should involve and how can they ultimately lead to better gender equality outcomes.

Some of the main concluding points were as follows.

- While there is a clear appetite for quality assurance mechanisms, we should not be too hasty in pushing forward the idea of specific mechanisms such as certification, before there can be a more systematic understanding of what works and what successful training is, in terms of transformative outcomes as well as participant experiences.
- We first need to be clear what purpose quality assurance processes serve. Quality assurance is about more than just certification. Mechanisms need to move beyond just ticking boxes relating to process, given that gender training is a political

rather than a technical process. Training should be transformative, result in better gender quality outcomes and be embedded in organisational learning processes.
- Any quality assurance process needs to understand the importance of context, and that there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to gender training. Thus any attempts to 'standardise' must not cause training to become fixed and inflexible, limiting the ability to tailor training to different contexts.
- We should not rush to choose one mechanism. There are many different options for quality assurance in gender training — from minimum standards to peer-to-peer review — that don't necessarily have to be 'top-down', and can be multidimensional and overlapping.
- A lot of expertise and experience on gender training and, more specifically, quality assurance already exists but is not necessarily brought together in one place.
- Participants appreciated having this opportunity to discuss the issues and would like more opportunities in the future. Several people pointed out that 'This discussion platform can already be seen as an activity of a CoP' (INDERA Gender Consultancy). There is an appetite for EIGE to take the lead here.

References

During the discussion, participants referred to a range of resources and sources of further information. These are listed below.

EIGE reference sheet on a step-by-step approach to gender equality training: http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/gender-training-stepbystep-approach-to-quality

EuroGender Gender Trainers' Database: http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/gender-trainers

'Liberating structures' website: http://www.liberatingstructures.com

Madrid Declaration on Gender+ Training: http://www.quing.eu/files/madrid_declaration.pdf

Overview of quality assurance systems by Marianne Dauvellier and Thera van Osch: http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/web-discussions/quality-assurance-mechanisms-gender-training-european-union

EIGE report on investing in gender competence: http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/documents/investing-gender-competence

Swedish Gender Business Network: http://www.genusforetagarna.se/

UN SWAP: http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability

UN Women trainer database: http://unwomen.unssc.org/

UN Women Global Training Centre community of practice: http://gtcop.unwomen.org/?lang=en

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European Institute
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http://eige.europa.eu

Publications Office