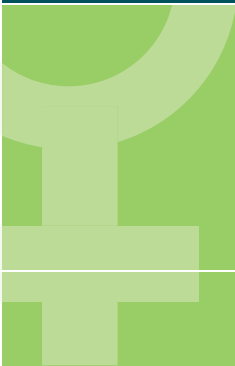


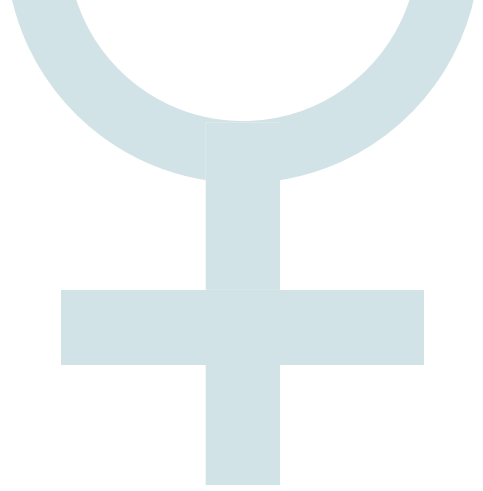


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Gender Mainstreaming

How Can We Successfully
Use Its Political Potential?





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How Can We Successfully
Use Its Political Potential?



Heinrich Böll Foundation
Regional Office Warsaw
Warsaw, December 2008



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Gender Mainstreaming.

How to Use Its Potential Effectively?

Agnieszka Grzybek, Agnieszka Rochon

The fact that *gender mainstreaming*, or the incorporation of the issue of gender equality into mainstream politics and activities, also translated – depending on the context – as gender equality politics, has caught on in new EU member states, is largely a result of EU accession. Even though all countries signed the *Beijing Platform for Action*, the document ending the Fourth World Conference on Women which took place in 1995, they did not treat the obligations resulting from this document in a binding way. However – as Barbara Unmüßig¹ emphasizes, the Beijing conference was a milestone for the development of the women's movement,

¹ Barbara Unmüßig, *Nachdenken über Gender Mainstreaming. Bilanz einen radikalen gesellschaftspolitischen Konzepts zehn Jahre nach der Weltfrauenkonferenz in Peking*, HBS concept paper, 2005.

because the *Platform for Action*, adopted by 189 countries, was a type of “historical consensus”. Representatives of governments and the civil society unanimously agreed that, firstly, women’s rights are human rights; secondly, that just relations between the sexes are a basic condition for socially and ecologically sustainable development and an inseparable element of democracy; thirdly, that all countries should systematically implement policies aiming at achieving gender equality. As it later turned out, the last item was the most difficult one to realize, especially in places where conservative forces were in power. In countries which were going through a period of political transformation (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia), and which later joined the European Community, gender equality politics had never been a priority. Gender politics lost with economic reforms, making up for delays in the economic sphere, so that these countries would be able to “catch up with Europe” as quickly as possible. It was women’s organisations, women’s rights activists, who repeatedly called upon provisions of the *Platform for Action*, trying to enforce on governments the realization of gender equality policies which would improve the situation of women. They pointed out that the European Union is consistently developing gender equality politics through introducing subsequent legal regulations which are supposed to ensure equal opportunities for men and women; that adjusting national legislation for *acquis communautaire*, but especially later enforcement of legislation and taking up real activities leading to improving the situation of women, should be conditions for accessing the EU. Yet, it always turned out that there were other priorities, more important than improving women’s quality of life.

As Unmüßig points out the idea of *gender mainstreaming* “is a radical concept that could change gender relations since it potentially obliges all actors in a political field, an enterprise, an organisation.” *Gender mainstreaming* was supposed to provide a philosophical framework and, at the same time, a tool for effective change in the sphere of politics, economics, social relations and culture; a tool providing men and women with true equal treatment and full participation on equal terms in all spheres of life. Ten years after the Beijing conference

we have reached a time of evaluation and critical analysis. Numerous analyses and studies concerning the realization of the principle of *gender mainstreaming* were published as part of preparations for the UN special session “Beijing + 10” (2005). On the one hand, achievements and successes were pointed out, but, on the other, weaknesses and limitations, which – as it seems – are inherent to this concept, were also sought. *Gender mainstreaming* was criticized both by supporters of this concept, who were sure that if certain corrections were made, the effectiveness of this instrument would increase, and by its opponents, found mostly among feminist theorists. They pointed out that basically the entire concept is based on a false and simplified understanding of gender equality, which does not allow for a radical critique of existing power relations and for thorough changes². When evaluating the realization of gender equality politics it was pointed out that one of the main barriers is lack of political will, which causes it to remain only in the sphere of declarations, which are not followed up by any activities initiated in institutions. These weaknesses were tied mostly to the institutional character of *gender mainstreaming*, which, from the outset, was supposed to be a top-down policy. This caused researchers, theorists and feminist activists to question the future of gender equality politics and the justification of using *gender mainstreaming* as a tool for its realization. In spite of the developed EU legislation, framework strategies for gender equality adopted for periods of several years (including the newest one *Road Map for Gender Equality 2006-2010*) and the reports about equality of men and women in the European Union submitted annually by the European Commission, the situation is practically not changing. Specific problems still remain unsolved: lack of consciousness, lack of expertise and lack of money³. Additionally, in some

² Olena Hankivsky, *Gender vs. Diversity Mainstreaming: A Preliminary Examination of the Role and Transformative Potential of Feminist Theory*, [in:] “Canadian Journal of Political Science”, 2005, 4 (38), p. 977-1001, 2005.

³ Teresa Rees, *Gender Mainstreaming: Misappropriated and Misunderstood?*, 2002.

European countries, gender equality politics is used by right-wing political forces and neoconservative governments to promote information strengthening traditional relations between the sexes and the traditional division of gender roles.

Yet, in spite of these weaknesses, *gender mainstreaming* still remains a key strategy of the UN, the European Union, other multilateral organisations and many countries. This can be clearly seen on the example of the European Union which, in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, adopted provisions promoting gender equality politics, later confirmed in the Treaty establishing the European Community. *Gender mainstreaming* has caused significant changes on the decision-making level of politics: the belief that gender matters and that analyses of activities establishing their effects for men and women are necessary has become common. *Gender mainstreaming* is a tool enabling the institutionalization of gender equality politics, therefore, it is important to perform its critical analysis and reflect on reformulating the strategy in such a way which would make it possible to achieve the goals this concept was supposed to serve.

Such critical analysis of *gender mainstreaming* has never before taken place in new EU member states (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia) or in border states (Ukraine). Usually *gender mainstreaming* is promoted as a tool for realizing gender equality politics and a tool for putting pressure on governments to undertake actions in this field, by emphasizing that it is an official EU policy. *Gender mainstreaming* itself was never analysed critically during preparations for the Beijing + 10 conference, only the politics of governments in this sphere were evaluated. Studies and publications devoted to these issues which are currently being prepared as part of projects realized using EQUAL Community Initiative funds, the European Social Fund (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia) and preaccession funds (Ukraine), promote *gender mainstreaming* without deeper reflection. There are not enough publications describing how to use this tool in practice. Two publications published by UNDP Poland: *Gender Equality Politics in*

Practice and the reports created on the basis of this publication *Gender Equality Politics. Poland 2007*⁴ are a praiseworthy example.

Being aware of the contradictory reflection accompanying the evaluation of *gender mainstreaming*, it is worthwhile to ask the question regarding the strategic potential of this tool and the future of institutional gender equality politics. The study mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, Barbara Unmüßig's *Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming: Taking stock of a radical social-political concept ten years after the Beijing World Conference on Women [Nachdenken über Gender Mainstreaming. Bilanz einen radikalen gesellschaftspolitischen Konzepts zehn Jahre nach der Weltfrauenkonferenz in Peking]*, which was presented at the international congress "Femme Globale", organised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in September 2005 in Berlin, became a starting point for the publication which you are not holding and which was prepared as part of the project "Reflections on *gender mainstreaming*". We invited experts from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Germany to cooperate with us. They have analysed the realization of gender equality politics in their countries, trying to answer, among others, the question of to what extent the application of *gender mainstreaming* has helped in implementing actual changes in gender relations. The experts point out both achievements and failures, at the same time formulating a number of recommendations which would make it possible to take better advantage of the potential of gender equality politics. The English language version of the publication contains texts by Barbara Unmüßig and Claudia Neusüß, which provide an introduction to *gender mainstreaming*, and four case studies written by experts from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. It is accompanied by publications in Czech, Polish and Slovak, which are slightly restricted in scope and which contain, in addition to the two introductory texts, also the case study concerning the given country.

⁴ See: *Polityka równości płci w praktyce [Gender Equality Politics in Practice]*, UNDP, Warsaw 2006 oraz *Polityka równości płci. Polska 2007. [Gender Equality Politics. Poland 2007.] Report*, UNDP, Warsaw 2007.

Claudia Neusüß's introductory text presents the historical development of *gender mainstreaming*, roughly pointing out that the nineties were the "golden age", when the women's movement managed to achieve the most within the European Union, which was significantly influenced by the fact that the European Union was enlarged by "women friendly" countries – Sweden, Finland and Austria. Considering the limitations of *gender mainstreaming*, Neusüß points out that it is mostly the lack of a precise definition of this concept which "makes it compatible with different ideas of equal opportunity", which means that practically every country can choose a convenient variant which best suits the local tradition of understanding gender equality. The analysis of the situation in Germany is particularly valuable, as it includes many analogies with the situations in new member states. In both cases we are dealing with a regression in the field of gender equality politics, or rather with an offensive of conservative politics, which also uses *gender mainstreaming*, but as an instrument to promote pro-family policies. "Gender equality politics has ceased to be a priority for the government" – writes Neusüß – „women's politics has been reduced to pro-family policies and gender equality initiatives have been restricted." Financial and human resources are being limited. We can find similar observations in Czech, Polish and Slovak analyses, whose authors unanimously state that gender equality politics was never a priority for their governments, but is now – due to the influx of EU funds – being used by conservative governments to promote solutions strengthening the traditional division of gender roles.

For this reason we need to ask questions about strategies for defending gender equality politics from being abused by neoconservative governments to promote ideas which contradict its basic concepts. It is difficult to treat *gender mainstreaming* as a miracle cure which would enable the achievement of gender equality in practice, but surely this concept can still play an important role as a complementary strategy. However, in order for that to happen the issue of gender equality needs to be repoliticised and – as Neusüß points out – the current "deadlock" in gender equality politics needs to be broken by forming new

alliances and initiating new activities by female and – very importantly! – male representatives of the world of science, politics, the civil society. At the same time, we should become aware of the fact that gender equality politics and its main tool – *gender mainstreaming* – should be a long-term process of transforming national politics.

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Translated by **Justyna Włodarczyk**

1.

Gender Mainstreaming.

Possibilities and Limits
of a Radical Social
Concept

Barbara Unmüßig

Gender mainstreaming: A radical idea

Gender mainstreaming is, at its core, a radical sociopolitical concept for achieving gender equality and equal opportunity.

Why is it radical? Gender mainstreaming is a strategic approach that initially obligates governments, as well as businesses and other institutions, to systematically introduce a gender-oriented perspective for **every** political and economic decision. This is a very radical idea. Something of this dimension has never been seen before. Gender mainstreaming attempts to examine and analyse all political, policy and economic decisions with regards to their effects in relation to gender. In this way gender mainstreaming finally does away with the myth that something like gender neutrality exists. There is no gender neutrality. Every political decision, as well as all economic and business decisions and measures have effects on the genders and the relationship between them. There is no sector – whether tax or other fiscal policies, foreign affairs or security policy, labour market or healthcare policy – that can be excluded from this type of gender analysis.

What are the origins of gender mainstreaming?

To start, the concept of gender mainstreaming originated in a women's and development policy context, notably in the World Conferences on Women in the 1980s and 1990s. In these contexts women discussed the fact that achieving gender equality and developing equal opportunities between the genders cannot solely be accomplished through policies for women and/or families, but that elements of these concepts must be integrated into all fields of politics – thus the term *mainstreaming*. Mainstreaming means integration into the prevailing

structures, thus it is nothing less than introducing such gender policies as a point of intersection across all political arenas.

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 marked a milestone – it was a huge success for international women's policies and the trigger for countless national initiatives for more gender equality and equal opportunity. Not only is the principle of gender mainstreaming anchored in the Beijing Platform for Action, but it is also this document which included the category of gender for the first time. The Platform for Action from Beijing is thus the first international document that strove to define this concept. It went on to be ratified by 187 national governments.

What does the category of 'gender' mean? What is 'gender' in the first place? Gender roles and the relationship between the genders are embedded in the relative social, political, cultural and economic contexts of respective societies. This makes it clear that our gender roles depend on society, they are socially and culturally constructed. At the same time it also makes us conscious of the fact that gender roles and the relationship between the genders are in a constant state of flux. Societal change is created; it is politically and economically 'made'. This clearly shows, especially to women and feminist activists, that they can influence the relationships between the genders. We must not accept the status quo of gender roles. Instead, we can actively influence and change them. These ideas experienced a breakthrough on an international level with the Beijing Platform for Action.

Another important victory in Beijing was the codification of the fact that the surmounting of inequalities and undemocratic relationships between the genders is something that is not exclusively the concern of women, but also a **concern for men** and a task for society as a whole. Those who wish to change the relationships between the genders must get men on board. In fact, they need the whole society on board. What became clear is that policies for gender equality – and this is the core statement – cannot be limited only to women and women's organisations, but must also be an objective for men.

What has happened with the idea of gender mainstreaming over the past twelve years?

First, for the record, gender equality policies achieved a breakthrough around the world in the 1990s. The **institutionalisation** of women's and gender policies was always one of the central political demands of international women's movements and networks. The Beijing Platform for Action and the principle of gender mainstreaming were very supportive of this institutional approach, as it called for governments to allocate the institutional, financial and personnel resources necessary for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. In this way the Beijing Platform for Action was able to provide a further impetus for political initiatives that have improved the legal framework for women's equality in many countries around the world.

However, despite these indisputable advances – both nationally and globally – there are hierarchies, power differentials and conditions of dominance between the genders that have not yet been dismantled.

Discrimination, disadvantages and violence are still defining factors for the living situations of millions of women in all regions around the globe. There are hardly any international documents, nor international (women's) conferences that do not confirm that the structural inequality between the genders has more likely been increased, rather than decreased in many societies. Women are still frequently excluded from political decision-making processes. Their legal situation is precarious. The economic differences experienced by women have hardly abated despite the increase in their gainful employment – on average they are much more likely than men to be in precarious working conditions or hold part-time jobs, as well as work in underpaid trades, among other reasons. However, men are also affected more than ever by unemployment, violence and marginalisation.

Nevertheless, it can clearly be said that the 1990s were very good years in getting legal regulations around the world off the ground. The Beijing Platform for Action and UN conventions like CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) are important political frameworks that supply the foundations for appeals and claims for gender-equitable policies.

In the context of the European Union, for example, some speak of a 'golden age' of gender equality policies because so many initiatives for equality have been passed. One example of what has happened in the EU is that the principle of gender mainstreaming was anchored as a responsibility for all member states in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. The treaty codified that all member states and all European bodies are required to consider gender perspectives and analyses at all levels of decision making, to develop and establish gender-focused processes in all phases of decision making. Within the EU they developed a five-year road map identifying core political fields where gender mainstreaming was to be implemented on a priority basis. For example, in the current action plan, the road map for the period 2006-2010, these core fields include the equality of men and women in industry and in the labour market. The latter is especially concerned with nations providing appropriate services that make possible the compatibility of family and career, as well as the compatibility of caretaking and career.

This EU road map also includes suggestions beyond this, recommending that each country adopt initiatives and create the conditions necessary to assist in overcoming traditional gender stereotypes. It includes requests that countries like Germany and Poland, Austria and Italy do more – institute gender training, put together handbooks and provide numerous other forms of support. All in all, these are good approaches, and in actuality the concepts and principles of gender mainstreaming have been able to accomplish many positive things in numerous institutions, administrations and in furthering learning processes.

Institutional learning

Gender mainstreaming can achieve many positive effects where the political will to make it a reality exists. It makes a huge difference whether or not bureaucracies are required to think about the gender dimensions of their political decisions using the principles of gender mainstreaming. This in and of itself is very positive, as it can change awareness in institutions. Gender mainstreaming challenges people to increase their knowledge about gender. Usually there is only little, if any, information about how political decisions affect gender relations. The majority of statistics collected around the world are gender neutral, which is why collecting gender-differentiated data is necessary. Using the principle of gender mainstreaming there has been much success in creating this sort of knowledge and collecting the appropriate data. This has brought about the realisation, for example, that women and men are affected very differently by healthcare policies, by therapies, etc.

Now, new instruments and methods, like gender analysis or gender budgeting, contribute to new (socio)political insights and perceptions of the gender-related consequences of policies, creating innovative standards of knowledge for policies and administration.

When the political will exists to provide financial and personnel resources, then gender mainstreaming can set processes of change in motion, start processes of awareness-raising and make institutional learning possible. These can all lead to new actions, as well as new administrative behaviours. There are many positive examples for the numerous positive effects that gender mainstreaming can have, especially in Europe.

Limits of gender mainstreaming

I. The lack of political will

Moving on, there are several critical points to be made. On the one hand, there was a gender-political awakening in the 1990s that can be summarized

as follows – there has never really been so much gender. Everyone was being forced to move, to act on the concepts of gender mainstreaming. Because the EU took up this principle it became a very, very important frame of reference in order to move forward national gender non-discrimination policies, especially for EU newcomers like Poland.

But in this millennium we have experienced a gender-equality political standstill. This includes Germany, which I will get back to later. What are the reasons for this standstill? Firstly, there are several general political causes. The European Union has grown from 15 to 27 member states, which has led to shifts in majorities. Additionally, within the EU there have been changes in national governments – as is the case in my country – where conservative parties have come into power. These conservative EU-member-state governments try to water down progressive objectives and/or implement EU gender-equality policies either hesitantly or halfheartedly. In many regards, these governments strengthen a rather conservative view of gender roles in public discourse. In some countries, like Poland, homophobic and xenophobic attitudes have increasingly come to the fore, which also makes it difficult to publicly discuss sexual orientation, ethnicity and culture as discriminatory elements. Overall there is a more hostile environment for the debate about anti-discrimination and a more hostile environment for discussing gender-equality policies overall.

A second cause for the political standstill for gender equality can be found in the fact that gender-equality political approaches are much too heavily and almost solely directed at the compatibility of family and career. This makes them subordinate to family policies, or even completely replaced by such.

In Germany, on the other hand, we have witnessed quite a phenomenon. Of all people it's the Federal Minister of Family Affairs and Women, Ursula von der Leyen – a member of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) – who has managed a breakthrough of mobilising more funds and infrastructure for childcare nationally. This shows that there are also conservative

politicians who can initiate a push for modernisation, at least in family affairs policies. But in Germany there are hardly any other additional attempts at promoting political gender equality from the current government beyond family affairs policies and debates about reconciling the needs of families and careers. In fact, at the moment our government is dismantling nearly every programme that was established to promote gender mainstreaming. A steering committee of ministers that was supposed to organize gender mainstreaming activities across all ministries no longer exists – it has been abolished. Policies for the promotion of women are hardly visible to the public, or concentrate for the most part on women's career advancement. Overall, whether at a national level, in the EU or UN, programmes related to budgeting for women's advancement are being slashed or cut in their entirety.

In fact, there is a lack of political will to truly seize the radical core of gender mainstreaming and to examine political decisions in regards to their gender-political consequences. In the everyday business of politics, gender mainstreaming is hardly ever practiced, both within governments and within institutions and both nationally and internationally. This instrument was never really utilised beyond a few pilot and showcase projects. Gender mainstreaming needs to be reintroduced into the political discussion at a national level, especially in the majority of EU member states.

2. Limits of the concept?

Along with these underlying political conditions and the lack of political will, there are also other factors that may have hampered, and continue to hamper, the success of gender mainstreaming, specifically the methods used for its realisation. For some time now there have been discussions about whether or not gender mainstreaming is a good, positive instrument at all in helping us reach gender equality and break down gender hierarchies. From my point of view this basically radical concept was much too narrowly defined and politically interpreted, especially by institutions and also partly by women's organisations. We were not successful in bringing gender policies forward in

important, so-called hard fields of politics, like economic and labor force policies, pension plans and social policies, and creating public discussions about the topic.

Looking at the EU, it would have been interesting, for example, if the Structural Funds and the regional EU programs, which set the course for economic and social policies and invest large sums into poorer regions within the EU, were analysed using the principles of gender mainstreaming to see how they have been influenced by gender policies. There are studies showing that gender mainstreaming played absolutely no role whatsoever in these relevant economic decisions and processes.

In the end, we focused very strongly on institutions and left out the spheres of economics and economic decisions that play a direct, important role in the relationship between the genders, simply disregarded them. For example, Germany – putting aside gender mainstreaming – recently passed labour market reforms that have increased the interdependence of the genders on one another in the case of welfare payments. This is a setback for demands such as men and women being able to remain autonomous in securing their basic needs.

Gender mainstreaming has not successfully intervened in large policy areas, in important decision-making processes. In my country, in Germany, there are really just pilot projects. Pilot projects were started here and there, they allowed a bit of 'toying' with the idea, but it never got beyond this phase. The previous Social Democratic-Green Party coalition government commissioned a feasibility study on the topic of gender budgeting. The examination of budgets according to gender criteria would have been a true breakthrough for influencing decisions from the perspective of gender. Initially the government did not even want to publish the results of this study. It was predominantly women who applied public pressure to urge the publishing of the results. Now the federal government has placed the study on the Internet. However, the government refuses to engage in any political discussion about how gender budgeting could be accomplished in German municipal and federal budgets.. The political risk is

apparently too great, as it would revolutionise decision making processes, and not just from a gender-political point of view.

A second point of critique is that we were too one-sided in our focus on institutions. To start, it is correct that decision makers in ministries, in institutions like the World Bank or in city halls and in corporations must have the will to implement gender equality policies and create more gender equality. Similarly, the top-down approach is a central prerequisite for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming.

However, institutions and companies are not neutral in their actions. They do not act in a sphere free from domination and self-interest. Institutions are directed to follow their own interests, just like governments and all other establishments. Commercial enterprises have long since discovered women as an economic factor and support gender mainstreaming and/or diversity processes in this way. They consider women solely as an economic factor and are less interested in gender hierarchies and gender roles.

Often times we acted as if we could tell these institutions what to do, but forgot that these institutions reflect the constructions of power and domination of the society at large and thus also reflect the common perceptions of gender roles. Who defines what a traditional gender role is? Who gets to define what is considered 'fair for women' and 'fair for men'? Who articulates needs and goals and, more importantly, with which negotiating power? Who has the power to define this within institutions?

Institutions and bureaucracies are certainly not areas that are sensitive to gender considerations per se. Additionally, decision making structures and practices are hierarchical in structure and business cultures are often still characterised by 'old boys networks'. They are dominated by rules and systems that are based more on confidentiality than geared toward transparency and a culture of open debate. Thus it is hardly surprising that gender mainstreaming pilot projects in ministry bureaucracies and other institutions were more likely to result in handbooks, criteria and checklists and that these processes were, especially in the beginning, often technocratic in nature.

Without wanting to throw out the baby with the bathwater, it is clear that institutions can promote learning processes. It is true that we need well functioning institutions that implement political ideas, including emancipatory ones. But from my point of view – and this is one of my basic theses – we also need a society-wide movement from the grassroots level, we need political pressure from the society at large, so that these institutions transform themselves. Political decisions will only change in character when the need for change comes expressly from society itself. Only then will institutions have to implement the political and policy specifications. I think many of those who believed and believe that institutions would/will be able to straighten it all out somehow have lost sight of this correlation. To influence institutions and bureaucracies through lobbying is one thing. Organising societal pressure through the media and general public, through noisy protests, is another.

Gender equality policies that focus solely on institutions through the instrument of gender mainstreaming have hit a massive political wall. This is especially true where there are no women's or gender-political organisations that have negotiating power to influence parliaments and public opinion from the outside and thus also indirectly influence institutions. In many countries this has been successful. Whether in South Africa, Kenya, in Mexico or Brazil, women's political organisations have been able to take advantage of political upheavals in their countries during particular transition phases and successfully introduce the principles of gender mainstreaming as found in the Beijing Platform for Action. Ultimately, how gender political topics are organised within a society is decisive in all countries.

Finally, and many know this is a different problem, a number of institutions have misused the concept of gender mainstreaming to block the financing of other women's political initiatives. Gender mainstreaming was used as the excuse, so to speak, to stop funding other women's projects, using the explanation: 'we're now taking care of gender issues via gender mainstreaming'. This has been and still remains a disastrous exploitation on the part of political and

other institutions. From the beginning, gender mainstreaming clearly stated that we need both – we must strengthen and foster women's political and economic participation in society, while at the same time getting the men on board for gender-political issues. The fact that women's projects have fallen to the wayside has led to a decline in solidarity with these concepts, instead of strengthening them. There is a great deal of disassociation and critique of gender mainstreaming worldwide. The idea in its practical political application has suffered a loss of its radical core for a variety of reasons.

In conclusion

To me, gender mainstreaming clearly remains a radical social concept. If it was taken seriously and truly succeed in bringing gender perspectives into all political decisions, it would be a breakthrough for more gender equality, for more equity and – from my perspective – would bring about totally different policies and politics overall. We want changes with gender perspectives in taxation, in foreign and security policies, in labor policies, etc. The problem is that we were too focused on technical and bureaucratic solutions within institutions. We all have work to do to again make gender policies a topic for society as a whole and one that is not only discussed in specialised circles. Gender equality must be propagated throughout society and we have to organise more political pressure from the bottom up. Policies for gender equality, including gender mainstreaming, are just one of many instruments within the EU that remain an **extremely** important frame of reference for national policies as well. I feel that women and men who want equality in many EU countries should feel fortunate that there are EU directives forcing national governments to act. I believe that we have no reason to lower our sights. We need this framework. But in addition to this legal framework we also need bottom-up policies, a strengthening of initiatives that target equality and we, furthermore, need more men on board. We need role

models, male role models, who are willing to advocate for gender equality in society, in administration, in industry and in unions. It cannot remain the domain of women alone to do the work needed to fundamentally change the relationship between the genders.

Translated by **Anthony B. Heric**

2.

The Strategy of Gender
Mainstreaming in the EU
and Germany – Two Steps
Forward and One Back?

Claudia Neusüß

Origin and development of gender equality politics

Gender mainstreaming is a policy concept which originates from the context of development policy and which has been internationally advanced and popularized at the UN level. GM was discussed for the first time at the Third UN World Conference on Women in 1985 in Nairobi and adopted as a new strategy for achieving equal opportunities at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing (see also Wichterich 2000, von Braunmühl 2000). The Platform for Action (PFA)¹ agreed upon there comprises measures to reduce discrimination of women and build gender equality. Twelve areas of action (among others: women and poverty, women and health, women and the economy) were agreed on.

While the term “gender equality politics” is not directly found in the Platform for Action, almost all thematic areas contain a passage, which de facto defines gender mainstreaming: *“Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of the consequent inclusion of a gender perspective in all policies and programs, so that effects of decisions for women and men can be analyzed before decisions are made”* (BMFSFJ 1996, P. 37).

The inclusion of such a cross-cutting perspective of gender equality politics into the Platform for Action represented a great success of the international women’s movement. At the same time, the critical perspective on power relationships between the genders and the vision of a different, better world expressed by many feminists reached much further than >mere< integration into the mainstream. The often cited call of feminist Bella Abzug, “I don’t want to be mainstreamed in a polluted stream!” clearly illustrates this. Feminist criticism

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

of various forms is always itself a driving force for fundamental change of society: “The power relationship between men and women was not only to be challenged, it was to be abolished” (Bereswill: 2004:52) – a new, better world was to be created!²

Still, the implementation of even the “moderate version” of gender mainstreaming turned out to be a challenge. Regina Frey points out that the Platform for Action makes far-reaching demands, also in terms of gender policy, on the ratifying governments. According to Frey and “ it functions until today as a measuring instrument for critical evaluation of the implementation of gender equality policy by governments” (Frey: 2004:32).

Is gender mainstreaming only a toothless tiger?!

Within the Follow-Up Processes of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing + 5), women's non-governmental organisations submitted so-called shadow reports, which commented critically on the official reports of the governments. Such organisations in Germany demanded in this context a double strategy of empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming (see also Heinrich Böll Stiftung 1999, P. 91).

Five years later, in preparation for the “Beijing + 10” UN Special Session, women's organisations again took stock of the situation. It turned out that all over the world the agreed upon measures to reduce discrimination of women and build gender equality were often not implemented. Furthermore, there was even risk of regression in what had already been achieved, especially in the area of sexual

² I am grateful to Jette Knoblich for helpful suggestions!

and reproductive rights. In addition, the international political climate was shaped by a conservative mobilisation against women's rights (so-called backlash). From the end of February until March 11, 2005, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) convened in New York and dealt with the many cases of the lack of national implementation of the Beijing Platform in the 191 signatory states.

Historical development gender equality policy in the EU

International developments of the 1980s, and especially the 1990s, in the area of gender mainstreaming also influenced the development of EU equal opportunity policy, which is still restricted to certain areas and which had been, for a long time, restricted only to employment policy. After the founding of the European Economic Community, equal opportunity policy activities were at first aimed at the creation of a common economic area. The principle of equal pay for equal work was, for forty years, the only reference point in the European Community convention for equal opportunity policy and was mainly restricted to the area of occupation (Erbe:2002:11).

The second phase of European equal opportunity policy until 1991 is described as "piecemeal equal opportunity policy" (Erbe 2002:12). In 1974 the Minister of Employment and Social Affairs passed the social political programme of the community. Aspects of employment, improvement of living and working conditions, as well as the participation of social partners in social and economic policy decisions of the European community were at the center of the discussion. In this context, directives that defined and further developed the principle of equal pay were adopted. Some of the greatest successes were reached via the various possibilities of filing suit at the European Court of Justice (see also Berghahn 2002). Later, in 1982, the first action programme for equal opportunity was initiated, the second followed in 1986. Both were to improve the professional opportunities of

women, thereby preventing unemployment among women. Another initiative of the community, NOW – New Opportunities for Women, also pursued this goal from 1991 onwards (ibidem: 12 f).

Incentives for a progressive women's and gender equality policy

In the beginning of the 1990s – parallel to the increased global network of women's organisations – a new phase began, which was shaped by coordinated activities in the area of women's policy. New women's organisations were formed all over Europe, lobbying at the European Parliament and the Commission. In 1990, the European Women's Lobby was founded and the Network of Decision Making was formed in 1992 (ibidem: 13).

At that time, in addition to the Maastricht Treaty, eleven states (with the exception of the United Kingdom) signed the Protocol of Social Policy. It committed the community to working for equal opportunities in the labor market, and allowed states to use "positive discrimination" measures to level disadvantages, which, however, did not have a noteworthy impact (ibidem: 14) (see also Holz/Neusüß 2006)

A further "push" for the progressive development of European gender equality policies came with the accession of the "women friendly" states – Sweden, Finland and Austria. From 1995 on, the possibilities to shape and act for an equal opportunity policy improved notably (Lemke 1999: after Erbe 2002: 14, Roth: 2007). Further guidelines were passed from 1992 to 1999. The subsidies and funds of the EU are one area in which the principle of equal opportunity for women and men was passed. In 1996 the Commission published for the first time the results of an evaluation of the measures and drew conclusions from them. The fourth action programme was then not limited to the area of employment, but

was also supposed to change societal attitudes and structures. “Gender mainstreaming” was introduced as a central element of the programme.

The programme DAPHNE (1995), which provided information about violence against women and children, and Action Plan STOP (1996), a programme against human trafficking in women and children, can be pointed to as signs of women’s issues moving from an economic to a political context (see also Klement/Junemann 2005: 9). However, the measures did not consider the structural context of the discrimination of women. Furthermore, in 1996 the Council issued a recommendation to the member states about “balanced involvement of women and men in the decision-making process”, with which the topic of political participation of women moved on the agenda. However, the EU institutions have no binding decisions or quota regulations so far (Erbe 2002: 14f).

The EU has been very successful in the area of legal norms, in the form of European guidelines (directives) for the realization of equal opportunities for men and women via judgments of the European Court of Justice. Even though there were setbacks, “ reforms have established to a large extent equal opportunity in the legal orders.” (Berghahn: 2001, ed. Holz/Neusüß 2006)

Amsterdam Treaty – (The strategy of) gender mainstreaming enters EU-policy

In the past European equal opportunity policy had concentrated mainly on the area of paid labor and the action and framework programmes. Gender mainstreaming was the next step which was supposed to help secure equal opportunities for women and men on all political levels and in all policy areas (see also Frey 2004, Holz/Neusüß 2006).

The strategy of gender mainstreaming was codified in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 and passed into law in 1999, which can be seen as a turning

point in gender equality policy, because it expanded the approach of gender equality to all areas. Gender mainstreaming is a binding task for member states of the European Union as well as for EU institutions. It is part of the common rights and ownership, the *acquis communautaire*, regulating rights and obligations of all member states and comprising all valid treaties and legal acts.

In article 2 of the EC-Treaty, equal opportunity of men and women became the community objective:

“It is the *task* of the community, with the building of a common market and an economic and currency union as well as with the implementation of the common policies and measures in the community, as in article 3 and 4, (...) to *promote the equal opportunity of men and women* (emphasis by author).”

Article 3 now included the principle of gender mainstreaming, which aims to abolish any gender discrimination in all areas of the community and directs all activities of the EU towards the promotion of gender equality:

“The community acts in all activities mentioned in this article towards the abolishment of inequalities and the promotion of equal opportunity of men and women.”

What has so far been discussed as gender mainstreaming, is here legally bound. It is thereby binding for European institutions to always include and actively promote gender equality. The precise understanding and the objectives of gender mainstreaming vary in different contexts (for example, they can be rather abstract: equal opportunity, gender justice, gender democracy; or concrete: the change

of organisations)³. The EU Commission also speaks of “equal opportunity” in the context of gender mainstreaming (Frey 2003), while the Council of Europe defines gender mainstreaming as follows:

“Gender mainstreaming consists of the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of political processes with the goal to consider a gender perspective in all political concepts on all levels and in all phases via the inclusion of all actors that participate in political decisions.”
(after Behning 2004: 123)

Article 13 obliges the member states to pass anti-discrimination laws accordingly. Article 141 is the only one with direct effect. Paragraph 4 explicitly enables positive measures “for the ease of occupation of the underrepresented gender”.

In addition, the Stability-Growth Pact (1996) led to higher unemployment of women as well as the increase of precarious employment for women, so that the member states must take measures to reduce the unemployment gap between the sexes. In this context, also the compatibility of family and professional life is promoted. The principle of gender mainstreaming also entered the area of structural funds (1996), where a new community programme, EQUAL, was introduced (Erbe 2002: 16-18). Gender mainstreaming became more concrete also in the area of development policy (2000) (see also Rodenberg 2003).

³ In addition to the complex discussion on the concept of “gender” within feminist theory (see for ex. Frey 2003).

The start of the EU guidelines and road map

For the time period of 2001 to 2005, a new frame was created in the 5th action programme, which considers all EU policy areas in order to promote gender equality. It includes structural changes in economic life, participation and representation, access to social and civil rights, as well as proposals and measures for the change of gender roles and stereotypes. At the Nice Summit 2000 the European Council underlined the necessity to pass a directive for the promotion of equal treatment of women beyond the area of occupation before 2003. In 2004 such a directive (RL 2004/113/EC) was accepted. It also demands equal access to the provision of services (Young 2005:2008). Further, the European Council proclaimed the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which contains equal opportunity policy articles. However, this charter is not yet legally binding. The 6th Framework Strategy for Equal Opportunity was adjusted until 2006 (see also Holz/Neusüß 2006).

The Road Map for Gender Equality, agreed upon for the time frame of 2006-2010 as a 5-year programme, formulates five core areas for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. These include: gender equality in the economic sphere, civil participation, social rights, the promotion of civil rights and awareness-raising regarding gender roles and stereotypes. The question of balancing family life and professional life plays an increasingly prominent role.

Along with the EU expansion process from 15 to 25 member states (2004)⁴ and the addition of two new countries, Bulgaria and Romania, in 2007, the balance of power in the European Parliament also changed. A conservative

⁴ Women's and gender equality policy aspects entered the political agenda only late in the negotiations with the new states (Roth 2003).

image of women, a potentially homophobic attitude and a conventional view of gender, where women are portrayed as mothers and caregivers, gained weight. A policy which fits this view is one which is formulated as a family policy and defined along conventional, gender-specific division of labour.

In recent years a new change can be noticed as part of European anti-discrimination laws. While in the 1990s policy changed from a women's to a gender equality policy, it is now moving towards an anti-discrimination policy, which considers further structural aspects (aside from gender, class, ethnicity/culture, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion). Thereby, the question of how these complex inequalities can be politically shaped belongs on the political agenda.

There have not been any new gender equality plans on the agenda recently. Instead of new laws, the current concern is the deepening and evaluation of the achievements so far. Some women's policy actors, for example Green EU representative Elisabeth Schrödter, call the current situation "gender equality policy stalemate" (2008)⁵.

The "Golden Age" and women's organisations

Experienced feminists and experts in the field of European relations speak of the 1990s as the "golden age" of equal opportunity policy in the European Union (Helfferich:2003). The number of women increased notably within the Commission and the European Parliament. Especially the Commission began to increasingly consider the aspect of "gender gaps". Never before (and

⁵ At a conference on „Frauenfragen sind Männerfragen sind Geschlechterfragen. 40 Jahre Neue Frauenbewegungen. – Und jetzt?“ Conference from June 12 – 14, 2008 at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

also never afterwards!) were European standards in equal gender opportunity shaped normatively with such intensity!

Especially in the 1990s, European women's organisations played an important role in the integration of gender mainstreaming into European treaties (Schmidt 2000, Roth 2007), and here namely the European Women's Lobby. Helfferich, who was at that time chairperson of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), underlines the important negotiating position of the women's lobby in the context of treaty negotiations and successful alliance politics mainly with the European Trade Union Confederation (Helfferich 1998).

During the eastward expansion of the EU regional networks which saw their identity and roots in middle and Eastern Europe, including the neighboring states, intervened increasingly often. The work of the KARAT coalition or also of ASTRA, an organisation concerned with sexual and reproductive rights of women, should be mentioned. These women's networks place pressure on their national governments with the help of progressive EU standards and as part of the expansion process.

Silke Roth points to specific feminist strategies and mobilisation that show the impact of the "boomerang" effect on policies of equal opportunity (Keck and Sicking 1998:12 after Roth: 2007). These patterns appear when channels between states and their national, civil society actors are blocked. In such situations international support can be used, for example that of the EU or UN, in order to increase pressure on states. As part of the expansion process, in which aspects of women and gender policy were only placed on the agenda from the side of the EU (Roth 2004, Choluj/Neusüß:2004), there exists the so-called "ping-pong effect", when "policy action often cycles back and forth between the EU and the national levels" (Zippel: 2004:59, after Roth:2007).

Today we can observe noticeable pluralisation, differentiation, specialisation and professionalisation of women's policy actors and women's

organisations. The autonomous women's movements increasingly network with each other in Europe in their fields, e.g. on violence (WAVE), health, gender, migration, gender budgeting and thereby attempt to increase their assertiveness.

The concept of gender equality

When gender equality is mentioned in the European context, one can assume that the concept carries different connotations in different languages (Verloo: 2007). Different women's and men's policy actors have different ideas of the world, its gender order and their strategies for overcoming gender hierarchies. Verloo emphasizes the necessity to keep an eye on the respective "framing" and its effects on equal opportunity goals.

"The meaning of gender equality is shaped through a variety of discursive processes. In these, the concept of gender equality is fit into existing policy frames, being broadened, narrowed down, watered down, or even submitted to other goals than that of gender equality. As particular(y) discussions of the issues of domestic violence and family policies show, the issue of gender equality can undergo processes of 'de-gendering' **where a gender equality focus that was previously present in the framing of an issue gets lost during the policy process by shifting the emphasis on other actors** (e.g. children or families, rather than the relation between men and women) or other goals (e.g. shifting the meaning of family policies from the goal of sharing to that of reconciling work and family life, where the goal becomes an efficient and competitive labour market rather than challenging traditional gender roles" (see for more Verloo P. 281:2007).

Reservations against and hopes for gender mainstreaming

Since the legal binding of gender mainstreaming in the Amsterdam Treaty, women and gender researchers, feminists and women's policy activists have been trying to answer the question of whether and under which conditions, the policy approach of gender mainstreaming can successfully promote equal opportunity policy – or if it (at times) could also lead to the opposite effect. Among the stated concerns is the fear that competition for scarce means, and the privileging of the “new approach”, could even lead to a reduction of (already insufficient) structures of financial support for women's policy (see also Holzer/Karadenizli/Specht/Windchurch 2002; Woodward 2003). The European Commission also reacted to this concern, emphasizing the significance of a double strategy of the approach of gender mainstreaming, in combination with women's empowerment (Commission's Report 1998).

Since the legal binding of gender equality policy in 1999, skeptics also fear that the fact of it being merely “soft law” and not an EU directive will lead only to problems with implementation. Breaches could not be punished with noticeable sanctions (see Schmidt 2000; Maier 2003). In addition, gender mainstreaming is hardly ever applied outside of the current focus on equal opportunity in the field of employment (Helfferich 2003). For the important area of European structural funds, criticism concentrates on gender mainstreaming not having been integrated into programme planning and on fundamental systematisations still missing. Lack of conceptual clarity about the place of implementation and about the details of the relationship to women's policy is said to exist (Meseke 2003).

An analysis covering all of Europe examined the aspect of gender policy in European regional programmes (EFRE), analysing which investments for

regional development in regions with lacking infrastructure are (co-)financed (Frankenfeld/Mechel 2004). Authors arrive at pessimistic results. Even though a systematic policy for equal opportunity of men and women is among the main principles of European regional policy, it is difficult to recognise any attempts at the integration of equal opportunity aspects ((ibidem:1). They suspect that aside from known factors, like “idleness of institutions” or “male dominance” (ibidem:3), there are problems that are part of the strategy. These problems are connected to the overburdening of the participating actors and they are difficult to harmonise with the core objectives of the regional funds – to give regions lacking infrastructure an opportunity to change. The authors see positive starting points, for example, in situations where it is possible to evaluate investments positively when these affect the number of jobs for women: for example, by giving female founders of new businesses favorable conditions (ibidem:6, see also Holz/Neusüß:2006).

Other critical feminist voices fear that harmonising real conflicts of interest rather blurs the image of existing inequalities between the sexes and limits the formerly active and visionary approaches of feminist policy to bureaucratic action that is subordinate to economic goals (Bereswill 2004).

More optimistic views see an advantage in the rather imprecise understanding of gender mainstreaming, since it leaves room for the pursuit of national paths and policies. It is mainly the indefiniteness of the concept that makes it compatible with different ideas of equal opportunity. Every member state could thereby pick the version that is convenient and that it sees fitting for its own equal opportunity tradition and culture. Since the precise details remain subject to the member states, the supranational level merely has a role of coordination, idea giver and example (a.o. Behning 2004). In addition, those who subscribe to this view hope for a paradigm change that would act deeply and fundamentally in all structures, consider both sexes – men and women – and thereby help overcome the seemingly deficient areas in analysing the position of women (see Choluj/Neusüß 2004).

Success can also be seen where the concept or aspect of gender mainstreaming has been explicitly named and described and where it results in well-prepared and published data, even if until now this has not happened sufficiently often.. One example is found in the synthesis reports of member states, which demand that the “gender gap”, for example in the area of wage development, must be named (Helfferich 2003) or in European economic policy. Although in the latter it plays mainly a role when women are concerned as a resource to be mobilised (Maier 2003). Altogether, notably the gender mainstreaming approach with focus on distribution aspects of budget policy and financial uses is seen as an especially interesting and possibly powerful tool in gender equality policy’s “tool kit” to act against distribution inequalities of public resources (Helfferich 2003, Villagomez 2004, Erbe 2004).

Gender mainstreaming in Germany – Obstacles, successes and current developments

Since the EU guideline on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in 1998 has taken effect, many diverse activities and measures, mainly of public administration and organisations in the countries of the European Union, have developed. Germany, being (regrettably) only in the middle field of equal opportunity in comparison with the rest of Europe, has gained experience with the strategy as a goal of its policy since the end of the 1990s on a communal level and with the agreement of the Cabinet of 1999 since the beginning of 2000 also on a national level.

The governmental programme “Modern State – Modern Administration” (*Moderner Staat – Moderne Verwaltung*) started in December of 1999 and ended in 2002. This programme aimed to help the federal administrative body in its

comprehensive reform under the concept of the activating state. The three pillars of the program were: modern administrative management, bureaucracy reduction and e-government. Gender mainstreaming was adopted as a priority of the governmental program.

So far, a number of pilot projects (conclusion of pilot phase at the end of 2003) have been tested. Among other things, the estimation of legal ramifications under the gender perspective, such as the development of tools or the aspect of gender-just public offers of reward, belong to this. In 2000, the inter-ministerial working group "Gender Mainstreaming" (IMA GM) of the federal government was constituted, directed by the State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The coordination of IMA GM lies with the department Gender Mainstreaming / *Gleichstellungsgesetze* of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The IMA GM works with the tool of working agreements to formulate its goals and plans in cooperation and with a high degree of commitment. The working group is to implement gender mainstreaming into the current work of all departments and thus presents the first step of a process of implementation. Also in 2000, the common rules of procedure / *Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung* (GGO) of the federal ministries were renewed. The new § 2 GGO states as follows: "The equal treatment of women and men is a continuous leading principle and is to be promoted in all its areas in all political, norm-giving and administrative measures of the federal government (gender mainstreaming)". (see also Gender Kompetenz Zentrum) As a result, the federal law of equal treatment (*Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz*), which incorporated the concept of gender mainstreaming, was passed (2001), a center of gender competence (*Gender Kompetenz Zentrum*) was founded at the Humboldt-University in Berlin (2003), a comprehensive web site was built and, in 2005, an annotated report on the equal treatment of women and men in Germany was produced (see appendix).

At the same time it can be noticed that, independent of the stated activities, the large societal reform plans such as the labor market reform of the red-green coalition were mostly implemented without gender mainstreaming and retouched somewhat only after strong protests of women's organisations. In daily politics, in the area where the important political plans are decided, gender mainstreaming as something given is still missing ! Yet, compared to the rather hesitant implementation of "traditional" equal opportunity policy for women, gender mainstreaming is at first look a success. Gender mainstreaming reactivated the slowing political debate on gender and increased public interest in the gender question. One reason for it is that also men increasingly think about gender aspects and question their traditionally assigned roles.

Recently, a public debate, partly informed and partly traditionally shaped, on gender mainstreaming has broken out in the media in Germany. The strategy itself is being negotiated, whether it is not in reality a "waste of taxpayers' money" or an "educational reform programme". But this debate also opens possibilities for a counter view. In any case, "mainstream" media have been reached. While this sounds promising, there are also critical voices: based on different reasons, some female proponents of "classical" women's policy and feminist theorists articulate skepticism towards the policy of gender mainstreaming. Among other things it is feared that gender mainstreaming could degenerate into "over-bureaucratization". The strategy could possibly promote conservative or traditional tendencies, when, for example, the emphasis on differences between women and men reproduces bipolarity instead of reducing it. Another criticism comes from the observation that economic incentives often are door-openers for equal opportunity measures in institutions and that gender mainstreaming thereby also allows neo-liberal policy. There is also the concern that other normative values are pushed to the sidelines, such as gender justice (see Meuser/Neusüß 2004. Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2005).

“Gender and diversity” – Opportunity for a comprehensive equal opportunity policy for women and men?!

A new challenge has appeared in recent years. With the recognition of “multiple diversity” of our living situations, differences along various social aspects within the genus groups of women and that of men become clearer. The strategy of “managing diversity” calls for hopes as well as concerns. Could gender and the equal treatment of women be neglected or at least marginalised due to the “larger pot” of diversity? Or can diversity help to bolster the fight against discrimination – within strengthened anti-discrimination laws – and even open new doors?

Proponents of gender mainstreaming see the opportunity for comprehensive and sustainable change of structures of gender relations. The expectation is based, among other things, on gender mainstreaming having to be legitimised “top-down” and being conceived of as a cross-section task, which concerns and potentially binds all actors in a political area or an organisation. The expectation is also fed by the view that gender mainstreaming is not only concerned with levelling the opportunities of men and women. It enables change to be initiated also by men and supports men who are willing to change and whose lives are, for example, not solely geared towards paid labor and career. Especially in many organisations, gender mainstreaming has contributed to a more relaxed and future-oriented discourse about gender aspects and hierarchies between women and men, which was not possible before the discussion on gender mainstreaming. In the view of many women policy activists there has appeared hope of formulating new organisational routines and strategic alliances with men (see also Neusüß 2002). In the framework of gender trainings, which aim among, other things, at increasing gender sensitivity and building of gender competence, there are increasingly

pairs of trainers or advisors, who aim for cooperation (male/female) and experience it as an advantage. Also in train-the-trainer seminars, there are increasingly more (though still not enough) men, who want to integrate gender in their professional profile as trainer and advisor.

A team of male and female trainers shows that men and women are equally responsible for gender equality. In addition, such a training team offers ideas for involving men. Stereotypes can be dealt with using a greater number of tools.

But the team must be aware that work in a mixed gender team could also strengthen gender role dichotomy. Therefore, a conscious, reflective and playful way of dealing with gender role patterns must be part of the competence of gender teams.

In the activities of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the context of gender democracy (Forum Men) as well as in the Gender&Diversity Association⁶, there are experts of both genders, unified by the implementation of gender mainstreaming and diversity and the reduction of gender hierarchies in federal organisations and institutions.

Overall, one can hardly speak of something like “the men’s movement”. But there is a small men’s policy scene in Germany. Men’s policy, or – to phrase it differently – topics related to masculine identity, can be found in the areas of working with boys, advice for fathers, men’s studies and, especially, in the debate on hegemonic masculinity (Cornell), in the work with men by churches and in men’s health. The project “New paths for boys” (*Neue Wege für Jungs*), realised by the Federal Ministry of the Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is trying to create new paths. Part of the project is a pilot study that analyses violence against men.

⁶ <http://www.gender-diversity.de>

Gender mainstreaming as an instrument of institutional reorganisation

According to my experience, the “success story” of gender mainstreaming, and especially its relatively high acceptance, results from the fact that gender mainstreaming is legitimized as part of the European treaty work, and also from the fact that it is discussed and implemented across Europe and the world. But it probably also rests on the ambivalence of the concept. Gender mainstreaming is part of (intra-institutional) negotiation processes, of organisational and administrative reform and is “charged” with various expectations. People and groups that have had so far hardly anything to do with gender or aspects of equal opportunity are beginning to deal with this approach. Their motivations vary. Sometimes the interest is simply due to a directive “from above”. At times it is money: the wish to work with European funds and the fear of one’s application being rejected otherwise. The often mentioned “win-win perspective” is also proving useful for the strategy. In addition, men recognise that, for example, the new law for the protection against radiation (*Strahlenschutzverordnung*) of the German government has advantages both for women (protection of the ability to bear children) and for men (protection of the ability to procreate).

From the promotion of women via selective equal opportunity work to gender mainstreaming – An example

My work with and in a large German and internationally active welfare association reveals highly complex meanings. For a few years the association

has been trying to reformulate its gender focus.. There existed a mix of interests, which was led by the desire for incorporating equal opportunity work into the organisation, the integration of more men and a greater responsibility and inclusion of the upper management. Staff members were supposed to become more open to the idea of change and part-time work and child-raising was to be made more attractive for men. But also personnel resources were to be reduced, in order to contribute to a cost decrease.

After many intra-institutional discussions, some changes and the training of top management, the next step was to get “middle management” involved in the new strategy. According to my observations, middle management is important in the operationalisation and implementation, and their role has so far been underrated. Processes of change can be significantly slowed or blocked at this point. It was of special importance to integrate gender mainstreaming into the processes of intra-organisational quality assurance. An important goal is to let gender become a quality criteria for good work and integrate it into organisational controlling processes. It leads to acceptance and shows itself thereby as an “ice breaker” for the participating men. It was also decided that there was to no longer be a gender equality appointee, but rather a special group of staff members whose role would be to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming as well as other tasks, directly subordinate to the leadership level. The future will show if the abolishment of the function of the gender equality appointee combined with the goal of spreading the responsibility for equal opportunity will succeed. The reorientation offers opportunities, because new strengths can be won for equal opportunity work. It also has risks, because spreading responsibility onto many people can also result in ambiguity about responsibilities, especially if the new (responsible) persons do not have the necessary competencies (yet). Evaluations and monitoring of the processes are therefore important for further work.

Can gender equality policies and diversity policies strengthen or hinder each other?

My answer is: both. Basically, I see a systemic approach that considers the respective organisation and its specific situation as helpful, rather than preferring “on principle” one of the approaches.. Whether one or the other approach is effective or a combination of both depends, among other things, on the respective organisational culture, knowledge and experience, political will, ability to learn as well as available resources. Gender equality policy is an approach that is theoretically more developed. Research on women, men and gender offers a broad basis of empirical and theoretical work. . The interdisciplinary character of recent research on gender, which discusses gender difference on several levels, is an important development in this area. By taking into consideration diversity and intersectionality of gender identity this approach makes it possible to prevent multiple discriminations and consider the diversity of the sexes.

On the other hand, the approach of diversity seems to me so far potentially under-theorized. Although I do see the danger of narrowing this approach down to strictly economic reasons or reasons connected to costs of labour, this risk does not necessarily have to come true. For one, this strategy also has roots in certain movements, such as the human rights movement in the U.S. and movements supporting rights of immigrants. Therefore, it would be a question of the framing and reference points.

Economic arguments can be door openers in organisations and not only for equality of the sexes. But their danger is that gender equality could, in the future, only count if it promotes working ability and “human capital”, that is when it transfers into financial results. I see further danger in the arbitrariness and the danger of a “backlash”. When governments want to limit sexual and reproductive civil rights, invoking local specificity and the diversity of the European community, then the community needs to emphasise the universality of human rights and women's rights as part of human rights. Negotiating gender implicitly

within the approach of a strategy of diversity has the advantage of high acceptance, especially in the private economy. The more current legal practice can be included as support, because it emphasises not only gender but also other aspects of difference (Krell:2008).

Gender mainstreaming in Germany in the context of conservative women's policy

The importance of gender mainstreaming in Germany has increasingly weakened on the governmental level in the last years. Clear statements about its value and significance are missing; at the same time resources and competencies are reduced. A steering committee on the ministerial level that coordinated activities among the different ministries in the past has been abolished and personnel and financial resources in the responsible department of the Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) have been reduced.

This can also be seen in the 6th Report of the Federal Republic of Germany on the agreement of the United Nations to eliminate any form of discrimination of women (CEDAW). Clear statements or declarations on commitment to the strategy are missing. Gender experts that have unified in the initiative "Gender Mainstreaming Experts International" criticize in an open letter to Minister von der Leyen that the report interprets gender mainstreaming "wrongly (...) as a trigger for resistance against gender equality and, therefore, promises a conceptual reorientation of gender policy for the Federal Republic". It is also criticised that this reorientation remains vague, that the changes of structural conditions and concrete gender political strategies are not formulated as objectives (see also *offener Brief GMEI: 2007*)⁷.

⁷ www.gmei.de

Furthermore, achievements in the area of implementation of gender mainstreaming are negated or simply not mentioned, such as the results of the scientific monitoring of gender mainstreaming processes of federal offices; the many, precisely operationalised working aids in the administrations or the diverse activities of the communal administrations, associations and institutions. The female experts of GMEI suspect that “if they had comprehended the concept [...], they would have offered a solid basis for commitment to the continuation of the gender mainstreaming strategy”. But this, as they suppose, is not desired at the moment.

A feasibility study on gender budgeting, which was contracted by the ministry in the past red-green governmental period, to see if and how gender budgeting can be applied in the federal offices, was finally – after many inquiries by actors in women's and gender policy – put online in October 2007. But nothing more occurred.

The study defines gender budgeting as part of a strategy of gender mainstreaming that relates to gender-specific, economic, fiscal and financial aspects of state action and that signifies the “systematic testing of all incoming and outgoing money in the budget process in the disposition, execution and accounting as well as all budget-relevant measures in terms of the economic effects for women and men as well as societal gender relations” (2007:5). It attests that gender budgeting has a special role in the implementation of gender mainstreaming and it shows that gender budgeting is an appropriate approach for the modernization of current budget processes. It also shows the relevance of budget decisions for gender equality effects. The next step was planned as a testing phase, with the “long-term goal of transparency in federal expenditures” (2007:5). As the study correctly notes, the most important condition for the implementation of gender budgeting on the federal level is the necessity of an “agreed upon implementation” (2007:16).

There had never been widespread, public application of the concept. The conclusion declares briefly, “the federal government comes to the

conclusion that there is still a need for clarification in fundamental questions”⁸. The long-term goal seems too removed at the moment.

Also the continuation of the center on gender competence – clearly decided on in the coalition agreement – is no longer specifically mentioned.

We can note that there is a decrease in addressing of GM on the federal level. At the moment, agreements on the further implementation can hardly be noticed!

Conclusion and current challenges

Altogether, several different and somewhat irritating phenomena can be observed in Germany at present. On the one side, one can say that there has never been as much gender-consciousness as today – equal status has become a societal norm.

Paid employment of mothers, following from the current family policy reforms, is declared an accepted norm on the political level, and the responsibility of fathers for child-raising and care is placed on the political agenda. Wage equality, lack of day nurseries, paternity leave for fathers are often discussed. Conservative women's policy – framed as family policy – has been significantly modernized⁹.

On the other side, gender mainstreaming is decreasingly less addressed on the governmental level and women's politics has been reduced to pro-family policies while gender equality initiatives have been restricted.

⁸ Machbarkeitsstudie GB auf Bundesebene (10-2007)

⁹ The introduction of wages for parents (*Bundeselterngehalt- und Elternzeitgesetz*), amounting to 70% of the former income, enables mothers and fathers to care for a baby in the first 12 months after the birth. When partners share childcare, the time increases to 14 months, otherwise the 2 months are forfeited. Since the introduction (2007) of this measure, the number of men caring for their babies has increased, even if it is mostly for 2 months.

There are currently many book publications, which have led to a public discussion in the media. Topics include “alpha girls” and the “F class”. It is often recalled that many goals of the women’s movement have still not been reached. At the same time, the female authors distance themselves from more radical feminist ideas. But the knowledge about the historic developments in the past four decades seems less present. Young women may possibly fall prey to the trap of wanting to solve the political privately, because they see themselves as emancipated, they believe that equality has already been achieved and, therefore, they prefer to act individually. The public sphere also lacks male (!) role models.

Politically, there is a need of a re-addressing gender mainstreaming on the governmental level in Germany and especially further engagement and political decisions. An offensive (of education) in terms of gender (and diversity) competence could become part of the discussion on needed educational reforms.

On the EU level, there is a need for clarification of responsibility, appropriate means of pressure, an increase of the share of women in all decision-making committees, a closer dialogue with NGOs as well as the development of measures for monitoring and sanctioning (see also Holz 2008¹⁰, Holz/Neusüß 2006). Strengthened re-politicisation and the pressure of a coalition of science, politics and civil society could add movement into the European “deadlock”.

It should be noted that due to the multiple dimensions of diversity, “solidarity in difference” (Axeli-Knapp:2008)¹¹ is to be practiced. We must

¹⁰ At a conference on „Frauenfragen sind Männerfragen sind Geschlechterfragen. 40 Jahre Neue Frauenbewegungen. – Und jetzt?“ Conference from June 12 – 14, 2008 at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

¹¹ At a conference on „Frauenfragen sind Männerfragen sind Geschlechterfragen. 40 Jahre Neue Frauenbewegungen. – Und jetzt?“ Conference from June 12 – 14, 2008 at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

learn more from each other and discover our potential. In our countries, within Europe and internationally we need a dialogue for the exchange of ideas between different (gender equality) actors in science, economics and (political) practices. We need stronger coalitions between different women's policy actors and between women and men, as well as more strategic planning and consultation. Furthermore, we need a new feminist offensive to (again) point to the structural dimension of inequality in the best feminist tradition!

Appendix

(Source: Gender Kompetenz Zentrum)

Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz

The new federal equal opportunity law (*Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz*) is applicable since November 30, 2001. The goal of the law is the equal opportunity of the woman in the federal administration and in the federal courts. The new regulation promotes the actual implementation of equal opportunity of women and men and abolishes existing disadvantages. § 2 shows the basic principle of gender mainstreaming. Key aspects of the new law are:

- Women with the same qualifications are – with consideration of the individual case – preferably considered in training, employment and promotion where they are under-represented.
- The compatibility of family and career will be improved (entitlement to part-time employment, telecommuting jobs or special working time models).
- The rights of gender equality appointees will be strengthened.
- Plans for equal opportunity will be expanded to become effective instruments of modern personnel planning.
- The guidelines for equal opportunity plans now guarantee an unchanged percentage of women also in case of cutbacks.

Trade unions also support the new law. In 2001 *ver.di* trade unions integrated gender mainstreaming as a task in the statutes and introduced a gender appointee in the federal board.

2002

Gender mainstreaming on the Internet

April of 2002, gender mainstreaming of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth goes online under: www.gender-mainstreaming.net.

Gender mainstreaming in the coalition agreement

On October 16, 2002 the coalition agreement between SPD and Bündnis 90 /Die Grünen is signed. Chapter VII (Equal opportunity of women and men) mentions: "Gender mainstreaming is to be sustainably integrated as a method for the implementation of article 3 of the Basic Law in all departments of the federal government. (...) We will build a center of gender competence (*Gender-Kompetenzzentrum*) that supports the introduction of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, initiates research, concentrates knowledge and trains experts of both sexes.

“Taking stock of the governmental program Modern State – Modern Administration” (“Moderner Staat – Moderne Verwaltung”)

In 2002, the federal government in the governmental programme “Modern State – Modern Administration” praised gender mainstreaming as a factor for the successful completion of the programme. It was also noted that an effective administration that is oriented to needs and services cannot afford inequality of men or women. On the basis of this conclusion, the fourth step of the implementation process was introduced: gender mainstreaming was to be established as an element of modern administration in the departments.

2003

Opening of the Gender Kompetenz Zentrum

The *Gender Kompetenz Zentrum* is established as an independent research and consulting institution at the Humboldt University in Berlin and opened on October 27, 2003 by the Federal Minister Renate Schmidt. The center is an externally funded project at the Lehrstuhl Fr. Prof. Dr. Susanne Baer at the law faculty, financed by the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend.

End of pilot project phase of federal ministries

Until December 2003, a total of 33 pilot projects on the implementation of gender mainstreaming were conducted at the federal ministries. These projects were to include equal opportunity aspects with precise examples, covering, towards the end, the entire breadth of political-administrative actions. The results of the pilot projects were introduced in the IMA GM by the respective departments as “best practice” examples and discussed, especially in light of the aspect of transferability to all departments. Cross-departmental working tools and check lists as well as the Wissensnetz Gender Mainstreaming are important results. The pilot project phase presented the second step of implementation of gender mainstreaming in the federal government.

2004

New Web site of the federal government on gender mainstreaming

Since March 8, 2004, a modernized Web site on gender mainstreaming is available. It contains links to several departments of the ministries and to the federal states. It shows the implementation process of the federal government with the key results such as a web of knowledge (*Wissensnetz*) and working tools. In addition, visitors to the gender mainstreaming web site have the opportunity to ask questions or give tips to the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

2005

Coalition agreement of CDU/CSU/SPD

On November 11, 2005, the coalition agreement between CDU, CSU and SPD was signed. Chapter VI (Family-Friendly Society) is concerned with “equal opportunity and women’s policy”. It also says: “We want to strengthen gender competence and will assure the effective implementation of § 2 GGO and make sure that appropriate tools are available, for example the *GenderKompetenzZentrum*”. Once in each legislative period we will “present a report on the equality of women and men and in a following governmental declaration point to the progress, show the remaining deficits and the resulting consequences”.

Report on the equal opportunities of women and men in Germany

On November 29, 2005, an annotated data report on the equal opportunities of women and men in Germany was published. The data report was compiled by the *Jugend vom Deutschen Jugendinstitut* (DJI) and contracted by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. It contains a comprehensive and current status description on equal opportunity on the basis of official and representative data. The report shows the situation of men and women with different backgrounds in different areas (paid employment, training, compatibility of family and career, social protection, health status and concernment of violence). The report also concludes that the situations and participation opportunities women and men have in many areas are converging, but that there are still significant differences, for example in the area of employment, in political and social participation.

Translated by **Sybillé Reinke de Buinrago**

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3.

Gender Mainstreaming in the Czech Republic: a Critical Perspective

Martina Kampichler, Katerina Machovcova

Gender mainstreaming (GM) is a contested concept – it can be analysed, on the one hand, from feminist theoretical points of view mainly concerned with the concept's relationship to other approaches to gender equality as well as its potential to promote these goals, and, on the other hand, from the point of view of its practical implementation and usefulness at the various levels of policy actors (see, for example, Walby 2005, Rees 2002, Daly 2005). In theory and practice we find a large number of differing definitions of the concept (Rees 2002) and recently also a cumulation of critical surveys of problems occurring in the practice of gender mainstreaming as well as of their theoretical implications (see for example Walby 2005, Daly 2005, Booth, Bennett 2002).

Mary Daly (2005) for example sees this ambivalent situation partly as a result of the quite specific development of gender mainstreaming as a concept, mainly "under the auspices of policy organizations" (pg. 434). She argues that due to this it is hard to differentiate accounts on GM that aim to promote it as a policy approach and those contributions which further the approach theoretically. Though this does not necessarily have to be a problem, Daly points out that it puts the development of specific aspects of GM in the foreground.

Indeed the key players in GM's introduction and development were international or supranational organization such the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union. Gender mainstreaming is said to have its roots in the development programs of the UN, where it was put forward as a tool to ensure better integration of women into such programs in order to make the positive effects of development work more accessible to women. GM was first mentioned at the 1985 UN World Conference on Women held in Nairobi and, after its following diffusion within the UN and its programs, GM was confirmed ten years later as the key strategic approach of the Beijing Platform for Action (Council of Europe 1998). In the course of the preparations of the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, as well as during its aftermath, gender mainstreaming also became a central part of the EU's gender equality policy discourse (Stratigaki 2005) and finally, through the Treaty of Amsterdam

(which came into force in 1999), got embedded also in the Treaty of the EU as one of the EU's activities (Art. 3). As a result, new member states of the EU (for example, the Czech Republic joining in 2004) had to implement GM not only as part of the Beijing Platform for Action, but also as part of the EU's *acquis communautaire* (which has far more legally binding character). The general conceptualization of GM (also in the context of the EU) received significant input from the Council of Europe expert group on gender mainstreaming (see Council of Europe 1998). However, parallel to these developments, emerged also feminist theoretical interest in the conceptualisation as well as critical analysis of GM.

Today we find a diverse mixture of practical definitions of the strategy – e.g. in handbooks, policy documents etc. (for example, European Communities 2005) – as well as attempts to make sense of the concept from a feminist and often more theoretical point of view (as shown, for example, in the special issue of *Social Politics* 12 (3) on Gender Mainstreaming). Related to that, we also find a number of ways and degrees of the implementation of GM, differing not only among nation-states, but also among the various institutions and organisations within them (Daly 2005, Rees 2002).

This situation constitutes the point of departure for the current publication of the HBS, which aims to contribute to the discussions of the conceptualisation and usefulness of GM by shedding light on current developments of the strategy in the region where the Heinrich Böll Foundation Warsaw operates. Inspired by Barbara Unmüßig's (2005) *Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming*, we aim to discuss examples of the use of GM in the Czech Republic not only from the point of view of the stage of its implementation, but also from the angle of what these developments can tell us about the quality and sustainability of GM as a strategy to achieve gender equality. In order to create a broader context for developing the case study of the Czech Republic, in the first part of the article we provide a concise overview of some feminist critical discussions of GM – both from the point of view of its theoretical conceptualisation as well as its practical implementation mainly among the EU member states.

The conceptualisation of GM

The central point connected to the conceptualisation of GM, however also to its implementation and radical potential in promoting and achieving gender equality, is how this strategy is being defined. As already suggested, the UN¹, the Council of Europe² as well as the EU³ are three key organisations which, to a certain extent, in the past decades led the way of defining GM. All three definitions vary in their range and focus. While the UN's definition puts its main emphasis on gender impact assessment, the Council of Europe's definition as well as the EU's are more encompassing: both explicitly refer to gender equality as the aim of GM and demand an active approach to policy change.

It is important to bear in mind that defining GM within a certain organisation is not necessarily a one-time job, but more a matter of negotiation and development. Maria Stratigaki (2005) for example points to the ambivalent use and development of the concept within the European Commission. While in the run-up to the Beijing conference the EU actively supported GM, later on (according to Stratigaki mainly under Commissioner Pádraig Flynn) the concept

¹ The Beijing Platform for Action defines GM as follows: "Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively." (United Nations 1997-2005: para 202)

² "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 policy making." (Council of Europe 1998: 12)

³ "Gender mainstreaming is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men – and taking responsibility to re-address them if necessary. This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men creating space for everyone within the organisations as well as in communities – to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality." (European Communities 1995-2008)

was used to undermine and cut down positive action programmes rather than to actively promote gender equality. However, the critical reactions of several actors within the EU or associated with it (e.g. the Committee on Women's Rights in the European Parliament and the European Women's Lobby⁴) led to further developments, which supported a twin-track approach (integrating GM and positive action approaches).

Moreover, it is not only interesting what these definitions include, but also what they exclude. With regards to that, Mieke Verloo (2005), who chaired the group of experts that developed the definition of the Council of Europe, provides a critical analysis of the definition from this point of view. In her critique, she points, among others factors, to a lack of space for oppositional politics. Mainly through limiting GM to "the actors normally involved in policy making" the definition excludes non-governmental and other organisations associated with the women's movement from active involvement or attributes to them only the role of "external actors" providing expert knowledge at most. According to Verloo (2005) this not only presents the struggle for gender equality as a quite apolitical matter and an allegedly consensual goal, but also reduces the potential for empowerment. Furthermore, as also highlighted by Unmüßig (2005), this exclusion makes GM especially vulnerable in the context of poorly functioning institutions and a lack of political will.

As these accounts, together with the considerations of Barbara Unmüßig, show the conceptualisation of GM constitutes a kind of development process and there is still large (feminist) potential for its further improvements. However, large potential for improvements lies also in the implementation of current conceptualisations of GM within policy making, as well as the integration of GM principles into various public and private organisations.

⁴ Online: <http://www.womenlobby.org/site/hp.asp?langue=EN>

Critical feminist views on implementing GM

A central problem with regards to this, is an often found lack of analysis of the concrete state of gender inequality in a given context and, connected to that, the absence of formulating concrete gender equality goals (Verloo 2005, Daly 2005). After examining the use of the Council of Europe's definition by various policy actors, Verloo (2005) argues that in many cases, the definition is cited without any further reference to or operationalisation of what "a gender equality perspective" means. This is often related to a rather technocratic understanding of GM, which sometimes confuses the strategy with the simple application of certain tools associated with GM (see for example Rees 2005). Closely related to that is also the problem of a certain dilution of efforts on positive action, based on the assumption that GM simply substitutes previous policy approaches to gender equality (Unmüßig 2005, Stratigaki 2005).

With regards to the implementation of GM we also find discussions about the final impact of GM – whether this strategy is limited to merely integrating gender equality issues within existing policy fields or whether it implies agenda setting in the sense of challenging and changing existing policy priorities (Jahan 1995, Squires 2005). Related to that, feminist critiques also discuss matters of strategic framing of GM or, to put it another way, the linkage of GM to other goals (e.g. pursuing modern policy approaches, efficiency etc.) (Verloo 2005, Daly 2005, Unmüßig 2005). The questions arising here are to what extent such framings help to get GM accepted in certain organisations and, on the other hand, to what extent means this a co-optation of the concept – especially when such other goals do not fully comply with the goal of gender equality (Verloo 2005, Daly 2005). From this point of view, strategic framing bears the risk of leading to rather integrationist implementation of GM, where the strategy loses its transformative potential of putting gender equality on top of the policy agenda.

Apart from these considerations, there are also feminist critical voices that challenge GM and mainly its potential to achieve gender equality even more fundamentally. Daly (2005), for example, criticises the strategy for its lack of a profound theory of social change. GM departs from the assumption that public policy (which GM is related to) is not gender neutral and supports and reproduces certain gender inequalities in society. Therefore GM through changing the policy making processes towards promoting gender equality is supposed to make a difference. However Daly (2005, pg. 447) asks a central question: "... it is not clear how change in governance translates into soci(et)al change. What is the relation between public policy and social structure organization?" So even if we know that certain public policies limit the promotion of gender equality in society, can we expect that these policies are also in the position to fully remedy these inequalities? And what about the inequalities not related to public policy? Consequently, according to Daly, we cannot expect GM to completely eliminate gender inequalities in society.

Therefore, central questions within all these discussions about the potential of GM appear to be: What do "we" (from a critical feminist point of view) expect to achieve with GM? Profound social change towards gender equality? A broader approach to policy making? Raising gender-awareness in policy making? And to what extent is GM in its current conceptualization as well as "the actors normally involved in policy making" able, willing and in the position to fulfil these expectations? And how do we know that the outcomes of GM are not just empty rhetoric, but at least point into a feminist direction?

Towards a feminist reading of GM

Though in their article, *Gender Mainstreaming in the EU – Incorporating a Feminist Reading?* Emanuela Lombardo and Petra Meier (2006) do not provide a definite answer to these questions, they provide at least some orientation for a feminist

reading of GM, which seems important for evaluating and further developing this strategy. For them a feminist use of GM implies 5 central shifts in policy making: 1) using a broader approach of gender equality that problematises gender inequalities within a larger structural context and allows for multiple causes of gender inequalities; 2) a transformational use of GM, prioritizing gender equality issues over competing objectives (agenda setting); 3) an equal representation of women and men, challenging the unequal gender distribution of resources; 4) changes in institutional and organisational cultures that integrate gender expertise and analysis of how gender inequalities are created and reproduced; 5) “empowerment” and “displacement”, understood as more active participation of women’s organisations and civil society, as well as going beyond the dichotomy of “sameness/difference” in gender equality policy making.

These five shifts imply a high level of what has been referred to as *gender competence* with everyday policy makers. The GenderKompetenzZentrum⁵ at the Humbolt University Berlin provides a useful definition and outline of this kind of competence: “...the ability of people to recognize gender perspectives in their work and policy fields and concentrate on them towards the goal of gender equality.” This is connected to three central features: *intention*, *knowledge* and *ability*. Intention refers to the readiness of a person to treat others in a fair manner, meaning the motivation to actively contribute to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This encompasses both individual as well as political will for change. Knowledge implies the integration of the broad range of findings about how gender structures our society as well as about the living conditions of women and men, with expert knowledge of a certain subject area or policy field. Related to this is not only a continuous up-date and further development of relevant data, but first and foremost a critical and reflective use of gender as an analytical category – as, for example, pointed out by a group of authors

⁵ Online: <http://www.genderkompetenz.info/genderkompetenz/>

from Germany in their GenderManifesto⁶. There they point to the dangers of using gender in the sense of women/men dichotomy, concentrating on and therefore reproducing differences in the sense of two homogeneous groups of men and women. Instead, they call for a use of gender to *undo* gender – which means not simply “allowing” for differences, but going beyond the dichotomies of men/women or sameness/difference (see also Verloo 2005). Finally, the third factor of gender competence, is the ability to use gender mainstreaming, in the sense of resources and other conditions provided for applying relevant tools and measures.

The following sections present several examples of gender equality as well as the implementation and use of gender mainstreaming in the Czech context, which will be later on evaluated based on the feminist reading of GM outlined above.

Equality between men and women in the Czech context

Considering the terminology, the term “equal opportunities of men and women” is found far more often than “gender mainstreaming”. On the one hand, this is reasonable, because this term can be more easily approached and understood, as gender mainstreaming is a foreign term, which can be confusing unless accompanied by a precise definition. On the other hand, this language practice obscures the complex strategy and goals of gender mainstreaming, thus contributing to its sometimes misleading implementation.

⁶ For more see, online: <http://www.gender-mainstreaming.org/>, http://www.gender.de/mainstreaming/GenderManifesto_engl.pdf

The very first state policy document on equal chances of women and men was Priorities and Procedures in Promoting Equality between Men and Women⁷, published in 1998. Since then a similarly structured document is published on an annual basis, followed by a summary of activities undertaken by the government and individual ministries.

In the 1998 edition the principles of equality between men and women lack thorough definition. At the very beginning of the document it is stated: *“Equality of citizens without regard to their sex is a part of basic principles of democratic society... (Government) shows its own level of engagement in the combating of stereotypes looking on the role of women in the society and family”*. Briefly, there are three biases to be seen here. First of all, arguing for equality “without considering sex” gives rise to so called “gender neutrality” policies, which, as plenty of gender analyses and researches show, easily lead to, for instance, maintaining the very same standards for everybody and thus contribute to indirect discrimination. The paradox of equality lies in the fact that sometimes the same and sometimes different standards need to be considered. Second of all, the main focus is obviously put on the position of women in society, male-related stereotypes are currently not being acknowledged. Last but not least, as Pavlík (2008) also points out, using “sex” instead of “gender” in some cases strengthens biological determinism and distracts attention from culturally and historically shaped gender roles and gendered structures. Obviously, these issues are supposed to be addressed by equality policies aiming at societal change. However, when such policies acknowledge biological determinism at the same time, this does not seem to be possible. Furthermore, as for example argued by Bacchi (1999), concentrating on stereotypes presents inequalities as

⁷ Priority a postupy vlády při prosazování rovnosti mužů a žen, online: <http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/654/zprava.pdf>

a problem linked to the attitudes of individuals instead of dealing with them as results of structures embedded in society and institutions.

The 2007 issue of the Priorities again does not bring any initial definition, but is far more focused on both genders. However, while the document includes some positive action towards women (especially in the area of access to economic activity), it does not identify the relevant need in the care domain considering men. Furthermore, in the section devoted to reproductive rights, it reinforces the women = reproduction stereotype. So again, some of the most obvious gender stereotypes can be identified in the very document that is supposed to function as a platform for challenging them.

In addition as Pavlík (2008) argues there are other misunderstandings on the conceptual level. The term gender equality is used as if synonymous with equality of women and men. In fact gender equality encompasses a wider area of all gendered identities (e.g. gay, lesbian, transgender, queer). Generally the whole framework of equality issues in the Czech Republic is based on heteronormative preconceptions and therefore risks homogenizing women/men. Further on in the text it will be shown how these misreadings support confusion in the other processes of the implementation of gender mainstreaming, especially with regards to projects financed from the European Social Fund.

Equality machinery in the Czech Republic

On the governmental level the responsibility for gender equality is assigned to the ministry responsible for human rights and national minorities. The appointed minister is at the same time the head of the Government Council for

Equal Opportunities for Women and Men⁸, which constitutes an advisory board of members of various state institutions as well as nongovernmental organizations and other interest groups such as trade unions. The Department for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men⁹ is a part of the Office of the Government and provides services for the Minister and the Council. Furthermore, it fulfils other tasks like initiating research, the coordination of educational activities and is held responsible for the collection of documents for the summary on the governmental Priorities.

There are other advisory bodies and working groups dealing with related issues (work-life balance, domestic violence etc.), but none of them have any specific powers to monitor equality politics. This institutional provision goes along with the establishment of gender focal points by each ministry, which usually means one part-time worker who is responsible for the equality agenda besides other duties.

There are no gender equality bodies on county and/or other local levels. Minor activities are supported by initiatives stemming from the nongovernmental sector, which found acceptance at the ministerial level. Since 2007 competitions promoting equal opportunities, like Office of the Year „Fifty fifty“¹⁰, and, since 2008, Family Friendly Community¹¹ are being announced.

These institutional provisions have been criticized widely. For instance in the Final recommendations for the report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2006¹² and in the Shadow Report(s) on equal treatment and equal opportunities of men and

⁸ Official website: <http://www.vlada.cz/en/rvk/rovnoprilezitosti.html>

⁹ This department used to be part of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs until the end of 2007.

¹⁰ Online: <http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/sprava/priprava/uradroku.html>

¹¹ Online: <http://www.obecpratelskarodine.cz/>

¹² Online: http://www.vlada.cz/assets/cs/rvk/rlp/dokumenty/mezinarodni_umluvy/cedaw/3CEDAW_Z_v_re_n_doporu_en_CZ.pdf

women repeatedly published by a group of gender experts from academic and non-profit institutions¹³. The main concern expressed in both documents is that the status quo lacks a systematic approach and that the government fails to fulfil its own declared goals (Appeltová, 2008). Experts persistently call for expanded competences and capacities of the equality bodies.

The limited activities of the government are followed by a lack of gender sensitivity on the level of institutions like labour offices, labour inspections and courts. Several court cases were ruled out as having nothing to do with gender discrimination, including the infringement of the principle of equal pay and the right to part time work for caring parents¹⁴.

Moreover, the antidiscrimination bill, first introduced in 2004, was in its reduced version vetoed by president Vaclav Klaus in 2008 on the grounds of it being useless and counterproductive¹⁵. While there is growing understanding that inequalities and discrimination on the labour market do exist, society seems to be anxious of providing victims of discrimination with more powerful tools, as, according to prevailing public opinion, such instruments could be misused against employers.

These findings also show that the approach to GM embraced by the Czech government to a large extent lacks the 5 shifts towards a feminist reading of GM outlined above. The lack of an overall approach to gender equality, which not only hinders the problematisation of gender inequalities within a larger structural context, but also the transformational use of GM, seems especially problematic. The limited changes in institutions and organizations, which point to a lack of political will, are another central problematic point. Related to that is also the repeated refusal to cooperate with NGOs more actively on that

¹³ Online: <http://www.proequality.cz/res/data/005/000588.pdf>

¹⁴ Eva Fialová, Soudní ochrana před diskriminací je v České republice stále neúčinná, online: <http://feminismus.cz/fulltext.shtml?x=2091940>

¹⁵ The Czech Parliament will deal with the bill again in the autumn of 2008.

topic (e.g. based on the findings of the shadow reports), which limits possibilities for empowerment. From the point of view of gender competence, apart from the already mentioned deficit in political will, an important problem is the lack of a critical and reflected understanding of the gender concept, as the findings point to a use of the word “gender” that remains stuck in the men/women dichotomy.

The application of gender mainstreaming in social projects

Before we turn to the implementation and use of gender mainstreaming in Equal projects in the Czech Republic, we should take a short critical feminist look at the EQUAL Guide to Gender Mainstreaming issued by the European Commission (European Communities 2005), which is aimed at presenting and introducing the gender mainstreaming concept to Equal beneficiaries. All in all, this guide shows some positive evidence of promoting a feminist reading of GM (e.g. discussing social structures as the basis of inequalities between women and men (pg. 7), or pointing out that other factors, apart from gender, also influence the position of men and women in society (pg. 7) or promoting cooperation with NGOs (pgs. 20, 25).

However, there are also elements that point in the opposite direction. The presented definition of gender equality: “that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured and do not give rise to different consequences that reinforce inequalities” (pg. 10) might be seen as problematic. This definition remains in a gender dichotomy of pre-inscribed differences between women and men and, consequently, does not actively allow for *undoing* gender in the sense of challenging the currently prevailing social categories or identities of men and women and creating space for new and alternative ones (see also Verloo 2005, GenderManifesto). Furthermore,

the guide as a whole very much concentrates on techniques of implementation and only very shortly discusses what to implement – that is gender equality.

Nevertheless, an even more important question is how these principles have been implemented within concrete projects.

The most outstanding application of gender mainstreaming is to be found in the projects jointly supported by the European Social Fund and the Czech national budget¹⁶, especially in those projects within the Community Initiative Programme Equal¹⁷. While the projects financed through other programmes¹⁸ were obliged to include equal opportunities as a horizontal priority, Equal projects operated with the gender mainstreaming concept. That means all projects had to include gender mainstreaming, plus there was a specific group of projects focused directly on equal opportunities of men and women.

Let us again take a look at the Guide on Gender Mainstreaming¹⁹ available for Equal beneficiaries. As one of the first claims it points out: „*Equal participation of women and men in all aspects of society is crucial for lasting growth and democracy*“ (pg. 5). Unfortunately, in many projects this was transformed into the mere monitoring of the quantitative male – female participation in the offered activities²⁰. While gendered statistics are important for the start of any activity, they are far from being a sufficient equality tool on their own.

¹⁶ Online: <http://www.esfcr.cz/clanek.php?lg=1&id=1>

¹⁷ It is referred to the projects supported in the II. round of CIP Equal, active in years 2005 – 2008, online: <http://www.equalcr.cz>.

¹⁸ Namely: JPD3 NUTS2 Praha (The Single Programming Document For Objective 3, Prague), OPRLZ (Operational Programme Human Resources Development)

¹⁹ English version online: c.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/gendermain_en.pdf, for the text the Czech version was evaluated, online: http://www.equalcr.cz/files/clanky/7/GENDER_mainstreaming_guide.pdf

²⁰ Author (K.M.) has participated in numerous activities within CIP Equal projects, including the evaluation of gender mainstreaming principle initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, website of the evaluation team leader: <http://www.regiopartner.cz>, the final report shall be online on www.equalcr.cz in October, 2008.

Considering access to resources/services, the approaches undertaken by developmental partnerships²¹ often have two characteristics:

- men are tolerated, not encouraged to participate
- a majority of women is unconditionally interpreted as equality

This means that a number of activities were “open” for men to join, or it was said “if men applied, we would not reject them”, but there were no specific measures taken to support an active/equal participation of men. Especially in CIP Equal projects this means a failure with regards to the innovation principle²². Sometimes we also find examples of gender stereotypes: where, for example, at the beginning of the project, the term “persons on parental leave” was used, but in the course of the project this turned into “mothers”. So linguistic barriers for male participation obviously persist and this language use confirms that childcare is still not seen as an issue “for boys”.

Another problem is that situations where women represent the majority are often simply interpreted as proof of equality without any regards to vertical and horizontal segregation, not to speak of the importance of male representation among both project experts and beneficiaries.

Given the statistical data on the position of women in the labour market²³, it is understandable that within a framework of a twin-track gender mainstreaming approach (Moser 2005), women are addressed in more projects. Activities within the Fifty-Fifty project²⁴, which successfully aimed at father’s participation in parenting, are one of the rare examples of positive action towards men.

²¹ CIP Equal projects are realized by a number of partner organizations who formed so called developmental partnership usually coordinated by the recipient of the grant.

²² There are basically 7 main principles obligatory for the projects: partnership, transnational cooperation, innovation, common decision-making, mainstreaming, thematic approach and gender mainstreaming.

²³ See Czech Statistical Office, online: <http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/home>

²⁴ Online, e.g.: <http://www.vega-eu.org/>, <http://www.pulnapul.cz>

Nevertheless, the track of mainstreaming cannot be left out completely from the overall perspective, which unfortunately is the case in most projects. Two problems can be identified here: an unclear understanding of the interconnection between public and private life and a homogenisation of women/men.

Although these issues are addressed clearly in the guide, for instance when it points out: *"...demand for more balance in work and family life is coming from women and men yet policies to reconcile these two areas continue to focus largely on the mother"* (pg.5), it is not properly reflected on the practical level. Though the guide also emphasises that *"the issue is not how to 'add' women to various processes but to reshape these processes to create the space for women's and men's involvement"* (pg. 5), this again remains unacknowledged in numerous projects.

With regards to further evaluation of the goals of projects, the categorisation proposed by Niemanis et al. (2007) proved to be useful. The authors define two different sets of goals:

- corrective: seek to address the needs and concerns of both genders. If men or women are disadvantaged in the given situation, the policy goal should seek to redress this imbalance. These goals aim to correct gender-blindness (pg. 31).
- transformative: these are concerned with transforming the institutions and structures (social, political, economic, cultural etc.) of the policy context, so that full gender equality can be more readily achieved (pg. 31).

As suggested above most of the projects address corrective goals with regard to decreasing inequalities concerning women. Only some of them do that with a feminist consciousness and as an active choice, being aware of the possibility and necessity of other options and/or measurements, which would focus on a more structural level and which should be carried out when the timing is right.

The problem of homogenisation was previously mentioned. The Guide deals comprehensively with the differences between women/men, although for some unclear reason the chapter valuing difference holds a different name in

Czech: Estimate of Difference. It specifies that both women and men possess different characteristics and are located in different societal positions, which need to be considered, so GM is not only about differences between men and women, but also about differences among men and among women.

However, a number of projects failed to effectively consider such differences. To give practical examples, some projects were focused on parents (mothers) re-entering the labour market after their maternity leave. A significant amount of activities were focused on providing labour market orientation (how to write curriculum vitae, where to find job postings etc.), teaching basic PC skills and, in some cases, motivational trainings (soft-skills etc.) were offered. Only a small number of projects were considerate enough to provide for instance advanced courses on information technology – an outstanding example with regards to that, provides the project EYNA coordinated by the Czech Agricultural University²⁵. Another persisting problem are offers of gender stereotypical re-skilling trainings, usually for assistant positions²⁶ or in the care sector²⁷. This is not to disclaim projects which operate with more traditional male/female identities and needs, but in the whole picture we see too many projects like this and they often lack any sort of reflection towards the various other options available.

Repeatedly these projects refer to the connections “women – care”, “women – low self-esteem”, “women – work-life balance”, do not offer any alternatives and shrug at the low participation of men in such activities. As a consequence, inequality structures prevailing in the society are being reinforced instead of challenged. Furthermore, as Rees (1998) points out, patriarchally structured institutions remain unchanged and women only move from exclusion towards segregation (e.g. within specific segments of labour market). Gender mainstreaming

²⁵ This activity is supported through JPD3 and OPRLZ scheme, online: <http://evyna.pef.czu.cz>

²⁶ See for example project Reintegration of Mothers, online: http://www.mostkevzdelani.eu/maminky/jicin/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=9&Itemid=6

²⁷ See for example project Development of Social Care Services and Reintegration of Women on the Labour Market in small rural communities, online: <http://www.charita.novyknin.net/index.php?id=19>

was designed as a strategy to overcome these risks, so these experiences and analysis point to an inappropriate application of GM.

Another part of this problem is the persisting focus on alternative and flexible work arrangements in connection to mothers. As Fodor (2006) emphasizes, the possibility for women to work part-time changed their behaviour, but barely affected the organisational structures. Women now work even harder to fulfil their caring tasks and simultaneously reach a certain economic independence. This is a risk that only a small number of projects acknowledge, through adopting e.g. a flexicurity framework or other ways of warning about the risks of flexible working arrangements.

Of course, also good practices with regards to the application of gender mainstreaming exist and those are especially, but not solely, represented by partnerships that are primarily focused on promoting gender equality and involve organizations with background knowledge in women's rights and feminism. Such good practice examples are to be found especially in the context of the projects *Breaking the Waves*²⁸ and *Fifty-Fifty*²⁹, because these initiatives have a strong focus on structural changes. For example, one working programme of the BW project is concerns politics and contains activities like: writing regular shadow reports on the governmental equality reports, gender audits for local municipalities, relevant gender analysis and seminars. The Project FF is more focused on employers and provides numerous activities, such as: studies on equality issues in human resources management, online and printed publications, seminars and conferences, individual counselling etc. All these activities also focus on a proper and successful popularisation of their results in the media, which helps to put pressure on politics/organisations to accept changes. The cel-

²⁸ Online: <http://www.proequality.cz/>

²⁹ Online: <http://www.pulnapul.cz>

celebration of the International Day of Equal Opportunities (19th June) also brings both public and political attention to the issues.

As can be seen from these examples, obviously good practices do exist and can be inspiring, not only for other coordinating teams who seek assistance, but also for people in decision – making positions.

When we discuss the quality of CIP Equal projects we also need to pay some attention to the role of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is appointed as a steering authority for these projects. Consequently, if there are deficits in gender mainstreaming within these projects, this likely also points to failures on the side of this body. Officially, a regular audit of how the projects fulfil indicators, which were set in advance, took place, so we also have to ask: how was it possible that beneficiaries were not warned that their activities risked reinforcing stereotypes and showed signs of misunderstanding the gender mainstreaming concept? Nevertheless, there is also a kind of learning process going on and also some good practices, for instance the successful running of national thematic networks, which provided a platform for experience and know-how sharing.

A lesson still to be learned is using gender mainstreaming as thoroughly integrative, not as an specific activity detached from everyday practice, as the author³⁰ experienced within the project Outplacement for Big Companies³¹. This project includes e.g. equality seminars for human resources managers, conferences, consulting and publishing activities. While doing a gender audit by the leading partners at the final phase of the project it was reported that equality is not an issue and before the auditing process potentially discriminating practices were not reflected upon.

³⁰ K.M.

³¹ Online: <http://equal.cd.cz/>

Another problem coming from the same kind of misunderstanding is dealing with issues of equality after the “vital/ important/ urgent” things have been done. Again this shows a misunderstanding in the sense that gender mainstreaming should be a key component of any activity, in a way as a prevention of further problems.

As mentioned above the Ministry of Labour also initiated an evaluation of gender mainstreaming within the projects and it will be vital to use its recommendations in designing new project calls as well as the structures surrounding the handling of the projects in order to support this learning process.

Conclusions

As the findings above show, the implementation and use of GM in the analysed projects is quite far away from the feminist reading of GM outlined at the beginning. (However, this does not necessarily preclude these projects from having some positive effects on the situation of women and men). One of the central problems is again gender competence. The analysis repeatedly shows counterproductive use of the concept of gender. Often “gender” is taken into account through “sex counting”, or in the form of prescribing women and men stereotypical differences, sometimes even further enforcing such stereotypes. As already pointed out before, this hardly opens up space for alternative gender identities and of course also forecloses the development of a broader approach to gender equality as well as a transformational use of GM.

Connected to that is the problem that again and again equality is being presented as a “girl’s issue”. Though we do need women activists and activism, though inequalities on the labor market impact women more, though women are being exploited through being ascribed care duties and domestic work – still, to achieve structural changes, it is necessary to involve men. A discourse of equality as a female issue at the same time strengthens the discourse of “women against men” politics and gives rise to a sort of an anti-feminist backlash trying

to prove how actually men are being severely discriminated against considering both labour market and private sphere. We need to find different ways of developing gender relations and gender mainstreaming activities should be supportive of that.

The crucial role of gender competence is confirmed by the positive project examples: GM seems to work well where there is previous knowledge about gender as a concept and, of course, also a positive attitude towards changing gender inequalities. Furthermore, given the fact that the majority of the Czech society first learned about gender issues in the late nineties and even later, it seems that quite a lot of work has been done. However, the resources, as limited as they are, were not used to their full potential, as we showed in the above analysis.

It is hard to say whether the outlined problems are due to the limits in the conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming or are connected to misleading implementation. Most probably both factors play a crucial role. The central problem that needs to be tackled in the Czech context is gender competence – mainly with regards to intention (political will) and knowledge (a more critical and reflective use of the gender concept).

Recommendations

- Promoting a public discussion about gender equality, its meaning and implications – what does gender equality mean in a specific context.
- Developing and providing guides for the use and implementation of GM that pay more attention to discussing the concept of gender and gender equality as a goal. The EQUAL guide to GM Mainstreaming, for example, seems more suitable for people that already have a basic gender awareness.

- Promoting gender studies at the university level – not only as a specific study program, but also as part of other programs.
- A more proactive involvement of NGOs during the whole process of GM – this would also imply changing the conception of GM from a pure top-down approach to a mere combination of top-down and bottom-up.
- Valuing difference and including intersectional perspectives in order to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes through a focus on male/female dichotomies, which forecloses analysis of differences among men and among women.
- Supporting learning processes of applying GM through organising meetings and workshops on all levels, including expert panels, activities for “first-time users” and initiating cross-sectional networking.
- Seeking new strategies for active involvement of men, as equality is also their issue.
- Promoting further critical analysis and the discussion of the conceptualisation of GM and not simply relying on GM (or EU-politics) in order to achieve gender equality.

Translated by **Katerina Kastnerova**

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4.

Gender Mainstreaming in Poland – A Case Study

Ewa Rutkowska

Definition of gender mainstreaming and “gender equality” in Polish public discourse

The term *gender mainstreaming* is usually translated in Poland as “policy of gender equality”¹. It is sometimes translated descriptively, as incorporating the social and cultural dimensions of sex into all spheres of life and all actions of the European Union, or as incorporating the gender perspective into all actions implemented by the member countries in all dimensions of social, economic and political life, in all implemented projects, regardless of their subject matter². Strategic documents supporting the implementation of operational programmes contain a narrowed definition, describing gender mainstreaming as striving to make gender equality a universally prevailing premise, so that men and women benefit equally. Unfortunately, such a definition leads to a number of problems regarding, for example, the job market and the area of combining professional and family life, since it does not address the areas in which women and men are underrepresented. It is impossible to talk about “benefitting equally” from a situation, when the initial state expressly favours one of the groups. It is this definition, which might have prompted further arithmetical (i.e. wrong) interpretation of equality as sharing goods in a 50:50 proportion.

In Polish – very limited so far – discourse on the subject, the definition by the Council of Europe is quoted: “Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that the gender equality perspective is

¹ See: *Gender Mainstreaming in Practice*, UNDP, Warsaw 2006 and *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007. Report*, UNDP, Warsaw 2007.

² www.gm.undp.org.pl

incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making”³.

In Poland, gender mainstreaming is treated merely as a “soft” tool, the application of which is not subject to monitoring and evaluation at the state level.

Implementation of the gender mainstreaming concept and policy in Poland

Although since Poland’s accession to the European Union implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy (understood as incorporating issues of gender equality into the mainstream) has become a duty of all beneficiaries of public funding, it would be difficult to talk about significant and apparent progress in this area. Actions of state institutions indicate that they do not understand the equality tools, let alone use them. It seems that understanding gender equality as a horizontal issue is best reflected in the operation of the third sector – the non-governmental organisations, in particular women’s and feminist ones.

³ *Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices*, Strasburg, 1998, see also: *EQUAL Guide on Gender Mainstreaming*, EQUAL, Warsaw, 2005, *Podręcznik włączania problematyki równości płci w główny nurt polityki zatrudnienia*, European Commission and the Department of Women, Family and Counteracting Discrimination at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Warsaw, 2007 and *Polityka równości płci na poziomie lokalnym*, Ośka Foundation, Warsaw, 2005.

Actions of the state sector

(a) Parliamentary Group of Women⁴

The Parliamentary Group of Women (PGK – Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet) was founded in 1991 as a supra-party unit, in an attempt to create an institutionalised women's lobby. The legislative initiatives of PGK include, first of all, a draft amendment of the Family and Guardianship code, as well as a draft amendment of the Act on Family Planning, Human Embryo Protection and Conditions of Permissibility of Abortion, in order to provide for a possibility to terminate pregnancies due to so-called social reasons. Furthermore, PGK prepared legislation concerning equality between women and men, which eventually was included in the new Constitution of 1997. It was thanks to PGK's initiative, that the work on the Act on Equality of Women and Men was commenced. In April 1998 the Forum of Cooperation between NGOs and PGK was founded. It constituted a regular platform for contacts between women's non-governmental organisations and state institutions.

(b) The act on equality between women and men⁵

A draft of the Act on Equality between Women and Men appeared before the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament) thrice – for the first time as early as 1996. The authors of the first draft were lawyers – professor Małgorzata Fuszara and professor Eleonora Zielińska. It was presented in the Sejm twice: in the Autumn of 1996, as an initiative of the Parliamentary Group of Women, signed by 160 members of parliament. It was not heard then, and

⁴ *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007. Report*, op. cit. p. 33.

⁵ See: Małgorzata Fuszara, Eleonora Zielińska, *Krótką acz zawiłą historia ustawy równościowej*, Biuletyn Ośki, Ośka Foundation, Warsaw 1998, Śląska Strefa Gender (www.gender.pl), the contents of the project are available at: www.bezuprzedzen.org.

several amendments were recommended, after the introduction of which it was proposed again in February 1997, as an initiative of 120 members of parliament. This draft was not heard either, due to – as the presidium of the Sejm put it – “too large a number of other drafts waiting to be heard”. The first reading eventually took place in June 1997, after which the draft was recommended for analysis by three parliamentary commissions: the Justice and Human Rights Commission, the Social Policy Commission and the Legislative Commission. There was, nevertheless, no chance for commencement of work on the draft, since in September 1997 a new parliamentary election took place.

The next version of the draft was presented before the Sejm in 1998, again as an initiative of the Parliamentary Group of Women. The draft was criticised by the government as, among other reasons, not complying with EU regulations. The proposed solutions were described as inconsistent with the practice of EU countries, which was an expression of the government’s negative attitude towards the draft, rather than its knowledge about the operation of similar acts in EU member countries. Significantly, the draft mentions questions of gender quotas and equality/gender monitoring of schoolbooks approved by the Ministry of Education. The first reading of the draft took place in March 1999, and after a debate it was rejected. The next step was directing the draft for a reading before the Senat (the higher chamber of the parliament), which accepted it in December 2002 and recommended for further consideration by the Sejm. The voting took place in May 2003, and subsequently the draft was directed for analysis by parliamentary commissions. In June 2005 the Sejm rejected the Senat’s version of the draft. Poland is the only country without an act supporting equality, as required by the EU law. In April 2007, when the Law and Justice (PiS) party was in power, a new draft of the act was prepared, mainly due to the fact that Polish legislation had to conform with the EU directives, particularly with the so-called Services Directive. However, when the Citizens’ Platform (PO) party came to power, it commenced the work on the act anew. It is not clear, when it is going to be heard by the Sejm. One may only hope that a threat of

European Commission's sanctions for not fulfilling the obligations does encourage the government to speed up the proceedings.

(c) The Commissioner for Equal Status of Women and Men

One attempt to implement the gender equality policy was the introduction of the Commissioner for Equal Status of Women and Men in 2001, by the Leszek Miller's government, as a result of pressure from the European Commission and women's organisations. The office of a ministerial rank, affiliated to the Prime Minister's Office, was headed first by Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka, and later by Magdalena Środa. The Office was to be responsible for the Polish government's policies regarding equal status of women and men, as well as for preparations for the creation of an office of a commissioner for prevention of discrimination due to the premises listed in the EU Council Framework Directive 2000/78/WE (race, ethnic background, religion and convictions, age and sexual orientation). The Commissioner commenced works on the National Action Programme for Women⁶, which resulted, among others, in the creation of 16 regional Commissioners for Equal Status of Women and Men. A number of local commissioners were called as well (though not everywhere). After the Office was liquidated in 2005 by the right-wing government of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, the tasks formerly carried out by the Commissioner were handed over to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which was to coordinate the government's anti-discrimination actions (certain competences of the Commissioner were transferred to a junior minister in the Ministry of Labour, Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska). Similar tasks were to be performed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. In March 2008, the Office was formally reinstated, and Elżbieta Radziszewska became the Commissioner.

⁶ See: Jolanta Plakwicz, Anita Seibert, *Strategie równości płci w Polsce. Raport* (available at: www.feministki.org.pl); *Polityka równości płci na poziomie lokalnym*, Ośka Foundation, Warsaw 2005.

(d) The Commission for Equal Status of Women and Men

Another form of implementation of the principle of gender mainstreaming was the existence (between April and October 2005) of the Sejm Commission for Equal Status of Women and Men. The tasks of the Commission involved dealing with issues resulting from the constitutional principle of equal rights of women and men, including providing equal opportunities for both sexes in the political, economic and social life of the country⁷.

(e) Official research

Efficient operation of the system of public information ought to be supported by disaggregating data according to sex. This is not the case, partially due to the myth of gender neutrality⁸, according to which not all sectors must be analysed with the use of gender tools. Clearly no area, from social care, education and health, finance, law and security, to macroeconomics, defence, transport and industry, can be omitted in the process of implementing the gender mainstreaming policies.

Following up the postulate of disaggregating data according to the sex variable is not difficult, since most institutions simply do not fulfil it. The report on implementation of equality policies in Poland⁹ refers to this shortfall in each of the 11 chapters concerning different areas of public life. Each of them also recommends creation of gender-orientated databases and qualitative analyses.

⁷ *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007* . op. cit., s.33.

⁸ See: Barbara Uhmüßib, *Reflections on Gender mainstreaming. Taking stock of a radical social-political concept ten years after the Beijing World Conference on Women*, HBS concept paper, 2005.

⁹ *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007* , op. cit

Since Poland's EU accession, very few synthetic studies considering sex as an important variable have been published in Poland. I shall quote all the generally available reports regarding women¹⁰. In 2004, the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS) published a well known report *Women and men on the labour market*, which has provided reference for most publications on the subject; for several years the report was the only Polish source of knowledge in this area. Once again, GUS in 2005 published: the *Women* report; a report on the survey by the Public Opinion Research Centre (Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej – CBOS): *The Poles on the Phenomenon of trafficking women* and *On the retirement age of women and men*. In 2006 research reports were published by CBOS: *State policy on the family and discrimination in the workplace of pregnant women and mothers of young children*; *Women in society: Equal rights or discrimination?*; *Participation of women in public life*; and *Women and men on sharing housework*. In 2007 more reports were published by CBOS: *Opinions on military service of women*; *Retirement age of women and men*; and *Public opinion on the situation of women in Poland*. In 2008 GUS published a report *Women in Poland*. As can be seen, the list of publications is not long, and the topics in most cases are either too narrow (discrimination of pregnant women and mothers), or too broad (women in general).

(f) Department for Women, Family and Prevention of Discrimination at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy¹¹

During the years 2005-2007, the Department implemented a number of projects aimed at preventing gender discrimination, which was the only attempt

¹⁰ I consciously do not quote research, where the researched group consists solely of men, since it is the women who are underrepresented and receive worse treatment. The masculine does define the universal enough as it is.

¹¹ The descriptions of all projects come from: www.kobieta.gov.pl

at implementing gender mainstreaming policies at the governmental level¹². Unfortunately, it would be difficult to find any translation of those projects into social and political reality, due to the low rank of the Department in political hierarchy, narrow competence of the Department's head, and placing emphasis on family (so-called pro-family policies), rather than on women. Furthermore, no results of pilot programmes are known, and public opinion was not informed about implementation of new programmes or continuation of the pilot ones. The Department issued a few publications summing up the finished projects, which are not considered significant for implementation of gender equality policies, since the scope of those projects, and consequently the scope of publications, was limited. Interestingly enough, the Department implemented most projects using its own resources, and not inviting competent organisations to cooperate or consult on those projects. This is not conducive either to appropriate distribution of public funds, or to the postulate of monitoring equality activities. It is also contrary to the necessity to consult programmes implementing gender mainstreaming policies with women's non-government organisations.

¹² Another mention of gender mainstreaming can be found on the website of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, containing information on the 5th conference of the Women and Sport Group. The conference took place in Berlin in 2002 and Polish representatives were present. The discussed topics included the issues of introducing gender mainstreaming into sport, including separate evaluation of its influence upon women and men, so-called gender budgeting, or participation of both sexes in sports committees, particularly those responsible for allocating funding. More on the subject: <http://www.msport.gov.pl/content.php?id=452>.

Implementation of the principle of gender mainstreaming – the EU project for new member countries

A Hungarian pilot project financed by the EU – *Implementation of the gender mainstreaming principle* – was implemented as a part of Community Framework Strategy for Gender Equality 2001-2006. The objective of the project was to exchange information and experiences on implementation of the principle of gender equality in the new EU member countries, and to create elements of joint strategy. It was introduced by Hungary as a pilot, and, to a lesser degree, by partner states. The project was to be implemented between September 2005 and December 2006. It provided for translation into Polish of a handbook for trainers (a result of cooperation between all partners), and for training representatives of government administration. The Polish side participated in the international conference closing the project, which summed up all actions planned as its part.

Discrimination of women on the job market – the campaign:

“Wanted: 45+. Reliability, commitment, experience”

The campaign was aimed at influencing the awareness of employers and employees¹³ by changing their stereotypical views on working women aged 45 and more, and by promoting the image of an older woman. The project is compatible with the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development, objective no. 1.6, which provides for multilateral support for women on the job market via gender mainstreaming, which is supposed to effectively lead to increased employment of women.

¹³ In spite of undertaking pro-women actions, the Department uses “neutral” language, which is in fact language ignoring the existence of females.

Gender mainstreaming at the governmental level in the EU member countries

Although Poland was not a partner in this project, representatives of the Department were invited to participate in a conference entitled as above, organised by Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, at the end of a project co-financed by the EU Community Framework Strategy for Gender Equality 2001-2006. The project had commenced in December 2005 and was completed in March 2007. The partner countries were Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and Portugal. The conference was a forum for presentation of results, good practices and experiences gathered in the course of working on the project. The Swedish ministry sent out a questionnaire concerning implementation of gender mainstreaming by the EU countries, on the basis of which it prepared a report *Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Member States. Progress, Obstacles and Experiences at Governmental Level*¹⁴. Participants of the conference admitted that the question of existence (or non-existence) of discrimination ought to be documented by research, which should constitute a basis for an approved action plan for improvement of living conditions of the discriminated sex – in this case, of women¹⁵.

Structural Funds – gender mainstreaming as a horizontal (and obligatory) issue

Pilot implementation of gender mainstreaming in almost 100 EQUAL Partnerships was designed as a part of the EQUAL EU Initiative. The institutions administrating the pilot programme were the National Support Structure for EQUAL and UNDP Poland. Ordered by the Cooperation Fund within

¹⁴ The Department does not publish information about the Polish report

¹⁵ The Department admits that Poland, as the only EU country, does not have either an act on equal status, or a national plan for gender equality.

the National Thematic Network, a report was compiled on the evaluation of projects according to compliance with, and implementation of gender mainstreaming. The evaluation concerned 89 projects from all the thematic areas¹⁶. The report revealed a high correlation between participation of an organisation/institution professionally dealing with gender equality in a Partnership, and the final result. A vast majority of the evaluated projects involved planned implementation of gender mainstreaming in the area of so-called quantitative equality, i.e. the Partnerships understood equality mathematically, mechanically dividing their target groups into two, regardless of earlier analyses, diagnoses and research results. The division and differentiation of beneficiaries of the final projects did not usually result in itself in any qualitative changes, i.e. those reflecting particular, specific needs and problems of each sex. In several projects there were no solutions connected with gender mainstreaming at the level of diagnosis, establishing characteristics of beneficiaries, objectives of the project or the suggested actions. At the same time, each of the Partnerships was obliged to fill in point 7 of the Application Form (description of gender mainstreaming), and had to define objectives and actions, which were not only very general and did not reflect specific characteristics of each Partnership's area of interest, but also did not specify indicators of change in a way, which might provide for reliable evaluation. At the stage of project planning and defining the problem, Partnerships did not consider the category of gender, and saw no problems they wanted to solve in the context of differences between

¹⁶ The topic areas: Topic A: Facilitating entering or returning to the labour market of people having trouble integrating or reintegrating into it, in order to promote a labour market open to all. Topic D: strengthening the national social economy (the third sector) and in particular services for local communities and improving job quality. Topic F: Supporting adaptability of companies and employees to structural changes in the economy, as well as the use of information technologies, and other modern technologies. Topic G: combining family and professional life, and reintegration of women and men who left the labour market, by introducing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation, and accompanying actions. Topic I: Assisting social and professional integration of asylum seekers.

women and men. Another apparent feature was the lack of knowledge of the amended Labour Code and the EU regulations¹⁷. Based on the above, a training model was created for future trainers in gender mainstreaming, in order to create a training model for Partnerships with the trainers' cooperation. During training, it often became apparent that people implementing the projects were not at all familiar with gender equality and the strategy of gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, the trainings took place at a relatively late stage of project implementation, so changes could only be introduced at the level of publicising the results.

The subsequent programming period (2007-2013) provides for the next pilot programme, involving the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme¹⁸, where gender mainstreaming will be presented to all institutions involved, from project applicants, to regional advisory centres, and to project evaluation committees. At this point it is important to quote two documents of strategic importance for Poland, supporting implementation of gender mainstreaming: the National Development Plan and the National Cohesion Strategy¹⁹. The National Development Plan, or the Polish version of the Lisbon Strategy, is a comprehensive programme of socio-economic development, financed with participation of EU funding, as well as by national budgets. The National Development Programme 2007-2013 is to serve for stimulating and better use of local development resources, particularly of human and social

¹⁷ Internal report on evaluation of EQUAL programmes was prepared by Maja Branka, Małgorzata Dymowska, Anna Kaminska, Ewa Rutkowska.

¹⁸ The pilot was designed by the Cooperation Fund Foundation. Negotiations are still underway (May 2008) with the Ministry of Regional Development in order to obtain institutional credentials.

¹⁹ After: Maja Branka, Małgorzata Dymowska, Katarzyna Sekutowicz, *Wdrażanie perspektywy równości szans kobiet i mężczyzn w projektach Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego Program Operacyjny Kapitał Ludzki. Podręcznik krok po kroku*, Warsaw 2008. See also: Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 supporting economic growth and employment. National Cohesion Strategy, Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw, May 2007.

capital. The mission of the National Development Programme is to improve the Polish citizens' quality of life. The National Cohesion Strategy (officially known as National Strategic Reference Framework) is a strategic document defining priorities and areas of application, as well as a system of implementation of the EU funds: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund within the EU budget for the years 2007-2013. The strategic objective of the National Cohesion Strategy is to create conditions for increased competitiveness of the Polish economy, based on knowledge and entrepreneurship, creating new jobs and increasing the level of social, economic and spatial cohesion. Implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework will involve support for equal opportunities, which means ensuring support for equality between men and women, as well as incorporating the issues of equality during individual stages of implementation of structural funds. This involves counteracting all symptoms of discrimination due to sex, race or ethnic background, religion or views, disability, age or sexual orientation. In the system of National Strategic Reference Framework, the implementation of this principle is introduced by ensuring equal opportunities during election of members of committees and sub-committees monitoring implementation of the funds.

Activities of the non-governmental sector

A significant part of actions for equal status of women and men, and consequently for implementation of gender mainstreaming policies, has been delegated to the third sector. Therefore, most women's organisations deal with tasks, which originally ought to have been implemented by the government and its institutions. Due to a large number of actions performed by non-governmental organisations, I shall only name a few initiatives from the recent years.

(a) The labour market

- Karat Coalition conducted monitoring of observance of workers' rights in clothing factories in Poland, a report from which was published in 2005. The research concerned compliance with working standards, such as the ban on forced work, the ban on child labour, the freedom to associate, the ban on working excessively long hours, the right to honest pay, security and legality of employment, safety and decent working conditions. The report indicates that as a result of restructuring and privatisation of the clothing industry a lot of factories were closed down, and the number of jobs fell by half. In Poland a vast majority of employees of the clothing industry were women, so the decrease of the number of factories meant mainly women lost their jobs. This is one of the reasons, why in the regions traditionally connected with the clothing industry most of the unemployed are women. A difficult situation of women connected with the clothing industry definitely influences compliance with their workers' rights in those regions. In the course of research it was discovered that only one of the eight quoted standards (the ban on child labour) was fully obeyed²⁰.
- The Gender Index project was implemented as a part of EQUAL. One of its partners was Feminoteka Foundation, and it was administered by UNDP Poland. The objective of the project was to create lasting mechanisms for ensuring equal opportunities for all employees in Polish businesses. Gender Index was aimed at designing solutions leading to effective business management incorporating the equality policy. The project promoted effective personnel management strategies aimed at strengthening the market position of the company. The tasks included organising a competition *The equal*

²⁰ Ewa Lisowska, Anna Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, *Macroeconomy and Trade*, [in:] *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*. op. cit., s. 21.

opportunities employer, conducting training for employers, organising two nationwide conferences to discuss policies of the state, including those within the gender mainstreaming area, as well as sexual harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, the project worked on adaptation of the concept of diversity management. Importantly, the project involved preparation of detailed recommendations for the Prime Minister, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the Sejm Committees of: Social Policy, Labour and Family and Women's Rights, concerning combining professional and personal life, unpaid housework done by women, women's rights in the workplace, as well as practical implementation of gender mainstreaming²¹.

- *Gender mainstreaming in institutions of the labour market* – the project was implemented by a partnership consisting of SPI Consult GmbH Polish Division, SPI Poland and Karat Coalition, commencing in November 2006. The project included organisation of two national conferences and 19 two-day trainings, as well as preparation of a brochure on the need to include the gender mainstreaming aspect in all actions undertaken by institutions of the labour market. The project was addressed to employees of labour market institutions: provincial and district job offices, training institutions, non-governmental organisations (including women's organisations), and all other institutions working toward improving the situation at the labour market²².

(b) Violence against women

- In 2007, Feminoteka Foundation prepared a critical report *Who do we protect against violence? Implementation of the act on prevention of family violence (2005-*

²¹ More information at: www.genderindex.pl

²² More information at: www.spiconsult.pl

2007). The report was written from a feminist perspective, and attempted to answer the question of how the act on prevention of family violence operated in practice, with particular emphasis upon the situation of women and girls. The report's authors decided to emphasise the aspect of sex, worried about an increasingly common tendency in Poland to place problems of women (including violence) in the family context. Foreign experts draw attention to the problem of women's "disappearance" from Polish policies, which at the moment are referred to as "pro-family", rather than "equality". The experts are most concerned about viewing domestic violence as a gender-neutral issue, which was mentioned in January 2007 by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The publication was prepared as a part of the regional programme "Gender democracy/Women's politics", implemented by the Polish Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation²³.

(c) Education

- The House for Polish-German Cooperation in Gliwice published a manual entitled *Równa szkoła. Edukacja wolna od dyskryminacji. Poradnik dla nauczycielek i nauczycieli* (*Equal school. Discrimination-free education. Manual for teachers*), as a part of the project "Gender lessons, or gender equality in a nutshell". The objective of the manual is to encourage teachers to critically reflect on the methods of working with young people. The manual consists of six mainly theoretical chapters, and three chapters concerning methodology of conducting classes on counteracting discrimination. The information is supplemented with a compilation of good practices in anti-discrimination projects, as well as a broad bibliography and a legal annex²⁴.

²³ The report available in a printed version and for download from: www.feminoteka.pl

²⁴ Ewa Majewska, Ewa Rutkowska, *Równa szkoła. Edukacja wolna od dyskryminacji. Poradnik dla nauczycielek i nauczycieli*, Gliwice, 2008. More information at: www.haus.pl

The Association “W Stronę Dziewcząt” (“Towards The Girls”) promotes equality in education, and particularly aims at: strengthening the position of girls in education and sports; promoting the knowledge about women’s history and rights among young people, teachers and parents; supporting open publication and free licences in order to strengthen and encourage cooperation within the equality and educational circles. “W Stronę Dziewcząt” created a proposal of lesson scripts, prepared for private and state schools. The scripts fit curricula of school subjects, which allows for their implementation without modifying the original teaching programmes. The association runs workshops for teachers and trainers of both sexes on the strategy of introducing issues of gender and equality to school classes²⁵.

(d) Publications

- *Gender Mainstreaming in Poland 2007* is a report prepared for UNDP Poland by a team led by professor Bożena Choluż, and the first publication on gender mainstreaming in Poland, which is this broad and comprehensive. The report was created by a team of tens of experts from the best Polish academic centres and the main non-governmental organisations working for equality between women and men. The publication includes an analysis of the situation of women and men in eleven areas of social life: macroeconomics and trade, governance and participation, labour, education, health, poverty, justice and human rights, science, research and modern technology, mass media, environmental conservation and sustainable development, defence policies²⁶.

²⁵ More information at: www.wstronedziewczat.org.pl

²⁶ The report available in a printed version and for download from: www.undp.org.pl

Strong and weak points of the concepts and premises of gender mainstreaming

It is often assumed that the theoretical basis for gender mainstreaming was provided by the “policy of difference”²⁷. Political practice is often based on the premise of “gender neutrality” treating the sex variable as insignificant, thus strengthening discrimination, particularly in its indirect forms. One of the objectives of the gender equality policy was to question the existing gender contract drawn between the private and the public, between the professional life and the home one. A critical view of relations of power between sexes was to yield a view of an individual, which allowed him or her to fully participate in both spheres of life without imposed, socially accepted roles, such as “sole breadwinner” or “carer for dependants”. In practice this was supposed to mean introduction of parental leaves, flexible forms of employment or a possibility of part-time employment, facilities for people wishing to fulfil professional ambitions in areas of the labour market other than stereotypical ones.

Another significant theoretical premise of gender mainstreaming was the concept of democracy²⁸ and the invariably connected with it concept of representation. It was assumed then, that it would be possible to create appropriate conditions for both sexes on the labour market. Once again, in practice this was to mean facilitating women’s access to generally appreciated goods, such as decision making, particularly in the field of public finance, or participation in political life, regardless of fixed social stereotypes and unwritten rules governing a particular community or organisation. The idea of representation proposed by gender mainstreaming also helped to introduce women into the mainstream,

²⁷ Teresa Rees, *Gender mainstreaming: Misappropriated and Misunderstood?*, 2002, p.3.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.5.

which indirectly undermined the hierarchic political style at all levels. It did not, however, lead to a complete redefinition of politics itself, although it did allow for criticising it within the existing framework²⁹. Another founding principle of gender mainstreaming was the principle of social justice, the objective of which was to include the groups formerly excluded from the public domain (in this case – women). One particular form of such justice can be the distribution of goods in a manner which takes into consideration the aspect of the earlier exclusion of women from social and political life.

The policy of gender mainstreaming implies the use of the concept of gender equality, which directly questions patriarchal culture, trying to solve the issues of asymmetrical relations between the sexes and inequalities in the areas of paid and unpaid work, family and caring for dependants, politics, culture, health, sexuality and violence. It also implies the necessity to refer to the category of gender, rather than to the biological, or in fact essentialist understanding of sex. Consequently, critical analysis is to be applied to the consequences of playing social roles by both sexes, their mutual relations, and in particular the relations of power and domination³⁰. Apart from this, an important value of gender mainstreaming (on the level of political and organisational culture and decision-making processes) is the postulated change of procedures, mechanisms and manners of conducting politics at all levels. This results in the necessity of gender expertise and in awareness of the mechanisms of reproducing inequality. It is worth remembering that the fact of gender mainstreaming having introduced the so-called women's issue and gender into the mainstream (and in spite of the fact that solving problems connected with gender (in)equality is a lengthy process producing no immediate effects) brought about a serious change of

²⁹ Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier, *Gender mainstreaming in the EU: Incorporating a Feminist Reading?*, [in:] "European Journal of Women's Studies" 2006, no. (13)2, pp. 153-154.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 153.

attitudes in the public domain, and about, however partial, abandonment of gender-blind politics.

A serious problem facing not only the introduction of gender mainstreaming in Poland, but also the concept itself, is the lack of conceptual and formal (structural) framework. It has been assumed (and quite rightly) that gender mainstreaming is a “model to assemble” rather than a ready formula for the introduction of gender equality. Furthermore, a periodicity of the inclusion of equal status of women and men into politics and social practice has been observed. Gender mainstreaming is therefore, as a rule, recommended to all institutions which have a history of not considering the perspective of gender equality. It seems, however, that in Poland introduction of this principle (worse still – only on paper) substituted a political debate necessary to define the desired relations between the sexes. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming actions are based on a false premise that the sexes occupy comparable, if not symmetrical positions, which in practice leads to deepening of inequality and worsening of the already unfavourable position of women³¹.

The ultimate problem connected with gender mainstreaming, raised by several theoreticians³², is the enduring gap between the provisions of the law, and its implementation. It is clear that both in public discourse and in the decision processes, relations between the sexes are either marginalised or altogether ignored. Gender mainstreaming seems to be completely unused as a tool for examining the influence of the sex variable upon the exclusion mechanisms in economics³³. This is not a particularly surprising observation, since economics and business are the areas where the aspect of gender equality is completely ignored.

³¹ Jolanta Plakwicz, *O potrzebie gender mainstreaming w polityce*, [in:] *Polityka równości płci na poziomie lokalnym*, op. cit., pp.: 20-21.

³² Barbara Unmüßib, *Reflections on Gender mainstreaming...*, op. cit., p. 4

³³ Ibidem. See also: Ewa Lisowska, Anna Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, *Macroeconomy and Trade in: Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., pp. 13-23

This phenomenon, however, appears in other areas of public life as well: in spite of the publication of several handbooks, manuals and theoretical papers on gender mainstreaming in Poland, only a few institutions are familiar with it, and even fewer use it. The knowledge of gender mainstreaming seems impossible to put into practice, not because it seems irrelevant, but because it is not taken seriously – still laden with stereotypes and prejudice of the people responsible for its implementation – and it is easily marginalised. There is always something more important to do than improving the quality of women's lives. Another problem is the feminist context of gender mainstreaming. On the one hand, in Polish publications most authors are careful to avoid the term “feminism”³⁴; on the other, the analysis of the term “gender” in itself suggests a feminist interpretation, usually rejected as “unscientific”, or “ideological”³⁵. An added difficulty with which texts on gender mainstreaming are laden, is its interpretation as a question to be dealt with by women; it is up to women to create change, while the role/situation/condition of men is not questioned. Although combining family and professional life with all its consequences, such as lower pay for women, hidden barriers (glass ceiling, sticky floor), feminisation of low-prestige professions, are the most frequently diagnosed problems on the labour market, the gender division of labour has not been properly solved. Instead, new ways are devised for women to better combine duties, which strengthens the existing system³⁶.

³⁴ See also a critical analysis of this approach in: Jolanta Plakwicz, *O potrzebie gender mainstreaming w polityce*, op. cit.

³⁵ Ibidem: “(...) the term ‘gender’ owes its political career mainly to liberal feminism, which questioned the so-called neutrality of the law, and of the democracy based on this law, from the sex perspective. Representatives of this strand argued that there is no such thing as an abstract individual, and that <<neutral law>> is nothing but legal provisions concerning only one (male) sex. They stated (...) that consequences of differences between sexes often do come up only at the stage of practicing the law, and consequently in policies conducted by various institutions the state is based on”, p.20.

³⁶ Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier, *Gender mainstreaming in the EU: Incorporating a Feminist Reading?*, op. cit., p.60.

Therefore, the weakness of gender mainstreaming is the temptation to treat it as a mechanism for the execution of law, without a reflection that it should be a long-term process of transformation of the state's policies. This is what effective implementation of gender mainstreaming ought to be about: it must be implemented at all levels of decision making, in accordance with the top-down principle. Only this approach may help to overcome the resistance at the administrative and institutional level³⁷. It is a myth, however, often repeated by Polish gender mainstreaming manuals, that it can be implemented without cost, and "en passant", alongside the "main" actions. Gender equality means costs of staff training, gender expertise and controlling the influence of actions upon women and men; it means costs of creating the necessary jobs connected with introduction and monitoring of gender mainstreaming activities. The costs involve "soft" actions of raising awareness in the field of gender equality. Justice and democracy *de iure* cost far less, than the existing ones. Gender mainstreaming could be aided by priority treatment by the Polish government, which would also involve sanctions for lack of implementation.

Another key controversy connected with gender mainstreaming is treating it as a substitute for earlier equality legal provisions and positive or equalising actions. As the reports presented by the Council of Europe³⁸ indicate, additional mechanisms are necessary for effective and permanent implementation of gender mainstreaming.

There is yet another error hidden in the Polish understanding of gender mainstreaming: juxtaposing it and pro-family policies. Opponents of gender mainstreaming assume that it is opposed to the family³⁹, not addressing

³⁷ Maria Stratigaki, *Gender mainstreaming vs Positive Action: An Ongoing Conflict in EU Gender Equality Policy*, [in:] "European Journal of Women's Studies", 2005, no. (12)2, pp. 167-168.

³⁸ See *ibidem*, p. 168.

³⁹ Which also corresponds with the stereotypical understanding of feminism, the objective of which, according to conservative interpretation, is total questioning of the family. Equality policy in Poland is embroiled with other concepts, such as women's reproductive health and sexual education, highly charged with ideology in the right-wing discourse.

the practice of other EU countries, such as Sweden or France, which practice gender mainstreaming whilst having one of the highest fertility rates. In the same strand of obscuring the reality are neoconservative practices appropriating gender mainstreaming strategies. In 2007 in Poland, we witnessed a media campaign “Moms at work can do more”⁴⁰. The concept of gender mainstreaming was treated by the right-wing discourse as an answer to women’s practical problem with maternity leaves and leaving the labour market. Strategic needs of women (and men) are not, however, taken into account at all, hence the action “Mothers at work...” not only enforces stereotypical gender roles, but also essentialises women in the professional sphere. The campaign clearly shows – although the authors do not see this – an identity problem: a woman who gets pregnant (the department wants to “encourage women not to be afraid of decisions about maternity”), instantly becomes a mother, who, in addition, gains value in the eyes of an employer. The Department does write about the necessity for systemic changes to help women on the labour market, but seems to treat them as secondary. The primary changes are to take place in, interestingly, women (mothers, according to the department), and, secondly – in employers. A mother acquires skills which, according to the authors of the campaign, are useful at work: she can negotiate, she is patient, focussed, empathetic and has developed emotional intelligence⁴¹. One of the reasons for this is the fact, that “motherhood is a constant compromise”. What is interesting in the rhetoric proposed by the Department is the absence of men (although it would be difficult to assume, that the Department decided to part with the heterosexual “norm”), who do not participate in parenting, and consequently do not develop the quoted characteristics. One possible reason can be that those particular skills are not highly regarded in the workplace, and even if they seem attractive,

⁴⁰ More on the website of the Department for Women, Family and Counteracting Discrimination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: <http://www.rodzina.gov.pl>

⁴¹ All to be found on the Department’s website.

they do so in feminised professions. Once again, this shows how harmful the right-wing/conservative re-formulation of principles of gender mainstreaming can be.

Has gender mainstreaming achieved anything?

Out of the 11 areas identified in the report on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Poland⁴², only three provided examples of good practice implemented by state institutions. They were “governance and participation”, “justice and human rights” and “defence policies”. It is therefore impossible to talk about conscious implementation of gender mainstreaming in Poland. In the case of the “governance and participation” area, good practices have been discussed above, namely the operation of the Parliamentary Group of Women, the Office of Commissioner and the Commission for Equal Status of Women and Men. Unfortunately, the last years have not seen advancement in implementation of gender mainstreaming – on the contrary. The chief argument can be the lack of the act on equal status of women and men. Perhaps passing this act could be the first step towards the implementation of gender equality in individual areas governed by ministries, as well as between the ministries – in accordance with the horizontal principle.

In the area of “justice and human rights”, the authors⁴³ quote two projects connected with counteracting discrimination, implemented by the Commissioner for Equal Status of Women and Men. The first one, *Strengthening policies for the equal treatment of women and men* was meant to lead to increased capacity of public administration to implement the policy of equal treatment of

⁴² *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007, op. cit.*

⁴³ Agata Teutsch, Eleonora Zielińska, *Sprawiedliwość i prawa człowieka*, op. cit. pp. 93-94.

women and men, to the creation of a system monitoring the situation of women and men, as well as to raising public awareness. As a part of the project, and only for the time of its duration, specially appointed officers were responsible for the implementation of the policy of equal treatment in individual ministries of government administration and in other offices crucial for this policy, such as the Ombudsman's Office or the Central Statistical Office. The government administration, justice system and police staff were trained, along with representatives of NGOs, trade unions and employers' organisations. A report was prepared, containing recommendations for Poland concerning implementation of this policy. An analysis of statistical data and qualitative research from the gender mainstreaming perspective was conducted.

The objective of the second project, *Strengthening anti-discrimination policy*, was to intensify actions aimed at preventing and combating discrimination based on race, ethnic background, religion, views, age and psycho-sexual orientation, as well as co-existing factors, such as sex. Polish legislation was reviewed, along with court practice and action programmes concerning counteracting discrimination; recommendations were established, allowing for the creation of new organisational structures and mechanisms of coordination responsible for the implementation of anti-discrimination policies. An educational programme and a manual *Anti-discrimination – Educational Packet* were devised, and a network of trainers was built, to provide training for the police, courts, defence lawyers, government offices, work inspectors and educational institutions, on preventing and counteracting discrimination in their work⁴⁴.

The last example of institutional good practice is the *Co-educational Army Project*, implemented by the Ministry of National Defence with participation of Partners Polska Foundation. The project was aimed at creating tolerant attitudes, and eliminating prejudice and stereotypes in viewing the role of women in the army.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, pp. 93-94.

Training methodology was prepared for issues concerning the formation of appropriate relations between women and men in the military service. The educational programme included: prevention of pathology in human relations, such as mobbing or sexual harassment; counteracting stereotypes in viewing social roles of women and men, including homosexuals; practical tips for commanders and educators on solving problems resulting from co-educational conditions of military training. The implementation procedure for the programme included a series of workshops conducted by experts from the Partners Polska Foundation, with lecturers of humanities from military academies, officers' schools and training centres⁴⁵.

The answer to the question about the manner of implementation of gender mainstreaming in Poland has been given several times by women's organisations, for example by way of analysing public discourse, based on the debate about the equality act. The postulate to introduce equality of the sexes was also reflected in the demand to reinstate the Commissioner's office. Aversion of the Polish government towards equality was noticed by CEDAW, which in February 2007 presented a set of recommendations concerning implementation of gender mainstreaming for the Polish government. It clearly showed that the work in this area at the state level falls short of being satisfactory. The following can be considered the most important of those recommendations⁴⁶:

1. To adopt a general anti-discrimination law and put in place appropriate procedures enabling its effective implementation, monitoring and enforcement.
2. To ensure that gender equality and women's rights are one of the priority areas of the government's actions, and to provide ongoing monitoring of progress in reaching these aims.

⁴⁵ Bożena Szubińska i Mariusz Wachowicz, *Defence policies*, [in:] *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., p.139.

⁴⁶ *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., pp.10-11.

3. To adopt a comprehensive action plan for gender equality with sufficient resources for its implementation in consultation with women's non-governmental organisations.
4. To take sustained measures for women's full and equal participation in national, municipal and judicial government institutions and international institutions.
5. To intensify efforts to overcome deep-rooted stereotypes and attitudes that are discriminatory against women by taking actions in educational programmes and the media, and by working with the non-governmental sector.
6. To provide priority attention to the problem of preventing and combating violence against women and girls.
7. To strengthen the system of data collection on human trafficking and to ensure the effectiveness of programmes combating this problem.
8. To strengthen efforts ensuring equal opportunities of women and men in the labour market.
9. To take concrete measures to enhance women's access to health care, in particular to sexual and reproductive health services. To ensure access to legal abortion and appropriate sex education for boys and girls.
10. To ensure that rural women benefit to an equal degree from gender mainstreaming policies and measures.
11. To collect quantitative and qualitative information on the situation of women and girls from groups especially threatened with discrimination (Roma, refugees, immigrants, women seeking political asylum).
12. To improve the system of collecting and analysing data by disaggregating by sex.

13. To institutionalise ongoing and systematic consultations with women's non-governmental organisations on gender mainstreaming policies⁴⁷.

It is worth emphasising that the above extract from recommendations is in accordance with Poland's obligations resulting from adopting the CEDAW Convention in 1980.

Polish law contains regulations concerning gender equality as well. Those are, for example, the 32nd and 33rd articles of the Polish Constitution of 1997, and chapter IIa of the Reformed Labour Code (2002, 2004) containing a definition of indirect and direct discrimination, drawn directly from EU regulations⁴⁸.

Recommendations for more effective introduction of gender mainstreaming in Poland

Apart from the recommendations from the Committee, there is a need for further ones, more detailed and indicating the possible, though not the only, directions for action:

- Institutional financial support for women's organisations, which ought to participate in building effective strategies for gender mainstreaming policies, as well as have a chance to jointly lobby for equality of women and men. Women's organisations should have a more convenient access to EU funds, which constitute the main source of financing for

⁴⁷ On the basis of: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit. See: *Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Poland*, CEDAW/C/POL/CO/6, 2 February 2007.

⁴⁸ See: www.gm.undp.org.pl, text by Natalia Sarata Włócej o GM.

the non-governmental sector. Without long-term financial support designing those strategies will be impossible⁴⁹.

- Passing the act on equal status of women and men.
- Broadening the constitutional provisions on equality of sexes and non-discrimination by introducing the principle of equal opportunities and compensatory preference⁵⁰.
- Adopting an act on partnerships and regulating the legal situation of homosexual couples, including those raising children.
- New formulation of regulations concerning rape⁵¹.
- Creation and implementation of national programmes and plans (see: National Programme for Women – Stage 2, 2003-2005) and identifying and securing resources for their implementation.
- Creating a Commission for Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men.
- Guaranteeing a fixed number of places on lists of candidates for electable bodies for women (a quota system) by party regulations or by provisions of general acts⁵².
- Publicising statistics and public poll results, so that inequality and discrimination on the labour market are considered a social problem⁵³.
- Creating a list of national health priorities, and closely monitored national programs for combating the diseases most dangerous to public health, naming the most important risks separately for women and

⁴⁹ Jolanta Plakwicz and Anita Seibert, *Strategie równości płci w Polsce. Raport*, op. cit.

⁵⁰ Agata Teutsch, Eleonora Zielińska, *Justice and human rights*, in: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., p. 92.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 92.

⁵² Małgorzata Fuszara, Sylwia Spurek, *Governance and participation*, in: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., p. 31.

⁵³ Danuta Duch-Krzyszczek, Natalia Sarata, *Labour*, in: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., p. 44.

men; exempting this area from dependence on political options of the government in power⁵⁴.

- Liberalisation of the abortion law.
- Constant monitoring of the feminisation of poverty and preventing it by introduction of “early intervention” programmes, development of professional qualifications, better health policy and education.
- Introducing a requirement of gender equality, or at least increasing the participation of women in bodies responsible for decision-making and distribution of financial resources for scientific research⁵⁵.
- Promoting science and technology among women.
- Trainings on gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, equality and anti-discrimination for institutions and teachers on every level of education, and for science-related institutions.
- Constant examination and monitoring of media broadcasts, their contents, language and social reception; creating a media equality code⁵⁶.
- Introducing gender mainstreaming to the areas/ministries dominated by men, e.g. environmental conservation, transport, business, industry, army etc.

Translated by **Katarzyna Nowakowska**

⁵⁴ Bożena Moskalewicz, Beata Balińska, *Health*, in: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., p. 69.

⁵⁵ Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foldyn, *Science, research and modern technologies*, in: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., p. 103.

⁵⁶ More: Izabela Kowalczyk, Joanna Piotrowska, Edyta Zierkiewicz, *Mass media*, in: *Gender Mainstreaming Poland 2007*, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

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5.

Gender Mainstreaming in Slovakia: Rather Down than Top

Olga Pietruchová, Paula Jójárt

In spite of efforts of women's NGOs in Slovakia, gender mainstreaming is still a new and unknown concept. When it first appeared on the international women's movement scene and on the agenda of EU politics, Slovak NGOs also started to highlight it. First attempts date back to 2002 when ASPEKT published the translation of the publication by Barbara Stiegler about EU strategy on gender mainstreaming and when the discussion about the EU agenda on anti-discrimination and gender policy started.

The next publication was "On the Road to the EU. A Guide Not Only for Women" (2002) published by ASPEKT in cooperation with partners in Poland and the Czech Republic on the occasion of EU accession. The publication provided information about the basic principles of EU legislation guaranteeing equal opportunities. It also contained the main philosophy of gender specific approach of the EU in some areas such as employment, labor market, violence against women and others.

However, the expectation that the accession of Slovakia to the EU would start more noticeable changes in social practices has not been met yet. Even after 5 years of EU membership, Slovakia does not have a conceptual gender equality policy or gender mainstreaming policy that we could evaluate. There are only sporadic initiatives, mainly related to the EU structural funds.

Definition of the concept

Even before EU accession, women's NGOs strove to import the strategy of gender mainstreaming to Slovakia. As a result of their efforts they gained knowledge of the principle. This was useful mainly in introducing terminology and definitions (esp. ASPEKT and Center for Gender Studies) but also in initial workshops and gender trainings. For instance, the only governmental website on gender issues and gender mainstreaming www.gender.gov.sk features the fol-

lowing definition taken from the Glossary of Gender Terminology edited by ASPEKT (<http://glosar.aspekt.sk>):

Gender mainstreaming

Means the application of a gender specific perspective in all decision-making processes and utilization of each decision-making process to achieve gender equality. No provision, no policy or decision is gender neutral (in its assumption or implications) and this fact must be taken into account in its preparation and realization.

In the international context, the concept of gender mainstreaming appeared for the first time at the 3rd UN World Conference on Women (Nairobi 1985) and in the discussion of the UN Commission for the Status of Women about the role of women in society. Although the concept has made its way into many international documents and it is commonly used at national and international forums, its designation is often ambiguous and its usage depends on the concrete context: it can be understood as the adoption of "women's point of view" in decision-making processes at all levels; other definitions link it to concrete actions and strategies aiming at gender equality. Yet another understanding is connected with rebuilding social institutions, so that they would take into account women's needs.

The definition put forth by an expert group of the Council of Europe (1998) takes this complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept into consideration: "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 policy-making."

In general, gender mainstreaming can be seen as a tool to achieve gender democracy or equality of opportunity. This principle is at the forefront of gender relations. The term became commonly known thanks to the EU policy,

although its roots date back to the history of the global women's movement, activities and recommendations formulated at women's world conferences. The gender specific approach should be taken into account in each political decision – from planning to the final evaluation. In practical terms, gender mainstreaming is becoming a tool to achieve such an arrangement of gender relations that would correspond with formulated goals.

Gender mainstreaming is based on the idea of a complex policy cutting across all sectors. Gender equality can only be achieved when we strive for it in all political areas. In the context of global women's politics it means that governments, in all political areas and in each individual case, will assess the impact of their policies on the situation of women and on the way in which the planned measures will improve their specific situation in accordance with the goals anchored in international documents." (www.gender.gov.sk, based on the website <http://glosar.aspekt.sk>)

Definitions and translations introduced by women's NGOs, and ASPEKT in the first place, became part of the terminology and political language adopted by experts and the media. In spite of that – in Slovakia like in many other countries – adequate translation of the term “gender mainstreaming” is still problematic, and for the uninvolved the term is incomprehensible and often unpronounceable. Thus, normally the translation “application of the gender perspective” coined by ASPEKT is used, but sometimes also “mainstreaming of gender”, “fostering of gender equality” or “implementation of gender equality”¹.

NGOs and their experts also initiated a number of interesting studies and analyses. For instance, Gender Audit of the EU Pre-Accession Funds 1999–2004 (Gender Studies and ASPEKT, 2005), the ex-ante analysis of the “gender” meas-

¹ <http://www.snem.sav.sk/zap/vrv15b.htm>

ures of the grant scheme EQUAL (ASPEKT, 2003) or the gender analysis of the Slovak pension reform elaborated by Oľga Pietruchová (Pietruchová, 2006).

Gender mainstreaming as a top-down process

The Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic of the year 2006, for the first time introduced gender equality terminology and an “entire” subchapter of the social policy chapter is devoted to the issue of gender. The Manifesto of the Government, for instance, promises “regular monitoring of equality of opportunities of men and women, and creation of institutional structures for mainstreaming gender in all policies and measures...” However, this statement sounds ironic coming from a government that at its beginning had only one female minister. Even after two years of this government being in power it must be said that this proclamation is a typical political formality that has not been visibly translated into practice.

The only positive outcome is the establishment of the Council for Gender Equality (CGE) initiated by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and the Family. CGE consists of governmental officials in the rank of state secretaries (at least theoretically); the local government and 3 places are reserved for NGOs. Besides the CEG *per se* there is also the Consulting Committee of the CEG based on expertise in the field of gender equality (esp. from NGOs) and the Executive Committee composed only of members of the state and public administration. The establishment of the Council for Gender Equality is meant to secure each ministry having a person responsible for putting gender mainstreaming into practice. At the time of writing this paper was, the CEG was just starting its work, therefore it has not yet been possible to assess its efficiency in implementing the Memorandum of the Government.

At any rate it can be said that with the exception of projects from structural funds the basic precondition – interest of the “top” level in implementation of the principle “down” is minimal and in practice invisible, which corresponds with the state of implementation of gender mainstreaming in Slovakia.

Governmental twinning project

The biggest (and basically the only) project on gender mainstreaming coordinated by the government, or implementation of gender policy as such, was the twinning project of Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and the Family SR carried out in cooperation with international partners. These were the French Ministry of Labor, Social Cohesion and Housing together with their partner agency GIP International. Germany was a junior partner of the project. The objective of the project was to “strengthen administrative capacities of the Slovak republic in the area of gender mainstreaming.” (www.gender.gov.sk)

The project was launched on 20 October 2005 and it was officially introduced on 13 December 2005. It was mostly related to the development of European structural funds in Slovakia because attention to the gender aspect is mandatory and gender equality is their horizontal dimension.

From the perspective of women’s NGOs and domestic experts on gender equality, the main shortcoming of the process was that due to the character of the twinning project the involvement of domestic experts in project activities and education was not possible. This created a certain kind of tension. Domestic experts were invited to trainings, but only as auditors. Since representative of the public administration who were the main target group of the trainings and who were the main participants, were usually complete beginners in the area of gender equality. Therefore, the trainings were not very beneficial for representatives of NGOs. Moreover, the expertise brought in within the frames of this project from abroad had already been available, but it was hardly used. A website with information on

gender equality www.gender.gov.sk was created within the frame of the project, but it has not been updated since the closing of the project.

When this paper was being written, the Institute for the Study of Gender Equality and the Family in All Policies of the Region of Banská Bystrica was starting its activities. The institute was established thanks to the support from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism through the Office of the Government SR. Its initiator was inspired by her participation in the governmental twinning project. However, information available on the internet indicates that the orientation of the institute will mostly be “pro-family”, as its materials mostly speak about the family and children and they say little about women and gender equality.

Education on gender mainstreaming

Systematic education in the gender agenda, and hence partly also in gender mainstreaming, is provided by the Center for Gender Studies (CGS) at Faculty of Philosophy Comenius University in Bratislava. The Center for Gender Studies was established in June 2001 as the first academic institution in the Slovak Republic focusing on educational and research activities on gender identity, gender specific differences and symbols. Beside accredited lectures on gender studies, including also the theme of gender mainstreaming, the CGS has also organised, within the frames of Community Initiative EQUAL, a summer and winter school of gender studies. Experts from Austria, who spoke about gender mainstreaming in institutions and advantages following from the decision to introduce these measures (CGS, 2007), participated in the second cycle of these educational activities.

Similarly, the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Prešov offers education in gender studies with the main focus on social work. In their reader on “Policies of Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men, Education and

Social Work” the concept of gender is discussed, but only in terms of elimination of gender stereotypes, or in terms of concrete processes (see Tokárová, 2006). Other universities offering education in social work, philosophy or political science are also starting to create similar study programmes (University of Matej Bel Banská Bystrica, College in Sládkovičovo etc.).

Systematic education outside of the academia focusing on decision makers basically does not exist. Even though some NGOs and gender experts offer gender trainings, the demand for this type of education is basically non-existent. The only exception is activities related to EU structural funds, where gender mainstreaming is a mandatory horizontal priority.

Projects of the European Community Initiative EQUAL II, thanks to personal efforts of gender experts and the director of antidiscrimination section of the Ministry of Labor, contain also the objective of gender equality in all four measures. Although the quality of projects varies, several interesting projects in the area of education were implemented. Among them is the project “ruzovymodrysvet.sk” (pinkandblueworld.sk) carried out by ASPEKT in cooperation with the NGO Citizen and Democracy (Občan a demokracia), Puppet Theater on Crossroads (Bábkové divadlo na Rázcestí) from Banská Bystrica and the non-investment fund School the Basis of Life (Škola základ života) at the Elementary school Gorkého 21 in Trnava. The goal of the project is to mainstream gender into education as the precondition of future occupational desegregation. The project covers a whole plethora of various educational, research and publication activities. (www.pinkandblueworld.sk)

The Society for Planned Parenthood carried out the project “Gender Mainstreaming in Reproductive Health Organizations”. Within its frames a group of trainers for gender trainings and gender mainstreaming was trained by two German lecturers. The project also published literature on gender mainstreaming in general and health services in particular and a manual on gender trainings.

Educational activities and gender trainings are closely linked to the question of ensuring the standard of quality. At present, among women's NGOs there are efforts to introduce a certain standardization of gender trainings and gender expertise. Especially within projects funded by the Community Initiative EQUAL there have been several projects offering gender education and certain new approaches and publications at the expert level. It must be said, however, that the quality of these materials varies – usually the best ones are those created by women's NGOs which have been dealing with the theme for a long time. On the other hand, there exists a certain “overload” of the market with materials and studies that not always apply expert, relevant and gender sensitive approaches. On the contrary, some of them are outright counterproductive. There have also been some cases of plagiarism of expert texts, but also cases of gender insensitive research, which, instead of unveiling gender stereotypes, reinforce them through its approach.

It has been repeatedly confirmed that sufficient funds allocated for a certain theme do not necessarily translate into improved quality. On the contrary, they also bring about interest and involvement of actors who have not previously worked with the theme and whose involvement is “artificial” and guided by self-interest. This experience, together with the fact that on most grant committees there are people who themselves do not understand the theme, can cause – and in Slovakia also causes – certain devaluation of the issues, together with formalization and bureaucratization of the whole process.

Opposition

The opposition to gender equality and gender mainstreaming comes traditionally from conservative circles. It's the Christian democrats and conservatives

who dismiss the gender agenda for ideological reasons: “The concept of so-called gender equality is a typical leftist agenda which tries to deny natural differences between women and men and strives to convince us that these existing differences are due to discrimination and manipulation. They make artificial distinctions between sex and gender, pitch men and women against each other, cast doubt on human nature as well as voluntary relations among people and traditional human institutions. They mistake equality of opportunity for equality of outcomes and equality of all people in their freedom and dignity with egalitarianism enforced by the state. It is a manifestation of social engineering striving to push for social experiments and it deepens the interference of the state in the private life of citizens.” (Hromadná pripomienka, 2007). What is paradoxical is that this public comment was signed only by women, although from the context it is clear that it was initiated by OKS (Civic-Conservative Party) with a predominantly male membership. This very fact points to inadequate reflection on gender equality issues in general.

Also the report on the Mother Centers project “We Perceive the World Differently, Therefore We Can Achieve More Together – Mother Centers in Fostering the Principle of Equal Opportunities on the Labor Market” shows similar lack of reflection. “Experiences with working at centers for mothers indicate that terms like equality of opportunity, gender equality, feminism, gender mainstreaming evoke in women feelings of nervousness and rejection. They reject the terms as such. Such comments are often uttered formally, or by people who give them the meaning of the “wrestling ring” with the other sex.” (UMC, 2006) Thus it is apparent that although the terminology evokes negative feelings, on the basis of personal experiences women identify with the content and intentions of these principles.

In general it can be said that the biggest obstacle to gender mainstreaming in Slovakia is not strong opposition but lack of interest and political will of those responsible for its implementation.

Feminist critique of gender mainstreaming

Thanks to the lobbying of women's organisations, gender mainstreaming has become part of the EU antidiscrimination policy and, if applied correctly, it is an efficient tool to achieve positive social changes. Its implementation in Slovak conditions is a long and uneasy process, but at present it is perhaps the only way to introduce at least minimal measures to strengthen gender equality in practice.

Nevertheless, after several years of attempts at implementing gender mainstreaming critical voices can be heard from the international women's and feminist movement. It is not clear to what extent this strategy is useful for women's movements and to what extent it can lead to weakening of political actors and to cutting off of their funding. Other questions emerge too e.g. how has gender mainstreaming changed the situation of women? Is gender mainstreaming just a slogan or a real possibility to create equality of opportunity for men and women? Is it really a principle that can bring about changes in decision-making processes or is it rather a strategy to maintain the patriarchal system? To what extent do political actors really know gender mainstreaming and to what extent is it really implemented? (see Sister Cities Going Gender, 2005)

These questions have been stemming mainly from the realization that in some EU countries the implementation of gender mainstreaming resembles a formal bureaucratic process focusing on quantitative representation of women (so-called "add women and stir"). Critical voices stress that one shortcoming of the "top-down" process is its dependency on the management of an organisation.

Therefore, we should not be surprised that gender mainstreaming reminds many critically thinking people from the former communist block of formalistic socialist emancipation. It, on the one hand, brought about important changes such as women's employment and education, but on the other it lacked the critique of patriarchal social arrangements and the hierarchy of

gender relations. Besides, emancipation policies never passed through the door of households and changed nothing in stereotypical division of labor in the household. Perhaps this was the reason why women did not show too much understanding for this policy and its “ownership”. In its final effect, the emancipation policy resulted in the double and triple burden of women.

There is the danger of a similarly formalistic approach also with gender mainstreaming. If the concept of “gender” is not used in its original epistemological meaning, stemming from feminist philosophy, and if it becomes only a new-speak expression for the term “sex”, its meaning of a cultural and social construct problematizing normative understanding of masculinity and femininity and male and female roles will be lost.

This danger is real especially in the process of introduction of gender mainstreaming to “big” politics: “It seems as if there was some feminist dialogue going on, but gender in this context does not mean categorization to theoretical structures, but gender means simply two sexes – men and women. There is no problematizing there. That is one thing. The other is a total misunderstanding when we say that women need the same opportunities as men. At the end of the day we lose any specificity of women. If the woman is to be defined through male categories then what is this all about? (...) Gender mainstreaming, regardless of a seeming similarity of terms – since just like feminism it also uses the term ‘gender’, is not a feminist programme; it’s a programme focusing on women and that is a difference.” (Barat, 2008)

The most important moments of feminist critique of gender mainstreaming that can be relevant also for Slovakia can be summarized in the following points:

- it is a formal process and many people and institutions applying it do not understand it at all. Without the knowledge of mechanisms of discrimination and disadvantage it is not possible to efficiently fight them;
- in its current form, gender mainstreaming does not problematize the patriarchal system, therefore it is “safe” and popular with governments and donors;

- using the term “gender” and leaving out the women’s question results in ignoring of specifically women’s issues and problems and their marginalization;
- feminists strive not for the integration of women into the patriarchal mainstream without its change, but for a radical change of social structures. A merely quantitative filling of positions by women without a genuine feminist agenda does not guarantee success, not even in those cases when the participation of women reaches the so-called critical mass (30%). We should not forget that gender mainstreaming is a product of feminist and women’s movement. In countries where this process is “controlled by the women’s movement”, such as Scandinavian countries, it has led to marked outcomes and improvement of the position of women in all spheres of public and private life. “Gender mainstreaming is a method and tool, so it is neither good nor bad. The basic precondition of its successful application is the reconstruction and interpretation of the term ‘gender’ in the original context of feminist epistemology. This is the only way to ensure meaningful application of projects and initiatives, either in the ‘bottom-up’ or ‘top-down’ direction.” (Kubes-Hoffman, 2004)

Case Study

Gender mainstreaming in the Slovak Republic in implementation of Structural Funds in the 2004 – 2006 Programming Period

The initial document for applying for EU aid was submitted by the Slovak Republic in the form of the *National Development Plan (NDP) of Slovakia*. In the document gender inequalities were given space only in one chapter *Analysis of economic and social development* in a special subchapter *Equality of opportunity of*

men, women and disadvantaged groups on the labor market². The concentration of the discussion on gender disparities in one individual subchapter means the exclusion of the gender perspective from other relevant chapters, which makes invisible the structural and cross-cutting nature of persistent gender inequalities and hinders the application of the gender perspective in all analysed thematic areas. The fact that gender analysis was relegated to a special space at the end of the chapter, or to the margin of attention (outside of the main center of attention) lowers the importance of the gender perspective to the minimum. It served as the formal fulfillment of an obligation, but the findings of the gender analysis cannot be applied to other parts of the document – e.g. to the overall SWOT analysis (they are missing from weak points and possible threats). Therefore, a logical outcome is that the part *Correspondence of the Strategy with Policies* formally refers to general regulations or legislative frameworks in the area of equal opportunities policies and antidiscrimination, but it does not contain any concrete strategies or commitments to support gender equality.

The *National Development Plan* follows from the *Community Support Framework* – the agreement between the EU and SR on development aid. In this document the questions of equality of opportunities of women and men dwindled to 2 paragraphs³ and gender specific data or analysis of gender inequalities in other relevant chapters – i.e. a horizontally applied gender perspective – is missing. Similarly to NDP, gender disparities are not included in the summarizing SWOT analysis (analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).

² The chapter names gender differences in the degree of economic activity, employment, unemployment and income, also representation of women among entrepreneurs, legislative, executive and managerial positions.

³ They mention the main gender differences in the unemployment and employment rate and income differences disadvantaging women, concentration of women in sectors with below average income (health care, education). The framework also states: "It appears that questions related to motherhood, disharmony between family and work life are the main elements we should focus on when evaluating the situation of women on the labor market."

The result of this is that so-called horizontal goals, including equality of opportunity, are formally sketched out but no concrete mechanisms of their implementation or evaluation are mentioned.

Other information is contained in annual reports of the *Community Support Framework*. From 2004 and 2005 reports it is apparent that formal statements about working towards the principle of equal opportunities prevail. In connection with one programme some data about the number of women in target groups is mentioned, but they are not presented in a systematic manner (only in selected national projects) and marked discrepancies disadvantaging women are not reflected at all. In other programmes, gender data about target groups is absent.

According to the available reports, there is still not enough data to conduct an evaluation, but the intention to prepare a special evaluation of the horizontal goals is proclaimed. The evaluation is still not available and according to the 2005 report it was postponed until the year 2006. Given the fact that the evaluation has not been published yet it is likely it has not been conducted at all.

In relation to *compatibility with Community policies* it is mentioned that the EU principles were included into relevant documents “by which their application in evaluation, selection and monitoring mechanisms was ensured”⁴, however, it is not clarified in which way. The respective part on equality of opportunities mentions only legislative compatibility of the Slovak legislation in the given area with international and EU documents. In other words, documents indicate the application of the principle of equal opportunities secured *de jure*, but not *de facto*.

⁴ Annual report *Community Support Framework*, 2004, 2005.

Programmes funded by the European Social Fund⁵

In relation to the gender perspective, programmes funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) are in a special position. The mission of the ESF is to support activities in the area of development of human capacities aiming at increasing employment, and one of its main principles is also to support equality of opportunity and social inclusion.

Taking into account the terminology they use, it seems that these programmes pay heightened attention to gender issues. Programming documents more often contain not just gender statistics, but also some concepts of gender terminology (gender equality, gender perspective, gender segregation of the labor market, gender mainstreaming). To a larger extent than other programmes they name concrete gender inequalities as well as provide recommendations for intervention towards their elimination. To a certain extent their weak point is that these analyses of gender inequalities are again concentrated only in separate chapters rather than being fully integrated into all relevant chapters. In some themes, attention to key gender inequalities is still missing. Thus, it is not possible to speak about full integration of the gender perspective. One consequence is that gender inequalities were not included in SWOT analyses and not all measures took them into account. It also must be said that in addition to

⁵ The analysis takes into account programs focusing on human resources development for the labor market: Single Programming Document Objective 3 focusing on the Bratislava Region and Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources focusing on the rest of Slovakia. European Community Initiative EQUAL was not included in this analysis as it, to a large degree, draws upon recommendations put forth by the European Commission. Moreover, it focuses on experimental testing of innovative approaches and its thematic concentration on fighting discrimination on the labor market including elimination of gender inequalities would beg a self-standing, more in-depth, analysis for which the extent of this paper does not allow.

inadequate naming of gender inequalities the materials also contain formulations denying the existence of some blatant gender inequalities⁶.

While the Single Programming Document Objective 3 (SPD Objective 3) focusing on development of human resources for the labor market in the region of Bratislava has no specific measures in the field of gender, the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources (SOP HR) focusing on the rest of Slovakia introduces at least one special measure to support the principle of equal opportunities (2.2 *Elimination of barriers which prevent equality of men and women on the labor market with emphasis on the reconciliation of work and family life*). A positive contribution of this measure is unquestionable; however, it has two main shortcomings. Firstly, although it names women (but not just them) as primary target groups, indicators at the level of outcomes and results do not include gender specific data⁷. Secondly, the amount of money that was supposed to be invested into this measure was relatively small – about 2% of the total funds allocated to SOP HR. In fact, this is a measure with the least amount of financial sources, even smaller than the amount of money projected to be spent in the technical support of this programme.

In relation to other measures, both programmes declare horizontal application of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all measures. This was realized in program supplements mostly through the evaluation of horizontal EU priorities through a common methodology, where impacts or influences on equality of opportunities of women and men are evaluated at three levels. Most

⁶ For instance, the Single Programming Document Objective 3 maintains that "In education, different treatment of men and women does not exist" which denies the existence of gender stereotypes in education and upbringing reinforced not just by teaching guidelines but also by actors involved in the process – teachers. It is paradoxical that this assertion is followed by a sentence casting doubt on its validity: "In general it can be said that there are more boys in the technical fields of study while more girls study humanities." The apparent discrepancy is not reflected upon at all.

⁷ These are only contained at the level of impact.

measures contain the evaluation of a *relatively high influence*, but in some also a *neutral* or *relatively low influence* occurs. Therefore, the horizontal integration of the gender perspective was not applied in all measures. It is also necessary to add that even in the case of measures indicating a high influence on equal opportunities of women and men we rarely come across, in descriptions of objectives or activities, the kind of tools that would mirror practical fulfillment of this principle. Even when some specific ones do occur, they usually emphasize the reconciliation of work and family life in spite of the fact that this issue is also targeted by the specific measure SOP HR 2.2. Outside of the measure 2.2, the support for gender equality is hence focused mostly on this limited area of barriers to a larger participation of women on the labor market, while others aspects, e.g. gender stereotypes in education, horizontal and vertical gender occupational segregation, the gender pay gap or low participation of women in entrepreneurship, and the like, are left unnoticed.

The fact that programme documents declare their commitment to carry out a set of supporting activities to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the executive level could be evaluated positively. The managing authority – which for both programs is the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and the Family SR has pledged to carry out:

- gender trainings and lectures for the management and staff responsible for implementation of structural funds;
- elaboration of manuals on principles of gender equality and ways to implement gender mainstreaming;
- elaboration of mechanisms to monitor observance of the principle of equality of opportunity in projects/measures/priorities;
- advisory services to those who elaborate project proposals so that consistent and continuous observation of the gender perspective would be secured.

However, the Managing Authority did not take the existing plans into account. The available annual reports do not indicate whether these activities have ever been carried out (not even in the form of technical assistance).

The annual reports create space for the analysis of the gender perspective in monitoring of aid implementation. The analysis of these reports showed that gender/sex disaggregated statistics do occur in sections on context indicators, but they are used only sporadically. In other words, gender data are not used systematically and consistently in a manner that would correspond with a horizontally integrated approach and that would make real application of the gender perspective in the whole programme possible. Even in cases when the reports give data specifically about women, gender differences are seldom assessed or analysed. The naming of gender difference remains purely descriptive⁸.

The biggest failing in project monitoring is the fact that indicators on target groups are not viewed from the gender perspective at all. It should be said that although the indicators were not defined to include the gender aspect, programme supplements of both programmes oblige final beneficiaries to provide data about the number of participants disaggregated by sex. This means that there exists an additional mechanism, but the reality of its application is different. In the annual reports these gender data do not occur at all and they have not been specifically evaluated yet. Their evaluation has not been included in a single external evaluation conducted thus far. This evaluation was meant to focus on the assessment of the impact of the project on increasing employment rates of disadvantaged job applicants and adaptability of employees – mostly from the

⁸ The descriptive approach in the annual reports – i.e. the absence of analyses, interpretations of evaluation of achieved outcomes and results is not a specific shortcoming of gender mainstreaming. This shortcoming of the reports was repeatedly pointed out by some members of monitoring committees in the discussions about the final approval of the report. Despite the fact that besides comments the discussions also yielded some concrete recommendations for improvement, these have not been heeded and the reports still maintain the descriptive approach.

perspective of the project's impacts on narrowing regional differences between particular regions targeted by the SOP HR and SPD Objective 3⁹.

As already indicated, in the case of a specific measure 2.2 that should primarily focus on supporting equality of opportunity of men and women gender indicators of outcomes and results were not defined, and the annual reports do not cite the participation of target groups from this perspective. The evaluation is limited to the description of calls for proposals and number of projects, the description of how their objectives have been met in terms of their content is completely absent.

According to the annual reports, the evaluation of fulfillment of the principle of equality of opportunity (either broader or concentrating specifically on the gender aspect) was not included in the methodology of the *monitoring visit* focusing on the realization of activities and overall administration of projects. The MA does not regard this aspect as a relevant monitoring tool related to the content of the project.

To summarize the analysis of horizontal mainstreaming of gender in both programmes the most important findings are:

- real horizontal gender mainstreaming in these programmes does not take place, neither at the level of programming nor implementation;
- the application of the principle remains at the level of declaration and its monitoring and evaluation is approached formally;
- (efficient) mechanisms to monitor the fulfillment of the principle of equality of opportunity and gender equality either through methodological tools applied in monitoring (the monitoring report, monitoring visit) or in terms of specific set of monitoring indicators are missing;

⁹ Available at <http://www.esf.gov.sk/esf/index.php?mod=news&nid=85&sID=80177ea5c42394f6b081abc13ac20824>

- despite the fact that the MA planned to conduct supporting activities to strengthen the implementation of gender mainstreaming (be it on the part of final beneficiaries or on the part of the management and implementation of programs) these activities have probably never been realized;
- publicly available documents (programming, monitoring and methodic) contain many inconsistencies not only with respect to the temporal continuity of the *original plan vs. its real implementation*, but also as concerns a single time period (the declared data collection according to the annual report vs. the data collection methodology according to the monitoring report form).

In general, the precondition for mainstreaming gender into these programs was partly set, but only at the level of programming (and even there we can see some shortcomings). At the level of implementation, the development trend shows that its realization remains formal and declarative and it is not put into practice. Thus, the impact of structural aid to support gender equality still remains unknown and its efficient evaluation would be very difficult also for teams of gender experts – since neither efficient monitoring mechanisms nor detailed data are available.

Summary of the Programming Period 2004 – 2006

Despite the fact that basic programming documents created a certain framework for application of so called horizontal objectives including equality of opportunity – encompassing also strengthening of gender equality, it is apparent that no concrete mechanisms, either institutional or related to project and programme monitoring, have been established to evaluate the realization of these objectives. Commitments adopted with the view of contributing to application

of these horizontal objectives are proclaimed, and specific indicators for horizontal priorities were set, but in particular annual reports (in the Community Support Framework or in individual programmes) these aspects were only formally evaluated, with no in-depth analysis of quantitative or qualitative data.

The support and application of principles of equality of opportunity and gender equality are therefore limited only to declarations. The absence of ongoing analyses in monitoring and evaluation is probably a consequence of the lack of in-house expertise, and also the lack of will to apply horizontal principles of gender equality or equality of opportunity, which is manifested in persistent discontinuity and inconsistency in reporting on monitoring of obligation fulfillment in these concrete aspects.

A serious shortcoming is also the lack of transparency in the composition and functioning of monitoring committees, which could, as one monitoring mechanism, play the key role in monitoring gender mainstreaming if the committees were composed of competent gender experts.

When looking at the possibilities offered by structural funds for the programming period of 2004 – 2006 it can be said that this first experience of Slovakia has been more or less a lost opportunity when it comes to the possibility of contributing to broader support of gender equality. As the most crucial factor appears to be the absence of capacities as well as low interest to fulfill commitments in this sphere, and not to reduce it just to a formal level, which leads to devaluation of the gender agenda.

The New Programming Period

Despite that fact that the new programming period started in 2007, at this juncture its in-depth efficient evaluation from the perspective of gender mainstreaming is not possible, since annual reports are not available.

It can only be stated that mechanisms for application of the principle of equality of opportunity, including gender equality, are in this programming period more complex, and that institutional and monitoring mechanisms have been strengthened. This concerns all horizontal priorities, not just the horizontal priority of equality of opportunity. It is likely that this development is due to pressure from the European Commission, not a reflection of possible outcomes of evaluation of the previous period (which has not been conducted yet) and its success or failure in this respect.

The evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the previous period would have helped to avoid further mistakes that have followed from underrating the gender perspective and its marginalization (instead of bringing it to the center of attention). Formal monitoring has thus far led to devaluation of the gender agenda. It is necessary to ensure that in the new programming period this trend does not deepen and that gender mainstreaming and support to gender equality are made a reality.

Recommendations on gender mainstreaming

I. To the Government of the Slovak Republic:

- to adopt a strategy, binding measures and divide concrete tasks for introducing gender mainstreaming into practice at least at the level of managing authorities
- to establish an expert institution to professionally manage the process, analysis, education and monitoring (the Spanish Institute for Women can serve as an example);
- to ensure at least basic education of state servants in the area of gender and gender mainstreaming;
- to create, at particular ministries, positions of gender plenipotentiaries;
- to present the theme of gender equality in the media as an integral part of the governmental policy;
- to initiate and actively participate in media campaigns (the Czech campaign *Mother Like Father* could serve as an example);
- to transfer gender equality policies to the regional and local level.

2. To the Structural Funds

- to ensure consistency and continuity in monitoring and evaluation of implementation of structural aid in the area of application of the principles of gender equality and equality of opportunities, i.e. to ensure consequent fulfillment of commitments declared in programming documents; in monitoring, pay attention to the real application of these principles rather than to the formal declaration of their application;
- to conduct an evaluation (external independent, or also internal) about application of the principle of equality of opportunity of women and men and the gender principle in the programming period of 2004

- 2006, in particular programmes as well as the overall absorption of EU funds and to transfer their outputs to the new programming period;
- to strengthen capacities in the area of implementation of the horizontal priority of equality of opportunities not only at the level of the coordinator but also of particular managing authorities (by designating responsible persons and creating capacities of respective managing authorities);
- to render the processes of establishment and operation of monitoring committees of particular programmes more transparent (publicise the establishment procedures, rules of operation and mostly up-to-date lists of members of these committees and organisations that they represent) and ensure the participation of experts and other actors from the area of gender equality in these committees.

Translated by **Eva Riečanska**

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About the Heinrich Böll Foundation Regional Office Warsaw

The Heinrich Böll Foundation (**Heinrich Böll Stiftung**), with headquarters in Berlin, is a German political foundation linked to the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party.

The Foundation's basic objective, both in Germany and abroad, is civil education aimed at supporting formation of democratic attitudes, social and political activism and understanding between nations. Its key values are: ecology, democracy, solidarity and nonviolence.

The Foundation is particularly devoted to building a democratic society based on respect for the rights of immigrants and the principles of gender democracy, understood as a domination-free relation between women and men. Both those principles constitute a basis for cooperation inside the Foundation, as well as in all areas of its public operation.

International operation of the Foundation involves cooperation with over 160 partner organisations from 60 countries on 4 continents, as well as running 27 foreign branches.

For over 15 years, the Foundation has been active in Central Europe, including Poland. In the 1990's, the Foundation mainly supported projects of partner organisations working towards human rights, equal opportunity for women and men, and balanced development of the natural environment. The Polish branch of the Foundation inaugurated its operation at the beginning of 2002,

when the negotiations before EU accession of the countries of Central Europe reached their final stages. One of the tasks of the Polish branch was to monitor and support actions aimed at inclusion of the equality perspective into the process of integration of those countries with the EU. Since the accession, the branch has faced new challenges: it initiates and supports social and political debate in Central and Eastern Europe (i.e. in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine), including the perspective of other issues close to the “Greens”.

At the moment in Central Europe the Foundation implements the programme entitled “Our New Europe”, aimed at reaching an agreement between the “old” and the “new” members of the European Union and their neighbours on the principle issues of European politics. The programme is divided into regional components: “Dialogue Forum Europe”, “Gender Democracy and Women’s Politics” and “Energy Policy and Protecting the Climate”, as well as national components: “Democratic Ukraine” and “Integrated Development of Rural Areas”. The Foundation’s operation across the region is divided between the regional office in Warsaw, the national office in Prague, and the currently organised branch in Kiev.

You can find more information about Heinrich Böll Stiftung, its operation and publications on our websites: www.boell.de or www.boell.pl.

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