

EU-REGIONAL POLICY AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN AUSTRIA — SUMMARY

Mission

The sub-committee on regional economy of the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning - following the resolution of the conference of the Representatives of the National Women - decided to work on the topic of the equalisation between women and men in the regional objective 1 and 2 programs and to commission the present study.

The study treats the question, how and to which extent the Austrian regional objective programs pursue the goal of the promotion of the equalisation between women and men. Within the scope of this study, the existing possibilities should be discovered and recommendations on a middle- to long-term basis should be derived.

GM in the Austrian structural funds programs

The approach of "Gender Mainstreaming" (GM) is part of all structural funds programs as an explicit confession to promote the equalisation of women and men. The issue arose at a time², when the program planning had already progressed to the final phase. Therefore the considerations could not be reflected in the desired and possible width and depth. Although there has not been identified a continuous integration of the topic, the present signs form a good basis for the future progress to reach the goal of constant consideration of GM in the programs.

As examples there can be cited co-ordinated and derived gender-specific goals, respectively, measures and indicators (Vorarlberg), institutions for regional GM support co-ordinated by regional managers for equal opportunities (Salzburg) or also the attempt of offering women-specific consultations for entrepreneurs (Upper Austria). Further "Good Practice" examples are contained in chapter 4.3 of this study.

Numerous of the currently existing initiatives in context with the regional goal programs pursue the goal of equal opportunity. They are based on the idea to promote women or particular projects to promote women in the labour market policy, respectively. The majority of the funds of the European Union for structural fund programs are made available through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This fund – in opposite of the person-oriented approach of the European Social Fund (ESF) - mainly intervenes in the capital or infrastructure related areas. This has to be considered with the implementation of GM.

The study also deals with the relevant indicator for the evaluations of equal opportunities. Suggestions for improvements were submitted to ensure a more systematic and broader information basis.

Some promoting as well as hindering influences that are relevant for the implementation of GM in ERDF-programs and measures evolved from analyses and interviews. The most important **promoting factors** are:

A clear **top down** confession to GM. It includes required resources as well as a definitive and consistent willingness. Only this way the necessary commitment can be established.

Providing experience and supporting structures for program and project managers in form of authorised Gender Mainstreaming Representatives, offering consultation, information, manuals etc.

Existing **consciousness** for the meaning and the benefit of GM as well as **personal commitment** within Implementing bodies and project responsible persons. That way an important consciousness is being established within the administration and towards the project responsible persons.

In the different regions of Austria (Länder) these promoting factors have been established successfully by implementing several specific initiatives and measures to different degrees.

² e. g. the Technical paper No. 3: "Considering equal opportunities for women and men in the structural fund measures" by the European Commission was just published in March 2000.

Anyway, not meeting the promoting factors mentioned above is a **significant hindrance**. Additional obstacles are:

- **Sanctions** against GM; rather than that incentives are preferred.
- Conflicts between the program's main goal and the horizontal goals of equal opportunities. The Implementing bodies are forced to meet the goal(s) to receive the maximum of possible funding. In case of doubt it might (have to) lead to the need to neglect horizontal goals.

Starting points for GM in ERDF projects

The **projects** turned out to be the highest priority on the intervening level in the current state of the program. The need is in getting to know specific options to react upon having a connection to the present situation and also the potential to be implemented with practical solutions. Additionally the necessity was stressed to find those types of projects where GM can be implemented only with difficulties or not at all in the current program period. This requirement resulted logically from the preceding analysis.

In order to point out typical projects eligible for funding by ERDF, exemplary types of projects can be assigned to the following main areas of intervention in a first step:

- Capital investments for the creation or maintenance of jobs
- Investments in infrastructure [...]
- Actions for the development of the endogenous potential [...]
- Measures of technical support [...]

It is recommended to determine the "suitability" of these types of projects for the implementation of GM: set the two axis's of a graph "**possible starting points for GM**" and "**acceptance by the respective participants' systems**" in relation to each other. Doing this a proper differentiation between the individual types of projects can be made as well as those can be determined where measures for the implementation of GM should be prioritised.

It is crucial to know the boundary conditions that are affected by ERDF promoted measures in parallel to this fundamental allocation of the types of projects. Only this way effective measures can be developed. It is necessary to correlate the **main goal of the regional development** with the **horizontal goal of equal opportunities**. Possible conflicting goals resulting from this have to be brought up for discussion and resolved. This can be done more successfully if GM has been established on a continuously broad program level. For the remaining program until 2006 however only the project level remains as starting point for GM.

It's preferred to use the approach that starts with projects that already had a positive regional development effect and tries to meet the horizontal goal of equal opportunity at the same time – and vice versa.

To implement GM effectively the affected **systems** on one and their **possibilities and limits** on the other hand have to be known and considered. This can be accomplished with a **system's map** of all systems that are relevant in regional development projects.

Based on this it can be quickly defined whether a measure offers few or numerous starting points for the implementation of GM. In addition to this the development of specific and meaningful indicators and interventions for GM is being supported.

Using the system's map reveals new perspectives, because it diverts the focus from the individual subsystem to the entire structure. This can have the positive effect that numerous starting points for GM can be found for projects, being classified before as not suitable to "gender" - or only with difficulty.

In principle it can be stated that complex projects and "soft" measures facilitate the implementation of GM. Projects with a close focus on the particular subject have more difficulty to implement the goal of equal opportunities due to fewer starting points.

Recommendations

Principally the first crucial steps for an improved implementation of GM are **sensitisation and awareness raising**. This contains optionally - depending upon the target group and work contents - the following measures:

Trainings for employees of the implementing bodies and the administrative authority as well as for multipliers. Trainings are meaningful in the areas of:

- Basics of GM
- Areas where GM is applied and
- Instruments for the implementation of GM (e. g. manuals).

Offering explicit consultations for project responsible persons as well as for Implementing bodies.

Externally effective measures for awareness raising regarding

- The use of a gender- appropriate language (in public relations work)
- Emphasising GM (e. g. bold print and larger characters on request forms)
- Specific supplements, consulting and training offers
- Obligating representation of GM in the project

Generally speaking three phases were specified for the improved implementation of GM:

- Short and medium-term program implementation
- Evaluation phase
- Program planning 2006+

Therefore the following specific recommendations were made.

Short and medium-term program implementation

The following measures are recommended for the short and medium-term program realisation based on sensitisation and awareness raising:

It makes sense to implement GM in specific equal opportunity **pilot projects** if the means and resources of the programs permit this. The use of the system's map is helpful to define the types of projects that are particularly suitable. Further gender-specific demand analyses and achievable targets represent an important basis. Using methods like "Mapping Gender" (see chapter 5.3) or the Four-R-Method (**R**epresentation, **R**esources, **R**ealities and **R**ights).

The development of a **detailed manual** for each individual type of project is recommended; the actual project planning and the verification of the proposals for projects, according to the principle of the "Four-GeM-Steps" (see chapter 5.3.1). The relevant questions for the project have to be raised in every one of the four phases (analysis, goals, realisation and evaluation). This allows potential users like Implementing bodies to evaluate a project regarding GM; it also serves project responsible persons during the concept development of a project. It is stressed that the manual is to be understood as such and not as a checklist being checked off. The criteria for the project evaluation are still to be determined. It is recommended to use the checklist presented in the chapter "Program evaluation and indicators".

Intensified **dialogue between Regional Development and Gender Mainstreaming** to come up with project related ideas and the improved implementation of GM in general. This applies to administrative authorities and Implementing bodies as well as Representatives of the National Women and the NGO (Non-Governmental Organisations).

Exchange of experience across different programs - for the better utilisation of existing knowledge and experience of persons involved in the program. This can take place through an organised and moderated exchange or as a training exchanging experiences across different programs.

Program evaluation and indicators

The following starting points are recommended:

The **indicator of the European Commission** (in accordance with Annex IV of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001 of 2 March 2001) should be used co-ordinated.

There should be a shared interpretation of the indicator within the implementing bodies to make an improved evaluation possible. A possible proceeding for projects that are difficult to classify at first: use a checklist that has been established according to the four steps (analysis, goals, realisation and evaluation). This checklist contains four questions for each phase of the implementation of GM that are to answer with “yes” or “no”. Based on a key for the answers a decision can be made. That means: if - according to the study - there is at least one of the questions for each area being answered with “yes” the project can be classified as a project meeting “**equal opportunity**” requirements.

Accompanying evaluation that dedicates itself explicitly to the topic of GM. It would be helpful to develop a detailed manual to support this, as already suggested for the pilot project development.

Analysis of GM measures that were planned in the current program phase; however, they were not implemented due to the lack of interest. It is recommended, to e. g. exactly analyse the reasons in the course of an accompanying evaluation and to derive options for future measures within this range of intervention.

Program planning 2006+

There is the opportunity to plan additional and extensive steps for the implementation of GM for future regional development programs beside the measures already stated:

Consistent use of the Four-Step-Method of the GeM-Co-ordination Unit during the entire program. The toolbox developed by the GeM-Co-ordination Unit might be helpful. It contains the manuals for program and project responsible persons and Implementing bodies, as well as a manual for the implementation of GM in programs (www.gem.or.at).

Use of existing resources and competencies of the Representatives of the National Women and of the NGO. It is important to clarify the roles in advance. It has to be granted that the responsibility for GM is not solely assigned to the Representatives of the National Women. It also has to be clarified how and in-what role-the representatives of the NGO will be tied in the future.

Obeying **top down effects** as a clear and visible commitment as well as establishing suitable boundary conditions by the “top”, meaning the European Commission as well as by the responsible Implementing bodies.