



Decision-making: exchange of good practices



European Commission

Decision-making

Exchange of good practices

European Commission

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Unit G.1

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Equality between women and men is a founding principle of the European Union. A balanced participation by women and men in society's major political and economic decisions is vital to developing real democracy and to contribute to economic growth.

Although significant progress has been made in the last decade, too few women hold key positions in decision-making despite the increased number of women that have entered the labour market (the female employment rate in the EU has risen from 51,4% to 57,2% since 1997) and the fact that more and more women are highly qualified (they account for almost 60% of university degrees in the EU). This is what is called the “glass ceiling”, referring to invisible barriers which prevent women from taking up positions of authority in public life and business.

It is very important to collect and disseminate data as well as to analyse the trends in this important field. The European Commission finances a database¹ on women and men in decision-making positions. It seeks to provide the most harmonised data possible on women and men in high level decision-making positions in the 27 EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey and Croatia. The database shows that the average percentage of women in the national Parliaments of the EU Member States is just 23%². In Governments, the proportion is 22%³. The private sector is not performing better: it is estimated that only 4% of CEOs of the highest decision-making bodies of the 50 largest publicly-listed companies⁴ are women. Women account for a mere 11% of board members of these same companies.

There are many reasons why women are under-represented in decision-making positions. First of all, there are gender stereotypes and discrimination, and segregation in education and on the labour market. Then there is the lack of policies to make it easier for women men and to strike the right work-life balance, and the unequal distribution of domestic and family chores. Lastly the political environment, corporate culture and media attitudes are still too unfavourable to women.

Promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making is one of the key concerns highlighted in the Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)⁵, which comes in the wake of the Framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2006). A balanced share of power between women and men can be won only by acting at all levels, involving all stakeholders and focusing on all the factors that combine to create gender imbalance in decision-making.

To support this effort, the European Commission has encouraged exchanges of information, good practices and networking between all actors involved in the field of equal opportunities between women and men under the fifth Community action programme on equal opportunities (2001-2006). This takes the form, inter alia, of co-funding transnational projects launched by the Member States, regional and local public authorities, NGOs, social partners and other relevant stakeholders.

These projects have focused on various decision-making issues: some dealt with the role of public actors and policies, businesses and trade unions, others concentrated on a specific field of activity or level of governance, and others again to tackle stereotypes in order to break the glass-ceiling and raise the awareness of the stakeholders. The variety of approaches adopted reflects the multidimensional nature of the problem, as highlighted by the project promoters.

The projects produced many outputs: publications, studies and surveys, good practice guides, tool-kits, guidelines or awareness-raising and information campaigns (conferences and seminars, media spots and websites). This publication features the profiles of 23 projects co-funded in the context of calls for proposals on the topic of decision-making. Each profile provides a brief explanation of the project aims and a review of the methodology and results achieved. Details of the coordinating organisation and its transnational partners are also included, along with the address of the project website where applicable.

This publication is designed to help to ensure these tools are distributed, as widely as possible, among all the key players involved in promoting a gender balance in decision-making positions, while acting as a source of inspiration for future action.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/index_en.htm

² Data related to Lower Chambers, collected in June-July 2007.

³ Data related to Senior Ministers, that is those who sit in the Council of Ministers and who hold key portfolios. Collected in June-July 2007.

⁴ Data collected in June 2006 (data not fully comparable).

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/roadmap_en.html



Decision-making
Exchange of good practices

Telework helps women returning to work

Project name

All inclusive @ work

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Belgium

International partners

- Amsterdam University, The Netherlands
- EKATO, Greece
- The Irish Telework Association, Ireland
- TecFor, Italy
- TeleDock/Aby-Teleconsulting, The Netherlands

EU subsidy

EUR 361 976

Total costs

EUR 604 000

Name of the coordinating organisation

Unie Van Zelfstandige Ondernemers - UNIZO

Contact name

Caroline Meyers

Address

Gasthuisstraat 31 (9th floor)
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Telephone

+32 (0)2 546 22 34

Fax

+32 (0)2 546 22 40

E-mail

caroline.meyers@esf-agentschap.be

Websites

www.tijdvoortelewerk.be
www.tijdvoortelewerk.be/
[Telework-survey-University-Antwerp.pdf](#)
www.tijdvoortelewerk.be/
[Synthesis-EUsurvey-Telework.pdf](#)
www.teledock.nl
www.unizo.be

One solution to increasing women's participation in the workforce is to encourage more teleworking. However, many organisations are reluctant to facilitate this without more research being done. The Belgian Unie Van Zelfstandige Ondernemers (UNIZO), together with partners from the Netherlands, Greece, Ireland and Italy, carried out an extensive investigation into the benefits of teleworking for women wishing to return to work.

In order to explore the benefits of teleworking the project organised round tables and focus groups involving social partners, policy-makers and women's organisations. Interviews with stakeholders explored the pros and cons of telework. With the help of e-surveys, which were sent out in all the partnering countries, the project was able to investigate employers' and employees' attitudes to, and experiences of, teleworking.

Furthermore, the project wanted to more closely look into the concept of telecentres which are centres enabling teleworkers from different companies to group together in a professional environment with a technological infrastructure, close to home. To this end each project partner organised qualitative analyses of telecentres/company satellite offices, comparing the experiences of telecentre workers and their managers with home-based tele-workers and their managers.

Pros and cons of teleworking

The results of the extensive data-collection were summarised by the project partners into a report, covering each of their countries. It presents statistics on teleworking within organisations, policy, good

practice, and barriers as well as solutions to such barriers. These reports were then disseminated in each of the national and international partner countries.

The research showed that there is a large gap between attitudes in northern and southern Europe towards teleworking. In Greece, for example, many women don't have the IT skills to be able to do teleworking. In addition, the type of jobs women normally hold are administrative, which are generally perceived to be inappropriate for this type of working. Surprisingly enough women are also less likely to suggest the idea of teleworking to their employer than their male colleagues.

The main reservations from the employers were a lack of employee supervision and a potential loss of social contact with colleagues or access to company information. At the same time organisations using teleworking said they perceived it as positive.

Telecentres - a better set-up?

The research on telecentres was presented in a general project report in English, entitled 'Telework in Europe', and gave the overview of the e-survey results and attitudes to teleworking. This report also presented the results of the closing transnational conference and was made available on CD-ROM for easy distribution.

It explains how the flexibility offered by telecentres is perceived to make it easier to combine professional and domestic tasks. Consequently, job accessibility is increased facilitating a return to work for women. They also boost social interaction among teleworkers and between these workers and their local community.

Moreover, telecentres were shown to lead to greater work motivation and productivity. Despite these facts the concept is quite uncommon in many countries.

The results of the project were summed up in a flyer in Dutch, Greek and Italian. In addition to this, two press releases were sent out which gave good overall response in the press.

Conference close calls for action

A transnational conference was held at the end of the project to present and discuss results and good practice. It concluded that much more work is needed before teleworking is accepted across Europe and recommendations for measures to help encourage a change in attitudes were made. Partners will be following-up activities within their countries and, in addition to that, the project suggested that a European telework platform should be created in the future, in order to further stimulate the debate.

In the end the project both raised awareness and stimulated interest in teleworking and there was a positive response from policy-makers and social partners to the findings.

Carpe Decision

Project name

Carpe Decision

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Italy

International partners

- Catalan Institute for Women (ICD), Spain
- Directorate General of Women, Valencia Regional Government's Ministry for Social Welfare, Spain
- Institute of Women, Region of Murcia, Spain
- Regional Committee for Gender Equality of the Ionian Islands, Greece
- Union of Algarve Trade Unions (USAL-CGTP-IN), Portugal

EU subsidy

EUR 233 855

Total costs

EUR 327 009

Name of the coordinating organisation

The Inter-Mediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CRPM)

Contact name

Angelo Parello

Address

Piazza del Pamiglione, 1
57123 Livorno
Italy

Telephone

+39 0586 82 64 25
+39 0348 33 65 750

Fax

+39 0586 82 64 30

E-mail

a.parello@comune.livorno.it

Websites

www.crpm.org
www.carpedecision.org

While women may be achieving more academically and are increasingly part of the workforce, look to the top levels of an organisation and they barely figure. If gender equality is to be accomplished, the full participation of women in all spheres of society is essential. With this in view, the Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CRPM), together with partners from Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal, explored the gender balance of decision-makers in public life within the Mediterranean region.

The work conducted by the project provided an opportunity to take stock of the current situation as well as to assess what more can be done to improve the access of women to decision-making roles.

As an umbrella group for all the Mediterranean regional institutions, the IMC was able to provide an extensive network for comprehensive research into the topic to be carried out. A transnational committee of experts in the field of equal opportunities was set up to direct and organise the research focusing on management, co-ordination, evaluation and dissemination. The committee gathered information on existing projects which worked with the involvement of women at the top levels of organisations. Their experiences feed into the research results of the committee. Criteria for good practice were defined and 28 examples of best practice were consequently identified to put into a database.

An additional study was made looking into the factors that condition the possibility of women taking up decision-making roles and this contributed to the

creation of a 'women in leadership' model. Interviews were also carried out with women in leadership roles in economic, political, social and educational fields to further identify obstacles for them to take up decision-making roles.

Improve awareness

Promoting visibility and knowledge exchange about the topic, both among policy-makers and the general public, were important to the project. In order to increase the knowledge about this issue public forums and national workshops were run which highlighted the need to encourage the inclusion of women within decision-making bodies. A final conference was held during which project findings were presented and discussed.

The project also used media and Internet channels to raise the project's profile. The information and findings, including leadership role models and successful examples of women accessing decision-making positions were disseminated throughout the 155 regions of the CRPM network. Awareness was further increased by the production and distribution of a number of brochures. This, alongside the final reports from the different partners, and a series of newsletters, summarised the project efforts and highlighted the importance of the issue.

In addition to this a project web-site (www.carpedecision.com) was created as a platform for sharing knowledge, experiences and analysis on promoting women's participation and access to decision-making. The website is available in English as well as project partner languages, and the site

includes not only the project information and results but also all the reports and information material that were distributed in the course of the project.

Better understanding of the barriers women are facing

The project findings provided a clearer picture of the practical realities and barriers faced by women in the region regarding decision-making roles. In some regions, such as the Algarve (Portugal), it became apparent that this was the first time that the subject was raised. It will take considerable time for change as stereotypes and behaviour patterns need to be dismantled. As a result of the project, recommendations on policies and measures to facilitate women's participation in decision-making were drawn up and presented to policy-makers. The project hopes to prompt the implementation of many more organisation-led initiatives and actions. Further research is needed on this topic. This would go towards a better understanding of how to increase the number of women involved in public decision-making roles. In addition, work must be done to sensitise the public into understanding that having more women in leadership roles is by no means a threat to men but a benefit to society as a whole.

Learning to speak with employers

Project name

Climate for change: Gender equality and climate policy

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Germany

International partners

- Alleanza per il Clima, Italy
- City of Lahti, Finland
- City of Malmö, Sweden
- Comune di Ferrara, Italy
- Comune di Genova, Italy
- Comune di Napoli, Italy
- Comune di Venezia, Italy
- Union of the Baltic Cities

EU subsidy

EUR 413 502

Total costs

EUR 533 651

Name of the coordinating organisation

Climate Alliance

Contact name

Ulrike Janssen

Address

Galvanistr. 28
60486 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

Telephone

+49 069 71 7139-21

Fax

+49 069 71 7139-93

E-mail

u.janssen@climatealliance.org

Websites

www.climateforchange.net
www.climatealliance.org

Comprehensive climate policy can only be drawn up if all groups in society are taken into account. Yet environmental fields, such as energy, transport and construction, are traditionally dominated by men. This is despite studies showing that women are more affected by climate change and, as a result, more understanding of the need for urgent lifestyle and behavioural changes. The 'Climate for change' project therefore set out to develop strategies to improve female participation in climate protection-related decision-making and increase the proportion of women in management and executive positions in this field.

The project, with the German Climate Alliance Group in the lead and Italian, Finnish, Swedish and Baltic municipal partners, focused particularly on climate policies at local level. Although women tend to be under-represented in local authority activities concerning environmental issues, this, nevertheless, is a context within which they are more likely to have the opportunity to get involved and increase their participation than elsewhere.

Finding the key to the problem

In order to analyse the structures that contribute towards preventing female involvement in the area of climate protection, a statistical survey was carried out in the ten partner cities. Interviews were done with women currently involved in decision-making roles, as well as with climate protection experts. The success of the methods and instruments for supporting women that are currently in place was evaluated. This helped to establish whether these should be developed further or whether new instruments and methods should replace them.

In conjunction with the research, the project sought to heighten awareness about the importance of having balanced gender participation among those accountable for making decisions, at local level, in the area of climate change. Project meetings and national workshops were to this end organised to stimulate an open discussion on this issue. These proved to help strengthen the contribution of city-to-city networks which had been established to improve gender balance within their local authorities. A database of female experts working on climate protection was created, providing greater visibility for these women. In the long term, these networks of women and men, will become a reference for the issue of gender mainstreaming in local climate protection.

Tools for a climate change

Central to the project was the idea of providing ready-to-use tools to be adopted by local authorities across Europe. The tools would allow for a more diverse and, consequently, more comprehensive approach to climate protection through the active involvement of women.

In this respect the project developed a Climate for change toolkit, drawing upon the analysis and results of the project. The kit, available in English, German and Italian, has been key to the dissemination of project results. It incorporates data, facts, arguments, project findings and best practices from many different European countries; tools for promoting women into managerial and executive positions, including implementation guidelines, instructions, suggestions and examples; a gender checklist aiding organisations to look at themselves through 'gender

perspective glasses'; and, a promotional leaflet to help raise awareness about the project among as many employees as possible.

Introducing global efforts

Following the project's closing seminar a resolution was drawn up by the partners. It called for Climate Alliance, national governments, the European Commission, the UN climate secretariat and other environmental networks to incorporate gender mainstreaming into climate change policy, to take actions to improve the number of women involved in the field, particularly in decision-making roles, and to strengthen the debate on gender issues during international climate negotiations.

Breaking the ‘celluloid ceiling’

Project name

Culture-Biz

Project duration

30/12/2003 – 29/03/2005

Country

Germany

International partners

- Finnekvit, Finland
- MEDIACULT, Austria
- Observatorio das Actividades Culturais, Portugal
- Zentrum für Kulturforschung, Germany

EU subsidy

EUR 323 583

Total costs

EUR 407 089

Name of the coordinating organisation

European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts)

Contact name

Prof. Dr. Andreas Wiesand

Address

Dahlmannstr. 26
53113 Bonn
Germany

Telephone

+49 (0)228 2420997

Fax

+49 (0)228 241318

E-mail

wiesand@ericarts.org

Websites

www.ericarts.org
www.kulturforschung.de
www.oac.pt
www.mdw.ac.at/mediacult/
www.finnekvit.org
www.gender-research.net

As women try to climb the ranks of the culture sector, the constraints of the ‘celluloid ceiling’ loom ever closer. A case in point: only 3% of Europe’s top grossing films from 1996-2003 were directed by women, according to the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts). As a result the Culture-Biz project set out to examine the opportunities that exist – or not – for women to take on decision-making roles within film production and book publishing.

As part of a series of three studies investigating how diversity can be achieved within Europe’s cultural industries through equality, the Culture-Biz project compares the status of women in large, medium and small-sized film production and fiction book publishing companies. The project, lead by ERICarts in partnership with Finnekvit (Helsinki), MEDIACULT (Vienna), Observatorio das Actividades Culturais (Lisbon) and the Zentrum für Kulturforschung (Bonn), explores the potential for women to take on decision-making roles at different stages of the production and distribution processes. The sector and country-specific observations and recommendations resulting from the project is of particular interest to private companies, national broadcasting organisations, professionals working on both the business and creative sides of the industry, professional associations, university professors and students.

Documenting the situation

Information and data from existing relevant studies were collected and analysed in order to enable project partner research teams to paint a clearer picture of the structural changes and developments within the sector across Europe, and the subsequent effect that

these are having on the roles of women working in the domain. In addition, interviews and assessments of the proportion of women actually holding executive positions within major European publishing houses, film production companies and key industry events, such as the Frankfurt book fair or the Cannes film festival, were carried out.

The survey studied the career paths of both men and women working in the sector and looked into how individuals and genders defined success. Furthermore, the project reviewed at which stages women were being blocked from reaching the higher ranks within the profession. It also looked into whether women helped each other up the career ladder. The project took into account women who had made it through the 'celluloid ceiling', examined what their overall share of the executive positions was and how these figures differed according to company size.

Finally, the survey researched the networks, mentoring and public programmes that exist to support women working in film production and book publishing, including female-specific book shops, publishers, book fairs, film production companies and film festivals. It also made a gender-focused study into who wins grants and competitions, takes and provides training and are influential figures within the industry, such as critics, agents and scouts.

Lights, camera, action

The project results show that while some progress has been made since the 1990s, gender balance throughout the sector is still some way off and the less well-paid, lower-status roles continue to be female dominated. Even if some women do make it

to executive level they rarely scoop the boardroom-level decision-making positions. Stereotyping and a lack of awareness of the contribution women make, on both the business and creative sides of the cultural industries, need to be addressed while greater transparency and the constant monitoring of developments are similarly essential if progress is to be made.

Results from all the national surveys can be found in the Culture-Biz book. Published in English, the publication presents developments and trends along with case studies, 'voices from the field' and examples of both good and bad practice.

Decision-making in rural areas

Project name

European 'carrefour' working on equal opportunities (CESEC)

Project duration

01/12/2003 - 28/02/2005

Country

France

International partners

- CRE of Guadajoz (ADEGUA), Spain
- CRE of Liguria (ISEFT), Italy
- CRE of Macedonia (American Farm School), Greece
- CRE of Rioja (CEIP), Spain
- CRE Svenskfinland, Finland

EU subsidy

EUR 345 534

Total costs

EUR 475 534

Name of the coordinating organisation

Foyer Rural CEPAGE for the Carrefour Rural Européen Femmes of the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region (CREF - PACA)

Contact name

Nathalie Grilli

Address

11 Avenue Alexandre Barety
06260 Puget-Theniers
France

Telephone

+33 (0)4 93 05 19 31

Fax

+33(0)4 93 05 14 71

E-mail

ng.cref@wanadoo.fr

Women in rural areas face barriers to opportunities just as their urban counterparts, but there are generally fewer structures in place to help them. A French project, together with partners from Spain, Italy, Finland and Greece, set out to analyse discrimination encountered by these women when accessing decision-making roles. In doing so, the project raised awareness of the issue and developed tools to improve gender equality with particular reference to women in rural areas.

To map out the problem, interviews were carried out with male and female rural decision-makers, looking specifically at how they use their time, how this differs between the sexes and from region to region. The study took place in all partner countries, taking into account private, public and political bodies. The results from this exercise were then compared to understand the most appropriate ways of helping women into decision-making roles. From this, 17 examples of best practice were collated from France, Spain, Italy, Finland and Ireland.

One of the main objectives of the project was to raise awareness and develop tools which could improve gender equality in rural areas. In the course of the project two CD ROMs were created. The first is an information tool which presents results from the project, including regional analysis and best practice, along with strategies to improve the situation of rural women. The second CD is a training/awareness-raising tool. It presents an overview of the issue of gender equality and the situation of women in Europe – including causes of inequality, the consequences of this and actions taken – as well as strategies to

encourage women into decision-making roles in the rural domain.

In addition to this a cartoon was created to stimulate debate on the issue of rural women in a more humoristic manner. The cartoon has been used as a teaching tool in schools and by working groups. It draws on the real experiences of women accessing decision-making roles in the rural domain and depicts in an innovative way the various steps the project has taken towards achieving equality.

The French, Spanish, Greek and Finnish partners set up training sessions for the use of these tools, which were aimed at equal opportunity specialists and organisations promoting gender equality. Several women's rights networks have consequently made requests to receive the training.

By operating within a trans-national network of more than 70 bodies, the project has facilitated a more comprehensive overview of the situation for women throughout Europe. Equally, skills and knowledge have been increased and improved, and a better understanding of how different cultural approaches influence attitudes has been developed.

Spreading seeds of knowledge over Europe

During the project three 'Path to equality' meetings were held bringing together those involved in rural issues, from across Europe, to discuss and share knowledge, experiences and innovative, best-practice initiatives. In addition to this, a closing seminar entitled 'Giving women access to decision-making posts in the rural domain' was held in Nice. Over 150 people

from different European countries attended the event to share views on the topic.

To raise awareness of the project and report on its progress a newsletter was sent out to equal opportunity specialists and, in turn, their contacts. The newsletter was used as a method of linking people from different regions to share good practice and explore different countries' approaches to the issue.

To reach a wider audience the project produced a number of articles featured in local and regional newspapers in Spain, Finland and France. Publicity spots on local television and radio appeared, as well as a report on the project that was broadcast on local Spanish television.

The project managed to highlight the issue of the value of women's contribution in rural areas, and the big demand on developing the projects network and tools further are currently being considered for future actions.

Gender segregation at work

Project name

Gender differences in the access to managerial and entrepreneurial positions

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Italy

International partners

- Athens Development Agency, Greece
- Euconsult Fondation, Hungary
- Local Government of Galagamácsa, Hungary
- Mayo County Council, Ireland
- Municipality of Ostersund, Sweden
- National Institute for Working Life, Sweden
- Women of the North West Ltd, Ireland

EU subsidy

EUR 284 576

Total costs

EUR 413 205

Name of the coordinating organisation

Provincia di Frosinone

Contact name

Nicoletta Paniccia

Address

Piazza Gramsci, 13
03100 Frosinone
Italy

Telephone

+39 (0)775 836861

Fax

+39 (0)775 836863

E-mail

gendmap@provincia.fr.it

Websites

www.provincia.fr.it
www.provincia.fr.it/gender
www.fondazionebrodolini.it
www.fondazionebrodolini.it/gendmap.asp

Why is it that women are far less prominent than men when it comes to the sort of managerial and entrepreneurial positions that require strong decision-making skills? By investigating access to these roles within different European cultural 'contexts', the Italian Provincia di Frosinone, together with partners from Ireland, Sweden, Hungary and Greece, hoped to gain a better understanding of the situation and how it is influenced by social and economic factors, welfare systems and company policy.

The project aimed to paint a fuller picture of the good practice and company structures that can reduce gender segregation higher up in an organisation. Focusing particularly on local authorities, since they play a fundamental role in the management, implementation and promotion of equal opportunities, the project measured the barriers women face when going for managerial positions or starting up their own business. Work constraints and the outcomes of public policies and training established to overcome these, were analysed. The discrimination encountered by women at different stages of their careers was also investigated.

Surveying the situation

Partners provided data and studies on the development of gender segregation throughout the various levels of a company's structure. This involved analysing employment figures for managerial and entrepreneurial positions by gender; studying the gender gaps in wages and access to training; providing data, by gender, on promotion and working hours; examining the laws and public policies that facilitate

women into senior positions at national, regional and local level; and exploring family-friendly policies and childcare services.

Interviews were conducted in each partner country with men and women in senior positions. Representatives from local government, credit institutions, unions and equal-opportunity commissions were also spoken to. The surveys took into account both the individual factors affecting a decision to move into a senior role (such as education and training, independence, management and supervisory skills, likelihood to take risks, domestic and caring responsibilities), and the company factors (such as policies and organisational structure). By examining these factors in the different social and economic contexts represented by the partner countries it was possible to see what weight they carried within those contexts. This information helped to conduct a micro-economic analysis of the access men and women have to decision-making roles.

Spreading the word

All of the research carried out in the context of the project, including the five country reports and comparative studies, was summed up in the Gendmap project final report, available in English. The project findings were discussed with the aim of setting future objectives. The recommendations made by policy-maker project partners were presented in the Gendmap project declaration on policy recommendations. These are also available in English.

The project also spread knowledge of the issue through a press conference which was organised at

the beginning of the project to raise awareness on the issue of gender differences in decision-making roles.

At the end of the project the results were disseminated through a project website (www.provincia.fr.it/gender) containing all information connected to the study. The website helped to achieve greater visibility for the project at national and European level. Furthermore the project produced three electronic newsletters which provided valuable research updates and examples of best practice, along with information on other relevant projects, events, legislation and news.

Additionally the project held information days in each partner country at the end of the project. These were organised by local authority partners and were an opportunity for the project to be presented to policy-makers, academics and other interested parties. Brochures were published in the appropriate language and distributed during each event.

Women in a changing context

Project name

GRADUS – Gender and decision making, steps and stairs in civil society

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Italy

International partners

- Centre Regionale de Formation et de Documentation des Femmes de Bourgogne, France
- Engender, United Kingdom
- Greek League of Women's Rights, Greece
- One North East, United Kingdom
- Red Ciudadanas de Europa, Spain
- Women into the Network, United Kingdom

EU subsidy

EUR 275 898

Total costs

EUR 351 898

Name of the coordinating organisation

Associazione Orlando

Contact name

Elda Guerra

Address

Via Borgonuovo 2
40125 Bologna
Italy

Telephone

+39 05 233863
+39 05 239788
+39 05 203401
+39 05 220351

Fax

+39 051 263460

E-mail

Dott.ssa progetti@women.it

Websites

www.women.it/gradus
www.women.it
www.onenortheast.co.uk
www.networkingwomen.co.uk
www.engender.org.uk
www.associazioni.monet.modena.it/cddonna/
www.regione.emilia-romagna.it
www.redciudadanas.org

Equality in civil society in Europe is gaining ground, though in some areas women are still poorly represented. In this context, an Italian project worked with partners from the UK, France, Greece and Spain, to examine contributing factors to female under-representation in decision-making positions. The project concentrated in particular on the presence of women in the previously little-studied voluntary sector also called the 'third sector'. Organisations within this sector, to which governments have devolved power in recent years, gather consensus, influence policy and link civil society with formal political entities.

First the project tried to gain an overview of the participation of women within the economic spheres. To this end, good practice supporting female presence in enterprises, NGOs, trade or professional associations and so called 'second-level institutions' (an organisation whose members are other organisations, not individuals) was identified. Furthermore, policies and tools used to identify good and bad practice were compared and a survey of best-practice methodology carried out.

As a second step, the project developed gender analysis tools for organisations to use. The project surveyed French and Italian semi-public, private and co-operative organisations trying to identify effective practices used by organisations to support women into decision-making roles. In addition, interviews were carried out with women in key roles within a variety of organisations. The GRADUS team also looked at what motivates women and which are the factors for success, taking into account their

education, professional experience and work-life balance. From this material the project could then establish guidelines for removing barriers faced by women in organisations.

New ways to bring women into organisations

The GRADUS research, including case studies, revealed a lack of visibility of women and their skills. Through analysing job types, skill requirements and formal procedures used by a sample of second-level institutions, the project was able to set up a new CV format. It is designed to best reflect the skills and experience women can bring to social, cultural and political life. The completed CVs are stored on a database developed specifically to make it easier for organisations to get in touch with suitable candidates.

To share the knowledge gathered within the project a number of seminars were organised in Bologna, Edinburgh and Newcastle. During these the research results and data were further discussed and evaluated, and it enabled the project's implementation to be monitored. A pre-conference was also held in the UK, entitled 'Women on board – learning together from economic, political and civil life'.

The project and the database were publicised to local authorities, union representatives, enterprises and associations. The project also established local women's networks enabling information and best practice to be shared. Information was also spread through a networking event held in the UK, entitled 'Women in public life'. The project also distributed documentation during conferences relating to the

topic. It gave the project additional visibility as their results were posted on the conferences, and partners' websites.

GRADUS presented their final results at the conference, entitled 'Changes in civil society – what about women? New ideas and new approaches in society, politics and economy,' which was held in Bologna.

Woman power in regional environments

Project name

Latent potential: Tapping human and social capital to promote and support gender equality in decision making in areas of high social exclusion

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Belgium

International partners

- Association of Women Co-operatives Industrialists (AMECOOP), Spain
- Comitato progetto porta palazzo – The Gate, Italy
- Eastern Health and Social Services board (EHSSB), United Kingdom
- Federacion de Municipios y Provincias de Castilla La Mancha, Spain
- Northamptonshire County Council, United Kingdom
- Rotterdam-Charlois District Council, The Netherlands
- Social inclusion Race Empowerment Network (SIREN), United Kingdom

EU subsidy

EUR 294 428

Total costs

EUR 375 404

Name of the coordinating organisation

Association européenne pour la revitalisation des quartiers en crise (QeC-ERAN)

Contact name

Haroon Saad

Address

Rue van Artevelde 80
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Telephone

+32 (0)2 524 45 45

Fax

+32 (0)2 524 44 31

E-mail

info@qec.skynet.be

Websites

www.qec-eran.org

Women face obstacles to becoming leaders at the best of times; unlocking such potential in deprived areas is another matter altogether. Undaunted, the ‘Latent potential’ project aimed to examine and promote the role of women decision-makers in local regeneration programmes.

Based in Belgium, and with partners in Italy, Spain, the UK and the Netherlands, the project covered a broad range of environments from Turin to Rotterdam to Belfast, including some of the most deprived areas in Europe.

Regeneration projects have long been a feature of disadvantaged regions to reinvigorate their local environment and quality of life. But until now they have mostly been involving planning, labour markets and property development – seen as traditionally ‘male’ fields of work. A key departure in this ‘Latent potential’ was the understanding that women play a key role in keeping communities together, especially in disadvantaged areas. This is not only a matter of ‘political correctness’ but also crucial to ensuring local empowerment; that is, a real sense that change is possible and taking responsibility for pushing things forward.

Exchanging experiences

The project first formed a coordination group, which agreed and developed an action plan for carrying out the project. One of the early achievements of the project was to establish a concrete network of male and female decision-makers in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres from seven different European regions. This group allowed participants

to draw from each other's experience in promoting gender equality and paved the way for an exchange of 84 men and women under the project umbrella.

The network was further reinforced by comparing best management styles and practices, and their research ultimately provided the basis for over 20 case studies from the partner areas. This work was then shared with regions outside the project group, covering more than 150 similar areas via existing links and websites. The project also established an online mentoring network, drawn from a cross-section of participants.

Exploring good practices

The Latent potential project ultimately revolved around four workshops. These took the form of peer reviews of local regeneration programmes. The first review took place in Turin (Italy) in an area with a high proportion of migrants. The district is the focus of a number of urban regeneration schemes and boasts a number of social projects aimed at various groups of women. The 20 visiting participants witnessed three projects tailored for mainly migrant women, which aimed to help them become more involved in civic life, while taking account of their work/family balance and their special positions in society. The second review focused on the city of Belfast (United Kingdom) and looked into schemes for ensuring more women get involved in politics, especially in underprivileged areas of the city. The partners were introduced to Belfast's conflict history, and visited sites and projects that illustrated Irish and immigrant women's contribution to the city's political development. The third review took place in Toledo (Spain) and focused on rural women in the labour market, specifically from the area of Castilla-

la-Mancha. The projects ranged from good practices to encourage poorly educated women to form craft-cooperatives, to less tangible issues such as how the image of women and their roles in society may be seen as barriers to entering the labour market. The regional strategy for helping more women into work was also explained, so as to put the projects firmly in context. The fourth and final review went to the County of Northamptonshire (UK), which is marked by ethnic diversity and pockets of poverty. Partners were shown how associations, catering above all for ethnic minorities, have been working to promote female participation in civic life, touching variously on their strategies, activities and the obstacles they face.

A final project report, highlighting the role of women and gender equality, was produced as a lasting resource for women's groups and agencies involved in urban regeneration programmes and policy-making. All of the above reports are available on the project website, mainly in English but with highlights in Spanish and Italian.

Turning the tide in public administrations

Project name

MAGAP II – Gender mainstreaming in public administrations

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Spain

International partners

- Association of Attica City Councils, Greece
- BCG.IT Pari opportunità e sviluppo sostenibile, Italy
- IAPETOS, Greece
- Provincia di Salerno Assessorato pari opportunità, Italy

EU subsidy

EUR 270 798

Total costs

EUR 380 837

Name of the coordinating organisation

Diputacion de Granada

Contact name

Helena Gallego

Address

Palacio Bibataubin
18073 Granada
Spain

Telephone

+34 (0)95 82 47 396

Fax

+34 (0)95 82 47 182

E-mail

hgallaego@dipgra.es

Websites

www.dipgra.es

Other link

www.albant.net

Set against a background of continued under-representation of women in governmental positions, this project aimed to change trends in political and civil service institutions. With a strong focus on raising awareness, MAGAP II sought to change prevailing attitudes and cut through any remaining sexism, especially among civil servants.

Based in southern Spain, with partners in Italy and Greece, the goal of this Mediterranean project was to introduce and ingrain a 'gender perspective' in public administrations. In other words, it aimed to ensure that gender equality would become a permanent fixture on what could be described as patriarchal political agendas. One of the project's key aims was therefore to ensure that equal opportunities became an integral part of every initiative in the public administrations of these countries – a part of the mainstream.

The main concrete goal of MAGAP II was to establish an Office for Equality, backed up by dedicated networks to assist in exchanges of experiences, which would feed directly into several initiatives in the area of 'gender equality mainstreaming'.

Feminising politics

The project focused on four main lines: awareness-raising and empowerment, training, creation of an Office for Equality and cross-border cooperation. In turn, this aimed at bringing about a 'feminisation of politics', i.e. to build up and embed the image of women in politics via dedicated publicity campaigns. The media drive was backed up by a series of debates held by the coordinating partners, which looked in

detail at the image of women in politics. They singled out top female politicians and civil servants, and flagged the most forward-looking organisations, explaining the benefits of their working environments and employment policies. The discussion forums ultimately helped to shape tailored training programmes, which sought to change mainstream attitudes and to empower the most able and ambitious women.

All of these activities helped to set the scene for the creation of the Office for Equality, a new concept – and a concrete structure – ensuring the continued promotion of gender equality. This new office is committed to keeping these issues on the political agenda and to ensure its values are incorporated in the civil service, now and in the future.

Grassroots involvement

MAGAP II ran its local plan for mainstreaming in the provincial Council of Granada, before it was spread to other bodies in Spain, Italy and Greece. It has since established a number of flexible but long-term measures that have not only become part and parcel of institutional life but will also ensure that the project's key messages are carried on in years to come.

This was in part made possible by the close cooperation established between project partners in the three Mediterranean countries – teamwork involving exchanges of experiences, plans, specialists and beneficiaries, as well as joint initiatives such as the 'Good practices strategy guide: Experience in implementing gender mainstreaming in public bodies'.

Cross-border cooperation was also key to this project, which was carried out in all three partner languages (Italian, Spanish and Greek) to ensure maximum exposure among local media and to reach as much of the general public as possible.

Mass media in (re)distribution of power

Project name

Mass media in (re)distribution of power

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Latvia

International partners

- Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality, Denmark
- Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, Italy
- Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, Estonia

EU subsidy

EUR 419 431

Total costs

EUR 524 289

Name of the coordinating organisation

Ministry of Welfare of Latvia

Contact name

Agnese Gaile

Address

Skolas Street 28
Riga, 1331
Latvia

Telephone

+371 (0)7021 625

Fax

+371 (0)7021 613

E-mail

Agnese.Gaile@lm.gov.lv

Websites

www.medijuprojekts.lv

Women seem to be invisible when it comes to public roles that involve making important decisions. Why? According to the project 'Mass media in (re)distribution of power' it is because of the stereotyped image women receive through mass media. With the aim to promote gender-balanced participation in decision-making, the Latvian Ministry of Welfare, together with the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, the Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality and the Italian Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, set out to raise awareness within the media on how the reinforcing of traditional gender stereotypes creates barriers for women.

A gender imbalance among those taking the decisions that affect society as a whole is a direct and undesirable consequence of gender stereotyping, yet the mass media is often unaware that the rigid images it uses are having a damaging effect on women's participation in political and public life. By raising awareness on this issue among communication specialists, policy-makers and the general public, the project hopes to challenge and change the way in which the sexes are portrayed so that men and women alike feel motivated to take on decision-making roles regarding issues that are important for the whole of society.

Raising awareness within the field

An information campaign, organised by the project partners, targeted policy-makers, media specialists, PR executives, researchers, students and NGOs, who were able to share their experiences at regular national and international meetings which were, in turn, fed into other project activities. Furthermore,

seminars held for students helped raise awareness of the issues among future generations of politicians and mass media professionals.

Raising awareness among the public

Publications, seminars and conferences were organised to stimulate public awareness on the issue. In addition, a project website (www.medijuprojekts.lv) was created, making all the information about the project easily accessible. In Latvia, two television and poster publicity campaigns highlighted gender equality by addressing the themes of ‘women in decision-making’ and ‘male involvement in household duties’. The campaigns were run in both Latvian and Russian and a public survey was carried out in conjunction with this.

The bigger picture

A further aim of the project was to create, through qualitative research, a bigger picture of the stereotypes being used and reiterated in the mass media, along with gaining a clearer idea of the opportunities that currently exist for women in policy-making decisions. Seminars, presentations, round-table discussions and conferences were organised in project partner countries, bringing together mass media representatives, politicians and policy-makers to debate the topics emerging from the research.

Read all about it

As a result of the research carried out within each of the project partner countries, a series of eight reports, including two comparative reports, were published. The reports call for greater public debate about gender issues and for regular research projects to monitor the situation. The use of case studies was considered

as particularly effective. It was felt that journalism courses should incorporate report findings and that, in general, the media should be kept up-to-date with research through PR events. All research results were to be made easily available on the Internet, at seminars and in media publications.

Stereotypes about female politicians and common perceptions of politics as just a male domain need to be overturned by educating the public. Equally, interaction between the media and female politicians has to improve: communications training, involving experienced female politicians, journalists and PR experts, should be offered to women in politics. Overall, there is a need for the political and policy processes themselves to become more transparent and inclusive so as to improve gender equality in the political arena.

Conference close

The project closed with a free conference in Riga. It brought together representatives from project partner countries and all new EU Member States to present and evaluate the research studies into governance and gender stereotypes in the media. Discussions about existing gender stereotypes, especially among media professionals, political decision-makers and PR experts, were facilitated and best practices exchanged.

Bringing women on board

Project name

More women in decision-making positions, a rational use of resources

Project duration

01/11/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Denmark

International partners

- A & L Goodbody, Ireland
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Ireland
- Equal Opportunities Ministry, Luxembourg
- Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
- Price Waterhouse Coopers, Ireland

EU subsidy

EUR 285 425

Total costs

EUR 445 408

Name of the coordinating organisation

Department of Gender Equality

Contact name

Sarah Fredberg

Address

Holmens Kanal 22
1060 Copenhagen
Denmark

Telephone

+45 (0)33 92 33 11

Fax

+45 (0)33 91 31 15

E-mail

sfr@lige.dk

Websites

www.towards-power.com
www.lige.dk
www.di.dk
www.finansforbundet.dk
www.sas.dk
www.nykredit.dk
www.justice.ie
www.algoodbody.com
www.pwcglobal.com/ie
www.mega.public.lu
www.bmfsfj.bund.de

Better competitiveness, greater prosperity. This is what a more gender-balanced distribution in top roles could bring to Europe. Denmark's Department of Gender Equality, in partnership with public and private sector organisations from Ireland, Luxembourg and Germany, set up this project to promote and improve the share of women in senior, decision-making positions within both private companies and local governments.

Talent is being lost in the workplace because women aren't being promoted into positions where they can have a real impact on the decisions that help an organisation, and, consequently, the economy. By focusing on improving women's access to the top roles of an organisation, the number of candidates for leadership positions would double, the skills pool would be bigger and a more diverse and comprehensive group could be making the boardroom decisions.

The project focused particularly on facilitating national and international partners to share research, know-how and best practice regularly, and developing successful strategy models.

Women taking the lead

In Copenhagen, a 'Talents and tools' conference was coordinated by the Danish Department of Gender Equality. The event explored the reasons behind such a small number of female CEOs and presented the positive effects of mentoring. In Berlin, the 'Towards power – women in decision-making positions in the economic sector' conference, organised by the German partner, raised awareness of the need for equal opportunities in the business sector. It also

facilitated discussions on strategies and measures to increase female participation.

Another important area for the project to map was the recruitment procedures for high-level positions. To this end the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Irish public service and voluntary sector organisations set up 'The leadership initiative'. The scheme aimed to achieve greater diversity in leadership within Irish life, focusing particularly on gender. Under this initiative PricewaterhouseCoopers in Ireland conducted an audit of its staff profile, while Irish partner, A & L Goodbody (solicitors), carried out audits on graduate recruitment and promotion over the last ten years. The information collected through the audits identified areas where more work was needed and where training programmes should be introduced to raise the awareness of the problems.

In Sweden, SAS Scandinavian Airlines recognised the need to reflect its customer base by employing a more diverse workforce. To do this it collected qualitative and quantitative information, carried out interviews and evaluated its current strategies for recruiting women. Using these findings the company designed an action plan for the future. Employees were kept informed of the project outcomes through the company's internal magazine.

The Confederation of Danish Industry analysed the recruitment processes of its member companies. It explored the ways in which women look for a job and the reasons for the difference in the number of male and female leaders. Two publications were produced

in Danish: a booklet entitled 'Strong leaders – Good role models' and a report entitled 'Recruiting women for leadership positions'.

Raising the awareness Europe-wide

The Danish Department of Gender Equality developed a toolbox to help companies implement strategies encouraging more women into decision-making roles. The kit provides advice on establishing action plans, internal surveys, recruitment policy, management development initiatives and creating a family-friendly workplace.

Close partner cooperation has led to an exchange of knowledge across borders and between companies. All of the Danish partners produced reports on the subject of women in decision-making positions, and the issue has become an agenda topic at high-level discussions. Similarly, all of the partners have established (or are working to establish) internal policies aimed at increasing the number of women who have a say in making important decisions within their organisation.

Novel ways to ensure equality in economic

Project name

Nivela – Strategies to balance the participation and representation of women compared to men in economic decision-making

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Spain

International partners

- International Training Centre for Women in Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Union for Professional Promotion for Women in Chemnitz, Germany

EU subsidy

EUR 309 862

Total costs

EUR 499 430

Name of the coordinating organisation

Ayuntamiento de Gijón (Gijón City Council)

Contact name

Dulce Gallero Canteli

Address

Plaza Mayor, s/n
33201 Gijón
Spain

Telephone

+34 (0)985 181555

Fax

+34 (0)985 181562

E-mail

agencialocal@ayto-gijon.es

Websites

www.nivela.org
www.ayto-gijon.es
www.bmfsfj.de

Women are often found balancing the books as company secretaries or office managers. But they are less likely to be seen at the forefront of European companies, despite a wealth of local, national and European initiatives. To this end, the Nivela project was designed to promote parity between men and women in economic decision-making.

Based in Spain, Nivela investigated the state of play in three European cities: Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Chemnitz (Germany) and Gijón (Spain). The project was also carried out with the aid of a team specialising in labour law and social security from the University of Oviedo Foundation.

The project began with a study entitled 'The situation and position of women in managerial positions and positions of responsibility in business'. This first involved data analysis, looking into women's access to jobs and senior management positions, recorded and weighted with questionnaires and polls. Then individual interviews were held, digging further into women's responsibilities, aspirations, values and deep-seated motivations. The results provided among other things new data on the number of female senior managers in sectors such as metallurgy and new technologies (two of the key industries of the partner cities). Following this, the project partners exchanged best practices and new measures for reconciling work and family life, while flagging companies with good gender equality records.

decision-making

Setting up international networks

All of this aimed at informing and paving the way toward an international network for studying trends in women's economic and employment status, designed to suggest new ways for ensuring equal opportunities in the business world. Another major goal was to raise awareness among the public in general and industry leaders in particular.

The partnership ensured information was published using a variety of media, thereby reaching a broad and diverse audience. At the same time, the awareness-raising schemes (website, local seminars, newsletters, etc.) made it possible to gain greater insights into chronic problems, investigating not only the state of play of women in managerial positions, but also the causes and strategies to be adopted in order to eliminate gender discrimination. The three local seminars were instrumental in this respect, focusing in turn on the business benefits of helping women to balance work and family life; the promotion of women in companies and their access to senior management positions; and EU regulations for the equal treatment of men and women in access to employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions.

Dispersing the knowledge

The project was also thrust into the public eye via a press conference, advertisements in local newspapers with information regarding the local seminars and a final conference. To this were added a series of four newsletters and a dedicated project website, consisting of two parts: the former

presenting the project (activities, partnership bodies, etc.) and the latter offering a series of sections to be regularly updated by the partnership bodies (documentation, publication details, newsletters and other developments). One of the project's trademark pioneering schemes was the 'Nivela' prize, awarded to the best participating companies, and decided by their promotion of gender equality in economic decision-making. The jury deciding on the award was made up of representatives from the City Council, Trade Unions and from the business sector.

Trading for equality

Project name

Parity between women and men in trade union organisations

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Spain

International partners

- Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB), Germany
- Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (FNV), The Netherlands
- Trade Union Congress (TUC), United Kingdom

EU subsidy

EUR 299 091

Total costs

EUR 430 170

Name of the coordinating organisation

Union General de Trabajadores (UGT)

Contact name

Elisa García Rodríguez

Address

Calle Hortaleza 88
28004 Madrid
Spain

Telephone

+34 (0)91 589 7815

Fax

+34 (0)91 589 7721

E-mail

gopazo@cec.ugt.org

Websites

www.ugt.es

Other links

www.dgb.de
www.fnv.nl
www.tuc.org.uk

Trade unions have long been a very male sphere of influence. However, the ‘strong arm of the worker’ is now being brought up to date with the rest of society – and that means giving an equal voice to both the sexes. ‘Parity between women and men in trade union organisations’ therefore aimed to boost the role of women throughout trade unions, in order to improve their quality of life and employment prospects.

As trade unions are committed to creating a society based on social justice, solidarity and equality, it is only natural that they should make sure women are properly represented within their own organisations. On a fundamental level that means taking concrete steps to ensure greater female participation – especially at the top.

With support from the European Commission, the Spanish, Dutch, German and British partners, aimed to achieve their short-term goals by investigating trends concerning the representation of women in trade unions. The project therefore began by studying the state of play in the professional world and the trade unions in the four partner countries. This was backed up by meetings in which the partners shared best practices about the role of women in negotiations, policy-shaping and agreements.

Understanding the issue

The first step toward achieving these goals was to produce accurate background research, tracing the numbers of men and women working in each partner country, and how many of these are members of trade unions. Data was also gathered to shed light

on collective bargaining (that is, how many men or women are involved in talks regarding pay, hours and conditions between employers and trade unions).

The second step involved holding discussion groups, so as to flesh out and explain the hard data. Questions revolved around problems encountered by women when applying for positions, clarifying trade union policies for gender equality, and tracing women's membership in each trade union; the contributions they have made and the roles they have played in recent times.

Raising the profile of gender equality

In order to share this research and to raise the profile of gender equality programmes, work was carried out in international conferences in Amsterdam, Oxford and Berlin, as well as in two parallel meetings in Madrid. At these events, the project partners compared their research, ultimately compiling their results into a 'Guide of good practices'. The pioneering guide was based on analyses and research experiments in each of the partner organizations, concerning all levels of women's participation in trade unions. Some 40,000 copies of this guide were printed and distributed, with a view to inspire and give guidance on how to achieve a balanced participation of men and women in these institutions of fundamental importance.

The project results were fed into the final seminar, and were translated and published in English, Dutch, German and Spanish. The greater part of this work has since been made available to the public via a dedicated website. This online portal has also been a key means of raising the profile of the project.

Available in Spanish and English, the site presents the national research of each trade union partner and the Guide of good practices, as well as key statistical data on the presence of women within the trade union partners.

Women in the heart of Europe

Project name

Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Greece

International partners

- Eyecatcher Associates/Shevolution and Project Parity, United Kingdom
- (MONA) – Foundation for the Women of Hungary (Hungary) – Arcidonna Onlus, Italy
- Northern Feminist University, Norway

EU subsidy

EUR 480 000

Total costs

EUR 600 000

Name of the coordinating organisation

Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI)

Contact name

Dr Fotini Bellou

Address

51, Harilaou Trikoupi & Valtetsiou str
106 81 Athens
Greece

Telephone

+30 (0)210 38 98 016

Fax

+30 (0)210 38 98 086

E-mail

bellou@kethi.gr

Websites

www.kethi.gr

Other links

www.shevolution.com
www.mona-hungary.org
www.arcidonna.org
www.kun.nl.no

Women are very much the unsung heroes of Europe. Female politicians in particular grow up from grass roots but are all too often hindered by glass ceilings. Moreover, the lack of women in local and national governments – and above all in the European Parliament – has been singled out as a key democratic deficit by the EU. ‘Women in the heart of Europe’ therefore aimed to help women break through upper limits imposed either by men or society at large. In short, it aimed to help women candidates realise their potential and to reach for the top in national and European elections.

Entitled ‘Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe’, the project was led by the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) in Greece, with the support of partners in Hungary, Norway, Italy and the UK.

The project’s main target group were female politicians and candidates for European and national parliaments. It therefore aimed to galvanise public opinion about the importance of women’s participation in political, economic and social decision-making. Ensuring equal representation of men and women on ballot lists was a key part in this plan, achieved by lobbying the leaders of political parties. However, to complement this, the project put a strong focus on training female candidates in media and political relations. The produced trainer’s manual on political communication skills has since proved invaluable for perfecting the skills of female candidates in several European countries, and has therefore been translated into English, Italian, Hungarian and Greek.

True to its name, the project has built up the number of women at the heart of Europe. There are now more female candidates and, even more importantly, greater numbers of women elected in both national and European Parliaments, proving that it is possible to wear down deeply engrained stereotypes that in the past would have discouraged many women from even presenting their candidacy.

Greece in particular has witnessed the first comprehensive public campaign, seeking real parity between men and women in political decision-making. This was backed up by the launch of a website in the run-up to the Greek elections, through which the public could find out more information about all the female candidates. Behind the scenes, the project also enabled female candidates to meet and exchange ideas at special seminars. All of this aimed to bring about a paradigm shift – a change of attitude, not only in government but also among the general public.

‘Parity in decision-making’ was carried out via a number of regional and international seminars, culminating in a three-day European conference, all of which was publicised via a website hosted by KETHI. Radio advertisements were prepared in Hungary, Greece and Italy, as well as television commercials in the last two Mediterranean neighbours. To this, were added tens of thousands of brochures and posters, displayed in town centres and mailed to homes in target areas. The trainer’s manual ‘Communication skills manual for women in politics – Parity in decision-making women in the heart of Europe’ is a permanent legacy of this project. Designed as a

practical tool-kit for trainers and experts, either for seminars or training courses, it has become a real reference point for improving the media skills of female candidates and politicians.

Equality begins with justice

Project name

Balanced participation between women and men in the decision-making process

Project duration

01/11/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Italy

International partners

- Consejo general del poder judicial, Spain
- Ministère de la justice français, France
- Romanian Public Ministry Prosecutor's Office, Romania

EU subsidy

EUR 210 743

Total costs

EUR 264 556

Name of the coordinating organisation

Consiglio superiore della magistratura

Contact name

Maria Giuliana Civinini
Milena Falaschi

Address

Piazza Indipendenza 6
00185 Roma
Italy

Telephone

+39 05 73 90 4284
+39 03 29 86 04172
+39 06 44 49 1207
+39 32 92 50 7624

Fax

+39 064457175

E-mail

gtaffi@tin.it
civinini@cosmag.it
m.falaschi@cosmag.it

Websites

www.csm.it

Other links

www.giustizia.it
www.Justice.gouv.fr
www.Poderjudicial.es
www.pcsj.ro

Assuring gender equality is an ongoing struggle not only in business and politics: it also affects Europe's judicial system. This seems all the more the case among the top ranks of magistrates in several European Union Member States. Working on this principle, the project 'Balanced participation between men and women in the decision-making process' first provided a snapshot of magistracies in the partner countries before setting out detailed recommendations. These ultimately want to ensure that equality and justice go hand in hand, and that our magistrates lead by example.

Based in Italy, and with partners in France, Spain and Romania, this project compared the careers of men and women in the magistracy. It looked into the number and nature of appointments, also at senior level, in an effort to explain the lack of female magistrates in the regions involved. Following this research, the project sought to make sure that new and positive measures were taken on board by European magistrates and related institutions.

The project began by analysing the ratio of men to women in the partner countries' magistracies. Italy, the host country, took the lead in compiling this statistical data, using special software, thus providing a detailed overview of magistracies in Italy, France, Spain and Romania. This was then complemented by questionnaires – on paper, online and via telephone interviews. These were sent out to all magistrates in the partner countries and a total of around 4,000 magistrates replied, thereby shedding new light on personal and career choices. The specific questions

involved were current professional and geographical situation, age and marital status, number of children and associated family responsibilities, organisation of work and free time, specialisations and professional training, career choices and motivations, extra-judicial appointments and membership of other institutional bodies, etc.

This data became the basis for discussion in a series of meetings, in which results were examined and theories put forward, culminating in a final seminar in December 2004, which gathered some 150 people. The lion's share of participants at this conference was made up of women from partner countries, both magistrates and officials from interested institutions.

Following the final research seminar, the project organisers released a number of recommendations for institutional bodies with a view to encouraging equal opportunities. These were published in printed documents and CDs, containing reference data by country as well as seminar transcripts. The concluding document was made available in Italian, English and French, while the results of the statistical enquiries and questionnaires were in English, French and Spanish. For the record, the flagship publication, "The balanced participation of men and women in the decision-making process" (released in December 2005) set out its key findings as well as minutes of the meetings.

Overall, the project has given a unique and detailed picture of the composition and character of magistracies around Europe, while its combination of hard data and individual experiences has proven

a major contribution to understanding the under-representation of women in these top legal roles. In all, the project has given EU magistrates and leaders a means of grasping – and in turn removing – gender inequalities in this important section of society.

Cities of equality on the agenda

Project name

Sister cities going gender

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Germany

International partners

- City of Paris, France
- City of Rome, Italy
- City of Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- City of Turin, Italy
- City of Venice, Italy
- City of Vienna, Austria

EU subsidy

EUR 392 203

Total costs

EUR 490 303

Name of the coordinating organisation

Stadt Frankfurt am Main - Der Magistrat - Frauenreferat

Contact name

Werner Schneider

Address

Walter-Kolb-Straße 9-11
Germany - 60594 Frankfurt am Main

Telephone

+49 (0)69 212 3 2841

Fax

+49 (0)69 212 3 07 27

E-mail

werner.schneider@stadt-frankfurt.de

Websites

www.sister-cities-going-gender.org

Several cities in Sweden and Finland show roughly equal numbers of male and female representatives. Stockholm enjoys parity in its city government and assembly, while Espoo (Finland's second city) has more women than men in its municipal assembly. The same is not however true for the rest of the European Union. Women make up barely a quarter of similar institutions in The Netherlands and Germany, dropping to below 10% in Italy. To ensure that the rest of Europe follows in the footsteps of Scandinavia, 'Sister cities going gender' has set up a network of partners in some of Europe's top metropolises.

Cities are the beating hearts of Europe, so it is natural in a way that gender equality should begin in these places. In light of this, the network 'Sister cities going gender' has campaigned for equal opportunities for men and women from the south (Rome), to the east (Vienna), to the west (Rotterdam) and to the centre (Frankfurt) of Europe. Backed by the European Commission, Nordic partners and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), 'Sister cities' has aimed to bring about a turning point in Europe's many metropolises. The German city Frankfurt took the lead, with a pilot project and the experiences from this were published in a manual. This has since been made available to other European cities to help and inspire them to fulfil their own projects under the banner of equal opportunities.

'Gender mainstreaming' – that is, making gender equality a part of each and every department and programme in our institutions – remains a disputed

issue, even within European women's movements. Public funding has in the past been diverted from projects devoted entirely to women on to gender equality schemes, and thus provoked a degree of criticism. A number of schemes were therefore chosen to highlight how gender mainstreaming is a worthwhile investment for the allocation of limited budgets and resources.

Cities mainstreaming gender

In Austria, the Women's Shelter Network, assessed the political pros and cons linked to existing gender mainstreaming projects in European cities. Closely tied to this, projects in Rome and Rotterdam looked in detail at how best to introduce gender-specific budgeting.

Extending the project's framework, Turin compared a number of career development measures for men and women in three types of organisations (administrative, non-profit and profit-making), the goal being to find the best ways to break through so-called 'glass ceilings'. For its part, Venice has set up a 'School of Politics' for women in city administration and politics, with a view to increasing the proportion of females in senior political positions.

From the north of Europe, both female and male experts from Sweden and Finland explained the link between the success of gender-equality measures and the existing make-up of city institutions (that is, the number of women already in positions of influence). They shed light on how female decision-makers are vital to the success of a broad range of gender initiatives. In short, women are more likely

to keep the 'door open' for other women than their male counterparts, and that the power to do this is concentrated at the top.

The result of the work is a number of unique studies, available either in print, CD-Rom or on the project website. Frankfurt's model report was published in English in 2005, along with the constructive offerings from the other partner cities.

Electing to increase female participation

Project name

The balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, the challenge of economic and democratic development

Project duration

01/11/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Luxembourg

International partners

- Department of Gender Equality, Denmark
- Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

EU subsidy

EUR 356 311

Total costs

EUR 445 389

Name of the coordinating organisation

Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances

Contact name

Maddy MULHEIMS

Address

12-14 avenue Emile Reuter
2921 Luxembourg
Luxembourg

Telephone

+352 (0)478 58 10

Fax

+352 (0)24 18 86

E-mail

maddy.mulheims@mega.etat.lu

Website

www.mega.public.lu

Women's involvement in political and economic decision-making is of the great importance and the awareness and promotion of their participation needs to be raised significantly. The current gender imbalance simply isn't good for society – for men and women alike. The Luxembourg Ministry for Equal Opportunities, together with Danish and German partners, initiated a project to develop strategies and measures to facilitate the access of women into these decision-making roles and encourage more women to set up their own companies.

The project targeted political parties, social partners, trade-unions and employer organisations, CEOs, HR managers, and NGOs working on the behalf of women, as well as the general public. By coming together to discuss the issue of balanced participation, the European partners were able to exchange strategies and good practice. To this end a range of tools were created to promote women into decision-making roles and heighten awareness of the need for balanced political engagement between men and women.

Different angles of the issue

The National Council of the Women of Luxembourg looked at women's involvement in the political decision-making. They conducted and published, in French, two studies: 'Promoting gender balance in decision-making in and by the Luxembourg political parties' and 'Promoting gender balance in economic and social decision-making.'

Several international public events were organised to stimulate the exchange of ideas and good practice.

These events were organised in collaboration with the social partners and the results of these were published by the Ministry for Equal Opportunities in German, English and French.

The event targeting female entrepreneurship provided an opportunity for women interested in setting up their own company to meet and share ideas with women who had already done so. Organisations involved in business creation were also present at the event. The forum was organised in conjunction with the Union of Luxembourg Companies and was entitled: 'Women and companies: create your own company... and contribute to an exchange network'.

Another conference was held to examine how the government could encourage more balanced gender participation within politics and the economy. The event, which was attended by members of the political parties, also looked at how political parties could increase female decision-making within their organisations and equal opportunities in their policies generally. The policy of mentoring was considered to be particularly effective. It was also agreed that policies aimed at family/work life balance, as well as those focusing on raising awareness and training, needed to be reinforced.

The economic advantages that a more rounded and equal workforce can bring to a company was addressed in another seminar. Unions were highlighted as important in helping women in decision-making roles and the event explored strategies for unions to play a bigger role in this. By exchanging good practice within private sector companies, in cooperation with trade-union and

employer organisations, this aim was brought closer to its goal.

In Berlin, the German partner organised a conference which explored and shared good practice on the issues of women in decision-making, gender equality and work-life balance, and in Copenhagen, the Danish partner organised a conference entitled, 'Talents and tools – How to promote women in decision-making'. This event explored the reasons behind the small number of female leaders, how mentoring can help women and what barriers exist for recruitment.

Additional to the events organised, awareness was also raised through two publicity campaigns on decision-making which were screened on television and at the cinema. Furthermore a booklet about the project was produced.

Outcomes

As a result of the project, the Ministry has committed to organising annual activities relating to women and company creation. In conjunction with this, a national federation of women CEOs has been established to encourage women into decision-making roles. The organisation will facilitate the growth of networks for women to share knowledge and experiences. It will also act on behalf of business women at a political level and work together with other international organisations to identify training needs and analyse existing obstacles.

Redressing the balance at the top

Project name

Libra 2003 – Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Spain

International partners

- Budapest Social Centre of Sources, Hungary
- City of Jyväskylä, Finland
- Provincia di Lucca, Italy
- Torfaen County Borough Council, United Kingdom

EU subsidy

EUR 385 931

Total costs

EUR 534 878

Name of the coordinating organisation

Diputacio de Barcelona
Centre Francesca Bonnemaison

Contact name

Ms. Lidia Garcia Chicano

Address

Sant Pere més Baix, 7
8003 Barcelona
Spain

Telephone

+34 (0)93 404 9095

Fax

+34 (0)93 404 9086

E-mail

s.ppolitiquesidh@diba.es

Website

www.diba.es/francescabonnamaison
www.diba.es/libra2003/

Despite equal opportunities being enshrined in law, Europe's public administrations are still chiefly male-run. While progress has been made in the formal recognition of women's rights, social norms are still holding women back – especially when applying for senior, decision-making posts. Libra 2003 has sought to redress the balance at the top, first by determining the under-representation of women in local and regional public administrations.

Coordinated by Barcelona's Service for Promoting Policies of Equality between Women and Men (SPPI), the project was carried out with the backing of the European Commission and partners from Italy, Hungary, the UK and Finland. Libra 2003 primarily targeted the political and technical staff of regional and local public administrations.

Comparing inequality at the top

The project used a data model called 'Diagnosis of gender awareness (DGA)' to explain the obstacles faced by women when trying to secure senior positions. The project analysed statistical material concerning, for instance, wages and number of hours of work and the difference between the genders. They also conducted individual interviews, held group debates and distributed questionnaires.

The DGA produced a snapshot of gender awareness in organisations along three main lines: openness to gender issues, human resources policies, and organisational culture (that is, gender views prevailing in the workplace). Taking this further, the DGA revealed both the prevailing management processes, as well

as the more subtle, but equally pervasive values and perceptions, that drive our understanding of gender equality.

The results show how stereotyped management models influence the recruitment of women to decision-making posts. Two kinds of segregation were identified. Men are in a majority in political and technical decision-making posts, and certain areas and departments have far higher percentages of men than women. The study also showed how informal relationships among men – that is, putting camaraderie ahead of merit – are still hindering the professional careers of women. However, family responsibilities were also flagged as a major obstacle for women seeking top posts. Overall, though, the need to ensure equal opportunities showed that a radical rethink and change of culture was needed in many institutions in order to achieve gender balance.

Tools to develop gender awareness

The pilot projects in the various organisations provided concrete action plans to ensure more equality of opportunity. Fleshing out this framework, Barcelona council published 1,400 copies in English of both a book and a CD-Rom entitled 'Participation of women and men in decision-making: An analysis of five European organisations'. A further 500 copies of this study were published in each of the partners' national/regional languages so as to reach the largest audience possible. International seminars were also held to share best practices between the partner organisations, ultimately with a view to reaching as many public administrations as possible in and around Europe. Finally, a travelling exhibition and

online forums have been organised to maintain the profile of Libra 2003 and awareness of the issues in general.

Shaping urban equality

Project name

The Town for Equality

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

France

International partners

- Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA), Finland
- Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities (SYVICOL), Luxembourg
- Basque Association of Municipalities (EUDEL), Spain
- Central Union of Municipalities and Communities, Greece
- City of Frankfurt-am-Main, Frauenreferat, Germany
- German Section of CEMR – RGRE, Germany
- Italian Association of CEMR – AICCRE, Italy
- Local Government International Bureau (LGIB), United Kingdom
- Municipality of Cartagena, Spain
- Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), Spain
- Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA), Sweden
- Tuscan Federation of AICCRE, Italy
- Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities (UVCB), Belgium

EU subsidy

EUR 261 430

Total costs

EUR 365 465

Name of the coordinating organisation

Council of European Municipalities and Regions – CEMR

Contact name

Sandra Ceciari

Address

15 Rue de Richelieu
75001 Paris
France

Telephone

+33 (0)1 44 50 59 59

Fax

+33 (0)1 44 50 59 60

E-mail

Sandra.ceciarini@ccre.org

Website

www.ccre.org

Achieving goals of gender equality in all areas of our society is far from an easy task. The project 'The town for equality' turned to local and regional authorities in order to develop tools which would give them a helping hand in accomplishing these goals.

This project aimed to provide local and regional authorities with new ways of ensuring gender equality. 'Town for equality' set out a range of measures to ensure balanced representation of men and women in all areas of urban life. Politics, sport, transport and the struggle against domestic violence were all target areas in this vision of the European city of the future, where equality is seen as par for the course instead of merely an ideal.

'The town for equality' becomes a European Charter

Led by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), this project was backed by the European Commission and partners in several EU countries. Its research activities were also achieved in cooperation with 'Sister cities going gender' as well as a number of local authorities and grassroots organisations.

With the support of its project partners, the CEMR held a number of seminars to discuss and exchange experiences in gender equality, where several cities set out their current best practices. These conferences also enabled officials from a variety of European towns and regions to meet, exchange ideas and build networks for future cooperation in the ongoing struggle to promote and ensure gender equality.

These meetings and research activities ultimately fed into an expert appraisal of equality at local level, comprising the methodology and first part of a CEMR publication entitled 'The town for equality'. Published in May 2005, the above-mentioned brochure was released in English, French, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish, and showed more than 100 best practices in gender equality from towns all over Europe. This has since been distributed throughout Europe and beyond (United Nations, etc.) and is available on the CEMR website (www.ccre.org).

The CEMR organised a final conference in Brussels in February 2005 to present the project's conclusions. This conference brought some 200 people to the European Parliament for a lively exchange of ideas and aspirations. 'The town for equality' is now an important tool for local governments wishing to implement gender-equality policies within their towns. The CEMR continued this work by drafting the 'European Charter for equality of women and men in local life'. This aims to enshrine equal rights via a unique legal document for European regions. The Charter's final conference was held in February 2006, and was well attended by MEPs, top Commission officials and relevant stakeholders.

Equal paths to power

Project name

Towards power – Women in decision-making positions in the economic sector

Project duration

01/11/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Germany

International partners

- Department for Justice, Equality and Law reform, Ireland
- Dipartimento Per I Diritti E Le Pari Opportunità, Italy
- Ligestillingsafdelingen, Denmark
- Ministère de l'égalité des chances, Luxembourg
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Hungary
- Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI), Greece

EU subsidy

EUR 352 745

Total costs

EUR 442 370

Name of the coordinating organisation

BMFSJ – The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Department for International Issues and Gender Equality

Contact name

Waltraud Dahs

Address

Rochusstraße 8 - 10
53123 Bonn
Germany

Telephone

+49 (0)228 930 2351

Fax

+49 (0)228 930 4313

E-mail

waltraud.dahs@bmfsfj.bund.de

Websites

www.bmfsfj.de

Other links

www.lige.dk
www.kethi.gr/english/apasxolisi/index.htm
www.justice.ie
www.pariopportunita.gov.it
www.mega.public.lu
www.fmm.gov.hu
www.bda-online.de
www.dgb.de
www.iab.de
www.fczb.de

Women are gaining ground in executive positions; yet Europe has ground to make up with only 14% of women in leading positions, compared to, for instance, the United States where some 46% of the executives are women. Despite variations across Europe it is clear that light needs to be shed on why women aren't integrated more. The project 'Towards power – Women in decision-making positions in the economic sector' sought to find the answer to this question.

Supported by a range of partners from the Atlantic (Ireland) to the eastern Mediterranean (Greece), as well as the European Commission, this project sought to analyse, raise the profile and ultimately transform attitudes towards gender equality, above all in the economic sector. The project began by considering problems outlined by women in the research phase, ranging from lack of acceptance to fewer possibilities for promotion, lower remuneration and tougher requirements for attaining top posts than their male counterparts, all compounded by the need to balance family and work.

To dig further into these issues, the project coordinators hosted an international conference. Held in Berlin in June 2004, the congress gathered some 30 experts from various EU Member States and social partners, encompassing European trade unions and industrial/employers confederations. In all, around 250 participants attended from across the European Union to review success stories and hammer out new ways forward for female executives. They also looked in depth at how to help female decision-makers to balance the competing

and strident demands of their family and working lives.

In addition, the conference focused on improving the legal situation in EU Member States. New ways of combating stereotypes and reducing gender segregation in both education and the workplace were also considered, while studies were put forward to demonstrate the beneficial effects of promoting gender equality in business and the positive impact it can have on companies as a whole. Conference participants also agreed on the necessity of a truly joint effort if women are to break into and hold onto the top decision-making positions. That ultimately means closer long-term cooperation, not only between EU Member States, but also across the various sectors – economic, political and administrative.

Before the conference, the general public was given two occasions to debate gender equality issues online with Germany's former Minister of Family Affairs, Renate Schmidt. Her story is in itself a source of inspiration, illustrating how a teenage mother rose to become Vice-President of the German Parliament. These 'chats' were recorded and are now available on the project website. The website also hosts a wealth of material from the conference, including video documentation of the event. After the conference, in Spring 2005, a summary of the project partners' contributions was released in both German and English, and this can be downloaded from the project website.

The partners all provided the project website with their individual opinions and expertise. Also covered

online are the essential facts, figures and views about top women in the economic sector, the state of play in European law concerning gender equality, reconciling family and work, and sharing good practice for the advancement of women.

Cashing in on female participation

Project name

Women in business and decision-making

Project duration

01/12/2003 – 28/02/2005

Country

Belgium

International partners

- Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), Cyprus
- Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, Germany
- Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UHCCI), Greece
- Unioncamere, Italy

EU subsidy

EUR 448 632

Total costs

EUR 592 068

Name of the coordinating organisation

Eurochambres Women Network (EWN)

Contact name

Brigit Arens

Address

Avenue des Arts, 19/A-D
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Telephone

+32 (0)2 282 08 50

Fax

+32 (0) 230 00 38

E-mail

arens@eurochambres.be

Websites

www.eurochambres.be/women/index.htm
www.if-europa.com
www.womendecide.gr/default.htm
www.ccci.org.cy
www.hk24.de
www.womendecide.gr
www.womenscoopbank.com.cy
www.eurochambres.be/PDF/pdf_women_network/career%20counseling%20guide_UHCCI.pdf

Half of Europe's population is women yet they have little say in the decisions affecting the economy. The project 'Women in business and decision-making' set out to heighten awareness of the benefits to society of gender-balanced participation in decision-making. The initiative focused on information exchange as an effective way of increasing equal participation, which will not only result in women getting the same opportunities and work conditions as men, but also enable them to contribute towards business and economic decisions.

The Belgian-based Eurochambres' Women Network, together with Italian, Greek, Cypriot and German partners, examined this issue from two perspectives. Firstly, from the point of view of business women, the barriers they have to overcome in order to contribute to decision-making and, consequently, the economic process. Secondly, considering the situation of women in the Chamber network, they identified measures developed by Chambers of Commerce and Industry favouring the full integration of women into the economic environment and decision-making processes. Additionally the project raised awareness within Chambers about the benefits of the full inclusion of women in the economy and, in the case of Chambers that have not yet addressed gender equality, encouraging them to promote women in business.

Identifying challenges to female participation

Two surveys were launched to identify the reasons for female under-representation in business decisions and to create an overview of activities

currently undertaken by Chambers to foster full female participation. These surveys focused on female entrepreneurs and the European Chambers of Commerce and Industry within the 25 Member States (at that time). This was done at both local and regional chambers in order to get a more complete picture.

The survey results were published and widely disseminated by Eurochambres in two English-language brochures: 'Women in business and in decision-making - the situation in Chambers across Europe' and 'Women in business and in decision-making – a survey on women entrepreneurs'.

Four different approaches

Four initiatives, run by the project partners, were selected as examples of best practice to be implemented by other Chambers. In Italy, the Unioncamere's Women Entrepreneurs Committees updated and analysed data on gender distribution within the decision-making bodies of the Italian Chambers. The results were presented in a brochure, a website (www.if-europa.com) was set up and an information seminar was organised.

The Women's Cooperative Bank (WCB), promoted by the Cyprus Chamber, is the first ever Coop Bank created by women. Its programmes help to empower business women economically by giving them access to finances often beyond their reach. Information on the project is accessible through training seminars, a helpdesk and a website (www.womenscoopbank.com.cy).

The 'EtrifftU start-up meets entrepreneur' project, run by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, facilitates networking between experienced business women and those just starting up through mentoring, workshops and joint business initiatives.

The Career Counselling Scheme, developed by the Greek Chamber, helps women wishing to climb the ranks in commerce and industry to enhance their skills and motivation and deal with stereotyping. Participants are monitored, coached and guided by mentors and counsellors. Courses and online support can also be accessed via the project website (www.womendecide.gr). A guidebook was published in English based on the results of a survey which identified the qualifications women require to access higher positions.

Conference close

A final conference, organised in Brussels, brought together European Chambers of Commerce members with women in business, business representations and the European Institutions, to discuss the project results and exchange experience and ideas on how to better integrate women in business and decisions-making.

Onwards and upwards for women

Project name

Women to the top (W2T)

Project duration

01/11/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Sweden

International partners

- CeLi, Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality of Roskilde University, Denmark
- Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia
- Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI), Greece

EU subsidy

EUR 285 426

Total costs

EUR 445 409

Name of the coordinating organisation

JämO, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman

Contact name

Anita Harriman
Marie Trollvik

Address

Box 3397
103 68 Stockholm
Sweden

Telephone

+46 (0)8 440 1061
+46 (0)70 874 1229

Fax

+46 (0)8 21 0047

E-mail

info@jamombud.se

Websites

www.women2top.net
www.jamombud.se
www.celi.dk
www.sm.ee
www.kethi.gr

Top-level management is the most male-dominated category in the European workforce. The Swedish Equal Opportunities Ombudsman in partnership with organisations from Estonia, Denmark and Greece set out to correct this imbalance by creating a platform for bringing more women into top management and consequently widening the talent pool.

The project stressed the importance of gender as an influence on modern working life and the need, in a democratic society, for decision-making to be shared equally between the sexes. It highlighted the necessity for structures and conditions to change if the best use of men and women's abilities is to be made. The project partners emphasised the essential role companies play in resetting the gender imbalance especially in recruiting. Therefore the project decided to target recruitment consultants, potential top managers and public and private-sector employers and equip them with necessary tools to change the situation.

The project adopted a number of strategies, based on new research findings and good HR practices. Three national surveys were carried out. The first explored female representation in top job roles; the second examined the characteristics and qualifications of recruitment firms' clients; and the third was a public poll on the importance of gender equality to employees and customers. This information feed into a number of tools and methods.

One area of crucial importance in order to achieve change is recruiting. The project set up networks and training for recruiters. Recruitment firms took part in

focus groups and seminars to analyse their internal processes and identify areas for improvement. As a result, the consultants produced a set of recommendations to help other recruiters become more systematic and gender-neutral in their selection of candidates.

Setting up networks

Eight networks for female top management candidates were created. These enabled unique contacts to be made at various levels and across Europe. Career planning, seminars, workshops, training and counselling were organised. A checklist was produced providing advice for women wishing to advance in their careers. Mentoring was implemented and, in Estonia, this was established as a way of promoting female managers.

Several events allowed different stakeholders to exchange ideas and further discuss what needs to be done in this area. A seminar was held, in each of the partner countries on leadership and organisational theory from a gender perspective. Seminars on tools and methods for change were also organised.

At a transnational conference lessons learned were shared and future development needs identified. The event highlighted the benefits to men, women and company profits of a balanced gender mix among decision-makers. It also presented the danger of stereotyping.

Raising awareness

A campaign to heighten public awareness about the need for more women in management was

implemented. Non-stereotyped images of male and female managers were used in the campaign. Articles and references to the project appeared in newspapers and magazines, and on websites, radio and television. The project also produced a textbook, 'Det ordnar sig' which presents organisational theory from a gender perspective and has been translated into three languages.

One of the main tools for spreading the information and tools of the project was the project website. The website (www.women2top.net), is available in four languages and enabled project information to be disseminated widely to women, employers and recruiters. Research findings and recommendations, useful links, best practice, checklists, articles on work-life balance, myths about women and leadership, and tools, including the 'Gender key' performance indicators, are available online.

Moving towards change

A balanced scorecard was used to measure and follow up the progress of the project and targets achieved. It showed how awareness of issues relating to gender equality in the workplace has increased and a number of employers involved in the project have now adopted measurable action plans to increase the number of women in senior positions. The project has revealed that a structured and transparent approach to recruitment and promotion are good for women since this ensures that professional skills rather than gender determine job suitability. Overall, the project showed that by increasing the talent pool through more female involvement, everyone stands to gain.

Women towards leadership in business

Project name

Women towards leadership in business and agriculture

Project duration

01/11/2003 – 31/01/2005

Country

Norway

International partners

- Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Iceland
- Ministry of Welfare, Latvia
- NUTEK – Business Development Agency, Sweden
- Panteion University, Centre for Social Morphology and Social Policy (KEKMEKOP), Greece

EU subsidy

EUR 349 861

Total costs

EUR 437 360

Name of the coordinating organisation

Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (now the Ministry for Children and Equality).

Contact name

Jorun Hjertø

Address

P O Box 8036 Dep.
0030 Oslo
Norway

Telephone

+47 (0)22 24 25 48

Fax

+47 (0)22 24 27 18

E-mail

gorun.hjerto@bld.dep.no

Websites

www.regjeringen.no/en/ministries/bld.html?id=298
www.innovasjon Norge.no
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Women are not achieving their potential as business owners and leaders. Yet, if there is to be equality between the sexes, ownership is vital. Little research has been carried out into female ownership: how they achieve access to it and how they perform as owners. This striking lack of information, both quantitative and qualitative, has prompted the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, in partnership with Icelandic, Greek, Latvian and Swedish partners, to work on addressing this issue, with particular reference to the agricultural sector. A direct and important consequence of encouraging more women to move towards ownership would be to strengthen their position as decision-makers in the economy.

Owning up

The project focused on the need to create channels for an exchange of knowledge about the issue. How do women attain business and agricultural ownership? How do they perform as owners? How is ownership distributed between the genders? How have laws and regulations influenced a lack of ownership among women? How have women's access and control over assets been affected throughout history? In order to best address these and other questions, the project made use of transnational networks and task-force meetings to share information on the main factors affecting women's ownership.

Knowledge share

Action-oriented focus groups of business women, organised in each partner country, were central to the project. They provided opportunities to share personal experiences of successes and obstacles encountered,

and agriculture

thereby giving invaluable insight into the challenges that the process of strengthening women's ownership could face.

Data and research collection, along with national pilot comparative mappings, provided further insight into women's access and obstacles to ownership. Examples of good practice were also gathered. However, it was apparent that, not only was there a lack of data, but also that existing statistics underestimated the importance of women's participation. This was the case particularly in family businesses and farm holdings, where their ownership is often not formally recognised.

The results from the mappings and the focus groups were presented during national workshops. Female owners, researchers, ministries, politicians and decision-makers, from both national and regional levels, were present at these. In addition, visits to female-owned companies were arranged.

Highlighting important issues

The general lack of data regarding women and ownership across the five participating countries highlighted a need for more coherent information. Nonetheless, the research did make the distribution of wealth and ownership more visible. As a result, the project has contributed to mobilising involvement from key figures towards promoting women in the economy. Additionally, it has provided policy-makers with input regarding laws and regulations that may hinder women's participation and has initiated a discussion on policies and measures to promote women in the economy.

The task-force meetings have helped to create networks of women in ownership. This has had the effect of motivating women, keen to get more involved in controlling their assets, to take the next step. Participants in these discussions emphasised the importance of female role models and the need for young entrepreneurship and education programmes to foster ownership among women. They preferred not to linger on problems, which they simply saw as part of the process and even as good learning opportunities. Nonetheless they did highlight the lack of capital and relevant education, general scepticism towards female owners (in banks, in public opinion and in the public framework) and conflicting demands on their time, as their biggest challenges.

Further reading

A collection of six reports, including one comparative report undertaken by the Institute for Social Policy in Oslo, were published in English as part of the project. They provide national overviews of the situation for female managers and owners in business and examine how this compares to that of men.

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