

# Investing in gender competence

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## Gender training matters

Gender training makes a difference. If implemented systematically it facilitates more efficient actions and a positive change in the attitudes of policy makers.

There are positive examples of institutional commitments to gender training in some EU Member States. Still, EIGE's research findings show that insufficient gender knowledge and skills is one of the main obstacles for gender mainstreaming implementation in the EU. Civil servants are more likely to consider gender aspects in their work if they are trained on how to do it and are convinced that this is important.

Staff members in [youth centres in the city of Kalmar \(Sweden\)](#) were given training to develop their capacity to integrate a gender perspective into their everyday practices.

By using the 4R method of analysis, which breaks down service use by gender, they realised that:

- Boys and girls devoted their time into different activities;
- Some activities (e.g. baking and watching films) equally appealed to both genders; and
- Unintentionally, the youth centres promoted activities that were preferred by boys, disadvantaging girls.

Building on these findings, the Funkabo community youth centre served as a pilot for a new programme. The activities that were introduced were both better-suited to girls and appealed to both genders.

The kitchen of the youth centre was enlarged and a new film room was set up – promoting activities that equally appealed to both genders. A new area in the middle of the centre was organized for socializing. Some of the stationary pool and ping pong tables that previously dominated the space were removed. In their place a multi-use room was developed in which games equipment could be easily dismantled / reconstructed to better accommodate the wishes of both genders.

Training for staff was important in transforming their view on gender equality. Through developing the gender capacity of staff members, concrete changes were achieved in how the youth centres functioned.

Source: <http://includegender.org/jamstalldhetipraktik/new-rooms-for-gender-equality/>

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*“Gender mainstreaming is about capacity building. It is about the capacity to integrate a gender perspective into ordinary processes and as such it is a learning and a change process.”*

*Anne-Charlotte Callerstig,  
Researcher, Lindköping  
University*

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## Making gender training work

EIGE's in-depth study on Gender Training in the EU examines the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of gender training. Informed by five case studies of gender training programmes in Austria, Greece, Germany, Finland and Sweden, the study is exploring how better knowledge and skills can improve gender mainstreaming.

The study found that improved individual gender competence leads to positive gender mainstreaming results if certain preconditions are met. In order to achieve change one needs to make sure the following elements are in place.

## Build gender competence development into policy documents

The development of gender competence, e.g. through training, should be embedded in both national strategies for gender equality and gender equality plans of organisations. This signals collective acknowledgement of the importance of gender knowledge and the readiness of senior staff to facilitate the learning process. If the policy framework defines the roles and responsibilities for action on gender at different levels, managers become responsible for supporting, sharing and promoting the commitment to gender equality.

Where gender training is optional, attendance rates are usually low. Moreover, if optional training is most often attended by individuals who are already gender equality aware rather than those who need it the most. A strong commitment could include obligatory gender mainstreaming training for new employees, particularly those in decision making position. Where relevant, knowledge of gender mainstreaming issues could be added to civil servants' job descriptions.

**The gender strategy developed by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy in Finland** defines the frequency, content and type of training to be given to staff members. Responsibility for the strategy is delegated to the HR and Administration unit.

**In Finland**, one of the conclusions of the Gender Glasses project was that it is important **to attract senior officials** and those directly involved in drafting budgets, laws and programmes onto gender training programmes. Such participation demonstrates commitment to gender issues and encourages other staff to engage in gender mainstreaming.

## Devote adequate resources to training

The resources dedicated to gender training must be adequate. Both human and financial resources are necessary to ensure that initial training and follow up activities take place. Staff should be encouraged to participate in the sessions, with a consistent allocation of time and an adequate budget in place to allow them to attend.

**The government's Gender Equality Action Plan in Finland** had minimal impact on the provision of gender training at decentralised levels due to insufficient funds. Where training had been introduced on the local and regional scale, authorities had used additional funding mechanisms (such as the European Social Fund).

In an evaluation of the **H&J programme in Sweden**, project managers reported that the gender perspective was 'drowning' in other work. In this instance, they were not being facilitated to devote time to the issue within their normal working hours.

## Put in place accountability mechanisms to guarantee application of new knowledge in practice

Once responsibilities have been defined and resources have been allocated, the success of gender training relies on accountability mechanisms. Bodies should be identified that would monitor whether gender issues are being integrated into the full policy cycle (planning, implementation and review). Ideally, it would be mandatory for them to judge the level of gender awareness within the organisation on a regular basis and to propose action to improve gender competence.

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*Gender training refers to the process of developing the intellectual capacity of civil servants to set and achieve gender equality goals.*

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*Success of gender equality policies largely depends on the knowledge and skills of those who design and implement it.*

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**Austria's** Department for Gender Equality Policies and Legal Matters at the Division for Women and Gender Equality established an Inter-ministerial Working Group to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all Federal Ministries and at all political levels. The **systematic provision of training** and the collection of gender-specific data – introduced by the Working Group – were crucial for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.

## Adjust the training to the needs of participants

Even if there are individual successes, training rarely has a significant impact for the whole organisation unless the working culture of the organization becomes gender-aware. The aim of training therefore should be to build gender-aware everyday working practices and collective norms. One must transform the attitudes that underpin actions and encourage the actions that stimulate a change in attitudes. In practice this means that there should be:

- **A change in attitudes towards gender equality:** staff should understand the relevance and importance of gender equality to their institutional / policy objectives.
- **Concrete methods to integrate gender into the policy cycle:** staff should know how and when to use gender mainstreaming tools so that they can take account of gender in everyday work.

Good gender training makes clear the connection between gender equality and the everyday work of training participants, taking account of individual circumstances and areas of responsibility.

**Interviewees in Austria, Finland, Greece and Sweden stressed** that the most effective training content was the one that was tailored to their everyday work. They identified the 'hands-on' element (group work, practical training, etc.) as a key success factor in gender training programmes.

**In Finland, training for regional authority staff took into account the regional context,** including the situation of men and women in the area, the unemployment rates and the regional economic plan. Participants provided details of past work tasks, and were prompted to re-assess the gender perspective in their original decisions. They also learned how to do gender impact assessments and report the results.

## Develop competence at all programme stages

Training at the outset of a programme – alongside consistent and regular follow-up – is vital to ensure that gender is clearly understood and integrated into everyday organisational practice. The gender knowledge and skills of all policy actors needs to be developed on an ongoing basis.

In Finland, 56% of project leaders of ESF projects altered their project objectives following gender training and one-on-one support. However, participants were unable to make significant practical changes because the training had occurred after the project planning phase.



**Final results of EIGE's in-depth study on gender training will be available in January 2014.**

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*Gender-aware work culture refers to the commonly accepted office norms, for example which hours are worked and which jokes are considered appropriate. Amongst others, these actions form part of a collective, unspoken judgment as to what is acceptable, important and/or valuable within organization.*

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## Introduce regular monitoring and evaluation of training

Regular training should be part of a broader strategy for on-going monitoring and evaluation. Ensuring follow-up is a crucial, yet often overlooked, aspect of gender mainstreaming if it is to be effective in the long run. The change in behavior could be measured, even if this involves a degree of subjectivity.

Organisations should involve relevant staff both before and after training to make sure that the actual needs are met and to give the employees a sense of ownership over the process of capacity development.

**In Finland, regular gender training was mandatory in all ESF regional programmes** in the period 2007 – 2013. On the contrary, in the previous programme period, it was organised on an *ad hoc* basis resulting in a situation where 9 out of 10 programme managers have never attended gender training.

**In Sweden, a form of interactive research was developed to evaluate** key learning points during gender training sessions. Large-scale seminars were organised for participants to express their opinions, allowing coordinators to assess, for example, whether project managers had made new political decisions after receiving training. Such learning events were then used to inform new training objectives and practices.

## Final remarks: Strengthening commitment

Commitment to gender equality requires making sure that responsible people know what needs to be done and how to do it. Training improves knowledge. The challenge is to organize and use it in ways that does make a difference.

Preliminary in-depth analysis of seemingly successful gender training initiatives produced strong points for further consideration. If in the European Union one stands for gender mainstreaming it must be reinforced with legal commitment on the Member State level and taking responsibility on the level of individual institutions. If one stands for gender mainstreaming comprehensive strategies must be developed to build the gender competence of policy-makers. Training and learning needs to become a natural part of gender equality work.

To be successful training requires well-defined actors, responsibilities, resources and timetables. Follow-up and evaluations are necessary to facilitate consistent gender mainstreaming across all stages of the policy cycle.

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*Driving a car requires a license as a proof of knowledge and skills. Driving gender mainstreaming is similar – you can only expect progress if civil servants know why, when and how to do it.*

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## About the project

In-depth research on gender training in the European Union is a part of EIGE's project "Gender Training in the European Union: Mapping, Research and Stakeholders' Engagement" implemented in 2012-2013 and contracted to ICF GHK. EIGE urges to devote sufficient and systematic attention to improving the gender mainstreaming competence of policy makers and implementers in the EU institutions and the Member States.

For more research findings and practical resources on gender training as a tool for gender mainstreaming please visit: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/activities/gender-training>