



Inside GEcel

Transnational Project Network:
Civic Education and Learning
for Gender Mainstreaming



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Dear reader!

Let us introduce to you in this first newsletter the aims and the partners of the transnational network: GEcel stands for “Civic Education and Learning for Gender Mainstreaming”, uniting 7 organisations from 5 European countries in a transnational project network.

Let us ask Cornelia Schmitz, the project coordinator: *Why was „GEcel“ developed?* Schmitz: “It is the aim of the project to implement the European strategy of gender mainstreaming (GMI) in the educational sector, mainly in civic education. We want to support in this sector individual and organisational learning processes.”

How are you going to proceed? Schmitz: “We are going to collect TOT (Training of Trainers)- and educational modules/ modells for GMI; then there will be testings of these in Iceland, Greece, Estonia and Germany. After the testing we will develop a catalogue of quality criteria, preparing the modules and models for the use and implementation with other (educational) organisations in the different countries”.

What will be the outcome of the project? Schmitz: “There will be a handbook in 5 European languages, it will contain the results of the testings, the quality criteria, short country reports about the situation of GM, guide lines for adapting and modifying the modules and models for GMI in civic education for the individual, organisational and national needs in the different countries of the partners”.

Members

of the GEcel Project-Network

- Federal Agency for Civic Education, Bonn, Germany
- Strategy 21, Bonn, Germany
- FIAB Research Institute for Labour, Education and Participation, Recklinghausen, Germany
- The Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality, Roskilde University, Copenhagen, Denmark
- The Women’s Training Center, Tallinn, Estonia
- Equal Opportunities Office of the City of Reykjavik, Iceland
- KETHI Research Centre for Gender Equality, Athens, Greece

Recent events & outcomes:

GMI Training in Reykjavik

On two occasions in May 2004, groups of 15-18 people attended a two day workshop on Education and Learning for Gender Mainstreaming Implementation, that was held in a small conference hotel in the vicinity of Reykjavik, Iceland.

For most of the participants this was a first time experience, although almost all of them are employed as equal opportunities officers within ministries, municipalities or regional development institutions in Iceland.

The justification of describing this as a first time experience lies not only with the fact that many had never attended a workshop on GM before, but also the workshop methodology applied by the two coaches, Heidemarie Wünsche-Piétzka and Hildur Jónsdóttir, had never before been experienced by the participants. As one participant put it in the

reflection round at the end of the two day workshop: “Now I find it much easier to understand what these terms ‘participatory’, ‘interactive’, group-oriented and ‘individual-oriented’ really mean, these methods involve everyone.”

The process design - where should it be anchored, what should be the role of each of the participants in their workplace context - was an important lesson. Thus the level of the methodology of the workshop became crucial. Every now and then, when the coaches had finished a phase of the program, an exercise or a work sheet, the attention of the participants would be drawn to the impact of that phase:

What did we learn?

Can these methods be used to train others? How do we motivate others? How can these equal opportunities officers work with senior management in a GM process?

A fruitful process has been started. Read on page 3 of this newsletter about the result of the Icelandic experience.

Methodology counts!

After merry introductions, where each participant chose a symbol representing their character or desires for gender equality, they described their wishes for the program of the next days, simultaneously written down on cartoons in different colours. Successively, the participants grouped them together, and stuck them to the walls, thus forming their own program. By this exercise, they themselves took responsibility and a certain ownership of the procedure and content.

"The limited discussion on GM, this battle with terminology and its transfer into the mother-tongue, was a new experience.

It became clear, that the participants present felt a shared responsibility to take on the historical task to develop further the Icelandic terminology in the whole field of gender equality and GM."

Hildur Jonsdottir

And what did they want to learn?

The political and historical roots of the GM strategy was one of the first topics. Linked to that was the institutional context of the strategy: where was the concept created and adopted and what lead those international and transnational bodies to do that? To understand that the concept walks on two feet so to speak, one belonging to the women's movements and gender equality work on the international arena, and the other to the UN bodies concerned with the human condition and sustainable development, was a revelation. The famous quote from the 1995 Human development report, when thrown by the projector upon the screen, created a strong, almost physical reaction: 'Human development, if not engendered, is endangered.'

Then the terminology.

The workshop was carried out in two languages, English and Icelandic. Not only were there lively discussions in English on definitions and meanings of important concepts like gender and sex, gender roles and gender analysis, equality and equivalence, gender awareness and gender blindness, just to name a few, but the terminology in the Icelandic language became a crucial issue to discuss.

The participants felt an urge to constantly turn to their own language to find out how these terms could be translated into Icelandic. They discovered the limitations of the traditional vocabulary in Icelandic when it comes to discuss the various aspects of the terminology implicit in the gender mainstreaming strategy.

It was not enough to transfer the terms into the Icelandic language. Neither the term gender nor mainstreaming translates easily. In Iceland it is not accepted to adopt foreign words into the language. Almost all Icelandic names of institutions, policies, legislation or job-titles, where gender equality is dealt with, start with the term 'equal rights'. Thus the connotation is created that the subject is limited to the 'rights' issue, and the discussion tends to go astray.

Author of the report from Iceland:
Hildur Jonsdottir,
Gender Equality officer at the city council of Reykjavik, Iceland

The principle of DUO: a fruitful experience

The interaction between the two coaches, the DUO, became crucial in this context. The method of leading a workshop by a DUO opens up for a variety of dimensions, depending of the constellation of the two coaches, that can be played with instinctively and dynamically. Where gender is the issue, a DUO consisting of a man and a woman has proven to be very useful. The different nationalities of the coaches, one German speaking in English from the European perspective, and the other speaking the mother-tongue of the participants, with rich local knowledge on the context of the gender equality work in Iceland, created an unanticipated third level of work:

the content of gender mainstreaming and GM implementation being the first, the workshop methodology the second, and the third the constant transfer between languages and the different connotations brought by each term as the participants struggled with finding the 'right' words that could capture the meaning of the English term.

When the participants were introduced to the theories on organisational development (how do we really manage change process like GMI is an example of, the level of abstraction was taken to new heights. It felt refreshing to get down to a more hands-on level again, like listing up the necessary steps of an implementation process.

Facts & findings, GM country profile: Iceland

GM: a guiding principle for Iceland

Iceland is a member of the European Economic Area, not a member of the European Union. It is not legally committed by the EU policy to implement gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is nevertheless a guiding principle in the governmental action plan on gender equality, and, likewise, also a stated aim of most policies on gender equality adopted by various municipalities.

Arrangements for learning about GM have been scarce. This is why the opportunity to attend training workshops, offered by the Socrates/Grundtvig 1 project: GEcel – Civic Education and Learning for Gender Mainstreaming, was warmly received by the Ministry of Social Affairs in Iceland, also the ministry for gender equality, and by the National Centre of Gender Equality that decided to co-host the workshops. The agreement between the project, on one hand, and the ministry and the national centre on the other, proved to be very fruitful.

Because of that, the invitation to attend the workshop extended to the main bulk of field workers in gender equality in Iceland – and accepted by them - was jointly signed by these three partners.

Glymur – naming the new Icelandic network



Maybe the best indication of the results of the workshops is the fact that the participants decided, at the end of the two day very demanding learning experience, to form a network in order to collectively pursue further learning, cooperation and mutual support in their future work on gender mainstreaming in Iceland.

The network was even given a name in honour of the small and warm conference hotel *Glymur*, where the workshops took place.

Naming famous steps in the process of development

How important such geographical manifestations are, can be seen in many famous developments: Maastricht, Amsterdam, Bologna – the EU takes up the connotation from places where major decisions have been made and puts them in the memory of citizens.

The network of Glymur will reflect the development process for the Icelandic group as well for the trainers: “A remarkable place with a very open atmosphere to encounter the enriching exchange of cultures which really enabled common and mutual learning”, says Heidemarie Wunsch-Piëtzka from Strategy 21, Bonn. She just finished

„Thanks to the GEcel project, we now have the Glymur GM network in Iceland.

Next Steps? See what happened in Greece!

The second testing of training modules has just taken place in Athens, at the Institute of Gender Equality of Greece, KETHI. Dr. Karin Derichs-Kunstmann from the FIAB Research Institute for Labour, Education and Participation in Recklinghausen, Germany, has accompanied this event as a "flying expert" in GMI.

More news about the testing in Athens will be given in the Newsletter No. 2, coming up soon, in December!

Spin offs: Good ideas should be realised!

1. Set up a glossary of the terms used in the trainings:

Models & modules
Methods & methodology
Policy & politics
Training & sensibilisation
What do all these words mean for us?

2. Create working groups in the stream of time

Whenever you think you find something important and noteworthy, call a small team together and try to elaborate on that.
You will have milestones visible to give you directions and reassurance like lighthouses in the stream of time.

3. Days of common learning on the net

... can give you the opportunity to learn and work together with a team of experienced people from all over the world. This exciting element of a transnational learning partnership can help equip you to work in international teams in the context of YOUR key issue.
Invite some experts for exchange, get inspired by their ideas and use them to broaden your perspectives.

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