



GENDER TRAINING IN EUROPE: PRESENT REALITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Report on the Online Discussion

List of abbreviations

CESIS, Centro de Estudos para Intervencao Social, independent non-profit organization of researchers in the social sciences, Portugal

EIGE, European Institute for Gender Equality

UCY, University of Cyprus

EKIΦ, Ερευνητικό Κέντρο Ισότητας Φύλου, Κύπρος

INTRODUCTION

This is a report on a two-day online discussion event organized by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) on the 25th and 26th of September 2012 from 9 to 15 hours BST on each day. The subject of the discussion was gender training in Europe. The Unesco Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Centre for Gender Studies of the UCY took part in the event, through the participation of **Maria Ioannou** and **Floria Valanidou**. This report will present highlights from the discussion, with a short section containing comments and concluding remarks.

1. DAY ONE

1.1. Main Issues

On Tuesday 25/9 the discussion revolved around three main issues:

- 1) The extent to which public policy organizations commission gender training;
- 2) the current lack of funding; and

- 3) the need to involve men in gender training both as trainers and as participants, and what might be the best way to approach male participants in gender training events. Also, men's engagement in gender studies.

1.2. Our contribution

We entered the discussion by introducing ourselves and our institution (the Unesco Chair with the Centre for Gender Studies at the UCY) and by informing the other participants about the commencement this year of the postgraduate programme for Gender Studies at the UCY Centre for Gender Studies. This created an interest and we were asked to give some details about the response we have had and the number of students who have registered. We also informed them that next year the postgraduate programme will run in English as well as in Greek, and explained that inaugurating this postgraduate degree is an important step forward for Cyprus.

Our ideas about how to approach men during a gender-training event were also appreciated, quoted and discussed. Basically, we pointed out the need for a context-specific approach, which would address the diverse beliefs and attitudes of participants.

1.3. Other ideas and topics from day one were:

- It might be good for EIGE to organize courses and seminars for trainers (Despoina Charalambidou-Solomi, from ΕΚΙΦ, Cyprus).
- More state support is needed (Charalambidou-Solomi)
- There are tools, but not so well defined problems to be solved. I do not start with training, but with a list of questions (Kajsa Svaleryd, Sweden, strategist for gender equality).
- There are plans to make the database for gender trainers operating in all EU member states and Croatia available through the EIGE's website in the upcoming months (EIGE).

2. DAY TWO

2.1. Main Issues

On Wednesday 26/9 the discussion revolved around four main issues:

- 1) How can we improve the standard of gender training in Europe?
- 2) Matters of practicality, e.g., the question of implementation of ideas for gender training;
- 3) Standardizing gender-training events, and
- 4) Whether the EIGE would itself be willing or able to organize gender-training events, such as conferences and seminars.

2.2. Our contribution

When Bente Knoll (gender expert and lecturer at Vienna University of Technology) suggested that gender training needs to be standardized regarding structure and content, we were asked by Kelly Shephard (our discussion facilitator) to comment, given that we had spoken yesterday about the need for a context specific approach. How can we strike a balance between standardization and creative flexibility? Upon this, we replied that flexibility and standardization may be combined, and suggested ways, e.g. by maintaining a standard structure but allowing for a flexible approach. We also spoke about how the new postgraduate programme at the Centre for Gender Studies at the UCY aims to create gender expertise and equip graduates with the skills necessary to act as trainers themselves.

2.3. Other ideas and topics from day two were:

- Training managerial staff and training policies need to be introduced; the theoretical frame must be combined with examples and comparisons to reality (Ioanna Pilavaki, Gender Equality Committee, Cyprus).
- Trainers must be trained too. Gender training faces a lot of obstacles and resistance. (Isabel Romao, senior advisor at the National Portuguese Commission for Equal Opportunities, Portugal).
- A course on mainstreaming gender equality was once very helpfully held by the Portuguese National Centre for Training for Trainers (Heloisa Perista, from the non-profit research centre CESIS in Lisbon, Portugal).

CONCLUSION

The two-day online discussion and event was held in a constructive and positive manner, which allowed for dialogue and exchange of ideas. Additionally, it gave professionals a platform from which to share thoughts, experiences and stories on gender mainstreaming, gender training and gender equality. However, the discussion also allowed for a number of problems to surface, such as lack of funding, lack of state support, the need to act and intervene in order to achieve results. Those involved with gender training and gender matters in Europe are well aware that these problems exist, and even feel concerned and hampered by them. It remains to be seen whether the EIGE will act upon the suggestion for itself to organize events, conferences and training seminars.