

EU2020

Gender Mainstreaming and the Path to Sustainable Growth

Comments and policy suggestions on the EU2020 strategy made by the ESF Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming

The ESF Gender Mainstreaming Community of Practice is a learning network set up by the EU Commission. The network supports Managing Authorities and intermediary bodies within the European Social Fund to make better use of the Gender Mainstreaming strategy in improving the implementation of the ESF priority axes.

Supporting the belief that *sustainable growth* requires agreement to an agenda that puts *people and responsibility* first, we, the founders of the EU Gender Mainstreaming Community of Practice, believe that one of the most sustainable and effective ways to do this is to take into account a gender perspective in the new EU2020 strategy.

Meeting the Grand Challenges of Gender Equality

Gender equality is still far from being a reality in European societies and in the working and private lives of women and men. Inequalities and discrimination based on gender persist. We agree with the opinions expressed by the European Women's Lobby (EWL), that the gender perspective has not sufficiently been covered in the EU 2020 strategy. Existing gender inequalities in the *European labour market*, in *education and research systems* and *innovation processes* pose a serious problem to the future of Europe and should be considered one of its *greatest challenges* both from a social, ecological and economical perspective. The current crisis is severe and existing inequalities are among the conditions that led to the collapse of the system. We therefore believe that an "exit strategy" must be built on a proper analysis of existing inequalities in order not to rebuild the economy based on the same (unequal) structures.

We are convinced that the current crisis has further underlined the need to develop new models for gender equality that builds on the norm that both men and women should be economically independent – and not depend on other people for their basic existence.

Ensuring Coherence with Community Gender Equality Strategies

Gender Equality was emphasised as an important aspect in the *Lisbon Strategy* and has inspired work in all member states as a consequence. The *European pact on Gender Equality* and the *European Road Map for Gender Equality* have also underlined the importance of maintaining a strong focus on gender equality issues emphasising the links between gender equality, economic growth and all aspects of social life, including the demographic development. *In order to support and sustain this work, gender equality must be one of the priorities of the new strategy and by doing so becoming the true successor of the Lisbon Strategy.*

Continued Work and Development of Gender Mainstreaming as a Strategy

The lack of understanding of gender problems, its causes and consequences, and also the lack of know-how of how to fight them clearly indicates the need to continue the work with Gender Mainstreaming in many areas. Gender Mainstreaming must continue, together with specific actions, to be the main strategy to reach gender equality within the European Union, both on Member State and Community level. It must be stated clearly in the EU2020 strategy that all policies should be made considering a gender perspective. *A gender perspective and gender equality analysis must be made a priority in all national actions plans that might follow the EU2020 strategy.*