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## **Gender Audit of the EU Pre-Accession Funds 1999 – 2004**

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Praha, Bratislava 2005

Supported by Heinrich Boell Foundation Warsaw



Gender Audit of the EU Pre-Accession Funds 1999-2004

Published by Gender Studies, o. p. s. Gorazdova 20, 120 00 Praha 2, Czech Republic

Aspekt, Mýtná 38, 811 07 Bratislava, Slovakia



**ASPEKT** 

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English language proofreading (Czech section): Alena Králíková, Ruth Elphick.

Layout, print: Roman Piják, Dape tiskárna Brno.

ISBN 80-86520-05-6

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## INTRODUCTION

*Livia Biziková, Alena Králíková*

### Why is it important?

Looking back into the closed period of the past could be rewarding and important for future decisions. Obviously, the decisions cannot be taken back but their outcomes may be, and often are, relevant in the following years. When it comes to finances and their division among programmes and projects, it is always interesting to assess the priorities and budgets after a certain distance in time to understand the processes and channels they passed through.

The EU membership has opened a lot of new challenges for each of the accession countries. During the accession process, the countries had the possibility to finance institutional building or infrastructure development from the EU pre-accession instruments. After entering the EU, pre-accession instruments were replaced by Structural Funds.

Economic impacts of the projects financed by all available instruments were relatively well documented and monitored. The projects had significant positive and negative social impact at national and regional level. Because of existing gender roles and stereotypes, the social “impacts” were not distributed equally between women and men. Moreover, the missing gender dimension on the project level helped conservation and strengthening of gender roles.

That is briefly the first intent why the joint Czech and Slovak project was initiated in mid-2004. It focuses on analyses of programming documents, and a selected number of foundations re-granting European funds to local projects in both countries. In our analyses, we tried to follow the whole link from adoption of the EU directive, through preparation of national guidelines, to approved projects at national and regional level.

Although the intention was clear, the work itself brought us to consider the content. To certain extent, it is natural that results cannot be pre-supposed ahead of all analyses, research and interviews. Thus, at the point of being sure that our comments would be rather critical, negative at some points or concrete cases, we decide to challenge the plans. Hereby, full versions

of the interviews of foundation’s and non-governmental organization’s representatives are included.

We understand this project a preliminary attempt to open up the question of women’s participation within different levels of EU funds. The publication is primarily aimed to form a basis for discussions on funding, gender mainstreaming policies, and gender equality implementation across all programmes, not only those targeting human rights, human resources or equality between women and men.

We formulated our outcomes in a form of conclusions and recommendations that we want to address mainly to two target groups. Firstly, we want to draw attention to the current EU accession countries to help them avoid “our mistakes”, and secondly to EU and national decision-makers dealing with Structural Funds to open and stimulate discussion over issues of equal opportunities and issues of social and economic cohesion.

**We would be very happy to be approached by any representative of any of the target groups who is interested in discussing any of the issues dealt within the publication, and to see possible future steps that would lead towards improvement.**

### **GENDER AUDIT OF FUNDS DISTRIBUTED IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

*Linda Sokačová*

The Czech non-profit and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are recently experiencing a new and specific situation. Foreign foundations, mostly those of American origin like Open Society Fund, Ford Foundation and others, are either leaving the Central and Eastern Europe region or significantly restricting their programmes in the area. Countries in the region in question are expected to have already become democratic and ready for a civic society to take over most of the activities and therefore remain sustainable without the foreign support. However, these organisations are still not very clear about what to expect from the new European Union resources and programmes. Many of the long-time existing organisations are finishing or limiting their work, and others are surviving a crisis caused mostly by a lack of money.

Women's organizations, especially, are facing lots of problems related to financial sources and institutional support from relevant state actors in this period. Moreover, the gender area is not well understood by responsible institutions, their leaders, employees or evaluators.

The Czech NGOs face a number of problems along with a variety of new opportunities coming from the Structural Funds. In this situation, Gender Studies (Czech Republic) and Aspekt (Slovakia) designed<sup>1</sup> research seeking to evaluate financial support from EU funds for NGOs involved in gender equality between men and women in the period from 1999 until 2004. This research aims to identify most topical moments in the grant schemes, their approvals, and to find ways to improve the process of supporting NGOs focused on gender equality themes. These organizations are able to contribute to the process of equalizing men and women in different spheres of civil society. The best way for accelerating this process is the partnership of NGOs, state and EU structures.

Research realized by Gender Studies covers five most important and leading foundations in the Czech Republic. Four of them allocated money or supervised financial flows from European funds: Civil Society Development

Foundation (NROS), National Training Fund (NVF), Socrates National Agency and Representation of the European Commission in the Czech Republic. The fifth one, Via Foundation, differs from previous institutions. It works mostly with finances from United States foundations. At the end of the period of time analyzed, Via was primarily implementing the Central and Eastern European Trust programme (CEE Trust) due to a funding transition when major international funders were moving their programmes to countries with under-developed democratic structures. It was a consortium of private grant-making foundations (Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation and others) backing independent public charity, which was incorporated under the laws of the United States of America. This programme aimed to provide "last" money for NGOs to support development and long-term stabilization of civil society. This study focused especially on its grant schemes and analyzed to what extent gender organisations were supported. The reason for including Via Foundation in the research was that many of the schemes mentioned gender equality as their priority. Recently, Via Foundation has been approaching corporate and individual donors.

The aims of this project are to identify financial flows of EU funds, especially those aimed at gender organisations, to underline moments that can contribute to a better promotion of equal opportunities for men and women, and to see sustainable development of NGOs involved in this field.

#### **Pre-accession instruments of European Union for NGOs**

Pre-accession instruments are financed by the European Union and are aimed at assisting the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union in terms of economic development and administrative reconfiguration, social change, and legislative work. Phare, as administrated by NROS and NVF, was the most important programme for NGOs. Other programmes, SAPARD - rural and agricultural development, and ISPA - infrastructural projects in the environmental and transport fields, focused on other EU key priorities that were not covered by Phare.

NROS managed several Phare programmes: Phare Access 99 and 2000, and Phare 2001 – 2003. These programmes were mostly focused on the

following political criteria: development and empowerment of NGOs and civil society, and integration and life opportunities for Roma people and seniors. Phare - Access 1999 was one the most successful grant schemes for organizations involved in the gender equality field. Four projects were supported: in the field of legal advisory for equality on labour market, advisory projects for victims of domestic violence, training of public officers in equal opportunities, and education for women living in rural areas. The programme's aim was to promote implementation of *acquis communautaire*s where state activities were missing, and to promote integration of groups or individuals at risk of exclusion after the accession process was concluded.

These criteria implicitly included equal opportunities for men and women. Still, they were not, just like in almost all other Phare calls for proposals, explicitly challenged. The fourth programme, Phare Access 2002, focused on organisations involved in health, social and the ecological field, and also on the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women. Although none of the projects directly focused on these criteria or issues, the call was successful. Gender and women's organisations were also supported within Phare 2002 – sustainability of civil society, with priorities of fundraising, philanthropy and education, and in Phare 2001 – empowerment of non-profit organisations in the Czech Republic. Three organisations were supported in the above mentioned grant schemes.

It is highly important to note that the successful organisations in particular Phare programmes are the same ones: proFem, o.p.s. Gender Studies, o.p.s. and Czech Women's Union (Český svaz žen). All of them have a long tradition and at the analyzed period of time, all of them had, to certain degree, guaranteed institutional funding.

Other Phare programmes were dedicated to the field of Roma people human rights, renewal and reconstruction after the floods in 2002 by NGOs, and seniors' position in society. In such calls for proposals, there was not much space left for organisations involved in equality between men and women because priority for equal opportunities was not one of the key ones. This was also reason why there was no open space for improvement of equal opportunities in the given areas although programmes relevant to human rights are also gender relevant.

Phare 2000 and 2003 have also been administered by NVF. Phare 2003 included priority of social integration and equal opportunities for regions of Northwest and Moravia-Silesia. It provided a broader understanding to the equal opportunities concept, and was mostly understood as backing equal opportunities for disabled people and ethnic minorities. No project dealing with gender equality was awarded.

The last, Phare 2003 (human resources development) is led according to the EU Structural Funds priorities, i.e. Operational Programme of human resources development. It means that all projects must follow horizontal criteria including equal opportunities for men and women; while others are local initiatives, information society, and sustainable development. This approach brings new opportunities for promoting equality between men and women but it also has certain limits. It puts heavy demands on evaluators of the projects presented, and their understanding of the particular horizontal priorities.

Phare served as a preparatory accession instrument for the Czech Republic. Although equal opportunities for men and women have been of high priority in the EU (see for example the Lisbon Strategy, adopted in March 2000), they were not highlighted accordingly in the pre-accession grant schemes, and calls for proposals. Phare should have focused on the Czech institutions' preparation for the EU structural funds. In this sense, due to lack of projects on equal opportunities between men and women, the Czech society faces a threat that some institutions and organizations would misunderstand this priority (see chapter Limits and challenges of EU funds), and therefore provide less pressure on applying institutions. This could end up with low effects of projects realized with the support of Structural Funds.

The gender organisations were not successful enough as the Phare programmes had difficult rules to follow. It takes a lot of time and money to submit a proposal. Organisations that want to run a Phare project are also obliged to co-finance it, at least by 10% of all eligible costs. It is a very difficult task to follow this principle for an organisation that does not have sufficient financial or institutional support from the state or municipal authorities.

Almost all gender and women's organizations are in this situation. To

submit a proposal demands good financial and material resources (i.e. providing five copies of the proposal etc.), and a professional background. It is a highly complicated point for unsecured organisations. Since an organisation can only become professionalized if it has “enough” financial means for human resources that can guarantee its professional development, most of gender and women’s organisations move in a circle. They simply spend lots of their energy and expertise in proving again and again that gender equality is a basis for the society and its economic, social, and political development.

### **Other EU funds**

Besides the pre-accession programmes, the NGOs could have used, and still can do so, use other EU funds, especially the Equal Initiative and Socrates programmes Grundtvig and Minerva that also have certain European dimensions.

From the equal opportunities point of view, Equal represents the most important programme. Its main aim is to promote more inclusive work life and strategies via fight against discrimination and social or working environment exclusion based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Czech Republic, as well as Hungary, also implemented Equal projects in the Round 1. It was funded from the national state budget (50%) and Phare programme (50%). Besides projects directly focusing on equal opportunities for men and women, all other projects applied for within the employment, entrepreneurship, and adaptability pillar, had to observe equal opportunities priorities. The project submitted by the Czech Women’s Union (ČSŽ) was agreed in the first round; it deals with reconciliation of family and professional life and flexible work arrangements.

The second round of Equal Initiative is jointly funded from the national budget of the Czech Republic and the European Social Fund. The horizontal principle of equal opportunities for men and women remains one of the key priorities and is an obligatory element to be implemented within the framework of all projects in employment, entrepreneurship, adaptability,

equal opportunities and asylum seekers pillar. Moreover, gender mainstreaming stands for one of the main building blocks of the programme in question.

The programme is a really positive way towards gender equality in employment, business, and development of working strategies and the economy as such. Compared to other pillars, the one focused on equal opportunities is far less subsidized (hereby, it is more than similar to other human rights topics). 4.397.388 EUR is detached for this priority, 7.915.298 EUR for the employment pillar (excluding the racism and xenophobia measure), 12.392.686 EUR for entrepreneurship pillar and 11.433.210 EUR for the adaptability pillar.

Grundtvig and Minerva are other important programmes administered by Socrates National Agency that may be approached by NGOs and their responses to relevant calls for proposals launched by respective programmes. Grundtvig’s priority is to support lifelong education of adults; Minerva targets use of information and communication technologies. Contrary to Phare, Minerva is developed on the basis of a centralized principle as well as some Grundtvig sub-programmes (called G1, and G3). There were a few projects focused on gender issues supported by Grundtvig: Gebige (Gender Studies, o.p.s.), W(omen) and W(ork) Network (European Contact Group), W(omen) and W(ork) Network (Bridge to Life - Most k životu) or Wo-Men: Gender Equality Creates Democracy (Czech organisation Athena was the project partner). None of the programmes’ priorities have been specifically focused on equal opportunities between men and women. Considering the fact that the education sector is highly segregated by gender in the Czech Republic, it may become one of the stimulating moments for the future design of these programmes, especially for those implemented in the Czech environment.

### **CEE Trust for Civil Society**

As mentioned in the introductory part of this study, the “traditional” foreign foundations that have supported Czech NGOs in 1990s started to leave the country in the direction of the less developed regions, especially

those in Asia. Six of them (Atlantic Philanthropies, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Open Society Institute, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund) initiated development of a large joint fund providing “last” support to the NGOs in the Czech Republic. The main aim of the fund was to support the development and long-term stabilization of civil society in the Czech Republic; other countries involved in the programme were Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The Via Foundation and its regional partners (The Donors’ Forum, The Partnership Foundation, The Civil Society Development Foundation and The Open Society Fund Prague) allocated or will allocate 3.000.000 USD to the programme in the Czech Republic during the three-year-long period (since autumn 2002 to autumn 2005).

Due to lack of institutional support from the side of the state and EU funds, this programme was very important for many NGOs active in different sectors. The significance of this programme was much more urgent for gender and women’s organisations, who were not receiving support or regular institutional assistance from any state or municipal institutions in that period; and their importance keeps on being undervalued. No organization from this specific sector of civil society was supported, although a number of them applied. The highest support was provided to ecological and environmental protection oriented NGOs. A number of organisations that were awarded some support also had good institutional background. While it is a logical effect of their professionalism, this approach limited, to a large extent, the institutional development of smaller and less professionalized organisations. On the other hand, small organizations that do not have a large offer of funding opportunities, especially those working on ecological themes, can be successful applying for support in other Via Foundation grant schemes. This proves more important at the time of financial deficit for certain kinds of NGOs’ activities that are not covered by Structural Funds and other EU sources.

As mentioned above, organisations dealing with gender issues did not receive any funding at all. The CEE Trust programme awarded support

to White Circle of Safety (Bílý kruh bezpečí), a network of organisations involved in helping domestic violence victims who, unfortunately, treat the issue as gender-marked. Another organisation that was provided with certain support, and is somehow concerned with gender issues, was Czech Helsinki Committee (Český helsinský výbor). It deals with equal opportunities in the labour market and provides advisory services in the area.

This situation arose although several of the foundations associated in the fund strongly emphasize gender and women’s rights issues; they are primarily the Open Society Institute (OSI), and the Ford Foundation. Apart from other specialized programmes, OSI also runs a special Network Women’s Programme. Its work is to promote advancement of women’s human rights, gender equality, and women’s empowerment. The Ford Foundation prioritizes human rights; sexuality and reproductive rights form principal integral parts of their programmes. The Ford Foundation has also provided long-term support to the academic Centre for Gender Studies at the Faculty of Humanities (formerly placed at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague) and it contributed to the Gender Studies, o.p.s. organizational development during a one-year-long project. Further financial support was refused to Gender Studies, o.p.s. because of the Ford Foundation involvement in the CEE Trust programme.

### Limits and challenges of the EU funds

Limits and possibilities of the EU grant schemes were especially identified on the basis of interviews with representatives of five major Czech foundations. These are the most important remarks:

- The issue of equal opportunities for men and women is becoming **more important after the accession** of the Czech Republic to the European Union. This can be seen mostly in the EU Structural Funds where the issue of equal opportunities and/or gender mainstreaming form one of the horizontal priorities within all grant schemes; even in the Operational Programmes of Industry or Agriculture. It can therefore have a very positive impact on the development of equality between men and women.

- **The advantageous effects depend on clear understanding of gender and equal opportunities.** They are, unfortunately, mostly perceived as measuring the quantitative proportion between men and women involved in projects or forming the target group, as positive/affirmative actions primarily aimed at women, or quotas applied within the ratio of men and women in different spheres of society. However, this is a very restricted comprehension of all the gender-related issues. It is important to see that equal opportunities aim to create an **equal starting line for all people regardless of their gender.** Another reproach was also mentioned in connection with the implementation of equal opportunities policies: it is the non-occurrence of sufficient and well-informed public debate about these issues, especially among experts working on EU funds. It can lead to mechanical and more or less blind borrowing or even acceptance of equal opportunities concepts and strategies from Western countries regardless of the Czech cultural and social context.
- **Evaluators of proposed projects are not trained** in the equal opportunities area at all. Certain improvement is identifiable with the arrival of Structural Funds in the Czech Republic. However, the insufficient awareness and misunderstanding of gender specific or gender sensitive issues may lead to elimination of projects proposed by gender and women's organizations. It may also end up in considering gender mainstreaming a marginal priority where just a number of women and men is enough to be stated without any relation to the project outputs, results or impact on the target group or society as such.
- Usefulness of equal opportunities' implementation depends also on the **right definition and adjustment of indicators.** In case they are not properly developed, they may become pure formality manifesting successful project management in Brussels and elsewhere.
- Foundations say that only the best organizations and best projects are awarded their support. This "**neutrality**" seems false if we consider that evaluators are not equally trained in all the relevant aspects of civil society (specifically the gender aspects). It is then impossible to evaluate

all projects from different sectors equivalently and on the basis of similar knowledge. Gender projects face a problem of insufficient awareness and they are therefore more than often conceived as irrelevant.

- The questioned institutions work with **equal opportunities and non-discriminatory politics** within their structures, hierarchy, and employment strategies within the organisations. They monitor statistics of men and women and exercise an equal chances policy during the recruitment. Some institutions enable flexible office programmes.

### Conclusions

The above-mentioned remarks are to outline ways that could help the improvement of application of EU Structural Funds and equal opportunities for men and women policies in the context of the Czech Republic. There are several relevant actors who may play an important role in the process of improving gender sensitivity in the Czech society: NGOs, EU, state and Government, regional authorities, and municipalities.

The NGOs should keep on initiating and enlarging the public debate on relevant topics and questions and educating experts and evaluators. Financial, material and human resources, however, limit their activities. The state should remain the main actor in the area of NGOs' support. The state structures (optionally regions and municipalities) are the only ones who can guarantee the institutional support for NGOs. The support does not only concern finances but also space or support from the legislation point of view etc. Structural Funds are very strictly targeted in labour market problems and are usually project-oriented. They cannot ensure all means for organizational development, and provide for basic functioning of the institution that works for public benefit. The same applies to other EU resources while profit of NGOs or their corporate fundraising form only a very tiny part of organizational incomes. The sponsorship of corporate funding of women's and gender organisations has not yet started to be perceived as interesting and challenging for the companies' development and potential growth.

*1) This study and related activities are supported by Heinrich Boell Stiftung in Poland.*

### **A FEW FLASHBACKS AND EXPERIENCES OF GENDER STUDIES, o.p.s. WITH EUROPEAN FUNDING**

*Alena Králíková*

Gender Studies, o.p.s. is a non-governmental non-profit organisation that follows activities of the Gender Studies Foundation founded officially in 1992. Due to the legal issues, it functioned as a foundation (legal form) until 1999 when it changed (based on the new law) to an organisation for public benefit (o.p.s.).

Since the very beginning, Gender Studies has been supported from foreign funds, especially the German and American ones; they included Frauen-Anstiftung, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Network of East-West Women, the Ford Foundation, and the Global Fund for Women, to name the most important ones. Until 1998, Gender Studies primarily focused on the introduction of gender studies among the academic studies at university level. In 1998, the Centre for Gender Studies was started within the Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. In 2004, the team of the Centre moved to Faculty of Humanities where it launched a gender studies MA programme.

As Gender Studies succeeded in its aim, it changed its activities from the academic ones to more activist projects, it kept the main operational, funding from Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, and applied for more varied funds at both national and European funds. Gender Studies has been active especially in gender aspects within the labour market, decision-making processes and, political participation. Apart from short and long-term projects it also runs a large gender studies and women's issues library; considering the number of books and publications, it is the richest one of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe.

Gender Studies, o.p.s. applied for funding from the European Union pre-accession funds many times. However, it was successful only five times over the 1997-2004 period, considering larger and minimum one-year-long projects and excluding support for short study stays or project-planning meetings.

Approximately, the same level of "success" applies to number of project proposals submitted by Gender Studies to Czech Republic's national funds or foundations and ministerial funding. Although there were dozens of them, only a few were agreed and supported from local resources.

All in all, had it not been for Gender Studies successfully applying for foreign funds at foreign foundations, its activities would have already been closed down for a long time. However, the real success Gender Studies has experienced was when it received support from a number of European and American foundations proves Gender Studies' institutional capacity and professional qualities of its representatives in responding to gender equality relevant calls for proposals, reacting to up-to-date issues regarding gender equality and acting in favour of gender mainstreaming and gender equality. Considering all the past experiences, it can be said that Gender Studies, as well as foreign foundations, understood the lack of gender equality and need for women's empowerment in the Czech Republic far ahead of all the governmental institutions and the Czech Republic based foundations. They started to consider gender mainstreaming only very recently as it can be understood from all the materials, reports and interviews analyzed. Nevertheless, it still remains a policy they do not see as personally challenging or of high priority for themselves as members of the Czech society providing an important background for its empowerment. Historically speaking, local foundations have focused on general functioning of civil society and its strategies, while they have not looked as far as equal opportunities and all their aspects mirrored in the society.

Although the European Commission stated gender mainstreaming to be one of the main European principles already in 1999 and gender equality has represented one of the most important horizontal priorities in the programmes funded from the European resources, the Czech foundations re-granting European funds have been rather gender-insensitive. In 1998, Gender Studies was sent an official response, (rather surprising if we take into consideration the gender equality process enforced) declining one project submitted at the Socrates National Agency within the Grundtvig programme. The letter said that gender equality did not need to be supported since women and men had already been equal in the Czech Republic. Gender

Studies asked the European Commission Socrates office for its official response which then refused the Czech NA's letter and apologized to Gender Studies for lack of knowledge and orientation in gender issues at the side of the National Agency in Prague.

It can be said that gender-oriented projects have not been supported at all, except for a few exceptions, while the Czech Government officially stated its respect for gender equality and equal opportunities in 1998 via setting the Unit for Equality of Women and Men at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and in 2001 via the Governmental Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men being established and its members being named.

Unfortunately, this is not a subjective view of a single organisation complaining of unfair measures. The contrary is true and both women's NGO and foundation's representatives confirm it, even though they stand at opposite sides – as donors and recipients – but still share the same view.

All this proves there is a huge gap between the policies as developed at the European level and as introduced at the Czech level, the reality of gender mainstreaming strategies applied at various institutions or measures, and within programmes implemented by non-governmental organisations or other state institutions. Nevertheless, the fault is not easily identifiable, it is not only on the side of foundations who are not being gender-sensitive, the state not having developed any proper controlling mechanisms, or, the European Commission not having introduced feedback indicators. The fault is rooted in all the factors mentioned and partially also in the general feeling that equality is not the issue of utmost importance within civil society, politics, or the economy. It seems gender equality has to wait. And it is still waiting to receive appropriate attention.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY CANNOT EARN ITS LIVING...**

**Interview with Saša Lienau from proFem, o.p.s.**

*Linda Sokačová*

Organisation for public benefit, proFem, o.p.s., a consultation centre for women's projects in the Czech Republic has existed in the Czech Republic since 1993 and Saša Lienau was at its birth. Recently, proFem has focused especially on fight against domestic violence.

***Do you think that state institutions in the Czech Republic have appropriately enforced gender issues?***

No, I don't think they have. Enforcement of equal opportunities for women and men has been discussed within the framework of the enforcement of equal opportunities for marginal groups, such as ethnic or sexual minorities. I assume the situation to be rather absurd when 50% of the population does not have the same rights as the other 50%. Including equality of women and men among marginal issues seems to me absolutely insufficient. Moreover, the instruments developed so far in the Czech Republic are rather unacceptable. I especially have in mind, the size and position of the Department for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

However, certain changes have taken place, primarily in details. Equality topics are being discussed. Discrimination in the labour market has become an important topic. A few years ago, the question of discrimination could not have been mentioned since the public opinion was clear about women and men having the same chances and opportunities. Thus, the issue was shut for most media and politicians.

***You were here at the beginning of gender organisations in the Czech Republic. How has it changed – in your opinion – during the last 12 years?***

I can see a large change. At the very beginning, organisations specialized in specific issues were being founded but with marked distance from feminist ideas. Gradually, they have started to focus on a more general context of

equal opportunities. A new generation of women with broader scope of knowledge has now dealt with equality issues. The organisations already know how to express what they work on and they also have a certain potential of people who will listen to them. Individual women facing some problems also turn to them. Moreover, most of these organisations have grown professionally.

***What do you think is the major influence on the current position of women's organisations?***

It is the public and the finance. Under-financing and the state's disinterested stand are the most important negatives. Women's organisations are then unable to ensure career and professional growth to their employees. People need to live on something and volunteers cannot secure the organisation's regular work. A certain level of professionalism is necessary as well as an understanding of the topic. And surely, the challenge related to EU accession also plays an important role.

***What is your experience with grant proceedings at the Czech and European levels?***

proFem has been applying for the European level grants since the very beginning. Our situation was much easier then, since we had a good financial basis and support from women in Frauen-Anstiftung (the German foundation). Later on, we built on our experience in the pre-accession funds.

***Nevertheless, making a general comparison, not all of the women's organisations were successful in applying for similar actions.***

I agree. proFem, however, knew that equal opportunities form an important part of the European granting policies. It was, nevertheless, more than difficult to enforce these issues to the level of Czech agencies responsible for re-granting European programmes. They were provided with directions to stick to, but they did not observe them any closer. The awareness of these issues grew a bit more just before the EU accession.

Another problem that consisted in the projects assessment, it was marked with an absolute lack of training for evaluators in the gender area. Gender-

oriented projects were almost automatically turned down. Training is highly important. Otherwise, gender organisations would be equally disregarded in the structural funds. An awareness-raising policy is urgently needed to be run by both non-governmental organisations and the state.

***What are – in your opinion – qualities and negatives of Structural Funds?***

It is very positive that equal opportunities have become a specific category. However, finances assigned to this topic are more than insufficient. Moreover, structural funds are limited to the issue of accession to the labour market. The majority of women's organisations has not and does not work directly with the labour market area. It would be very complicated for them to comply with such requirements. The granting process is too formalized; it can thus be almost impossible for a number of small organisations to participate in it. I also perceive the division of programmes between regions and Prague as rather doubtful.

***Why should the state and EU support operational costs and activities of non-governmental non-profit organisations?***

The Czech Government's politics says that civil society forms one of the democracy pillars. It is the basis for citizens (women and men), and their active influence on the environment they live in. This sphere cannot earn its living by itself. And if this country wants to be understood as a modern one, it has to develop and support civil society.

## **GENDER SENSITIVE POLICY SHOULD BE OPENLY DECLARED**

**Interview with Monika Ladmanová, Open Society Fund Prague**

*Alena Králíková*

Since 1999, she has worked for the Open Society Fund Prague as a programme manager of the Legal Programme and the Women's Programme. Currently, she also coordinates a programme redistributing sources from the Trust for Civil Society in CEE.

***Let me please first ask you a rather personal question: why are you interested in the equal opportunities issues?***

I cannot say exactly how I came across equal opportunities and the interrelated issues; it was, to a certain extent, thanks to my personal development. My life experience played an important role as well. I never thought of equal opportunities of women and men when I was 18 or 20. Only at the time when I studied law, where various issues were treated (justice and relations of formal kind) I saw that the human right aspects were overlooked, and I got closer to the equal opportunities issues.

***Does it mean the equal opportunities policies should form part of politics as such?***

Yes, definitely. I think that in our society it is quite obvious that we are not as far as we should be and that only very few people understand it. Most of the society is far from assessing the inequality phenomenon. The equal opportunities enforcement is highly important and the period we have been dealing with it is truly a short one. We need a variety of programmes and actions supporting the issue to be more respected, so that it does not take a century of "natural development".

***Why and when did OSF first launch the programme in support of gender-specific projects? What was the aim? OSF is the only foundation that directly focused on gender issues.***

It happened at the turn of 1997 and 1998. Open Society Fund has dedicated

itself to supporting open civil society. It reacts to up-to-date situations and topics that may in any way restrict the open society growth and development. I think, therefore, that it was quite logical for the foundation to focus on more general topics in 1992 when it started its activities in the Czech Republic. I do not want to say that they were more important but they were related to the process of the society's transformation. Gradually, it got to different areas of interest, like education, the issue of the majority society in relation to minorities and education leading to tolerance. At one point, the foundation also identified that there was a need to see to other important pillars of democracy, like equality of opportunities, which means everyone's right to equal chances not only with regard to nationality but also to gender. At that time (1998) the foundation's director initiated a small programme being launched, focusing on education of civic education teachers. That was the beginning. The foundation built an educational cycle for teachers explaining them roles of men and women in society and the roles' challenges over the eight years since the revolution.

The space and financial support to gender-oriented projects grew quite slowly. Around the year 2000, the "gender programme" became one of the five main programmes, considering the amount of money allocated to each of them. Within the programme entitled "Society, women and men from gender aspect", the foundation defined certain aims and priorities it focused on. However, at that time, there were only a limited number of subjects that could have implemented such priorities. It means that although the foundation was ready to re-grant all the finances, there were too few projects submitted. Then, around 2000, not everyone fully understood what we worked on. It is, nevertheless, rather usual that OSF performs the role of 'the first one to try', not only within the gender area but also if we talk about legal programmes, we succeeded to establish work for public benefit in the criminal code. Step by step, OSF leaves the topic since it has already become part of the system and there are enough of those who took over the responsibility.

As far as equal opportunities for women and men are concerned, the source of money has remained missing for true activists and those able to foresee things. I mean visionaries who understand what the society lacks. One of the good examples I can mention is the Gender Studies' project on

women's political participation, that is very much relevant but at the same time very innovative and thus rather unattractive to donors. Therefore, two years ago the foundation decided to found a separate agency, a fund, which would primarily specialize in mobilizing gender-oriented projects, providing funding to those initiatives, and developing fundraising strategies realized in the Czech and Slovak Republics. The Slovak-Czech Women's Fund stands for a certain "exit strategy" of the "gender programme" in the situation when the foundation is not sure if it is able to run the programme in the future financially; the fund should thus be the one to support projects dealing with hot gender topics.

***Can you say how many "gender projects" were supported since the "gender programme" was launched?***

I cannot say the exact number but the reports would definitely provide such information: first, there was a special granting programme; and second, there was an educational programme running since 1998 where there were yearly approximately 30 teachers from Prague and 30 from Brno taking part. There were some 20-30 projects supported from grants a year. The programme supported various actions and activities, publishing books, organizing roundtables or campaigns, and developing systemic changes of laws etc. It means that the programme did not ask for activities unified by their theme.

***Can you say that gender mainstreaming has been implemented across other OSF programmes?***

Yes, but it is not a rule. We do not search for gender aspects within other programmes. However, a number of projects submitted within other programmes, have often dealt with the gender aspects. The East-East programme represents one of the good examples: it is oriented at a trans-national cooperation, between Eastern and Central Europe, where international projects are applied for regularly; they often include an educational component, exchange of experts, and other activities. Still, the rule does not exist to support a certain number of projects where gender mainstreaming is followed.

***Do you mean that equal opportunities are not openly defined as a horizontal priority within other programmes?***

No, they are not. The programmes launched by OSF usually have general framing. As soon as we identify concrete important topics, we try to initiate some projects to be submitted within the area in question. It may often happen that we approach strategic partners who would be able to work on the issue, then, we develop conditions of joint cooperation and their project.

***How do you assess other foundations' policies operating in the Czech Republic – considering their approach to strictly gender-specific projects but also to equal opportunities as such, i.e. how are the evaluators trained etc.?***

It is my subjective opinion but I am very critical in this issue. It is, however, also caused by conditions within which the foundations have to work, what their goals are etc. Foundations do not enter topics where they fear of risk. In the Czech Republic, themes related to gender issues are either understood as too bold or too marginal. Obviously, there have been a few exceptions. However, the times are changing. There are some foundations in the Czech Republic that deal with equal opportunities. In the case of some, it is related to their duty of re-distributing concrete money. It largely depends on the institution's management. It is thus important to persuade employees and foundations' management of the necessity of gender sensitivity which is truly crucial. Until they do not perceive equal opportunities as a priority, they would hardly support projects that prioritize them.

All this is closely related to the development of politics in the Czech Republic. When Vladimír Špidla was in the position of a Prime Minister, we knew that he saw equal opportunities as a key issue, and not something formal. In the case of current top politicians we are not sure anymore. They are either open to the topic or they deal with equal opportunities or equal chances because they are forced to. In this sense, supranational mechanisms work well. But the second group is, unfortunately, much bigger. Although you may "hide" the equal opportunities agenda among human rights, you may also focus on it openly within a broader context. That is, in effect, much more contributive, especially taking it from the long-term perspective. Anna Čurdová has tried to do this but she is alone.

It often happens, nevertheless, that women themselves do not see the scope of the equality of opportunities. This strikes me very much. There are lots of women working in foundations but men usually dominate their boards of directors.

Control mechanisms stand for another important aspect related to finances allocated from the European Union sources. When gender mainstreaming is obligatorily followed within all projects, not only those directly aiming at equal opportunities for women and men, it would be very good if concrete mechanisms of control were functioning to provide a feedback on how the gender mainstreaming enforcement is developed in the European Union, and to what extent the obligation of including gender issues in projects is supported.

***How do you think the equal opportunities policy would look like in the future?***

I think that the first step is to introduce gender mainstreaming among main principles and duties. The second step remains in defining the system of evaluation of stating indicators. The third one is to analyze the previous steps and see if gender mainstreaming has its space, or, if it was implemented only formally. The problem is that the process needs to be started from both sides, and not only by those who try to enforce equality “from below”. Until the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs starts to work on targeted enforcement of equal opportunities, the grant proposals will not be taken seriously. It is hardly possible for any changes to take place if gender sensitive policy is not openly and clearly declared as one of the main issues.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN THE FUTURE?**

*Alena Králíková*

Gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities were not perceived as priorities within funding or programming in the Czech Republic until the process of accession was concluded and the country (along with a number of other states) joined the European Union in May 2004. Since then, the situation has been changing positively towards a definition of gender equality relevant indicators, and their factual monitoring within EU funding. However, since the EU experience is longer and still, unfortunately, rather neutral when it comes to real equality and empowerment of women, we cannot expect any dramatically positive changes to take place soon. Moreover, gender equality has been a very sensitive topic lacking any structural approach – not only in the programming or funding, but – what is worse – in the overall political approach in the country. They are often misunderstood by politicians and public officers, misused in semi-official campaigns against feminist movement, or misinterpreted as an issue lacking transparency.

Equal opportunities do not play a role as a key political issue as it does in many other countries, such as Sweden, Finland or Great Britain - to name a few. There is no top political representative appointed with responsibilities of women's human rights and gender equality, and the action plan developed regularly for over four years has generally lacked any concrete actions, plans or campaigns. The country, i.e. politicians and their parties, fears – so to speak – any official topical cooperation with non-governmental organisations while it actually relies on their activities when it comes to CEDAW or any EU-relevant reporting. The Czech Republic has not run (via its ministries) any programme as yet focused on support for women's or gender equality organisations, not mentioning evaluation of gender mainstreaming in other programmes.

The European Commission's objectives include – apart from support of economic and social development – also support of horizontal priorities.

Equal opportunities of women and men are one of the key issues as well as environmental sustainability, regional development and information technologies. They are important especially in relation to the Lisbon Strategy from March 2000 stating new aim of the European Union - strengthening employment area and economic and social reforms as part of the economy. Horizontal priorities are not allocated any special funds; however, they are fulfilled within various programming materials and they are more or less specific objectives. They may also be diversified on national levels and may cover social inclusion, regional and/or local development, support to entrepreneurship, and other specific matters. Generally, they stand for hot issues in society. It is therefore not surprising at all that gender equality or gender mainstreaming plays a key role among priorities in all European Union countries.

Strategic documents range the following crosscutting priorities among the Czech Republic main horizontal issues and are to be applied within all supported activities and/or projects: environment, equal opportunities, information society, and regional development.

The Czech Republic is hereby now obliged to evaluate horizontal priorities in relation to support distributed from structural funds on all levels of operational programmes, and other programmes co-financed from the structural funds' sources. Evaluation of horizontal priorities assesses whether their importance has been mirrored in a relevant way in all programming documents, in the programme's management, and whether structural funds respond to priorities being implemented properly. Evaluation of horizontal priorities provides for improvement in the following programming period. This is the theory.

Implementation of crosscutting themes, i.e. horizontal priorities, represents a rather experimental process as far as their design and management are concerned. It leads to a question how they are to be evaluated, monitored and assessed; and to what extent qualitative and quantitative measures are to be considered. Often, as it can be understood from a number of analyses developed in other EU countries in the last four years, the measures' definition differs a lot from their real implementation. Generally speaking,

they are often very formal and not directly related to the programme content, or they are quantitative, again with no contextual relation to the programme or project as such. The reason may be identified in lack of political support to horizontal priorities being strategically implemented across all sectors, even in those where they are not primarily relevant.

Equal opportunity policies have therefore been, along with other horizontal priorities, discussed as a part of Structural Funds reform, which started in 1999. This discussion is envisaged to lead to a better outline of the 2007-2013 programming period. In 1999, gender mainstreaming was, moreover, declared as of utmost importance – not only within the structural funds programmes but in all policies, measures and decisions developed and introduced internationally in the scope of EU and nationally in all member and accession countries. However, until today, no mechanism providing structural feedback has proved effective as far as implementation of gender mainstreaming is concerned.

European Commission has preferred horizontal priorities to be assessed parallel to main “vertical” evaluation during all its phases: ex-ante, mid-term, and ex-post. This may, however, end up for such priorities to be considered only superficial elements and not having any special added value within the respective programme.

Recommendations are thus more than logical, and surely not very innovative since they must be reproduced in all documents related to gender equality:

- team of evaluators need be trained in gender issues and aspects of gender mainstreaming in funding, both as horizontal and vertical priority, or gender experts need be invited to become horizontal and vertical priorities evaluators;
- best practices of projects run at local, regional, national, or international level need be analyzed and implemented, to any possible extent, in prepared programmes, re-definition of indicators and more effective gender mainstreaming policies;

- programme beneficiaries need be regularly consulted and their experience with indicators and programme structures monitored;
- gender mainstreaming and gender equality measures need to be provided with full attention of politicians, and they need to become key issues in each country’s political, social, and economic aims;
- general control and feedback mechanisms need be introduced at a structural funds level, and developed further on, with regard to specific operational and other co-funded programmes; they need be contextualized with the concrete programme indicators and regularly monitored, not to remain just a formal duty for the projects to be produced in line with.
- programme and horizontal priorities managers of funding or re-granting institution at national or European level need be trained in gender mainstreaming policies and be gender sensitive even when working with projects that are primarily irrelevant to gender aspects.

In the Czech Republic, as far as Structural Funds programmes can be reviewed over the past six months, the approach to gender mainstreaming has improved. It is not due to any developments in the country’s approach to gender equality, but due to the pressure from the side of EU to re-granting institutions and foundations towards their gender sensitivity. According to the research, institutions and foundations working to any extent with EU funding have to prepare an internal measure stating the institution’s approach to gender equality and include gender mainstreaming in the evaluators’ training.

Gradually, but still very slowly, it also seems that women’s and gender equality organisations are going to be approached more often in respect to their expertise in the gender mainstreaming area, and other relevant issues, this was recently the case of Civil Society Development Foundation and its Transition Facility programme.

Nevertheless, these positive steps do not build or even form a basis for any proper structure. They are either introduced because of the external pressure and “political” necessity, or they are based on lack of knowledge cured temporarily by several consultations with women’s organisations. Neither

of which, however, brings along any structural challenge. The institutions or foundations responsible for re-granting or EU relevant co-funding do not train their employees and evaluators in horizontal priorities aspects; and they do not analyze the priorities' indicators in close cooperation with local or EU-based experts. It is often just initiative of an individual working on the horizontal priorities' manuals to invite gender experts (or ICT / environment / regional development experts) to participate on specific issues.

More positive future prospects of gender mainstreaming depend on three intertwined layers: action from the bottom, i.e. non-governmental organisations at local, regional, and international level lobbying for gender equality, become a respected policy and a key word in politics and decision-making; action targeted at the public, i.e. the media to run awareness raising campaigns towards gender sensitivity; and action from the top, i.e. pressure from national and especially European bodies towards gender mainstreaming implementation in all measures and decisions taken, both horizontally and vertically. The vertical focus should especially empower the issues of gender equality and equal opportunities, and get away with frozen stereotypes related to equality of chances.

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### **GENDER DIMENSION OF THE EU PRE-ACCESSION INSTRUMENTS IN SLOVAKIA**

*Livia Biziková, Jarmila Filadelfiová*

#### **Important steps in the EU accession**

Slovakia's accession process to the EU began in 1993 during the Copenhagen Summit when Slovakia established a formal relation with the EU. In 1998, the EU accession negotiations started with six countries. Because of unwillingness of Slovakia's Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, who was in power at that time, and because of the lack of external acceptance of his politics, Slovakia was not invited to these discussions. In 1999, during the Helsinki Summit, the EU accepted Slovakia as a candidate for membership. Following the decisions from the EU Copenhagen Summit in December 2002, accession negotiations with Slovakia were successfully completed, and the accession treaty was signed at the Athens Summit in 2003.

#### **Gender dimension of National Strategies and Action Plans**

To assess the gender dimension in the accession process firstly we focused on the examination of how the question of the equality between women and men was translated from the EU regulations to the national legislation. (The most important documents are listed in the box 1). The analyses of national documents such as the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis' and 'Negotiating Positions of the Slovak Republic on the Accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union' clearly show priorities from the EU perspective and link them with the national priorities. Both basic documents are focused on transposition of basic EU principles without mentioning the gender dimension.

The analyses of the Progress Reports are one of the possible ways to see the changing priorities and goals during the accession process. The continuing publishing of reports evaluating our progress towards accession shows the changes in the understating of different issues such as equal opportunities from both sides, national and the EU.

In the **Progress Reports 1998 – 2002**<sup>1</sup>, the issues related to equal opportunities are restricted to measures in the chapter Employment and Social Affairs. The proposed measures are only dealing with necessity to change the labour code without emphasising its enforcement. Precisely in 1998 the amendment of the Labour Code restricts unequal access to work (prohibits sex-desegregated advertisements for job offers) and unequal pay for men and women. The amendment of the Labour Code changed the maternal leave to parental to allow both women and men to take paternal leave.

Under political criteria (in Progress Report, 2000), it is stated that Slovakia will ratify all documents related to the rights and the protection of minorities. However, the weak support for human rights and women's rights was pointed out by NGOs.

The progress in women's rights is presented by establishing The National Centre for Equal Opportunities in 1997 and by the adoption of the National Action Plan for Women.

In 2001, critical view upon the success of the implementation of legislation related to women's rights and amendments of labour code are explicitly emphasised. In the chapter on political and citizens rights The European Commission emphasises that Slovakia made only a very limited progress in fight against trafficking of women and children and to the contrary - the country is increasingly becoming a country with higher rate of origin, transit and final destination of traffic in women and children.

In 2001, the EC revised the progress achieved in the accession process and the new principles, priorities, intermediate objectives were adopted in the Accession Partnership with Slovakia (COM(2001)661final). The document recognizes the areas (published in the progress reports on yearly basis), in which the country did progress during the accession process and proposes future actions while comparing the current state to the situation in 1998. Among others, the areas to improve further are listed as follows: fight against discrimination, ensure proper implementation of social aquis particularly in the field of health and work safety, as well as equal treatment for women and men, adopt legislation against discrimination and develop a timetable for its implementation. The necessity for capacity building as a preparation for the forthcoming Structural funds, particularly in the field of employment and

## Gender Audit of the EU Pre-Accession Funds 1999 - 2004

*Box 1.*

*Summarized key strategies and action plans during the accession process*

Year	Strategies and Action Plans
1995	'Memorandum of the Government of the Slovak Republic', according to which the acquisition of full EU membership is stated as the strategic goal of Slovakia.
1998	'National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis' (revised in 1999, 2000 and 2001)
2000	'Negotiating Positions of the Slovak Republic on the Accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU'.  Progress Reports
2001	'Preliminary National Development Plan 2001-2006'
2002	'Action Plan for reinforcing administrative and judicial capacity'.

social policy including measures of European Social Fund (ESF), is expressed too.

The analysis of progress reports shows just minimal requirements for how the equal opportunity issue should be included in the national documents dealing with pre-accession instruments. Besides, the political and economic criteria of women's rights and equal opportunity policies are restricted only to a minimum of fields such as labour market and trafficking. In the last years the gap between the adopted legislation, lack of capacities for its implementation and enforcement were criticized. It should be stressed that until opening the Transition Facility in 2004, no specific programmes from pre-accession instruments were focused to improve the situation in the field of equal opportunities. However, the needs were identified already in 2001.

### **EU pre-accession instruments**

#### **EU legal framework for pre-accession instruments**

The general framework for pre-accession assistance for accession countries was set up by the Council Regulations no. 622/98, no. 3906/89 (last amended by Regulation no. 753/96). These two council regulations were later amended by the new regulations EC no. 1267/1999 and no. 1268/1999. These regulations set up the basic framework for the accession strategy. In the 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the regulation (no. 622/98) the equal treatment between the accession countries have to be taken into account, but not the equal treatment between the women and men in each country. Besides other issues, the regulations generally mention the targeted area to be supported such as environment, transport, agricultural, and rural development (which form an integrated part of industrial reconstruction or regional development programmes). The targeted areas are described without paying attention to equal opportunity measures. However, the area of regional or rural development covers lots of possibilities for conserving and even increasing the existing gender gap.

*Source: Interim Evaluation of the European Union Phare Programme, 2004.*

### Box 2.

*Selected priorities from The integrated plan of regional and Social development*

*The plan was issued in 1999 and provides the basic priorities and strategic guidelines for the Phare projects in 2000 and later. The aim of the document is to overview the current socio-economic and environmental situation in the country, compare it to the situation in the EU, provide SWOT analysis, and define strategic priorities and elaborate goals within them.*

*The gender dimension is not captured in the document. In the first part, in which the macroeconomic situation is discussed, all issues eg. wage gaps, unemployment rates, participation in SMEs are mentioned only from the point of view of regional differences. Sex-disaggregated data is provided in the description of the participation of men and women in the labour market at national level only. Based on this preliminary assessment, the following SWOT analysis lacks any gender dimension. The most important part for the project formulation is the last part providing the strategic priorities with their breakdown to more specific goals. In the priorities, the human capital and social supportive measures are listed. Priority focused on human capital could be extended to four main interest areas: changes in the employment policies, improvement of public health, support of the initiatives in the civil society and inclusion of marginalized group. Again, the sex-disaggregated data is mentioned only in case of life expectancy and difference in the number of women and men in the different age groups.*

*Except the discussed priority dealing with social capital, the others such as rural development, development of SMEs and support of research and education have strong gender dimension. In the document, the equal opportunities are mentioned in the similar understanding as that of the EC regulation of pre-accession instruments (1267/1999 and 1268/1999) - as equal access of each region to resources, information, subsidies and instruments for regional development.*

*In: Ministry of Construction and regional development, 1999.*

*The Integrated plan of regional and social development. Bratislava.*

### **EU framework for Phare programme**

The Phare programme was set up in order to support changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. PHARE became the most important programme in the region, which provided expertise and investment support. EC has oriented the programme to help candidate countries in their preparation for the EU membership focusing on two main areas: the adoption of *aquis communautaire* and related institutional development and investment support. Phare program was finalised in 2003 and the implementation of projects will continue until 2006. The European Council decision no. 2760/98 sets up the rules for Phare cross-border co-operation. In the directive there are no requirements to assess the impact of socio-economic changes on gender and equal opportunities. In order to deal with the issues of democracy and human rights within the instruments supporting development, the EC adopted a new directive in 1999 (no. 976/1999). In the field of human rights, this document sets up one priority (out of nine priorities) - to support equal opportunities between men and women. Regarding the democracy building, the document states (in one out of seven points) the necessity to ensure equal participation in decision-making in politics as well as in decision-making dealing with economic issues.

As a general framework for the last stage of pre-accession instrument Phare, the EC prepared the programming guide (EC, 2002, on the national level adopted by the Slovak government as regulation no. 55/2002). The allocated funding was intended to finance remaining actions stemming from the national priorities and also to finance investments to support economic and social cohesion. The guide strongly emphasises the support for measures necessary for the adoption of forthcoming Structural funds. Based on the partnership principle of the Structural funds, the document calls for co-operation of different local authorities, economic and social partners, and environmental and equal opportunity bodies in the preparation of development plans. The document supports the main priorities of forthcoming Structural funds by emphasizing the support to the underdeveloped regions, the need to strengthen the human capacities in the field of employment, industrial transformation and the support of equal opportunities between women and men (in accordance with priorities within ESF) also. In the annex of the document, the new project form is presented

including gender indicators. This project fiche was then adopted at the national level. (The comparison of different project fiches is presented in next chapters.)

### National priorities for PHARE programme in Slovakia

The detailed description of priority activities in the PHARE programme is completed in the Regulation of preparation and implementation of PHARE programme for 2000 – 2006. Slovak government adopted the document in 1999. According to the document, there are three important aims to be reached – institutional development, infrastructure investments and the support of the human capital in smaller scale, too. In case of institutional development, the major investments are allocated for the preparation of the regulatory framework necessary for the adoption of aquis. Besides this aim, the need for the improvement of economic, decision-making and social capacity for the implementation of Phare and Structural funds is recognized.

In the section on the support of human capital it is pointed out that measures to increase employment have to be improved and the adaptation process of industry and its employees has to be assisted. At this point the need for the improvement of equal opportunities between women and men is explicitly mentioned. The mentioned goals are based on general EU guidelines and they were extensively elaborated in the **Integrated Plan of Regional and Social Development** of the Slovak Republic for Phare programme 2000

#### Box 3.

*How to deal with equal opportunity question in the object fiche*

*Many Slovak authors of project fiches appear to have difficulties with a beneficiary analysis that exclusively deals with gender. Firstly, there is the problem of jargon. Most writers of Phare project fiches might have had to consult their dictionary to find out what gender actually is and what gender mainstreaming could be about. If you are one of them, you can make your life easier by including something similar to the following text in your fiche.*

### **Equal Opportunity**

*Equal opportunity principles and practices in ensuring equitable gender participation in the project will be guaranteed*

*Equal opportunity principles and practices in ensuring equitable gender participation in the project will be guaranteed, particularly as regards to selection of trainers and trainees for the training programme, where a balanced distribution of positions/places will be sought.*

*In: Riis Burisch & Partner GmbH: Getting it Right 2003, Programming Phare Projects, 2002. Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic Aid Co-ordination Unit.*

(no. 923/1999, see box 2). In the document, each goal is described in details except for the goal of equal opportunities. In the part dealing with social issues, the active employment policy is indicated, but the gender dimension is missing. In case of indicators measuring the development, the understanding of gender issue as the type of horizontal indicator is missing entirely. The Integrated Plan was the first document, which attempted to capture the situation in the regions in socio-economic and environmental development potential realistically, regrettably without gender dimension.

In the end of 2002, the new National Development Plan (NDP) was adopted. This document is one of the important strategic documents on which further priorities and key areas are built and selected for the Structural funds (see chapter on the Structural Funds in box 7).

### **Analyses of Phare projects' fiches**

To be efficient in the inclusion of all measures during the project cycle, the special attention should be drawn to their presentation in the project fiche. One of the aims of the project fiche is to clarify objectives, expected results, feasibility and different impacts by the project submitters. For that reason, it is necessary to be aware of the consequences the project will have on women and men. If these requirements are not stated explicitly, it is very unlikely to expect the project submitters to care about these issues on the voluntary basis.

In the project intent form (final form was **created** in the middle of 2000), there is no any requirement to present the impact on equal opportunities or to ensure gender balance in all stages of the project. The form requires evidence of project's compliance with the Integrated Plan of Regional development (discussed in the previous chapter), which in fact doesn't include gender dimension. There is space open to provide additional documents proving the feasibility of the project in terms of e.g. environmental appraisal, technical and economic studies but requirements on gender impact assessment are not involved.

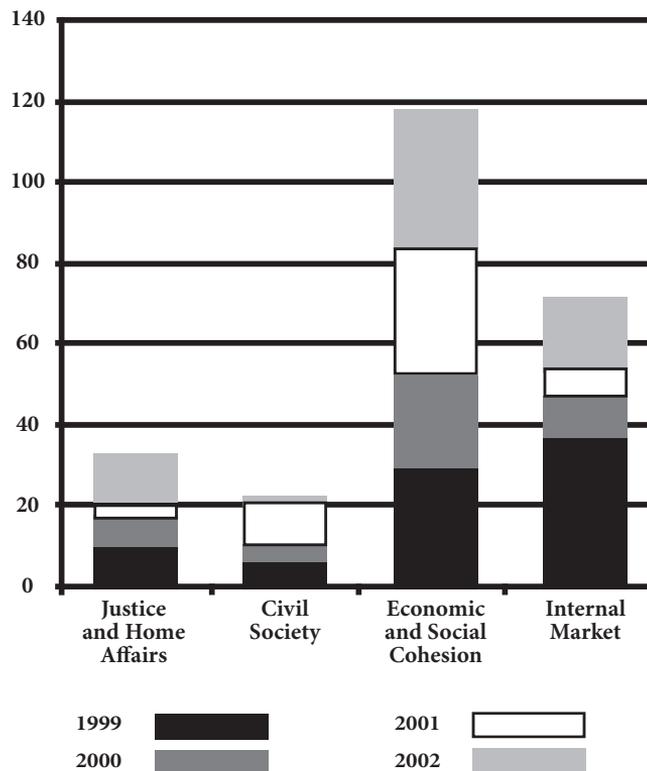
In the project fiche (finalised in December 2002) the significant part refers to the newly adopted National Development Plan (NDP, presented separately in box 7). It also requests to indicate how the project would contribute to the strategic development of the region, where the project will be implemented. The same closed cycle as described above repeats again - because of the lack of gender dimension in the strategic national planning documents, there is no incentive to include gender at the project level. However, in the point eight of the project fiche, listing the measures on how the equal participation of men and women (NOT women and men) will be ensured and how the participation of the women will be assessed, is required. In comparison to requirements for environment, these are expected to show the current state, main impacts and provide accessibility to environmental impacts assessment (EIA, if it was completed). That kind of approach moving from current state to future impacts allows us to see the consequences of the project in the wider perspective. In case of gender dimension, it will be useful to pay attention to the current level of inequalities to avoid projects creating more inequalities. In the guide for the project fiche, the exact phrase that should be written in the column concerning equal opportunities is given (see box 4).

In the annex, the submission of different types of feasibility analyses including compulsory analyses of environmental impacts of the projects is required. There are no requirements for any kind of gender impact assessment.

To be effective in the implementation of equal opportunity principle at the project level, the inclusion of indicators in the project fiche is a fundamental requirement. It is obvious that the project developers will not pay adequate attention to these issues without clear guidelines presented through targeted questions in the project fiche.

Box 4.

Allocation of Phare in Slovakia (M€)



### Gender dimension in selected Phare Programmes

#### Phare Horizontal Programmes

The Phare programme is one of the three pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union<sup>2</sup>. Phare assistance is also oriented on investment projects (business related infrastructure, SMEs support, human resources development including vocational education and training, with a particular emphasis on the Roma minority).

In the beginning of the program in 1998 and 1999 the main interest was focused on the law approximation towards the EU legislation, adoption of the *acquis communautaire* and strengthening the juridical systems in order to increase the enforcement of adopted laws. At this stage the highest expenditures went to the internal market and related institutional development, and to the projects dealing with economic and social cohesion. During this first period, the interest in the field of economic and social cohesion was more focused on the building of necessary institutions dealing with cadastre reform, further on setting up the framework for export support, on foreign investments and replenishment of the Slovak Post - Privation Funds (SPPF). Other projects dealt with the implementation of different standards and certification systems requested by the EU such as agricultural policy, veterinary standards and related statistics, environmental statistics, integrated custom strategy, institutional capacity building for Box taxation, institutional capacity for improved labour protection systems and institutional support for public administration reform.

The first period between 1998 –and 1999 was important for the development of the whole institutional framework. The overlooking of the gender balance hardly can be corrected later, when all institutions function. The project fiches of all projects in 1998 contain the following statement: ‘Equal opportunity principles and practices in ensuring equitable gender participation in the project will be guaranteed’, which is not further elaborated in other parts of the project or even on the level of indicators. It seems that the use of this sentence in all projects at the early stage of Phare programme is a matter of formal inclusion for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements for equal opportunities. The project Special preparatory programme for Structural

funds dealing with initial institutional development included the following expression ‘The dimension of gender equality will be integrated at all levels of component objectives. It is anticipated that this will set an appropriate foundation for future gender mainstreaming in application of regional and structural policies in Slovakia’. From the equal opportunity perspective, gender balance at all levels of the project preparation management and implementation should be ensured at least. It should be a basic requirement to guarantee the gender balance in the decision-making in the newly set-up institution.

In 2000, the support in the field of economic and social cohesion was focused on strengthening the development in Eastern Slovakia by preparation of training courses, contact points and other support for the business development. Activities supported from Phare sources such as micro-loans, business incubators are measures, which are often used for supporting women to run their own businesses. Unfortunately during the projects implementations and selection of supported candidates gender sensitive measures were not included. Again, just a formal recognition that ‘Equal opportunity principles and practices in ensuring equitable participation in the project will be guaranteed’ without special attention of the precise measures is listed.

Later in 2001 and 2002 similar small-grant schemes for small businesses and trainings were supported. In all cases no special measures were introduced to ensure the principles of equal opportunity and the gender balance at least.

In the last years of Phare Programme in 2002 – 2003, the guidelines for the program were influenced by the forthcoming Structural funds, more precisely by the newly adopted development plan and project fiche. In the approved projects in 2003, the question of equal opportunities and its presentation on the level of measurable indicators was restricted to the question of securing the jobs for women returning to work after maternity leave. Nevertheless, there is no affirmative action proposed to mitigate the disadvantages.

We can conclude that pre-accession instruments help institutional development and infrastructure building in accession countries. However, in the terms of equal opportunities they are more likely to preserve status quo, i.e. current inequalities. There were projects such as micro-loans

for SMEs, grants for NGOs and projects, which engaged minorities, and actually targeted specific women and gender issues and did not see the group of beneficiaries as homogenous mass. As a consequence, many of the implemented projects had distinct gender impact and therefore cannot be characterized as gender neutral, but we did not find any gender sensitive indicators on any level of the project adopted.

### **Phare Small Projects**

The basic aim of the Phare Small Projects was to increase the knowledge and information about the process of the EU integration and to promote Slovakia within the EU Member states.

The program was opened for NGOs, educational institutions, local and regional authorities and economic, social, cultural and political bodies in Slovakia.

In 2003, except the overall priorities, more detailed priorities were formulated for projects seeking support. They should have focused on the following goals: equal opportunities, human rights protection and support for local development. The grant support for one project was 5 000 – 30 000 EUR. In the projects, the co-financing was requested at least to the 20% of total project costs.

### **Gender dimension in the application procedure**

Nevertheless, one of the aims of this programme was to support projects dealing with equal opportunity issues. The gender dimension in the application procedure for Phare Small Projects programme is included only in one question of the application form.

In the first section dealing with the identification of applicants, a part inquiring about the description of the applicant (maximum 3 pages) consists, among others, of following questions - When was your organisation founded?, What are the main activities of your organisation at present?, List of the management board/committee of your organisation. In case of list of members of board or committees, the indication of gender is required.

In the guidelines for applicants there is no information about the equal

opportunities and how the issue should be handled in the proposal and later during the project implementation<sup>3</sup>.

The evaluation of submitted projects neither relies on assessing gender aspects of the proposal nor requests any gender indicators to be included in the project proposal.

### **Analyses of the supported projects**

In the detailed project analyses we evaluated 100 projects, which were supported from Small project grant scheme in 2002. We identified 4 different types of projects:

1. Infrastructure development projects;
2. Projects focused on infrastructure development and the preparation of strategic development documents, which will later become the essential documents delineating local goals for the projects supported from the Structural Funds;
3. Projects focused on the preparation of local and regional development plans, which are the basic documents for the Structural Funds;
4. Projects focused on the preparation and building of support systems for investments development (industrial park infrastructure, business incubators etc.).

The distribution of analysed projects according to the mentioned categories is presented in the box 7.

We did not have access to the detailed projects' description. Therefore we selected five main indicators dealing with gender issues and participation of women, which we were able to evaluate from the available data. The studied indicators are following:

- A. The project targets only women, it is so-called women's project;
- B. There is at least one activity focused on women or there is at least one activity divided by gender;
- C. The participation of women or gender issues are explicitly mentioned in the proposed activities;
- D. Gender indicators are included in the list of indicators assessing potential beneficiaries;

E. Gender balance among the persons mentioned in the preparation and implementation of the projects.

In the group of analysed projects, we did not recognize any women's project, which would identify women as its target group. There was no project, whose activities were explicitly divided by gender or in which different activities targeted women and men. Two projects explicitly state that proposed activities could be interesting for women, however no tasks or activities are included to ensure the equal participation of women.

In the case of business incubators, it was stated that the project creates options for women either to run their small business or to be employed in some of the companies. Again, it is a voluntary measure, which may be carried out but at the same time may not.

One project dealing with preparation of development planned in a municipality acknowledges that there is need for special targeted activities for elderly women, whose number is increasing in the local community. Again, there are no proposed measures or priorities, which could be afterwards included in the project and which would be grounded in the development plan.

Gender-balance in the project team occurred only in 14% of the analysed projects. This indicator was the highest from all monitored and it reflects the number of women in regional offices and municipalities. However, 14% reached is still far away from the balanced gender dimension.

From the analysed projects it is clear that we cannot expect the project submitters to include gender dimension on voluntary basis. The requirement to comprehend and involve gender dimension in the projects in the form of measures, gender-segregated goals and the estimation of the real group of beneficiaries between women and men has to be called for explicitly. Even in case of projects, in which one of the priorities was support of equal opportunity between women and men, none of the supported projects directly targeted this question. This is probably due to the low interest of the members of committees selecting the projects and weak support of gender dimension in the guidelines for projects submitters. In consequence, the projects manifested enormous lack of any attention to equal opportunities.

*Box 5.*

*Distribution of analysed Phare small projects according to their gender dimension*

Type of projects	1.	2.	3.	4.	Total
No. of projects	34	32	21	13	100
A	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	0
C	0	0	1	1	2
D	0	0	0	0	0
E	0	1	10	3	14

### **Communitarian programs**

The Communitarian programs of the EU are mostly focused on support for the institutional development. At the beginning these were opened only for Member States, which were also participating on their financing. By the decision of the European Parliament, some of the programs opened for accession countries. Until 2001 the participation of Slovakia had to be approved for each programme separately. The decision of the EU - SR Association Council no. 1/2002 and no. 212/2002 adopted the general principles for participation in the communitarian programmes in general and than Memorandum of Understanding was signed for each of the programmes separately. Slovakia endorsed the decision in Parliament in 2002 (no. 140/2002). This resolution only set up a general framework. The financial memorandum of the national Phare Programme specifies the amount to be paid from the Phare Programme and from the central budget. European Commission allows accession countries to pay the fee for the

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*Box 6. Implementation of communitarian programmes dealing with education and social issues*

Programme	Participation of Slovakia					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
TEMPUS	x	x	x	-	-	-
Socrates I,II	x	x	x	x	x	x
Leonardo da Vinci I, II	x	x	x	x	x	x
Youth I, II	x	x	x	x	x	x
5 <sup>th</sup> Framework programme 1999 - 2001	-	x	x	x	x	-
6 <sup>th</sup> Framework programme 2002-2006	-	-	-	-	x	x
Culture 2000 2000 - 2004	-	-	-	x	x	x
III., IV. Support for SMEs	x	x	x	x	x	-
SAVE II	-	x	x	x	x	-
Equal opportunities 2002 – 2006	-	-	-	-	-	x
Fighting social exclusion 2002 – 2006	-	-	-	-	x	x
Tackling discrimination 2001 - 2006	-	-	-	-	-	x
Employment support 2002 - 2006	-	-	-	-	-	x
Public health support 2003 - 2008	-	-	-	-	-	x

Source: [www.government.gov.sk/phare](http://www.government.gov.sk/phare)

access to the programmes up to 50% from the budget allocated for PHARE and the rest from the state budget. Legislation for setting up the general framework does not deal with the equal opportunity issues between women and men at all.

The detailed description of participation of Slovakia in communitarian programmes with focus on social issues and are presented in box 6.

In 2001, Slovakia participated in 9 communitarian programs in the sectors of education, culture, economy and finance. In 2002 11 communitarian programs were implemented in the following sectors: education, culture, economy, social affairs, labour and finance. In 2003, the Slovak Republic continued in the already opened 11 communitarian programs in the fields of education, economy, finance, and culture. New programs in culture, social affairs and labour, environment and health started also.

From all programmes, the Ministry of labour, social affairs and family coordinated only one program dealt directly with equal opportunity issues of women and men. In terms of this topic the country participated in the Community Programme for Gender Equality (2002-2006). The Slovak Republic signed a memorandum of understanding on the accession to this Community programme on 20 June 2002. Within the framework of this programme, the EC approved two projects for Slovakia:

- The project of the International Centre for Family Studies focused on the preparation of a publication comprising of 5 studies on gender equality and organisation of the national conference in October 2003, where the results of the studies would be presented;
- The project of the Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family entitled “Challenge for Social Inclusion: From Dependence to Work (scheme of social assistance and incentives for work)”, which also focused on the inclusion of Slovakia into the European strategy to fight poverty and social exclusion. The results of this research will be presented at a national conference to be held in the summer 2005.

The other programmes under the priority “labour and social affairs” are the following ones: Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion

(2002-2006), Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2002-2006) and Community Programme to Support Employment (2002-2006).

Many other project initiatives not included under the social affairs and labour priority has a strong gender dimension.

The projects under priority "education" such as ERASMUS (supporting student's mobility), COMENIUS (education programmes for minorities and teachers), GRUNDTVIG (adult education), LINGUA (support for language courses), LEONARDO DA VINCI II (focusing on mobility of researchers and teachers, courses in foreign languages, but also on the transfer of new methods and techniques in the education), and finally YOUTH (support of youth communities, support for cross-border co-operation between youth communities and mobility of students) should at least meet the basic requirements for gender balance within the supported groups. In the requirements provided by the supervising bodies none of the gender indicators or gender segregated data were implemented.

### **EU instruments after accession**

#### **Legal framework and priorities for Transition Facility**

In its Strategy Paper (COM (2002) 700 final, 9.10.2002) the European Commission proposed to establish a Transition Facility for certain institution building actions in the new member states over the period 2004 - 2006. The purpose of the Transition Facility is the continuation of the assistance for the new Member States in their efforts to strengthen their administrative capacities to implement Community legislation and to foster exchange of best practice, as an extension to assistance provided until accession under Phare.

#### **National priorities for Transition Facility**

The aim of national strategy was to provide an outline of how the Transition Facility assistance will be deployed in a manner compatible with sectoral and national strategies so that it will address those areas where administrative capacities still indicate weaknesses. This also includes areas where new Member States are asked to prepare for the implementation of newly adopted Community legislation.

Following priority areas for further support were identified: agriculture, statistics, justice and home affairs, protection of the Communities' financial interests and fight against fraud, environment, nuclear safety, financial control, internal market including customs union, social policy and employment and public administration.

With respect to social policy and employment the following areas requiring further action were specified:

- public health;
- anti-discrimination – establish the equality body required by the acquis to improve the situation of the Roma minority;
- equal treatment of women and men - further strengthening is needed in order to ensure enforcement of the legislation;
- social dialogue - the administrative system needs to be progressively improved;
- employment policy - important efforts are needed to improve policy co-ordination;
- social inclusion - analytical work and social statistics systems on poverty and social exclusion should be developed further on in accordance with the EU commonly agreed indicators on social inclusion;
- free movement of persons - necessary administrative structures need to be further developed in the field of the co-ordination of social security systems.

**In 2004** Transition Facility assistance was supposed to be aimed at the strengthening of administrative capacities in the field of gender mainstreaming as well as the implementation of the anti-discrimination acquis, notably by strengthening the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. Only in 2005 the issue of equal opportunities is explicitly mentioned.

The allocated budget for each project was 500 thousand EUR.

**In 2005** Transition Facility support is expected to be aimed at the development of a monitoring system for long-term health care. Further assistance is planned for the strengthening of administrative capacities in order to foster social dialogue.

Transition Facility assistance **for the year 2006** should be used for the development of social statistics on poverty and social exclusion systems and capacity building in the field of employment mainstreaming policy.

Transition Facility programming and implementation guide (COM(2003)4884) doesn't include gender or equal opportunities. In the description of priorities and aims of the facility, the issues of equal opportunities are not stated explicitly and they are not included even as a horizontal indicator, as it is required for the Structural funds.

Box 7.

*National development plan*

*Based on the decision of the Slovak government (no. 133/2002) the national plans were adopted as basic documents for the definition of priorities and needs for the projects administered within the framework of the Structural funds. National development plan consists of 5 sectoral operational plans: economic development, human development, agriculture, rural development and fishery and environment. The documents very carefully evaluate the current situation, future potentials and define the priorities in each section. Because of the stricter regulation about equal opportunities under the Structural funds. ?? The equal opportunities and gender-segregated assessment is included only in case of human development. Practically, it means that in the chapter on human development special part on gender inequalities is included. This is a first attempt to capture gender inequalities in national development documents, though it is done in a very simplified way. Regrettably, the gender issues are not understood as horizontal indicator in all sectoral plans.*

*In: Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, 2003. National development plan, Bratislava*

### **EU and national legislation for the Structural Funds**

#### **EU legal framework for the Structural Funds**

The general framework for Structural funds was adopted by EC on 21 June 1999, no. 1260/1999. To the contrary to the general framework for pre-accession instruments, the issue of equal opportunities between women and men are included in the document. In this document, the process of economic and social cohesion is understood as the development, which respects the principles of sustainable development in economic, environmental as well as social terms. More emphasis is put on the social and environmental dimension. Regarding the social issues, according to the documents it means high employment rates and improvement in the field of equal opportunities for women and men (in Slovak translation again - men and women). Moreover, the Structural funds project could help in the alleviation of any form of discrimination (based on race, ethnicity, disability or age) by the means of adequate evaluation of needs, use of financial incentives and exceeding partnership, too. The document emphasises the necessity to develop partnerships between environmental and equal opportunity bodies not only on the national level, but also on the regional and local levels.

In terms of monitoring, it is indicated that there is a need for evaluation on three different levels, which requires strengthening of the quality of evaluation in the field of economic, social and environmental impacts, as well as the evaluation of impacts on equal opportunities between women and men. For the ex-ante evaluation, the documents provide guidelines, in which it is stated that equal opportunities should be evaluated according to the opportunities in the workplace, labour market, education and the reconciliation of the work and family. In the documents, the issue of equal opportunities is understood as the horizontal problem, which means that all priorities should fulfil this requirement. The bodies responsible for the preparation of development plans have to make all institutions dealing with particular issues public, equal opportunity bodies included.

#### **Monitoring the equal opportunities among decision-makers**

Monitoring the current approaches of national decision-makers from the standpoint of gender mainstreaming and sensitivity to gender issues presents

an important part of our analysis. We selected organisations involved in the selection and monitoring of projects financed from the Structural Funds resources.

We were interested in the four main areas:

1. Gender balance in the institution involved (including decision-making bodies and monitoring committees);
2. Consulting process with organizations (governmental, non-governmental) dealing with equal opportunities of women and men;
3. Monitoring the activities aimed at education and dissemination of information about equal opportunities amongst the employees;
4. Level of awareness to the question of equal opportunities in the EU funds, for which the institutions are responsible and also in the measures, which will probably appear in the submitted projects in the future.

The survey was completed during August and September 2004. We prepared a survey consisting of 20 questions (four questions for each area). We sent 85 questionnaires (via snail mail and e-mails) and got back 22 responses, which stands for 25% return rate.

In the monitored institutions the level of gender balance was very diverse. In more than half of the monitored institutions the number of women employees was higher than that of men. In only one institution the number of women and men employees was balanced. The heads of units dealing with the EU funds are in balance (55% lead by women, 45% lead by men). On the contrary, men head all monitoring committees.

Generally, the consultation with equal opportunities bodies or NGOs succeeded very rarely. None of the monitored organizations established a separate body to deal with gender issues. 24% of organisations consulted equal opportunity issues with an expert. In 14% of the returned surveys the participation of member of a women's NGO in the monitoring committee was stated. More than 50% of the institutions did not use any form of co-operation with the organizations dealing with equal opportunities in their work. If they cooperated with any of these institutions at all, most often it was the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and foreign expert (mainly from the EU).

33% of the monitored organizations indicated that the employees participated in trainings or workshops related to equal opportunities. In nearly all cases it was only a half-day event without any follow-up activities. Usually, only limited number of employees took part in the training (e.g. one per organization). Only one organization mentioned that the equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming is part of the basic qualification of their employees. 23% out of the monitored organization indicated that they had access to manuals, brochures, or other educational materials on equal opportunities for women and men.

In all cases they showed awareness of the requirements to ensure equal opportunities for women and men on all levels of the projects. Major gender indicator, which was indicated in the surveys, dealt with the labour market. More precisely, two different types of indicators were mentioned: number of women running their own business (in a project supporting SMEs) and wages of men and women. Because of the very strong horizontal and vertical segregation typical for the labour market in Slovakia we can imagine how the second indicator will be implemented only with difficulties. Moreover, there will be number of projects, which will not create new jobs directly, though still they can have strong gender impact.

According to the completed survey involving the decision-makers dealing with the approval and monitoring of the projects, it is apparent that their awareness of equal opportunities for women and men as well as their interest in the issue are very low. Despite the fact that the legislation and project guidelines require relatively strong focus on gender dimension (especially in comparison to the pre-accession instruments), the institutions' representatives did not provide satisfactory information about the level of knowledge, experiences from consultations and trainings, planned approaches regarding the inclusion of equal opportunities in the projects financed from the Structural Funds.

1) [www.government.gov.sk/phare](http://www.government.gov.sk/phare)

2) <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/index.htm>

3) *Delegation of the European Commission in the Slovak republic, 2002. Phare Small Projects Programme 2002. Guidelines for Applicants to call for proposals. Budget line B7-030. Bratislava.*

### CONCLUSIONS - LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

We understand our project as a pilot initiative for the assessment of the gender dimension of EU financial schemes accessible during the accession process. We are also interested in the assessment of the potential implementation of equal opportunities in Structural Funds available after the accession. We followed with great interest and worried at the same time, about the contradictions occurred during the implementation of projects supported from EU pre-accession instruments. There is undoubtedly, in many fields such as institutional development and built infrastructure, significant improvement achieved. At the same time, in the analyzed projects or in the national documents, the setting up of the general framework, and the question of equal opportunities is nearly entirely missed.

#### **National development documents without gender dimension**

The preparation of national documents, which set up the priorities and general goals for pre-accession instruments, has a crucial role in the translation of the equal opportunity measures at the project level. Here, we would like to stress also the importance of the EU attitude, because at the beginning of the accession process these national documents were prepared under very close collaboration with the EU and their advice was followed relatively strictly. In this first stage, the equal opportunities between women and men were not understood as priority in the EU or at the national level. This attitude was then transposed to the national development documents.

In the national priorities, the development strategies for the projects (except the huge infrastructure building) had a lot of projects which dealt with institutional development and economic and social cohesion. Projects under both these themes have strong social and therefore gender impacts, which were not captured.

It is also important to stress, that in the national documents the equal opportunities were included just after 2002 – four years after opening the

pre-accession instruments. It was done in a separate chapter without the intention to include gender as a horizontal issue.

**We recommend the inclusion of equal opportunity measures and gender dimension at the first level of national document preparation. This requires a strong commitment from the EU and the country to understand the equal opportunities as the basic pre-condition for development. Such clear signs for the implementation agencies, project submitter, and all key stakeholders will be then transposed on the project level.**

#### **Building the institutions without equal opportunity principles**

It is important to stress that the institutional building in the case of equal opportunities was not done sufficiently. The interest to perceive equal opportunities in terms of institutional capacity building or project-based started just on the last stage of the pre-accession period. The attention to the field of equal opportunities started (and financial resources allocation as well) from the EU, because of forthcoming Structural Funds. In this last stage, one of the priorities in the EU planning documents was to set-up the institutional framework for the implementation of the projects under European Social Funds, which requires inclusion of gender sensitive measures in all supported projects, and to set up framework for the EQUAL initiative and mitigation of gender (not only inequalities that are also managed under this fund). These priorities together with other dealings with social issues were included in the programme of Transition Facility, which is the instrument prepared for completion of the institutional building in the new Member States. Before this initiative we did not find any national development plan or strategic document within pre-accession instruments capturing equal opportunities in a comprehensive way. Generally speaking, the question of equal opportunities was opened only after completion of setting-up the new institutional framework during 1998 - 2003.

**Therefore, we recommend the current accession countries to include equal opportunities in the development plans, and national strategies from the beginning of the process. Ensuring gender balance**

**in all newly created institutions has to be a basic pre-condition for implementation of aquis or pre-accession instruments.**

**equal opportunity issues, and gender mainstreaming could provide assistance and consult national strategies in all stages of a project cycle.**

### **Failure at the project level**

The neglect of gender issues in the national planning documents was exaggerated at the project level. Due to lack of any indicators monitoring gender balance, and the impact of the project, these issues were not captured at the project level. It is also regrettable that during the five years of implementation of the pre-accession instruments, new project fiche with questions related to equal opportunities was included only in the last year of the programme.

**Therefore, it is necessary for both EU and national levels, to clearly stress importance of gender issues as a basic pillar of economic and social cohesion. As indicated in the completed surveys, there is a need for clear guidelines for project developers, submitters, and evaluators at national level informing how to deal with gender issues. Otherwise, inclusion of gender measures will be very formal and focusing on one or two indicators unable to capture the large scope of gender impacts within diverse projects.**

### **The EU Structural Funds – chance for improvement in the field of equal opportunities**

Structural Funds already caused some changes in 2002 within the national programmes and priorities; gender dimension was also included. However, it is not enough. To be able to ensure equal opportunity principle be implemented in the whole project-cycle, from preparation to conclusion, and monitoring of impacts, much more needs be done. This requires understanding equal opportunity as one of the priorities at national level, and at the level of all actors of institutional framework.

**The EU prioritizes the equal opportunities issue as one of its basic principles which should have a significantly positive impact at the national level. All actions need be done in synergy. Thus, co-operation of governmental and non-governmental institutions dealing with gender,**

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The aim of the **HBS** regional office in Warsaw has been to analyze and discuss the accession process from the perspective of gender issues and women's rights. The foundation is oriented towards democratization of Central Europe. It acts via involvement of civil society actors in political processes and stimulation of citizens of Central European societies to participate in EU referenda, public discussions of a new Constitutional Treaty for Europe etc. The foundation promotes national and international dialogues on "green" issues such as human rights, women's rights and environmental protection. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung also supports the Central European civil societies' use of instruments and funding opportunities that are at their disposal as citizens of new EU member states<sup>1</sup>.

The foundation's goals and tasks are based on the long-term co-operation with feminist projects in Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia. It supports joint international projects to allow for shared knowledge and experience among the organizations involved. One of the successful examples of joint work was the simultaneous campaign in all three countries focused on support to women's participation in the election to the European Parliament in 2004. Following this tradition, this Czech and Slovak joint initiative deals with the gender dimension of the EU pre-accession instruments.

**Aspekt** is feminist educational and publishing project, which has existed for 12 years. For that period of time we have published 21 issues of feminist cultural journal, every issue of which was devoted to special topic such as violence against women, female body, feminism, motherhood, patriarchy or human rights. Recently a feminist webzine ASPEKTin continues in the tradition set up by Aspekt magazine. From 1996 on Aspekt has published also books (66 different titles until now). Aspekt also maintains public library with basic feminist and gender specific literature. From 2000 information and documentation center provides students and researchers with outcomes of media monitoring and maintains a database of Slovak women's NGO's. Aspekt is active in many political and social activities, e.g. campaigns against violence against women, campaign for the public active women in politics, against the prohibition of abortion, initiatives in the feminist pedagogy etc.

Aspekt was involved in the preparation of ex-ante evaluation of one of the

themes of the EQAUL initiative in Slovakia. We coordinated the campaign about women's rights and the EU accession and the campaign to support women's participation in the European Parliament election in Slovakia. [www.aspekt.sk](http://www.aspekt.sk)

**Gender Studies, o.p.s. (GS)** is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to gathering and disseminating information about gender issues and women's rights both in the Czech Republic and around the world, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. GS performs the role of information, consultation and education centre in the area of women's and men's relations and their position in the society: in the labour market, politics, decision-making processes etc. Via specific projects, GS actively influences changes concerning the issues of equal opportunities for women and men in various areas, such as institutional mechanisms, media environment, women's political participation, ICT etc. GS's goals are to promote an understanding and tolerance of lifestyles that do not follow traditional patterns and to create a forum for discussion of social status and behavior of men and women in society. GS library operates an extensive collection of books, periodicals and multimedia; it is the largest library of its kind in the Czech Republic.

### Footnotes

1) [http://www.boell.de/asp/frameset\\_en.htm](http://www.boell.de/asp/frameset_en.htm)



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ISBN 80-86520-05-6