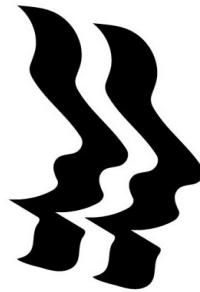


« *DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GENDERS* »



# Research Report

*“Gender Training in Europe”*

June 2006



**Socrates**  
Grundtvig

Project co-funded by the European Commission  
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## Content

1. A tool widely developed in Gender and development area	3
2. A theme without priority within the current European commission gender policy	4
3. Few projects of gender trainings for trainer developed within the different European programs	6
1.Community program on gender equality (2001-2006)	6
2.Grundtvig program	7
3.Other Programmes	9
4.The absence of an European unified professional profile of gender trainers	10
5. Perspective of the gender training tool within the European future gender strategy	12
European gender trainings approach: the persisting weaknesses....	13
A.Gender is still too often related to women's issues	13
The predominance of female trainers	15
The predominance of "sociological" and "work context" approaches	16
Few trainings focus on personal context and transformative approach	17
Transformative Gender trainings: a necessary tool to make gender policies a reality	19
References.....	21

The central aim of this research is to have a transversal reading on what is being developed in the gender training field, in particular in the specific area of gender trainings for trainers at the European level.

Through the analysis of the current European gender policies, programmes and actions the research focuses on the following questions:

- What place is made for gender training tool? What actions are being developed?
- Within the existing gender trainings, what dominant approaches are being used and what general tendencies can be highlighted?

# Gender trainings for trainers: what is being done?

## 1. A tool widely developed in Gender and development area

An important majority of the available documents and information on the gender trainings for trainers theme belongs to this field, gender inequalities being one of the primary obstacles to the realisation of human rights, development and poverty elimination.

Gender equality is an internationally agreed goal and the promotion of gender equality is a precondition for achieving sustainable social and economic development. All development cooperation projects must thus include a gender perspective and to reach this objective the field of gender trainings has been strongly developed these last 30 years.

The concept of gender trainings emerged in the middle of the 1980s to “teach” development, planners, policy makers and implementation staff to see and take into account the differential impact of development interventions on men and women.

Since then, and in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action commitments, there has been an important increase of demand for gender trainers and thus for gender trainings.

And consequently there has been an important development in many countries of gender trainers and gender training organisations and a prolific literature about this issue.

The sector of training of trainers on gender and development presents the specific characteristics to be deeply developed and to work on many networks. A lot of very efficient networks are indeed disseminating as theory as tools. It is the case for example for the network Gender at work<sup>1</sup> or INSTRAW<sup>2</sup>. All these organisations are now very well organized and many of them are very useful resources centres.

They offer an extensive database of gender trainings and training materials offered by international, governmental and non-governmental organizations on all of a wide range of gender issues (gender-based violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, gender-sensitive national planning and budgeting, health and education, gender and participation in agricultural development planning, gender and VIH, etc....)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.genderatwork.org/index.php/index.php/about/>

<sup>2</sup> INSTRAW - United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women  
<http://www.un-instraw.org/en/>

The materials - courses, workshops, online training courses and materials, toolkits, handbooks, guidelines, checklists, etc - are aimed at different stakeholders who are explicitly or implicitly involved in the struggle to achieve gender equality and empower women: policymakers in international and national organizations, governments, communities, non governmental organizations; practitioners, trainers, educators, journalists, advocates, women leaders, etc.

The context might not be the same as our developed countries. However, the prolific literature constitutes an important source to enrich this research.

## **2. A theme without priority within the current European commission gender policy**

The European commission's concern about gender equality appears since the Rome treaty but gender issues had been really taken into account with the apparition of the mainstreaming approach.

Gender mainstreaming is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men<sup>3</sup>. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men in order to re-address them if necessary.

The Commission first started to work on gender mainstreaming in the early 1990s, developing a more consistent approach following the UN Women's Conference held in Beijing in 1995 that established "gender mainstreaming" as the internationally agreed strategy to promote gender equality.

Since then, gender mainstreaming has steadily grown in importance and has a central place within the European Commission's Framework Strategy on gender equality 2001-2005 in which financial support is also available via an action programme.

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<sup>3</sup> See the European Commission definition : [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/gender\\_equality/gender\\_mainstreaming/general\\_overview\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/general_overview_en.html)

or the International Labour Organisation's Definition of Gender Mainstreaming: "*Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels.*")

This strategy includes mainstreaming and positive actions (their combination represents the so-called “Dual Approach”), in accordance with a positive legislation.

This European machinery gathers now ten directives, which have evolved during the past thirty years.

This legislation collectively covers veritable panoply of issues ranging from access to employment, working conditions, and remuneration, to occupational social security schemes, statutory social security schemes, self-employment, etc.

All among these priorities: between positive action and mainstreaming, the gender training as a tool to contribute to a better understanding and better communication between genders is never mentioned. Gender training should be indeed considered as one of the main tool to reduce inequalities and be clearly exposed as a priority in policies, programs, actions.

It is true that considerable progress has been achieved over the last thirty years, but there are still a lot of challenges facing the European countries today and European needs in term of gender trainings need further thoughts and debates.

Even if not clearly established as a priority, the European Commission nevertheless points out its importance and necessity in various documents. For example in “Promoting diversity bodies promoting diversity and combating discrimination in the European Union 21 Executive summary”, the European Commission gives recommendations concerning information, research and awareness building, and many of them focus on the importance of the training tool:

- *“Training should be used as a tool for changing discriminatory practices so that cases of discrimination are not repeated.*
- *Training material and training programmes should be developed (...)*
- *The institution should focus on training with a multiplier effect in order for the resources to be spent most effectively.”*

In spite of these recommendations few concrete actions are being developed.

### **3. Few projects of gender trainings for trainer developed within the different European programs**

In spite of this European willingness to develop the gender training area, the research done among the existing actions and programs showed little interest from European actors and the existence of only few dispersed actions.

At the moment of the research we found no program entirely dedicated to gender trainings conception and design and through the existing gender policy programs, it was never clearly mentioned as a main line of action.

Moreover, there was no information<sup>4</sup> about the available gender trainings in Europe, mainly because a database gathering gender trainings at a European level did not exist.

However, many European programs give the opportunity to develop and design such trainings.

#### **1. Community program on gender equality (2001-2006)**

The funding programme linked to the EU's Framework Strategy on Gender Equality for 2001-2005 (the programme has been extended until end-2006) develops 3 global objectives:

1. Promote and disseminate the values and practices underlying gender equality
2. Improve the understanding of issues related to gender equality, including direct and indirect gender discrimination and multiple discrimination against women, by evaluating the effectiveness of policies and practice through prior analysis, monitoring their implementation and assessing their effects
3. Develop the capacity of players to promote gender equality effectively, in particular through support for the exchange of information and good practice and networking at Community level

When in the third point the European Commission talk about developing “the capacity of players to promote gender equality effectively”, any allusion is done about gender training for trainers. It seems however an interesting and basic tool to improve this capacity of effective promotion of gender equality. In the same way, within the 5 fields funded by the program, any of them is specifically dedicated to the gender training area. It is also interesting to notice that under this program, gender training is not present neither within the

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<sup>4</sup> For this research, a request for information (entitled: Request information – gender trainings for trainer in European Union) has been submitted to the DG Employment and social affairs via email.

priorities established every year for the calls for proposal (equal pay in 2001, reconciliation of work and family life in 2002, gender balance in decision making in 2003, gender roles and stereotypes" in en 2004/2005)

In 2003, 2004, 2005, the program has been focusing on various themes, 2 of them could have can be connected to gender trainings.

- "The role of men in the promotion of gender equality, in particular the role of men and fathers in the reconciliation of work and private life"
- "Promoting change in gender roles and overcoming gender stereotypes"

A lot of the projects accepted, within the different priorities of the year have as objectives to create awareness material<sup>5</sup> (to think beyond gender roles and stereotypes, to promote participation of men and fathers in the work/life balance, etc...) and trainings or pedagogical material are being developed for policymakers in publics institutions, managers in private companies, or in education for educators and teachers but within all the projects approved under this program, none of them has specifically the purpose to create gender training for trainers.

The Programme is complementary to the other EU programmes and grants, which according to the European legislation shall equally aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women.

## 2. Grundtvig program

One of the 4 operational aims of the global programme established by the European Commission<sup>6</sup> is: "Contributing to improving the quality of teacher training relating to the persons involved in the teaching of adults".

With the Community Program on gender equality, the Grundtvig Program appears to be the perfect frame to develop training tools for gender trainers and the European Commission showed the clear willingness to introduce and to develop the gender dimension into the program field. According to a European Commission evaluation of the program "Grundtvig" was performing well in this field."<sup>7</sup>

This same evaluation note that each year, "a number of projects focus directly on gender-related issues, bringing together adult educators to exchange innovative methods and

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<sup>5</sup> See for example the project "Looking in a different way :formulating and trying out processes, methodologies and tools for training in the gender approach." at

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/emplweb/gender\\_equality/project\\_fr.cfm?id=195](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/gender_equality/project_fr.cfm?id=195)

<sup>6</sup> web site of Grundtvig program:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/grundtvig/overview\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/grundtvig/overview_en.html)

<sup>7</sup> idem

materials on such issues as empowering women in decision-making positions to do European women's studies, addressing the learning needs of migrant fathers, or simply helping people 'put on new (gendered) glasses'." <sup>8</sup>

Analysing closely the different projects accepted the last years within the 4 types of activities<sup>9</sup>, none of them have the creation of special gender training for trainers: as a main objective

*Grundtvig 1: European cooperation projects, training courses and thematic seminars in adult education*

⇒ In 2005, on 107 projects approved, only the project "Dialogue between Genders" dealt with gender training.

⇒ In 2004, on 84 projects approved, none of them deal with gender trainings.

⇒ In 2003, the project "Gender equality creates democracy"<sup>10</sup> (2003-2006) appears to be the only one relevant as one of its outputs is the creation of a course for gender trainers. This project mixes gender issues and women rights. The proposed training addresses sociological gender issues.

*Grundtvig 2: learning partnership (small-scale co-operation activities between organisations working in the field of adult learning)<sup>11</sup>*

⇒ In 2004, 297 projects in different themes areas have been approved, 3 of them dealt with gender issues but mainly with gender mainstreaming implementation.

1. RealGeM - Gender meets Reality (Comparing experiences and methods of implementation of gender mainstreaming)
2. Challenging actions in gender mainstreaming - strategies and tools for implementing gender mainstreaming in Europe
3. Gender Training Methods Learning Partnership (creation of a compendium that will give a synthetic view on the state of the art concerning gender training methods).

⇒ In 2005, 392 projects have been accepted. 2 of them deal mainly with gender training issue.

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<sup>8</sup> "Adult learning — on the road to Europe Thematic trends in Socrates-Grundtvig European cooperation projects and networks", 2005.

<sup>9</sup> See the different compendia of Grundtvig projects at :

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/grundtvig/info\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/grundtvig/info_en.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gender-equalitywebinfo.it/index.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Compared to the transnational co-operation projects, which are product-oriented, the learning partnerships focus more on process, and aim to broaden the participation of smaller organisations that want to include European co-operation in their education activities.



1. Equ@lang (to create a learning network for the use of non sexist language in primary and secondary education and to train adults (parents, teachers and educational staff) in the use of non sexist language)
2. Gender T.I.D.E. – Gender Training for Information and Documentation Experts (to develop new methodologies to train people working in women centres and women organisations. The final goal is the creation of a new curriculum for experts in the field of documentation with a gender orientation).

Grundtvig 3: Course Mobility for training of educational staff

In the course database 2006-2007, if searching with “gender training” as title key word, any course appears.

Using “gender” as search criterion, just 2 trainings are being proposed of a total of 679: “Gender Education – violence prevention” and “Thematic conference get-in: gender, ethnicity, integration through international school projects”

Grundtvig 4 : - Networks (thematic and projects network) between the various actors involved in adult learning

⇒ In 2003-2005, the development of a virtual Gender Training is one of the activities undertaken by the Grundtvig-4 network OASIS.

This network is connected with the “Gendercheck project” which offers the possibility to study basic information about Gender aspects in didactic methods, didactic material or about Gender budgeting and the possibility to put gender policies into practice, to discuss experiences and results with the OASIS-partners and other experts in Europe. Unfortunately the web site<sup>12</sup> is not updated.

If the Grundtvig program appears to be the most suitable frame to develop gender training activities and actions, this program is not used to develop gender trainings for trainers.

### 3. Other Programs

In addition to the EU’s Gender Equality policy, several other programmes and initiatives in the employment, social, education and culture policy areas also support projects and organisations promoting equality between women and men and could logically treat gender training for trainer.

⇒ *EQUAL– promoting equal opportunities in the job market*

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.oasis-europa.org/home.html>

An important source of funding in employment is the EQUAL Initiative financed through the European Social Fund. The promotion of equality between women and men is integrated in the different themes of the programme as well as being targeted through specific actions.

None of the EQUAL projects approved since the beginning of the program deal specifically with gender training for trainer, specifically in its gender equality axe.

However a lot of projects work partly on gender awareness and develop awareness activities.

EQUAL Program establishes as well various European thematic groups, constituted by different European partners. One of them, the ETG 4 (European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities/gender mainstreaming) develops a European reflection on Equal Opportunities and its overall purpose is to promote a "European Model of Comprehensive Approaches to Equal Opportunities". None its works addresses more specifically gender trainings theme and specific skills needed or existing methodologies<sup>13</sup>.

⇒ *DAPHNE II programme to combat violence against children, young people and women.*

The European DAPHNE programme is a crucial instrument to combat violence against women. It gives financial support mainly to NGOs helping victims of violence or working on preventive measures to combat violence.

None of the approved projects deal with gender trainings.

#### **4. The absence of an European unified professional profile of gender trainers**

What skills does a gender trainer need? Are there any established criteria to constitute the basic skills required to be able to train afterwards?

This profile does not exist at a European Union Level. This is not the same at a national level in some European countries.

However, it is not officially included in national gender regulation of the majority of the European countries. Any of them of these national policies focus on developing gender trainings or criteria for gender trainers as priority tools.<sup>14</sup>

It is again in the cooperation for development area where the reflection is the more advanced.

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<sup>13</sup> Available at : [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/activities/etg4\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/activities/etg4_en.cfm)

<sup>14</sup> National machinery, action plans and gender mainstreaming in the Council of Europe member states since the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995),2004.

For example, the Swiss Agency for development established its own criteria for gender competence of trainers:

*“(...) Trainers should have acquired gender skills at both practical and theoretical levels. They should be aware of their own «Doing Gender», as well as that of the participants. They will know the areas of conflict that can arise between and within homogeneous- or mixed-sex trainers’ teams and participant groups, and they will be able to intervene in a gender-neutral way in problematic group processes.*

*They are aware of their example-setting role.*

*They deal subtly with the different context-specific role concepts of women and men, while avoiding gender-related references, generalisations and culturalisation. In general, they are aware of the ambivalence between the perception of gender-specific behaviour and the attribution of such behaviour patterns to one of the sexes, and draw participants’ attention to that.”<sup>15</sup>*

At a more global level, UNESCO in collaboration with IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) proposes to trainers who are already engaged in gender trainings or who want to become a gender trainer an e-learning gender training kit.<sup>16</sup>

Through this kit, they receive an accreditation as a master gender trainer.

This gender training kit offers material on gender and development drawn from the web and audio/video/print materials. There are seven gender training modules in the kit. They are designed in self-instructional format and include lessons, self assessment and tests for evaluation:

Module 1: Dimensions of Empowerment and Gender Training

Module 2: Gender-sensitive Policies, Interventions and Institutions

Module 3: Media, Methods and Approaches in Gender Training

Module 4: Education and Research

Module 5: Leadership

Module 6: Governance

Module 7: Entrepreneurship

The content of these modules is not accessible directly, so it is difficult to have a clear idea of the criteria established by UNESCO for “master gender trainer”. But the personal dimension does not seem to be integrated as one of the central elements.

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<sup>15</sup> GENDER & TRAINING: Mainstreaming gender equality and the planning, realisation and evaluation of training programmes SDC Swiss Agency for development and cooperation, 2005

<sup>16</sup>See the web site: [http://www.ignou.ac.in/igun\\_gentr/index.asp](http://www.ignou.ac.in/igun_gentr/index.asp)

## 5. Perspective of the gender training tool within the European future gender strategy

### ⇒ *A new frame*

In April 2006 the European Commission presented the future development for an equality policy between women and men to tackle the remaining challenges for gender equality.

Gender inequality in the EU will be indeed tackled by 21 specific activities over the next five years, which are outlined in a new gender equality roadmap published by the European Commission.

The roadmap sets out six priority areas for action in the period 2006-2010:

- Achieving equal economic independence for women and men;
- Enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life;
- Promoting equal participation of men and women in decision-making;
- Eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking;
- Eliminating gender stereotypes in society and;
- Promoting gender equality outside the EU.

### ⇒ *A new funding programme*

Gender equality will form one of five areas covered by the new PROGRESS Programme funding European social policy from 2007 to 2013. The PROGRESS Programme will take over the work of the Gender Equality Programme. It will finance studies, awareness raising campaigns and the exchange of information and good practice; monitoring and evaluation exercises and networking initiatives. The section devoted to gender equality is expected to have a budget of EUR 50.3 million over seven years and support 3 different type of action:

- Analytical and mutual learning activities:
- This type of actions will cover the carrying out of studies, surveys, evaluations, peer reviews, the elaboration of guides and reports and the development of common methodologies and indicators.
- Awareness and Dissemination activities
- This type of actions will cover among others the organisation of conferences in support to the implementation of Community law and policy objectives, media campaigns, events, training seminars...
- Support to main actors

- This type of actions will cover the financing of key EU networks acting in at least one of the section of the Framework programme, the funding of networks of experts and institutional bodies, EU level observatories, training seminars for legal practitioners etc...

Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL  
Establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS  
(presented by the Commission) ( SEC(2004) 936 }

The last two points of these new priorities constitute an ideal frame to develop a concrete work on gender training for trainers needs.

Moreover, the Commission proposed to set up a European Institute for Gender Equality, which should become an important tool for the dissemination of information, the exchange of good practices and the development of methodological tools for the promotion of gender mainstreaming.” The Gender Institute should be operational by 1 January 2007.

## **European gender trainings approach: the persisting weaknesses**

### **A. Gender is still too often related to women’s issues**

Often, the gender theme remains associated to women’s issues and the majority of organisations working in gender training area are women or feminist oriented. The necessary implication of men that supposes the dialogue between genders is hardly mentioned.

Gender equality is not only a matter for women. Gender equality is an objective for the whole of society; it is a matter for both men and women. Gender is relational.

To focus on women only is inadequate. A better understanding of men’s perceptions and positions is essential to be able to transform efficiently the existing situation.

Therefore, in future men should also take part in the gender training area more actively than at present.

Improving the lower status of women and fighting against women discrimination are of course an essential part of promotion of gender equality. But many men, too, suffer from the

expectations of stereotypes of masculinity which are directed at them. Masculinities need to be explored and a reflection needs to be run on socially constructed 'ways of being a man'.

However, an evolution has taken place the last 30 years.

The first sign this evolution and extension of the women issue to the gender one came first from the cooperation for development area.

The Women in Development (WID) approach is the first strategy used to address gender issue in development. This approach focused on women and was concerned that women be included in development.

The evaluation of the progress shed light on the limitations of this approach and highlighted in particular the need to focus on issues of power and control as key to challenging the unequal power relationships between men and women.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach evolved as an alternative and complementary approach. The GAD approach is based on the need to analyse, understand and address the root causes of gender inequality, it emphasises the interdependence and complementarities of male and female roles and therefore the need for transformation of gender relations.

However, this shift in emphasis from Women in Development to Gender and Development has not led to recognition within policy of the need to understand the position of women and men.

With a few notable exceptions, we can notice that men do not explicitly feature a lot in gender policies, programs and actions.

It's more obvious in cooperation for development area but this tendency can be noticed as well in the European ambit.

Where men do appear, they are generally seen as obstacles to women: men must surrender their positions of dominance for women to become empowered.

Men and masculinities is a relatively new area in gender issue. Reflections and researches need to be done about the cultural conceptions of masculinity and roles of men. The dominant definition of 'what it is to be a man?' needs to be challenged.

Gender research, gender policy, and gender trainings need to contribute to this debate.

## - The predominance of female trainers

One aspect shed to light as well in this research is the majority of female gender trainers comparing to male gender trainers.

The effectiveness of male gender trainer in breaking male resistance during gender seems however obvious, male gender trainers have indeed a strategic role to transform attitudes of other men resistant to gender issue:

*“The aspect of ‘transformative effect’ is derived largely from the process through which male gender trainers induce distinctive change reaction among mostly male trainees in the learning process. It is based on the understanding that for there to be a transformation in gender relations in the wider society the inhibiting behaviour and attitude towards the subject of gender equally must change as well. Such a change is no more measurable in a training situation than “simply a flip of mind” or attitude. It is manifested when the presence and facilitation of a male trainer induces and fosters positive posturing in the trainees than would that of a female trainer. (...) Men’s resistance to women trainers is composed of a multitude of positions rooted in deeply ingrained cultural principles that have created and fastened mans voice as the legitimate” (...).<sup>17</sup>*

Men resistance is mainly due to a deep misunderstanding of the gender concept.

*“The burden of ignorance as to the true meaning of gender that participants carry into the training situation may be fatal to the effectiveness of female trainers. Just by flashing participants’ fears and expectations, one is able to see how the fear of being told about “women’s subordination” or women’s oppression or “Beijing Domination” abounds. Such fears are indications of the degree to which the concept of gender is misconstrued to mean women’s issues only. They also serve as bases for the mental pictures trainees’ form of the trainers before they are seen. Thus you find most participants coming to gender training expecting to be trained by women.*

*The presence of male trainers provides the initial proof that their fears might just be unfounded. The find their fears and preconceived mental pictures ambushed and it is at this point that the trainer can tactfully clarify the concept that embraces the concern of men as well as those of women. (...)<sup>18</sup>*

The mixed gender training team has been considered as an essential and an integral part of the methodological choices in gender training area.

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<sup>17</sup> Gender training with men: experiences and reflections. Milton Obote Joshua (published in: Sweetman, C. (ed.) Men’s Involvement in Gender and Development Policy and Practice: Beyond Rhetoric. Oxfam Working Paper Series, Oxford, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Id.

- **The predominance of “sociological” and “work context” approaches**

The big majority of the existing gender trainings are situated in an academic social science context.

Most of the time, trainees are being equipped with the analytical and conceptual skills needed to understand gender issues in a context of social and economic issues.

The dominant discourse is indeed mainly based on the objective to “improve”, to “sharpen” the participant’s “understanding”, as well as to give people a “common language and shared understanding” and to “increase” knowledge in:

- ⇒ Gender and related concepts (difference sex/gender, gender mainstreaming, gender equality, equity, parity/gaps, etc...)
- ⇒ Social construction of gender and socialization process. How gender relations and attributes are socially created, constructed, maintained and reinforced by cultural systems and institutions. How it affects ones behaviour in a society
- ⇒ Historical perspective of gender and equality approaches (to identify key structures and mechanisms that steer and coordinate the global movement towards gender equality etc.)

This common and shared understanding is seen as a precondition to then introduce gender tools for gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, work plan, evaluation, etc...

Most of the time, s the professional work context is addressed, the tool provided are to make participants able to mainstream gender and to apply gender analyses in their own professional contexts.

This aspect is underlined by only few available evaluations of gender trainings. Any question is personal oriented but more linked with practical aspects (training program, length of the work shop, group dynamic, etc...) and work implementation (“ Do you feel confident that you will be able to effectively integrate gender into your work?” etc.)



- **Few trainings focus on personal context and transformative approach**

Do we reach a consensus when talking about gender training? Does a consensual definition exist?

The gender issue is a complex and sensitive field of work, conceptually as well as methodologically. Gender is indeed a composite idea for which no single definition is possible.

In a general acceptance, training is a transformative process which aims to increase knowledge in a particular field and to develop awareness and understanding as a way to change behaviour. Training is ultimately supposed to offer new personal and professional knowledge, skills and competencies to achieve that.

Questions that immediately arise here are: What extent and meaning is implied by “offering skills” about gender issues? and Is it enough to offer gender skills?

This point indicates the different levels of “personal transformation” that can be achieved through a gender training.

Gender training can be seen as a practical tool for analysing gender differentiation and provide adequate knowledge regarding major factors that influence and are responsible for maintaining or changing the structure of gender differentiation.<sup>19</sup>

The objective’s descriptions of the majority of the gender trainings stop their ambition at this stage: to get aware of what gender issues are and how gender influences our everyday actions, as well as power relations in every area of life as well as how gender discrimination is accepted as normal.

But going further, gender training, to be more than simple gender awareness, should have also the objective not only to give knowledge and to raise awareness, but to change skills and behaviours but as well as to make the person able to implement sustainable changes when dealing with all personal and professional kind of situations.

A joint and accepted global definition could finally be: *‘Gender training...is a tool, a strategy, a space for reflection, a site of debate and possibly for struggle. Gender training is a transformative process.’*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Basic Framework and strategy for gender training”, B R SIWAL

<sup>20</sup> Macdonald, 1994:31

Gender training is then a *“catalytic process in the social transformation for gender equality at the individual, institutional and community levels”*.<sup>21</sup>

But it is very unusual to find allusion to the personal dimension. Improving “awareness” and equipping participants with gender knowledge are mostly supposed to be sufficient to make participants able to reduce the gender bias.

Participants’ fears and expectations reveal this fear to not enter a process of transformation for example in the case of : *“to learn but not to practice back at home.”*<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, the personal development dimension is consequently an area still quite virgin in reflection, analyse and research.

Among the prolific analyses about gender training and development, hardly any of them focus on the real impact and personal transformation of trainers or trainees. In any of the website of the major organisations and networks (at a European level or in gender and development area) a space for trainers is available to share their experience and difficulties and it has been impossible to find reference to personal development.

Some authors however underline the importance to involve participants with their own biographies and positions in order to be able to respond to their needs:

*“Gender is not an extraneous body of knowledge but is ‘lived’ by everyone throughout their lives. There are no ‘experts’ on gender, and no right answers about how people should live their lives. The basic material on which training should be based is therefore the experiences which participants bring with them. The purpose of having gender workshops is merely to bring this experience to the fore, to encourage people to consider what it means for them, and to share information about how others elsewhere have dealt with, analysed, or tried to change the gender dynamics that they live and work with.”*<sup>23</sup>

It is not easy to find analyse going deeper and very few authors develop the following reflection:

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<sup>21</sup> Gender training with men: experiences and reflections” Milton Obote Joshua (published in: Sweetman, C. (ed.) Men's Involvement in Gender and Development Policy and Practice: Beyond Rhetoric. Oxfam Working Paper Series, Oxford, 2001.)

<sup>22</sup> “ Report on the Gender sensitisation and planning workshop for male trainers in combating gender based violence in UNHCR Programmes from Guinea, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Ghana. Riviera Hotel Conakry-Guinea 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2003.” [http://www.femnet.or.ke/documents/unhcr\\_workshop.pdf](http://www.femnet.or.ke/documents/unhcr_workshop.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> “Gender training in Acord: Progress report and critical assessment.” Judy El-Bushra RAPP, London, October 1996

*“In a conventional training methodology, the trainer needs to be merely an expert on the content and only the cognitive development of the trainer is emphasized, and the self and the sensory/emotional development of the trainer are not even mentioned. However, the development of the self of the trainer is extremely important. (...) Trainers should be able to connect effectively at an emotional level with the people with who they are working. This is possible only if the trainers themselves are willing to look at their own blocks, attitudes/biases and understand where they are coming from. Being aware of and working on personal attitudes and behaviours is vital in changing gender relations. As such self-awareness formed a critical component of the workshop.”<sup>24</sup>*

**- Transformative Gender trainings: a necessary tool to make gender policies a reality**

In spite of the willingness since several decades to address gender inequalities, evaluations of gender mainstreaming have mentioned repeatedly and consistently that policy commitments to gender equality “evaporate” in planning and implementation processes, with the result that impact on women’s and men’s lives is very limited and that inequalities keep existing maybe in a more subtle format.

One main cause comes from the extent to which gender mainstreaming, as an organisational strategy to promote gender equality, will be formulated and then effectively implemented depending on the understanding, skills and commitment of the staff involved in management and implementation.

To achieve the objectives expressed in policy and planning documents without significant resources being devoted to developing staff commitment, understanding and skills is unrealistic.

It is the case in cooperation for development area:

*“Most development organisations in the north and south have not yet built significant staff capacity in gender mainstreaming. As a result, only a small minority of staff have the level of understanding, skills and commitment to act effectively and consistently in line with gender equality policy commitments. (...) Staff responsible for promoting attention to gender issues is frequently under-resourced.”*

It is the same situation in the European Union and in particular at the European Commission level:

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<sup>24</sup> Post Press Release. Training of trainers on Gender and Development. 11 February 2003. Reported by Sarah Siddiq.

*“Gender expertise is still staffed primarily through external consultants or detached national experts. At both headquarters and delegation-level, there is a lack of staff with gender expertise and responsibility. (...) Rather, staff members report being overwhelmed by new responsibilities, with insufficient training and resources. (...)*

*Interviews with European Commission staff members reveal a huge range of competency regarding gender. A handful of people feel confident, but most staff members feel that gender is not an area they understand. At both headquarters and in delegations, there is not enough gender training, and what training that exists is inadequate. In recent research, one official said that he had not received any gender training in his three years with the European Commission; another said training did not take place in the delegation at all.’<sup>25</sup>*

The breaking of the persistence of gender inequalities requires interventions on many fronts and levels.

The uncertain impact of equal opportunities European policies and as a result the failure to transform women’s and men’s position led to question the capacity of transformation of the different agents committed in gender equality field.

Gender training has the big potential to be an important instrument of change and has to be thought as a crucial tool to overcome the gap between the demand of official gender policies and reality. Gender training is indeed an essential part of both breaking and making new borders within the gender system in the European society.

But developing appropriate understanding, commitment and capacity, as well as addressing issues of gender inequality demands for a transformative process.

It is not enough for a trainer to be gender aware. The way of training in gender issues cannot at all correspond with a traditional transmission of authoritative knowledge from trainer to participants. On the contrary, gender training has to create opportunities for reflection and analysis of one's own personal experiences, attitudes regarding gender issues, enriched by new perspectives.

Gender training and personal development have to be thought as the key elements to impulse a real strategy to deal with gender inequalities at source and to make finally the objectives of gender equality within the reach of all the different agents committed.

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<sup>25</sup> “Gender in the European Union: Everywhere and nowhere.” By Genevieve Painter, Gender Officer - OneWorld Action & Karin Ulmer, Gender Officer – APRODEV October 2002  
<http://www.eurosur.org/wide/EU/Trade/GM.htm>

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