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GOING FOR GENDER BALANCE

A GUIDE

FOR BALANCING

DECISION-MAKING

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Good Practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making

for

Division Equality between Women and Men
Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe

Alison E. Woodward
Centrum voor Vrouwenstudies
Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Pleinlaan 2
B 1050 Brussels, Belgium
aewoodwa@vub.ac.be

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PREFACE

Thanks to international agreements and local actions, the level of gender balance in many areas of decision-making in member countries of the Council of Europe has improved dramatically in the last 25 years. Reports from the Council of Europe have been very important in these efforts. Yet, progress has been uneven. Some member states¹ have undergone radical transformations in their structures of decision-making or economies, while others have encountered road blocks. Parity in decision-making still remains a distant dream almost everywhere. Continued sharing of experiences in attempting to move the goal posts in decision-making closer to parity can strengthen the resolve of activists. It provides positive evidence of the benefits of gender balance for those who might still have doubts. Novel efforts across the member countries are a vital source of inspiration for actors in the entire spectrum of social decision-making.

One of the problems of activism and action research is that action and results are much more important than documentation. ‘Research’ about gender balance in social decision-making is carried out throughout Europe in settings ranging from universities to the work rooms of women’s councils in school basements. Across Europe, actors in sectors ranging from government to trade unions are working to bring about a better gender balance in decision-making. Both men and women have shared in this mission. Sometimes someone puts together a few pages about a project which is disseminated as a kind of grey document among enthusiasts, but accessing this material in another country and in another language is often an impossible mission. For newcomers there are always lots of questions about what can be done, and what the best ways are to do it. Hence this short and hopefully inspirational handbook.

Europeans can be grateful that international organisations such as the Council of Europe motivate efforts to popularise and circulate news about successful and original ideas. This stimulates both experienced and novice actors to find new approaches to further move to a world where women are truly recognised as holding up half the sky.

This guidebook is one link in a chain of shared ventures and only a tiny new step among the many that could be taken. Yet every time a new step is taken, the point of departure is different. Today, the realms of decision-making that form realistic targets for change are conceived of in much broader terms than 25 years ago. Gender balance is not only about getting more of the under-represented sex into all areas of decision-making, but also about making balanced groups work more effectively, and maintaining gender balance over time. At issue are not only the formal positions of elected seats within democracy, but the entire framework of social and economic decision-making.

Working for gender balance requires examining the inner dynamics of decision-making organisations as well as the external efforts to affect the context of decision-making. In this booklet we concentrate on the following areas:

¹ Member states as at April 2001: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

- Internally we look at efforts to improve gender balance in highest levels of *organisation* in political parties, public administration, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations. How are organisations in these sectors addressing their own internal organisational questions?
- Achieving balance at the top of these sectors often requires changes in public attitudes. We have therefore, where relevant or illuminating, also considered the activities of actors such as political parties, national governments, and non-governmental and voluntary associations in attempting to influence the general societal context to be more supportive of gender balance.

The dynamics of decision-making in the business sector operate under conditions that are scarcely comparable with non-profit sectors. Further the business sector is relatively impervious to public and political demands. Thus we have excluded them from this brief guidebook. Nonetheless, some of the reflections on the dynamics of organisational structure will doubtless be relevant for this sector as well.

In this report we select a few from the myriad examples of projects for gender balance. We are extremely grateful to all the informants who helped us to select and document the interesting ideas in this collection. People involved in social change are usually overworked and over committed, and those who took time to help in making this brochure both within the Council of Europe and in the member states are gratefully acknowledged. We particularly want to thank the staff of the Division Equality between Women and Men of the Directorate General of Human Rights at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg including Olöf Olafsdóttir, Karen Palisser, Amanda Raif and Elin Junesjö, and the authors who have worked on earlier Council of Europe reports with a special mention for Else Skjøsberg. Without the research efforts of Tove Samzelius Jönsson producing this guide in a short time frame would have been impossible. Her diverse linguistic talents and persistent and dedicated interviewing were vital to the completion of this version. Thanks are also due for the support of Vesalius College of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, the Marie-Jahoda Chair at Ruhr-Universität Bochum and to the knowledgeable colleagues at the Gender and Policy group of the VUB Centre for Women's Studies including Machteld de Metsenaere, Petra Meier and Karen Celis.

A. Introduction: Another guide to getting women into decision-making?

What changed the most in the last fifty years in the Council of Europe member states is the position of women. What we in Europe have experienced in gender relations is the most revolutionary transformation in social relations in the history of human kind. Most people in the richest countries now think that gender equality issues are solved, or at least don't see them as particularly problematic.¹

Indeed, much has altered at all levels in European society. Member countries have now had female leaders in formerly inconceivable positions from Minister of Defence to Prime Minister, and even ministerial cabinets sometimes come close to gender balance. Visibly, women are making important societal decisions. That this change has come about has been the result of social action and concerted strategies on the part of women and men who think gender balance in decision-making is essential for democracy and for the future.

However, social decision-making is not confined to the halls of parliament. The progress across Europe in bringing women into decision-making has been highly uneven and not all sectors have been equally flexible in transforming to new patterns of gender equality. Political decision-making, which is the most visible sector, has been the one which has seen the most dramatic change, but the further we move from arenas of democratic control, the lower the level of gender balance in most countries. International comparison has made abundantly clear that different arenas for social decision-making are moving towards gender balance at different speeds.

Networking and sharing experience have been crucial for active citizens hoping to change gender balance in decision-making. The work of other women and men shows first of all that change is possible, and second of all, that there are many ways to stimulate change and raise public awareness about the necessity of gender equality. International organisations and groups of women's networks have been instrumental in bringing ideas and smart practices together and disseminating them to publics outside the local range.² These guides, produced at national, regional and international levels, all aim to stimulate others to take action, and fulfil the agreements taken by the international community to empower women and bring them into an equal role in the decision-making processes.

So why yet another such guide? First of all, most of the colourful examples come primarily from one sector – that of politics. Political organisations were among the first to be challenged by the women's movement. Many people forget that other sectors of social decision-making must also change. This guidebook focuses on changing the organisational cultures in groups that are fundamental to the selection of women decision-makers. It looks not only at the better

1 European Commission. 1999. "Eurobarometer 25th Anniversary Report." Brussels: European Commission Directorate General X.

2 In each section, a few additional readings are suggested including guides and surveys of interesting projects.

known sector of political decision-making, but also at other organisations important in social decision-making. Because of their 'social ambitions' these types of organisations, by virtue of their very mission, should be susceptible to the arguments of human rights and social justice that underwrite demands that decision-making reflect gender balance. These organisations are less visible to public scrutiny, and comparative studies are less frequent, but a balanced voice is just as important. Further, even in political decision-making, which is the most transformed sector, much more remains to be done. Inventive approaches that suit the new situations of societies in transition as well as sectors where international networks are less extensive are especially needed. Fresh ideas can lead to happy cross fertilizations and new initiatives.

Second, while many international surveys provide brief mentions of a multitude of initiatives, there is a continuing need for more information on the actual practicalities of putting through gender balance initiatives. This guide goes into deeper detail about a small number of events to provide insights into what actually has been done and how it was achieved and what sorts of roadblocks needed to be overcome. This should give practitioners and activists a more realistic insight into the particularities of gender balance actions. The guide aims at providing information presented in an accessible language to reach a public beyond the gender specialists. Men and women with varying knowledge and levels of gender awareness and gender analysis skills need to know about the range of possibilities available.

1. Why more women in all fora for decision-making? Reasons to continue to work for gender balance

Although activists working on women in decision-making usually have a commitment to the issue based on a complex analysis of the origins of gender inequality and its contemporary structural forms, it is useful to keep in mind a few strong arguments for continuing efforts. The idea that gender equality is already achieved is rather widely held among leaders. This should be countered. Four major arguments provide convincing ammunition.

- First, member countries of the Council of Europe have agreed to struggle for increased gender equality. This is documented in international, national and sectorial accords.
- Secondly gender equality is related to fundamental notions about the quality of social justice, human rights and the nature of democracy.
- Third, there are strong empirical indications that the inclusion of both sexes in policy making leads to better policy making that better fits a diverse citizenry.
- Finally gender balance leads to the introduction of forgotten and/or new issues on the policy agenda.

The first two arguments put moral force and structural backbone into work for gender balance, while the second two provide the 'business case'. It is socially and economically profitable to work for gender balance. There is a competitive advantage to utilizing the capacities of women in the public sector. As the Declaration of Athens (1992) proclaimed,

“women represent half the potential talents and skills of humanity and their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for society as a whole.”¹

i. International agreements

a. The United Nations

A fundamental reason for continued effort to stimulate action around women in decision-making is the continuously renewed international commitment to improved results. The strongest international statement of the fundamental need for gender balance in decision-making thus far has been the *1995 Beijing Platform for Action*. Its commitment to the empowerment of women is based on the conviction that:

§13. Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace. (United Nations: The Beijing Declaration 1995)

The Platform for Action explicitly aims for a 50-50 gender balance in all areas of society, and its analysis places full participation in decision-making in the foremost role. This is one of the most important of a long line of international and national engagements to raise the percentage of women in important decision-making fora.² The basic mission statement of the Platform is that policy should be made with the full participation of women and result in programmes that foster the empowerment and advancement of women. Parity in decision-making is the fundamental underpinning of virtually every recommendation in the Platform for Action (Celis, Meier, and Woodward, 1999).

b. Europe

• *Council of Europe*

The Council of Europe’s 43 member states make a much broader membership base than the European Union. The Organisation aims to promote democracy, and sees equality as a fundamental human right. The Declaration on Equality of Women and Men (1988) states that sex-related discrimination is a hindrance to the recognition, enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The first Equality Committee was set up in 1979, and in 1992 it became a Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men attached to the Directorate of Human Rights. It was in the Council of Europe that the concept of parity democracy was created³ and the Organisation stands behind the task of stimulating members to

1 Declaration signed by the female ministers of European Union member states in Athens at the first European Summit on Women in Decision-making, 3 November 1992.

2 For a review of the legal framework of the commitment of the Council of Europe to gender equality as the ‘equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres in public and private life’ (Council of Europe 1998:11), see for example Council of Europe. 2000b. *National Machinery, Action Plans and Gender Mainstreaming in the Council of Europe Member States since the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995)*. 18 September 2000 ed. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Directorate General of Human Rights or Council of Europe 2000a. *Positive Action in the Field of Equality Between Women and Men: Final Report of the Group of Specialists on Positive Action in the Field of Equality between Women and Men (EG-S-PA)*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Directorate General of Human Rights, Division Equality between Women and Men.

3 See Group of Specialists on Equality and Democracy: Final Report of Activities, 1995. ISBN 92-871-2977-0.

work to achieve effective equality between men and women. Gender balance is seen as a *sine qua non* for genuine democracy. This is underwritten in the Declaration on Equality between Women and Men as a Fundamental Criterion for Democracy, adopted at the 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Men and Women (Istanbul, 1997).

Governments and political parties can play a key role in actions to promote the role of women in politics. In its Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1413 of 1999 the Council reaffirms its commitment to equal representation in political and public life. It notes that despite continued work and international commitment, 'little progress has been made in the member states of the Council of Europe' and recommends a number of specific actions so that members may achieve an equal representation of men and women in both politics and public life.¹ The Council's work has emphasized the partnership between the sexes both in public and private. This can lead to advancements in life quality for all.²

- *The European Union*

The European Union has had a long term concern with gender inequality. It explicitly and directly addressed the imbalance in decision-making beginning in the early 90s with the European expert network on Women in Decision-Making (1992-96) which spurred the first relatively sophisticated comparative monitoring of the relative number of women in a wide range of important social decision-making sectors (finance, politics, health care, justice)³ and resulted in the establishment of the European Database for Women in Decision-Making which monitors the changing fates of gender balance in political decision-making.⁴ The Finnish presidency at the end of 1999 recommended further that standard statistics be gathered on nine fundamental areas of decision-making on a regular basis, providing one important monitoring mechanism to spur progress and this commitment has been followed up by France and Sweden. One of the main goals of the Medium-Term Community Action Programme of 1996-2000 was the maintenance of its commitment to improving gender balance in decision-making through programmatic actions (European Commission Employment and Social Affairs Interim report:1999). Candidates who hope to join the EU are expected to enact the EU legislation on equal opportunities and adopt the EU goals for improving gender balance in their countries. Thus substantial effort is needed to develop and translate programmes of action to the specific needs of European countries in transformation, with their own unique histories of gender relations. Declarations signed in Athens (1992) and in Paris (April 17 1999) repeat the goal of balance in decision-making fora.

Within the social dimensions of the European Union Structural Funds and employment policies, commitment and arguments have been mustered to increase women in management functions. Projects were initiated under the New Opportunities for Women programme to

1 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1413 §11. Adopted 22 June 1999 19th sitting.

2 'Equality and Democracy: Utopia or Challenge' Council of Europe Conference, 1995 Strasbourg. See also Report of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Explanatory memorandum Paul Staes 26 May 1999.

3 European Commission. 1997. *Gender, Power and Change in Health Institutions of the European Union*. Vol. CE-07-97-507-EN-C. Brussels: European Commission DG-V, European Commission. 1998. *Women and decision-making in the judiciary in the European Union*. Vol. CE-17-98-992-EN-C. Brussels: European Commission DG-V; European Commission. 1999. *Women in Decision-Making in Finance*. Vol. CE-V/2-99-006-EN-C. Brussels: European Commission DGV (also available electronically).

4 The web-site <http://www.db-decision.de/> provides the most recent figures of women in elected office and includes a report on the situation in the banking and finance sector.

provide arguments and strategies for ending vertical segregation in higher decision-making among employers and employees' interest groups. The European Trade Union Confederation offices have long had an expert on gender policy, and argue that unions should look within their own organisation at the upper levels to monitor decision-making and representation of all members.

ii. National commitments

Governmental commitments sometimes go beyond the international agreements pleading for better balance in decision-making. Most European national states have also adopted policies with various levels of commitment to gender equality ranging from statements of principle to changes in the national constitution aimed at increasing the number of women in decision-making. In fact, it is thanks to the power of the state over the sectors of political representation and public employees that many of the most concrete changes have occurred. These national policy advances can provide inspiration for lagging sectors. In the accompanying legislative documentation, numerous arguments can be identified that are useful for further social actions. A number of recent statements and policies are available in the National Action Plans and reviews submitted to the Beijing +5 sessions. These can be consulted on the UN website <http://www.unifem.undp.org/beijing+5/documents.html>.

iii. Social justice, human rights and democracy

International and national treaties and agreements are useful in convincing resistant agencies that 'other people' besides 'wild-eyed women's activists' also support such initiatives. Internationally, gender balance is considered as a fundamental basis for democracy and is often constitutionally protected. It is seen as an important way to improve the quality of society. Another tactic is to argue from the basics on which these treaties are founded, namely shared conceptions of human and social rights and of the nature of democracy today. In democracy, the points of view of different groups should be taken into account. This is incontrovertible in the case of women, who make up more than half of the population of the member states in Europe. These arguments can be especially persuasive for social decision-making sectors that are outside of the state, and concerned with fundamental issues of equality in a broader sense, such as trade unions, and non-governmental organisations. Frequently such organisations have mission statements which explicitly indicate their commitment to social justice, but in gender neutral terms. Activists should appeal to these principles and can find arguments for gendering our conceptions of these topics in the work done in recent political theory.¹

iv. Quality of policy making

If the arguments of international commitment and moral and social justice are not persuasive enough, a third set of arguments for gender balance in decision-making can be made. This is the strong case for the ways in which gender inclusion improves the fit between public needs and public policy and heightens policy legitimacy. These arguments focus on the difference that gender balance can make for policy. The quality of public policy delivery, and its effectiveness

¹ It is beyond the ambitions of this guide to provide a survey of this literature. A recent and helpful starting point is Squires, Judith 1999 *Gender in Political Theory* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

and efficiency is an important concern in many European countries. This argument points to the profit that full participation and real democracy provide.

In terms of theory, these arguments are self-evidences in public policy studies. Now the theoretical arguments are increasingly backed up by empirical results, thanks to cases in countries where gender balance has been achieved. New dynamics appear in gender mixed decision-making groups, which can lead to higher competency in conflict resolution. Balanced groups also amplify and diversify the number of surfaces of policy makers present towards the general public. The more diverse the face of policy-makers, the more close to the receptors in the public at large. Activists can refer to numerous studies that demonstrate that public satisfaction with policy delivery is heightened thanks to inclusive decision-making and representation.

v. *New issues in policy making*

Finally, better gender balance in decision-making improves policy and democracy because it leads to the introduction of new questions and concerns. This allows organisations to achieve a tighter fit with the concerns of a changing society. Society can gain from the use of women's talents in confronting the complexity of a globalising world. It is already evident from studies on the increase of women in politics that the presence of women leads to new accents and issues on the public agenda. In an ever more complex global context, an increase in antennas to a significant section of the public can help societal decision-makers to better keep up with rapid change.

For each set of arguments which activists mobilize to motivate decision-makers to commit resources to recruit women and empower women in decision-making, it is useful to employ examples which convincingly demonstrate the *added value* of gender balance, both morally, qualitatively, and ultimately quantitatively. Successful change agents develop a capacity to 'speak the language of power' to achieve their aims. Those arguing for better gender balance in policy decision-making need to use the vocabulary and instruments of policy makers while pushing them to become more sensitive to gender. Gender balance advocates must demonstrate that policy made in a gender balanced setting is more likely to be seen as legitimate as it will be based on solid, broadly conceived information input. Such policy may have greater chance of succeeding and be less costly. Grounded arguments are essential in persuading certain types of power holders of the importance of continuing commitment to achieving gender balance.

2. Issues in increasing the number of women in decision-making

i. *Diversity of settings: national and sectorial*

Armed with arguments, people who want to change gender balance still run into a multitude of obstacles in achieving their goals. The price in changing the status quo is high, and those who want change should never underestimate the force of those seeing change as a threat to established power relationships, even if this is not explicitly expressed. Anticipating resistance and difficulties may help in choosing strategies and appropriate tools from the wide choice available. The first consideration is the most obvious: there is no one magic recipe for solving

the problem of gender balance in all societies and sectors in Europe. Every sharing of experience highlights common issues, but also makes a practitioner more aware of the special problems presented by his or her national and sectorial context. In looking for new approaches, the context specific elements that lead to success have to be kept in mind. Everyone attempting to go further in achieving gender balance needs to make an analysis of the situation before proceeding. An old saying claims that culture, including organisational culture, is like water to a fish. It is only when the fish is outside the water that it understands what water (or culture) is. International exchange can help activists better understand their own cultural waters. The advantage of multi-national cooperation is that it can help men and women better 'see' their own cultures and the problems presented for directed change efforts.

A main element that must be considered is *structure and timing*: the historical and structural points of departure. *Legal contexts* vary dramatically. In 1999 France changed its constitution to achieve parity between men and women. Belgian law mandates that the composition of electoral lists include 1/3 women. Finnish and Norwegian law govern the gender balance of advisory boards. Portugal's constitution says it is the task of the state to work for equality. Other legal measures that are part of second generation emancipation legislation also make the context very different between countries. Culturally, the acceptability of the use of legislation and strict quotas to address balance also differs strikingly.¹ Finally the procedures in electoral systems are also important for strategies and results in politics.

The *speed of change* in achieving various milestones on the way to better gender balance varies drastically both between countries and between sectors. Sometimes a very specific event such as the democratisation of a regime as in the case of Spain or Portugal can lead to lightening progress in some issues of gender representation. While other countries may look as if they are lagging behind the often lauded Nordic situation, we should not lose sight of the fact that almost all members of the Council of Europe are able to identify initiatives that have led to improvement. This may help explain the present state of affairs of relative self-satisfaction on the part of top power holders who believe that gender balance is no longer an issue.

The national historical context is not the only contextual element of importance. Every sector in social decision-making has *sector-specific thresholds and dilemmas*. The context of change in a metalworkers trade union is quite different than in the Department of Social Welfare or the Red Cross. Gender is just one element in an organisational culture. Gender relations are influenced by other power relationships and definitional issues. We can look at gender balance in decision-making among the governmental and non-governmental organisations working with developing countries as an example. On the one hand, these agencies often work out sophisticated means for gender-testing projects for other countries, while on the other hand many are faced with serious problems of vertical segregation of power within their own organisations.² With low

1 'This guidebook will primarily highlight other strategies besides quota's, although there are strong arguments for believing that quota regulation may be the quickest way to achieve gender balance. There is a vast literature about the use of quotas to address democratic representation of social groups which is beyond the scope of this guidebook - see the recent Council of Europe publication. 2000. *Positive Action in the Field of Equality Between Women and Men: Final Report of the Group of Specialists on Positive Action in the Field of Equality between Women and Men (EG-S-PA)*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Directorate General of Human Rights, Division Equality between Women and Men, which reflects the Council of Europe's own long tradition on this matter.

2 An extremely helpful insight into the advanced practices in NGOs working with development for their clients and the challenges they face internally is in their general set of reference publications made available by the OECD Development Assistance Committee on the site <http://www.oecd.org/dac/Gender/htm/sourcebook.htm>. See especially Shalkwyk and Woroniuk 1997.

financial resources, high ambitions, and a small pool of willing and sacrificial personalities, challenging decision-making on the basis of gender can be extremely difficult.

ii. What things in a context can be critically important factors for success?

When planning a strategy, organisers need to identify which contextual factors need to be taken into account. Naturally, such a list can be endless, and each context is unique in time, culture and social and economic context. However, some aspects crop up repeatedly, and can be crudely characterised and anticipated.¹

a. Political context: The political context includes both structural and cultural factors.

- Structurally each country differs in how the electoral process works. Strategies need to be keyed to the legal and institutional givens. What rules govern the nomination of candidates, the ways candidates can be financed and promoted and voter choice?
- Advocates of gender balance can be aided by contexts in which there are parties with explicit commitments to social justice and even gender awareness in their party programmes.
- What are the demographics and culture of the present decision-making elite? How open is the elite? To what extent are women already present in important decision-making positions in politics and to what extent are decision-makers sensitive to gender issues? Are there allies to be found among male elites?
- What other gender initiatives such as positive actions or gender mainstreaming are present? Is there an explicit and official analysis of the reasons for gender imbalance or is it not specified or not analysed by political actors. Are the level and direction of gender policy explicit and analytical?

b. Administrative context: What mechanisms are in place in the public administration and government to support gender initiatives?

- The presence or absence of explicitly gender dedicated state agencies and specialized personnel such as an equal opportunities officer or Women's Office – what is the state of the equality policy machinery?

¹ The International Research Network on Gender and the State under the leadership of Dorothy Stetson and Amy Mazur has worked out a theoretical framework for the analysis of gender and policy issues which provides the intellectual structure for these criteria. See Mazur, Amy, and Dorothy McBride Stetson, eds. 1995. *Comparative State Feminism*. London: Sage or Stetson, Dorothy, and Amy Mazur. 2000. "Women's Movements and the State: Job-Training Policy in France and the U.S." *Political Research Quarterly* 53:597-623 and also the work of Leijenaar (1997) about the context of gender initiatives. Also helpful are the concepts developed in Mackay, Fiona, and Kate Bilton. 2000. *Learning from Experience: Lessons in Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities, Governance of Scotland Forum*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh who discuss the relationship between mainstreaming and gender balance efforts.

- Is there an official gender/equal opportunities/mission statement at the national or local level with an administrative ‘home’ – an office or offices which are accountable for the implementation and enforcement of policies?

c. Framing of gender issues: What’s at stake in the minds of policy makers and the general and sectorial public, what are the reasons for gender inequality and in what ways is it seen as a ‘problem’? ¹ Countries where biological explanations for the inequality between the sexes are dominant need different strategies than countries where issues of power and oppression have been raised, or where inequality is framed in terms of ‘patriarchy’. ‘Emancipation’ is not the same as ‘Equal Opportunities’. The ‘problem’ may be very different in countries where there is a large pool of professionally educated women and men in non-traditional fields (such as the feminisation of medicine in the countries of central and eastern Europe) than in a country where less than 10% of the students in engineering are female.

- Is gender balance seen primarily as an issue of women’s liberation or emancipation? Is it framed as a struggle of opposites so that the relationship between men and women is polar and antagonistic? Or is the focus more on the relationship between the sexes and the positive consequences of diversity?
- What is the historical framing of gender equality? What was the nature of the struggles that have gone before? At what speed did changes take place? Have new relationships had a chance to solidify?

d. Pool of potential leaders: People are the most important resource. Who are potential workers and leaders, and what are their capacities in terms of time and other resources? Is there a tradition of voluntary and civil engagement that helps underwrite commitment or is civil society dependent on paid workers?

- How sophisticated are potential workers in terms of gender activism and how familiar are they with different approaches? What is the level of training on gender issues available? Does the country have any women’s or gender studies programmes?
- What is the level of training in the fields where responsibility needs to be taken up? How is training delivered (by apprenticeship or in open training programmes)?

e. Level of opposition to gender equality and its organisation: To what extent are there parties or groups who are explicitly opposed to a change in the status quo of gender balance in decision-making? Is this opposition highly organised in political parties with non-emancipatory programmes or other organisations? To what extent is there general public tolerance of explicit sexism or discrimination? What has been the experience with backlash to programmes for gender equality?

¹ Carol Bacchi writes convincingly that the key issue in policy formation is power over the definition of the problem and its construction: ‘What’s the Problem?’ is the most important question, and women need power over definition. Bacchi, Carol Lee. 1999. *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems*. London: Sage.

These factors can all help explain varying speeds of progress in changing the balance in decision-making, as well as guarding against a belief in one or two ‘miracle’ solutions, relevant for all settings – such as the mandating of quotas. These may be effective in terms of quantitative results, but perhaps do not lead to the ‘business argument’ advantages of improved policy making. ‘Quota Aunties’ may be derailed by backlash and long-standing implicit beliefs about biological incapacity, and thus hindered from effective performance.

3. What’s inspiring?: Choosing among a wealth of choices

The above discussion should make clear that there is no one ‘best’ way to improve gender balance in society. Depending on the sector and the country, a good example from one place might be a disaster in another. Still, this doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t share experience. This booklet highlights a few examples which seem like ‘smart’¹ practices, with one or more features which we think are appealing enough that they might inspire others. They were chosen keeping the criteria of economy, originality and success in mind. We were particularly looking for strategies which did not involve a large expenditure of resources. In larger settings, though, it is utopian to think that a major project can be achieved for free. Realistically, we have also seen that external support from an international organisation such as the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Development Programme or the European Union can make the difference between success and failure in countries with limited means.²

However, one of the most important resources is a critical mass of committed change agents at all levels. Without this, no amount of external funding will suffice. Past experience seems to indicate that the most original projects come from a small group of social entrepreneurs with low resources but high social capital in terms of connections and solidarity.³ A ‘smart’ practice here may not always be the ‘best’ but may be one that is most easily transferable within the sector or which might provide more general inspiration. Especially interesting are initiatives that are economical in terms of effort, and that act in accordance with a kind of free lunch theory. For instance, if a government is already running an information campaign around a new voting system, projects encouraging gender balanced voting choices can be linked to the campaign at lower cost. The easier an initiative combines with other efforts, the lower the threshold. Although news gets old quickly in today’s information society, we also looked at the originality of a project. Finally, we aimed to find projects that informants saw as ‘successful’.

The best way to scientifically select interesting practices would have been a complete survey of all countries. However, a survey of every measure taken in the Council of Europe member countries to improve gender balance in decision-making was far beyond the scope of this project. Yet most international organisations have been collecting good experiences for a number of different purposes, and the Council of Europe is no exception. The Steering

1 This concept comes from Bardach, Eugene. 2000. *A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis*. London: Chatham House, p.71.

2 An important methodological consideration here is the fact that internationally financed projects become much better known than national ones. While initially our ambition was to identify projects primarily carried out by local national agencies, it became increasingly clear that projects considered ‘good’ by national informants, particularly in the south and east of Europe were often co sponsored by the ILO, UN or the EU. The EU and the UN have also been active in documenting ‘Good practices’ especially concerning labour market initiatives (European Commission 2000) and mainstreaming (UN: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/resources/goodpractices/>). Ultimately, when it came to projects in the trade union and non-governmental sectors, we often selected international cooperative projects.

3 The power of a few individuals to change society is well illustrated in Gladwell, Malcolm. 2000. *The Tipping Point: How little things can make a big difference*, London: Little Brown and Company.

Committee for Equality between Women and Men and its associated Groups of Experts have carried out surveys and contacted members to identify and share strategies and projects in a wide range of equality concerns. Most recently guides have been prepared highlighting transferable practices in the fields of Positive Action (2000) and Gender Mainstreaming (1998). Through this research, and the activities of the Steering Committee, numerous examples particularly appropriate to the field of women in decision-making have been collected. The starting point for the selection of projects profiled here was material that had already been submitted to the Directorate General of Human Rights, Division Equality between Women and Men.

On the advice of experts within the Council of Europe, we pursued a number of projects in more detail and re contacted a number of the experts¹ connected to equality projects to up-date and complement information on model projects in their countries. We specifically targeted projects that were already known in one sector or another, although we also hoped to unearth other novel efforts. We asked (through e-mail and by telephone) that informants suggest one or maximally two projects in their countries in the fields of political parties, government, trade unions and other non-governmental organisations that were especially noteworthy, either because of their success or because of their transferable originality. These were followed up where possible with telephone interview with the directly involved informants or activists.

The range and quantity of activity is impressive. Our choices should be seen as a starting point, and modestly tenuous. Some of the projects selected here are perhaps well-known among Western European gender experts, but the intent of this booklet is to reach out to a public beyond this circle. Even when a project's 'idea' is well-known, the actual details of what was done may not be so clear.

In the ideal world there would be a giant web-site where all countries could publish their successful projects in a standard form accessible to everyone. In the future that may be the way such sharing can best be accomplished. This project and the modest research that lies behind it are hopefully a step in the direction of further networking, where activists and interested organisations can directly contact each other.

Among the criteria important in selecting the projects here was diversity. We looked for initiatives from a wide range of countries with different gender traditions, in the 5 sectors of social decision-making. A predicament we faced is the fact that some sectors of social decision-making, such as political parties, have many more initiatives than others. Equally so, the richer countries in the north of Europe had much more readily accessible information than other areas. Given the pressure of time, the more fully documented cases were easier to include². Another criterion for inclusion in this version of the guidebook was the completeness of the description we had available. While we attempted to get information on many projects, in the short time we did not always achieve enough information for a full practical depiction.

1 A list of the experts who have aided in this project is to be found in the appendix as well as the questions which were distributed by e-mail as a mini-survey to relevant informants identified in cooperation with the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men. The questionnaire distribution and interviews were completed in September and October 2000.

2 We are highly cognizant and apologetic about the fact that this version of the guidebook has a majority of examples coming from Northern Europe. This is not a fair depiction of the actual situation, but is due to the time constraints of the project. It can be hoped that future versions will include more cases from the South and East of Europe.

A final element that played into the selection was an attempt to get a wide variety of initiatives. Generally initiatives can be grouped into several types.¹

- The most ambitious are those addressing structural conditions. These mandate change through legislation, changes in the electoral and selection procedures and directives which may involve quotas or other forms of positive action and mandatory targets for a higher proportion of women.²
- A second type of initiative is directed at changing the cultural acceptance of balanced decision-making through awareness raising campaigns directed at diverse publics.
- A third type of programme is directed at increasing the efficiency of the transition of new candidates into positions of power. These initiatives include efforts to enlarge pools of candidates through training and construction of data bases. They may address organisational culture and develop strategies to enable gender balanced groups to work together in better ways.

The examples in this booklet are arranged by sector of social decision-making rather than by country or type of initiative. Conditions in a sector can be especially important in setting the ground rules for what is possible in terms of initiatives and contexts of international co-operation. An introduction to each sector briefly sketches some of the important considerations in launching actions. Where possible, we indicate larger studies that can provide further inspiration for change in organisations in that sector. When interview material was available, we attempted to let women and men comment on their initiatives in their own words. For selected cases we present a brief description of the setting, what actually occurred in the example, the duration of the project, and its financing, an evaluation of the ways in which a project was successful, and information on contact people and further documentation that might be available.³

1 Leijenaar (1997) provides a masterly typology of strategies for government and parties in political decision-making dividing them into strategies addressing individual and institutional barriers, and those addressing recruitment, selection and election. We expand her analysis to take in initiatives addressed at improving the work culture for women in decision-making to enhance their retention.

2 It should be noted however, that quota and positive action experience is already very well documented in the literature, including in Council of Europe's own report on Positive Action in the Field of Equality Between men and Women, EG-S-PA (2000) 7.

3 We also asked about obstacles that projects faced, but found that a much more extensive interview process would be necessary to analyze resistance and tactics for disarming opponents. This problem should be addressed by future research, as should the identification of critical success factors necessary for replication of an effort.

B. Reaching gender balance in political parties

The representation of women in political office has changed dramatically in Europe since 1970.¹ As the recruiting ground for political office, political parties played a crucial role in bringing about this change. In many countries increases in elected women were preceded by changes within political parties themselves.² The parties rethought attitudes about diversity in politics. Discussion of new ways to define democracy focusing on better concepts of inclusive representation occurred.

That political parties are crucial for changing gender balance is most evident in those countries which have used quota laws to obligate change in elected political representation. Here analysts cite the difficulty in bringing about gender balance *inside* political organisations as one of the main stumbling blocks to raising the number of women nominated and later elected³, so that authorities have been forced to turn to stronger measures. Major European research has been carried out cross nationally about increased female political representation. However, the situation inside political parties has been relegated to a minor position in both projects and research⁴, perhaps because of the difficulty of gaining access to internal deliberations.

Political parties are interesting here in two ways. First they play an instrumental role in recruiting and training women to take positions in decision-making. They ultimately aid women in getting elected through selection and promotion of gender balance on electoral tickets. Party support, intellectually, emotionally and financially is essential for election and for later good performance in public office. Second, political organisations themselves need to be taken into consideration as organisations. To what extent have they succeeded in achieving the democratic representation of the sexes that they may be trying to promote for the wider public in their own house? Are the decision-making organs inside political parties, such as the executive council, balanced in terms of gender? To what extent are women's interests integrated into the policy and platform preparation work of the party?

1 Information about the increase in women in political decision-making in the member states of the European Union is available at Frauen Computer Zentrum Berlin website <http://www.db-decision.de/>. As the International Parliamentary Union (<http://www.ipu.org/>) has done substantial work in documenting and disseminating information about useful strategies in parliaments to foster gender balance, we have not included examples here. Also important are other web interactive sites including that of the European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities (<http://www.ccre.org/women/woan.shtml>) and the site of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (<http://www.int-idea.se/women/index.html>). For readers of Dutch and French, the Belgian interactive women's information site includes a special 'Dossier on Women and Politics and Websites' at <http://www.amazone.be>.

2 There are numerous well-documented examples including the early adapters in Norway, the experiences of the Greens in Germany and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom or Scotland to only list the best documented cases.

3 European Expert Network Women in Decision-Making 1994 'Participation of Women in four Political Groups in the European Parliament' Brussels: European Commission Equal Opportunities Unit.

4 Lovenduski, Joni and Susan Stephenson *Women in Decision-Making: Report on Existing Research in the European Union*, Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications 1999:14.

While more and more European parties claim that their general membership is gender balanced,¹ the upper regions of the party seldom reflect this. Women are vital in mobilizing support and campaign efforts, but seldom hold top party functions behind the scenes. In fact, worldwide, less than 11% of party leaders are female.²

1. What's special about political parties as a context?

i. Ideology

The context of a political party is “political”. Gender issues need to be linked to the ideological platform of a party. Parties which aim to increase individual freedom may be less inclined to utilize strategies involving quotas and more inclined to use training techniques. Parties with a focus on collective solidarity need arguments linked to demonstrations of how gender balance relates to collective justice.

ii. Position of women

As in most voluntary organisations in civil society, activity in political parties requires substantial investment of time. A classic roadblock for women has been the combination of a traditional gender role in a household and meeting times after the normal workday. The kinds of availability needed are challenging to all citizens with family responsibilities, but this is especially associated with the tasks of women in many areas of Europe.

A second sort of roadblock is associated with the history of political activism itself. Many political parties were born out of social struggles that were carried out in masculine contexts (industrial strife for example). Women, who were denied the vote, played a smaller role historically and this guaranteed them a place in the back row. These relatively sex-segregated cultures (in all social classes) have carried over into the traditional way of working in the parties.

iii. Party gender cultures

When parties carry out gender analyses of ‘why there are so few women?’, and when interviewers ask female politicians about roadblocks and problems of working within the party, concerns about the gender culture surface.³ Each party has its own gender culture. Across the political spectrum, masculinities and femininities are specifically shaped in relation to party history and ideology. A Christian party may seek out the ‘traditional family person’ as the ideal representative. For a male candidate this would be a ‘good provider’. The female candidate

1 European Expert Network Women in Decision-Making 1994 ‘Participation of Women in four Political Groups in the European Parliament’ Brussels: European Commission Equal Opportunities Unit.

2 Shvedova, Nadezdha. 1998. Obstacles to Women’s Participation in Parliament. In *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, edited by Azza Karam. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance p. 24.

3 Two-thirds of respondents to an Inter-Parliamentary Union survey felt that party structures were not ones in which women felt at ease, even if many also positively evaluated their own party. 50% felt that political parties generally were somewhat hostile to including women, supporting an argument that ‘formal inclusion of women did not always guarantee an equal political gender partnership’. Waring, Marilyn, Gaye Greenwood, and Christine Pintat. 2000. *Politics: Women’s Insights*. Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, p. 55.

should have worked her way up by serving coffee and not incidentally being a 'good mother'. A socialist party's ideal may be the 'masculine trade union activist from a heavy trade who is also well-spoken' while on the distaff side the ideal might be the young, pretty militant woman who puts class before gender interests and the collectivity before all. Each party constructs their own ideal types, and such stereotypical constructions are acted out in the daily work of political organising.

Culture is then reflected in the kinds of social networks (gender mixed or segregated) and settings where work gets done. This might be in bars, top restaurants, offices in the city centre, places of work, or in people's kitchens and church basements. Each place has its own gender code. Culture is also reflected in the models of behaviour that are expected, with one standard for women and another standard for men, leading to a continuously skewed experience.

If party culture is one of the main reasons for difficulties in improving gender balance in party decision-making, then the problem will be one that is especially difficult to address. Culture change in organisations is one of the hardest sorts of change to achieve, and requires a long time frame and extensive commitment.¹ Further, because culture is a central part of the problem, varying tactics may need to be employed, including humour. Party mates share a number of common values. Clever strategies can make use of these in lampooning some of the practices that put women and men in concrete cultural corsets.

iv. Resistance

Cultural change is disruptive, and often uneven. Some actors resist, others want to go faster and those who feel that they will lose resources may actually undermine change efforts. This may explain why gender resistance in local parties may be much more intense than at the national level. At the micro level, losses and dashed hopes are intensely personal. Overcoming resistance through techniques that garner allies is a key feature of successful change efforts, but extremely difficult to achieve. Colleagues and comrades may themselves be unaware that they are resisting change. Obstacles to gender balance may appear without any conscious expression of backlash or resistance. The longer party mates have known each other, the more likely gender-coloured patterns of interaction and roles are entrenched. Changing these can be personally painful and may be seen as disruptive of party spirit and solidarity.² Men and women need techniques to undermine backlash in ways that make new friends and help members see that a better gender culture can lead to electoral gain and more positions for all.

v. Timing

Nonetheless, it is also the case that no area of social decision-making in Europe has shown as much progress in attempting to improve the position of women in decision-making as the political sector. It is the sector longest concerned with this issue. The increased concern for

1 Alvesson, Mats, and Yvonne Due Billing. 1997. *Understanding Gender and Organisations*. London: Sage, and Gherardi, Silvia. 1995. *Gender Symbolism and Organisational Cultures*. London: Sage.

2 Cockburn, Cynthia. 1991. *In the way of women: men's resistance to sex equality in organisations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education and Benokraitis, A. 1997. *Subtle Sexism. Current Practice and Prospects for Change*. London: Sage provide vivid illustrations of the conscious and unconscious faces of resistance to gender balance.

women's representation in politics dates in Europe from the beginning of the Second Wave of Feminism, when new sorts of women's organisations were founded within parties. These groups took on their own party as an adversary and lobbied for internal regulations to improve the representation of women, including positive actions and changes in electoral systems. New political constellations arising from New Social Movements such as Green parties also pushed traditional parties, (thanks to electoral success), to start to consider gender issues

vi. Financing

Given that democratic representation is frequently a goal of national policy, political parties have been favoured recipients of funding for carrying out gender balance projects as part of the financing of political parties in general in some countries. For example, France uses the state subsidy for parties as a tool and requires that at least 1/8th of the funds be earmarked for women's activity. Thus parties, as opposed to other social organisations, do not always have to rely solely on their own resources to develop programmes for gender balance.

vii. Smart practices

Another special feature of political parties is that they are well placed to gain access to information about smart practices elsewhere. The increasing process of European integration has led to a heightened degree of 'internationalism' among European party formations. European Union Parliamentary fractions have worked in an exchange relationship with international party federations so that there has been an ever-increasing synchronization of tactics and formulations between European party formations.¹ Women's organisations within such federations have been quick to take advantage of the possibilities to compare notes and develop parallel strategies to sister groups in attempting to change their own national party structure. A rather unique feature of this sort of work has been the tendency of women to form liaison groups across party lines, both within representative bodies (Network of Parliamentary Committees on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Member States of the European Union and of the European Parliament (N.C.E.O) founded in 1997), and in international bodies (International Parliamentary Union, Council of European Municipalities and Regions). This leads to enhanced networking and sharing of positive ideas. Through cross-party initiatives pressure is applied on individual parties to harmonize in line with 'general political practice'. A nice example of the kind of cross fertilization that can occur was the translation of a small handbook on political effectiveness produced on the basis of Norwegian and Swedish experience by the Social Democrats in Sweden (see below: Power Book).

This privileged position of access to fuller information and established networks means that the sector itself has less need of a general handbook. It also implies that political parties can provide good ideas for other sectors that are as of yet less networked.

¹ See for example Hix, Simon and C. Lord. 1997. *Political Parties in the European Union*. London: Macmillan.

2. Selection of cases: Politics

Given the nearly 30 years of experience in developing successful strategies for improving political representation, making a choice of a few exceptional cases is extraordinarily difficult. Strategies to improve the position of women within parties include

- directed recruitment efforts
- awareness campaigns directed at the external public,
- awareness efforts within the party,
- construction of better data banks on potential office holders,
- training of both male and female political activists on gender issues and political skills,
- quantitative targets for improvement (either hard – quotas, or soft – intentional targets).

Sometimes the actors are not the political parties themselves, but governments, or cross-party consortiums of women's groups aiming at raising the consciousness of political actors inside parties and the general public.

We have taken two sorts of activities into consideration here. First, the work of variously composed political groups aimed at increasing the proportion of women elected to public office through original awareness efforts, and second, the work of individual parties focusing on their internal culture. Thus, the number of cases treated here will be slightly larger than elsewhere in this brochure.

i. Portugal: The Parity Parliament

Women hold up half the sky: What if they filled half the parliament?

How does parity look? Politicians from all political parties in Portugal filled the seats of the Parliament with 50 percent men and 50 percent women to provide a photogenic and powerful example of what gender balance can look like. In 1994, this put parity on the agenda. Thanks to the parity parliament the notion of 'parity democracy' entered into the vocabulary of Portuguese political opinion leaders. The parity parliament provides a clever example of using cross-party activism to put positive pressure on parties themselves to recognise their own female candidates as potential parliamentarians.

The Portuguese constitution engages the state to ensure equality between the sexes through action, but the path to parity is long. Illustrating how parity relates to democracy was one of the missions of the Parity Parliament. The initiative was taken by three Portuguese women who were

Members of the European Parliament. 115 women politicians invited 115 male colleagues to the session. All the members of the one-day parliament held or had held elective functions. During the session they debated the nature of democracy, the role of women in Portugal, citizenship and parity. The event was widely covered by the press. The impact of the example as an event seems to have gone long beyond that one day, so the example can be seen as a smart practice. With relatively little resources¹, widespread impact was achieved.

For the public at large, its media-attractiveness offered a visual example of what gender balance is all about. The different political parties were all compelled to come up with a gender-balanced slate of candidates for the parliament. This meant that male allies at high level were mobilized for the cause of gender balance, even if for only one day, so that the general public could see that the issue is not only a 'women's issue', but a citizen's issue aimed at improving democracy overall.

The Portuguese example is one that might be possible in most European countries. Today, there are illustrations of what real world parliamentary parity can be like. The Nordic parliaments and regional parliaments in Germany, Scotland or Wales² have achieved almost 50% representation. With the constitutional changes in France and pending changes in Portugal itself, even more examples will be present. However, in the 43 member states of the Council of Europe women hold only 17%³ of all seats in parliament. The situation varies widely from country to country. In places where women representatives are less than 20%, a Parity Parliament could be a very good idea.

Source: *Council of Europe Portuguese expert Isabel Romão. Contact person for additional information: Ana Concello: aconcello@ip.pt.*

ii. Iceland: Parties working together: a 5-year multi-party awareness campaign-1997-2002

When the male prime minister becomes a poster boy acclaiming, with considerable humour, that women may take different angles on problems, and politicians should try to put themselves in 'women's shoes', you have an awareness campaign with a difference. An important part of any social movement's success involves recruiting allies. One of the distinctive elements of women's political agitation has been the use of humour to get attention and break down barriers. The campaign in Iceland sparkles with several nice qualities: it is humorous, it involves men and women across party lines in their political functions, and it is part of a long-term strategy of cultural change.

Awareness campaigns are a strategy with one of the longest histories, and have been used in all sectors of decision-making. Most countries have experience with awareness campaigns directed either inside in party organisations and/or directed to the general public. They may be sponsored

¹ The initiative was partially funded by the European Commission and co-financed as part of the awareness campaign preceding European parliamentary elections in 1993-94.

² The run-up to the creation of the Scottish parliament is very informative, as women's activists from a wide range of organisations strongly campaigned for the constituting of the new parliament on parity grounds. See Alice Brown, 1998. 'Deepening Democracy: Women and the Scottish Parliament' Regional and Federal Studies 8.

³ As of April 2001.

by public authorities, women's coalitions and organisations and coalitions of parties. The examples are legion, and the role of campaigns encouraging voters to choose for gender balance seems to be important.¹

In Iceland the campaign was initiated by the Althingi (Parliament) which charged the government to appoint a committee including the various political parties, the Office for Gender Equality and the Women's Rights Association. The initiative was thus across the various sectors being dealt with in this handbook. Importantly it was conceived as a long-term effort and well financed by the government with ISK 5 million in its first year (1998). It involved all the political organisations in an advertising campaign, and has stimulated women's groups in the various political parties to collaborate and co-operate.

Specifically the project was concerned with mobilizing top authorities behind action to increase the share of women in politics as part of the interests of the nation. Both men and women are depicted in the ads, challenging stereotypes with a smile and indicating that the top members of society do not find gender issues laughable. One problem of reaching gender balance is that it is still seen as a woman's issue. Raising public awareness that gender balance is important for everybody requires powerful male allies. The Iceland campaign makes men visible. While sex is perhaps still the most powerful tool for getting the general public's attention in advertising, humour comes a strong second, and some of the best examples of awareness campaigns directed at convincing men and women that gender balance in politics is important make strong use of both. The Iceland publicity campaigns are part of a wider set of strategies including training courses, an educational and communications network and public meetings: This idea of using humour and mobilizing cross-party/cross-gender support from the very top of the nation is one that can be followed by many other countries with lower resources. The Icelanders feel that they have some success already, as the share of women in the Icelandic parliament Althingi went from 25% in 1995 to 35% after the campaign had been in operation for a year. They will now be targeting local elections for 2002.

Source: *Document in Council of Europe Archives 'An increased share for women in politics' and telephone/e-mail interviews. Project manager Una Maria Óskarsdóttir, Office for Gender Equality, Pósthússtraeti 13 101 Reykjavík, Iceland. Telephone +354 552 7420 Fax +354 562 7424 unamaria@jafnretti.is or jafnretti@jafnretti.is*

iii. Independent Women: Women's parties initiatives as a shock tactic: The Lithuanian Women's Party and Swedish Stödstrumpor

Grabbing the public attention can also be done by more dramatic means. Women-only parties have a distinguished history across Europe. One of the most famous is the Icelandic party in the period 1975-1982 which was probably instrumental in the election of the first female Head of State in a developed democracy, but local women's parties have been founded in many European countries. These warn traditional political parties that there is a substantial gender vote that can steal from their own electoral base. While women's parties often exist precariously, they are powerful alarm bells that have been used with significant success. One of the most well known

¹ Norway noted that in years where there was no 'Vote Woman' campaign, voting for women seemed to go backward and similar results were noted in evaluations of Belgian experience (Carton 1998).

cases is the Swedish ‘Support Stockings’ movement¹ in 1994. A number of well-known women (often middle-aged, hence the joking ‘Support Stocking’ name) began to organise their own political party. The threat of an all-woman party full of electorally attractive candidates shook the established parties so thoroughly that they moved to make real commitments in the campaign. One of the most important was a promise, if elected, to gender-balance the governmental cabinet. The winning Social Democratic Party followed through on this.

Today, women’s parties have been a very important shock technique in central and eastern Europe. In the nineties, after it became apparent in several new states in Eastern Europe that the representation of women had declined dramatically, women also grabbed the stick of the all-woman assembly or party. In 1995, 13 women’s organisations founded the Lithuanian Women’s Party, headed by the female former Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskienė. As in the Swedish case, the party quickly became very popular in the polls and definitely contributed to changing public attitudes. They showed that women don’t need the quota favours of the communist past to be independent political actors. This is an important lesson in the Eastern European transitional context, where citizens are suspicious of group identities and the label ‘feminism’. Although the party only elected one member and did not get the required 5% needed to cross the representation threshold, it was 7th among 24 parties in the 1996 elections to the Seimas (parliament).

It can be argued that the increase from 7% to 18% female representatives in the 1996 election was partly a result of the visibility of the Lithuanian Women’s Party, and helped contribute to the establishment of a cross party parliamentary women’s group in the parliament. The party itself has evolved with a new name and statutes that specify gender balance among the representatives, and is now actively seeking allies with more traditional parties on platforms of equal opportunities.

Source: *Presentation by Prof. Kazimiera Prunskienė, Member of Parliament, at the Conference: Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium, Reykjavik, 8-10 October 1999.*

iv. Sharing good ideas across party lines – Training material: The Power Book (Swedish Social Democrats)

‘...it’s had a really positive reception. Many women recognise themselves in the problems that are presented here’ (Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbundet interview)

When Norwegian social scientist Berit Ås first sketched the five techniques that made women working in gender mixed groups feel powerless, many had an ah-ha experience. The droll insights into the dynamics of gender in organisations became a wide spread underground weapon. Going from normal citizen to politician is not self-evident. Most big parties have gender-neutral programmes of training, awareness, negotiation techniques and law as part of their socialization process for new politicians. Women’s groups in parties have developed additional material to help with the specific problems women candidates face². Training to help

1 Documented in Agneta Stark 1997. ‘Stödstrumpor’ in Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell (eds.) *Who’s Afraid of Feminism*, London: Penguin.

2 In most Northern European countries political parties have developed training programmes for their women candidates. In Belgium, for example the programmes of the Socialist Party, the Catholic People’s Party and the Green constellation

recognise when gender intervenes and confounds political effectiveness is an important strategy to help empower politicians. Before the 1994 elections,¹ the Swedish social democratic women took the Norwegian secret weapon and included it in their training packet. Women elsewhere were charmed with the idea and wanted to share it with their friends. The booklet which expanded on some of the earlier ideas was called the *Power Booklet - a quick DIY on how to obtain real personal power*. It outlines the steps that women can take as individuals and in groups to get more women into decision-making bodies, and raises awareness about gender dynamics so that women will be more effective once they get there. The booklet observes that 'there are innumerable traps on the road towards fair power for women. This handbook identifies the traps and provides a guide on how we can avoid or eliminate them'. It emphasises that politics is not only about being a candidate. There needs to be gender balance behind the scenes, if a party is to be credible to women voters. It gives concrete tips on how to change things.

This little booklet became an underground best seller. An important part of this example as a 'smart' practice is the fact that the Swedish women were not shy about their discoveries. They found the resources to share them with others by translating it into English. From there other women's groups have translated it into French, Serbian, Croatian, and other Slavic languages and even into Chinese. The example of Australia's Power Handbook (Kirner and Raynor 1999) written by politicians was important in pushing the idea of making the knowledge widespread. What's really interesting about this initiative is that the ideas easily cross party lines, and can be used by a wide variety of women's political organisations. Across Europe, political parties try to train their politicians, and sharing of good training material on working together to make gender balance a reality is a way to empower ever-broader groups of citizens.

Source: *Power booklet S-Kvinnor Sveavägen 68 O.O. Box 70458, S-107 26 Stockholm. Interview with Estrid Landmark 08 7002748 A video presenting the theme is available from the Equality Council in Vaxsjö municipality in Sweden.*

v. *United Kingdom: Target 50:50 - It takes Cash, Confidence and Culture to get ahead in politics! (Liberal Democrats)*

What keeps women out of politics? Many parties have internal analyses of how this comes about. Increasingly parties attempt to attract new women candidates. The example of the Liberal Democrats demonstrates a combination of analysis with policy measures to attract women candidates and help them succeed. The catchy slogan Cash, Confidence and Culture makes this a particularly interesting campaign. It addresses the three major roadblocks newcomers face in politics. In the late nineties a number of ideas came together in the Women's section of the Liberal Democratic party to smooth women's way into politics. In the electoral system of the United Kingdom, small parties such as the Liberal Democrats face an uphill battle. Given that only 3 of the 46 Liberal Democratic Members of Parliament are female, this recent campaign

(Ecolo/Agalev) all have their specific accents, cleverly illustrated training guides and interesting angles. Organisers can profit from contacting the various parties in their own countries and others to find out about gender initiatives and new training ideas, even if prepared by the opposition.

¹ This election had as a theme for the Swedish social democratic women 'Every other dance is for the Ladies' (*Varannan damernas*) as a reaction to the electoral checkmate experienced in 1990 for women. Women had resolved to work for really dramatic change. The title referred to a national investigation in 1987 (SOU) that had rejected quotas as a method in favour of voluntary measures.

looks like a needed initiative, and shows that even in rather negative situations inspiration can be forthcoming.

- *Cash* Borrowing from the United States idea of the Mama Cash Trust Fund built on donations to help woman candidates meet the exorbitant personal costs of election, the Liberal Democrats established the Nancy Seer Trust Fund in 1997 to help finance extra expenses. This addresses the problem of the unequal monetary resources of women and men candidates. The fund was established to help pay for campaigns, travel expenses and child or elder care, which are often gender-linked.
- *Confidence* initiatives included a programme for shadowing Members of Parliament at work so that the real aspects of political culture and the demands it poses could be realistically assessed, and specific training for women on speaking at public meetings, selection interviews, hostile questions and debates.
- *Culture* is often cited as the most difficult roadblock in politics, as it seems invisible. Here the 50:50 campaign has worked on sensitising the most local party level to influence selection proceedings and encouraged the construction of skills databases to recruit spokeswomen and candidates.

Source: *Council of Europe Positive Action Survey 1998 (Women Liberal Democrats and Jackie Ballard, Liberal Democratic MP)plus telephone interview 0044-20 7227-1208 (L. Ravenscroft, Liberal Democratic administration)*

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C. Decision-making in public administration and government – Is change just a matter of political will?

1. Contexts of public decision-making

At first glance, one might think bringing about gender balance would be easiest in the public sector. After all, public administrations are governed by political decision-making, and must respond to other considerations than merely the market when it comes to employment policies.¹ Issues of fairness, justice and democracy are important in choosing staff. But indeed, it may just be the fact that public bureaucracies' staff questions are ruled by more than mere market demands that has made change in this sector slower than we might expect.

It was in fact the world of public bureaucracy and its supposedly gender neutral norms that inspired some of the early surveys of gender in organisations.² Social scientists poked holes in the idea that the public bureaucracy was in any way a sex-neutral place of employment.³ They remarked that the ideal typical bureaucrat was always a 'full-time' employee with full commitment to his place of employment and no career breaks. The standards and examinations used to choose top civil servants could be seen to be anything but culture or gender neutral. Was it then any mystery that the top regions of European ministries and administrations were peopled primarily by males, while the lower regions were the realm of the female secretary and coffee cart mistress? The sector quickly inspired comparative research (Wurster 1990) which showed a European trend towards high vertical segregation, with few women in top functions and many women at the bottom.

Public administration, which is the face of the state, became a significant front line for those desiring better gender balance in decision-making. Thanks to its visibility, strength and symbolic importance as a mirror of the values of a policy, increasing numbers of activists, from inside and outside the state worked to improve the representation of men and women across the different levels of responsibility. The targets were two-fold: on the one hand the composition of publicly appointed regulatory bodies and on the other the composition of the higher-level public functions in the civil service.

1 Parsons, Wayne. 1995. *Public Policy*. Aldershot, New Hampshire: Edward Elgar and Colebatch, Hal and Peter Larmour. 1993. *Market, Bureaucracy and Community: A student's guide to organisation*. London: Pluto Press provide excellent insights into the limitations of change through bureaucracy and public institutions.

2 Morgan, Nicole 1988. *The Equality Game: Women in the Federal Public Service (1908-1987)*. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women or Wurster, Barbara. 1990. *Women in the higher public service: career development: a strategy for the optimization of human resources*. European Institute of Public Administration., Maastricht and Castello-Branco, Maria Jose. 1987. *Women in the higher public service levels. A European Overview*. Maastricht: European Institute of Public Administration.

3 Witz, Ann, and Michael Savage. 1992. The gender of organisations. In *Gender and Bureaucracy*, edited by M. Savage and A. Witz. Oxford: Basil Blackwell and Stivers, Camilla. 1993. *Gender Images in Public Administration Legitimacy and the Administrative State*. Newbury Park: Sage or Staudt, Kathleen 1990. "Gender politics in bureaucracy: theoretical issues in comparative perspective." in Kathleen Staudt (ed.) *Women, International Development and Politics. The Bureaucratic Mire*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press

Because the state can be regulated by the public, it is no wonder that legislation has been a key instrument for bringing about quick change, especially in the composition of public bodies. From the early eighties when the Norwegian Gender Equality Act began to require a minimum 40%/60% gender balance in advisory committees at the local level, an increasing number of governments have used legislative reform to come closer to gender balance or even parity in the publicly appointed sector. The majority of Northern European democracies have adapted some form of strong guidelines or regulation for the composition of governmental appointed bodies¹ ranging from one-third to fifty percent.

Strangely, however, imposing gender balance within state personnel has proved to be a much more difficult task.² Contextually several things are important about the state administration as a venue for gender balance efforts.

i. Knowledge about the position of women

The relative simplicity of acquiring data about the actual state of affairs of women's and men's representation at different levels is a positive aspect. Public administrations are 'public'. Increasingly citizens demand transparency. While many public administrations had rather antique systems of personnel administration in the seventies and eighties, and frequently lacked sex segregated statistics, they were necessarily more responsive to demands for revealing this information than could ever be the case in the private sector. International as well as national bodies increasingly pressed for full and regular reporting of the employment situation. For example, the United Nations asks all member nations to report statistics on gender balance for most public decision-making functions. This occurs on an increasingly regular basis.

ii. The need to be responsive to political directives

A bureaucracy can avoid political direction in the short term, but determined leadership, backed up by legislative and treaty demands gradually force change in ways that are much more dramatic than what may be achieved in voluntary associations such as a political party. Influences that have pushed forward gender balance in public administration have come both from the citizenry and the organized women's movement. They have been very critical of gender imbalance in powerful administrations.³ The demands also result from the increasing harmonization processes across European public administration as a result of European integration, and heightened administrative professionalisation (European training schools, the public management movement, etc.) which have put emphasis on changing personal administration into Human Resource Management. HRM requires a more holistic approach to the qualities of employees and frequently has an eye for diversity and balance issues in employee groups and management.

1 Leijenaar mentions Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands and Germany, Belgium and France, Norway. (Leijenaar 1997: 46)

2 The European Union under the Finnish presidency recommends that regular statistics be reported on the proportion of the highest ranking female civil servants in member states and in the European institutions, as well as the distribution of women civil servants in different fields of action and the proportion of women in the higher magistrature. (Council of Europe 2000:77 based on report of Finnish presidency 10-1999). The Council of Europe publishes annual statistics on the number of staff in the Organisation split up by sex and by grade.

3 See for example the gendered opposition to the European integration process in Scandinavia e.g. Borchorst, Annette or Bertone, Chiara. 1998. "Constructing a Women's Perspective on the European Union: The Danish Debate." *NORA (Nordic Journal of Women's Studies)* 6:108-121.

iii. Success stories

The relatively high rate of success in changing administrative balance in a number of countries with varying administrative traditions, shows the responsiveness of public administration to strongly administered political will (Canada, US, and Scandinavian countries). This makes it possible to convincingly show public officials and civil servants that change is indeed possible, and can be part of public management quality improvement efforts.

iv. Variety in the public sector

Government and public administration cover an extraordinarily wide range of activities. The public sector includes museum guards, food inspectors, TV producers, schoolteachers, and bridge builders. The types of organisations are also infinitely various, ranging from the executive offices in the national capital including cabinet ministers to the local administration of a community health care centre. In many countries, all of these various sorts of functions were governed by a uniform set of recruitment rules and promotion and salary standards for most of the 20th century. Today public management reform has encouraged more tailor-made approaches to personnel. Depending on the setting and tasks, different projects are needed to achieve gender balance.

v. Roadblocks: rules and rarities

Several specific sorts of roadblocks are particularly typical of this sector. First, the fact that bureaucracies are governed by laws and regulations provides both advantages and disadvantages. Agreements about functional classification schemes or promotion policies and recruitment procedures are inflexible in many countries. It requires a virtual public administration revolution to allow more modern personnel management practices. The degree of freedom in the hiring top managers, which is the area in need of greatest change, varies widely between countries, and is seldom as complete as in the private sector. This is a boon for those who wish to change demographics, given that it is rule bound, but a block when decisions of the past continue to haunt the present. The popular perception of bureaucracies as sluggishly stable and burdened with mountains of bureaucratic ennui¹ has some truth. A special roadblock characteristic of this sector is the demand for specific technical education where women are under-represented. Although female engineers are more likely than men to work for a public rather than private sector employer, there is a general shortage of highly skilled technical personnel. The pool of potential female candidates to even up the gender balance may be limited.

vi. Timing of concern for representation of women

As mentioned above, this sector has long been a target for change. While the aim continues to be a better balance in the top regions of administration, the ways in which it is talked about and possible strategies have evolved since the situation has gradually improved. Techniques that were new fifteen years ago when gender equality issues first became news have now been around so long that they meet backlash just on the basis of looking old. “We tried that and it didn’t work.”

¹ By doing nothing, public bureaucracies escape the pitfalls of the faddish, but sometimes life passes them by, as in the crisis of governance efficiency in recent years.

Smart projects aimed at changing female representation in the higher regions of public administration sometimes just learn to talk about ‘positive action’ in new language. The concept of ‘balance’ is such a new approach, as is the use of ‘target figures’ linked to the potential pool or the code word ‘diversity’ taken from the American management literature. (See below: Dutch and Belgian examples of new packaging of old gender equality aims to obtain bureaucratic support.) The presence of women in decision-making, the so-called femocrats, may have been highly influential in launching organisation-appropriate initiatives from within. Perhaps more so than elsewhere, the critical success factor is a firm alliance with top power holders both within the administration and within the political structure.

2. Selection of cases

Given the variety of employment and decision-makers in the public sector, we have attempted to choose from several levels of administration and sectors. We are very aware of how deficient this is as a representation of the richness of the sector. As it is important to acknowledge the role of the state in carrying out international commitments, we have chosen a pair of examples showing how government can be influential in raising general awareness of the importance of gender balance in all areas of decision-making.

i. Sweden: Learning to work together to make decision-making more effective - Seminars for key persons in Swedish Society¹

“Today, when working with gender equality, the problem is often that the people at the top do not always practice as they preach. This project could be done in any country! Even though, of course, one needs to do some preparation and find the political will among the highest officials ...I see this as a very important target group as they are ultimately responsible.” (Birgitta Hedman, Swedish administrator, Statistics Sweden.)

Even when gender balance is near, a country may not reap the expected fruits. Many times top decision makers have been used to working in a segregated gender setting. Working together with diverse colleagues can turn governing into an ethnic or gender challenge. A pair of projects in Sweden have particularly original ways of helping to address some of the issues of gender balance in practical daily work.

Equality between women and men has been a goal in Swedish public policy for a long time . However, for such a goal to become reality, society’s leaders need to take responsibility for its achievement. This conviction drove former Swedish Equality Minister and Vice-Prime Minister, Mona Sahlin’s initiative in launching special seminars about working with gender diversity for top officials. The first three hour seminar took place in 1996, and assembled the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Members, State Secretaries, Political Advisors and some other top-level officials. Later, similar seminars were held for regional governors, general-directors, bishops and university-deans. By 1998, almost all key societal officials had taken part in these seminars.

Two women, Birgitta Hedman, head of the gender division at Statistics Sweden, and, Agneta Stark, a professor in gender studies and economics, were responsible for the seminars. They

¹ All facts are based on a telephone interview with Birgitta Hedman, and correspondence with Agneta Stark, October 2000.

discussed Swedish gender policies and problems arising in various policy fields. The point of departure was a large statistical material out of which relevant choices were made for each occasion. The content was adjusted to the each groups area of activity. All participants received a small book called “Women and Men in Sweden: Facts and Figures”.¹ In addition, Ms Hedman and Ms Stark asked the participants what they did themselves to address gender equality questions. In this way an interactive debate was initiated, yet the responsibility to take action was left in the hands of the participants.

According to Birgitta Hedman, the participants generally saw this idea in a very positive light. Several regional governors and general-directors asked them to come back and hold seminars for lower officials as well. This project was unique because it was initiated and supported by the highest political level. Due to the active support from Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, it became difficult for other officials to get away from participating. Ms Hedman further says that “by discussing these issues, it became clear to everybody that these are important questions that Sweden has to work for”.

Source: *Birgitta Hedman: Statistics Sweden, Tel: +46-8-506943*

ii. *Sweden: Unions of Cities and Regions: The JAM-KOM project and governance initiatives of the Swedish Landstingsförbundet (Union of County Councils)*

In many countries, the role of leagues of municipalities and regions can be crucial in stimulating projects to improve gender balance in government. The Nordic countries are rich in interesting practices launched by many sorts of actors, including teams of local governments, local governments working with international partners, and certain types of workplaces managed publicly such as hospitals. Particularly interesting in this regard is perhaps the work of local and regional governments in Sweden. They have stimulated a large number of projects within its equal opportunities programme especially focusing on the issue of democracy in the workings of local and regional government. At the local level one particularly original, and yet low cost idea that can be used elsewhere was in the JAM-KOM project (Women and Men Working Together)² sponsored by a larger project working on Equality in Cities with the Work Environment Fund. In the North of Sweden a number of local municipalities set up mock working sessions to train men and women to become more aware of the gendered citizen they were planning for. Men and women top managers were given guidance in trying to think through the implications of being the opposite sex. They played the role of the other sex in a mock policy session: Men and women attempted to role play the ‘other’ in terms of the policy that they were designing. They also played cross-gender roles in terms of interactions in meetings, after training sessions. This eye-opening project is an example of how gender balance in practice can be supported by initiatives at the local level aimed at decision-makers.

¹ This book is published in new editions every year. The Swedish title is: “På tal om kvinnor och män: lathund om jämställdhet 2000”, (Örebro: SCB, 2000). The book is also available in an English version: “Women and Men in Sweden: Facts and Figures 2000”, (Örebro: SCB, 2000).

² Swedish Working Environment Fund 1994 ‘Women and Men Working Together The KOM programme’ Uppsala: Arbetsmiljöfonden and Hagberg, Jan-Erik, Anita Nyberg, and Elisabeth Sundin. 1995. *Att göra landet jämställt: en utvärdering av kvinnor och män i samverkan - Sveriges största satsning av jämställdhet paa arbetsmarknaden*. Stockholm: Nerenius & Santérus Förlag.

The Union of County Councils in Sweden has a long term commitment to gender equality. Under the theme of 'democracy' its work includes projects such as mentoring young women politicians to encourage longer career commitment and help them over initial difficulties in entering local politics, and analysis of equality issues that can be addressed by employers and employees unions. Of special interest for our theme is a project looking at work in balanced boards and advisory commissions.

A number of Council of Europe member countries are moving towards requiring gender balanced memberships of boards. This has been law in Norway and Finland. Sweden concentrates on the practical issues of working together in boards that include both sexes in an even mix. The initiative was extremely practical and resulted in a book of methods and video training techniques to facilitate work in gender-mixed settings that can be used across Sweden.

Another useful feature of the County Council initiatives in general is the custom of publishing frank evaluations about the success or failure of the projects, so that others have a better chance of avoiding pitfalls. For example both the projects on the training of politicians and a gender project in 5 hospitals published reports which demonstrated the many problems in a realistic manner and suggested ways to do better in the future.

The transferability of many of these efforts is heightened by the fact that they are published and often translated into English and accompanied by a special web page. Naturally such encompassing efforts need to be carried out by a strong organisation with many members, in a relatively affluent setting with politicians committed to seeing gender balance improve. These pre conditions were available for the Swedish Counties. Luckily their experiences can be shared.

Source: *Landstingsförbundet Ongoing Equality Projects: Theme Democracy, projects Democratic techniques and democratic dialogue on Gender equality in boards and steering committees and books 'Sen då- uppföljning av projektet Politikerroll i förändring i Östergötland and 'Den Demokratiska Dialogen: Arbetsformer för kvinnor och män i politiken' plus video. <http://www.lf.se>*

iii. United Kingdom: Bringing diversity into public service and Public Service Week¹

"It turned out that people don't know what public appointments are! To get more diversity we will have to change this."

The Labour government in the United Kingdom directly advocates complete parity at the top levels of public decision-making with its 'Target 50:50' programme. All departments filed action plans for public appointments and equal opportunities from 1998-2001. In the United Kingdom there are more than 100,000 public appointments to a wide range of public bodies. The aim is to make them more representative of 'ordinary people' from different walks of life and

¹ Information provided by Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Jill Butt 00 44 020 7276 2628) Other information on gender specific initiatives available from Helen Reardon-Bond in Women's Unit 0044 020 7273 8832).

backgrounds, and gender balance is an important part of this effort. The first step in achieving balance in decision-making is identifying the relevant candidates and motivating them for a job in public service. Still, it seemed according to one informant that “we are just standing still, so we tried to find out what we could do”.

A public opinion survey identified one of the reasons why more diversity was hard to achieve: most people did not know what a public appointment or advisory committee was about. Since 1998, the government, and the independent office administering public appointments has worked actively to raise the number of ‘ordinary people’, including women and ethnic minorities, into public service. The approach to doing this includes a number of attractive and transferable initiatives.

- Booklets such as *Stepping Out: A woman’s guide to public appointments* hope to stimulate new candidates and train them to be successful.
- Current office holders are receiving more attentive appreciation and also being groomed to help in getting new recruits. They are encouraged to offer mentoring and shadowing opportunities, so that potential candidates can see what the job actually entails.
- The Office holds workshops with various public groups to find out how they can do better in recruiting more diverse appointees and what support recruits need.
- During a National Public Service Awareness week in late autumn 2000, special days were held in a few test regions in the UK. Mock Boards were organised so that non-office holders can experience what kinds of issues come up in the different fields in public service and what kinds of input they can have. The different public bodies were represented with demonstrations and stands. Aid in preparing a CV and succeeding in interviews for an appointment helped build confidence among new candidates. Young people were especially targeted through, for example, engaging the annually appointed Scottish Youth Parliament to mobilise its members.

The project was first organised in 2000 with a regional focus. The costs were carried by the national government as a pilot project. Hopes are that it will be repeated on an annual basis across the United Kingdom. Crucial in the success of the project have been the clear commitments from the top executives and cabinet to changing the demographics of public advisory and management bodies and the willingness to try a wide variety of tactics aimed both at the inflow of new candidates and the retention of those already working.

Source: *More information on Public Service Week and the efforts of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments are described on the website <http://www.ocpa.gov.uk>.*

iv. France: a holistic approach to the higher public administration

In addition to parity in the political sphere, the government has taken measures to promote the access of women to high-level posts in the public administration. Following the report submitted to the Prime Minister in February 1999 on “high-level posts in the civil service: towards equality between women and men”, several measures were adopted to facilitate women’s access to posts of responsibility:

- fixing a minimum percentage of women to sit on panels for professional competitive examinations;
- the administration’s nomination of an equal number of women and men to joint bodies;
- the introduction of progressive targets for each ministry and for each level of management to ensure a balanced participation of women and men in top management posts.

A circular of 6 March 2000 endorsed these measures and the Prime Minister asked each ministerial department to prepare a pluriannual programme to improve the access of women to jobs and posts in top management.

While many of the techniques have already been tried with success elsewhere, the importance of the French effort is just the fact that it builds on previous experiences, and expands them to a holistic analysis of the entire problem. It commences with recruitment (education and awareness) selection (the composition of juries, and clear statutes of non-discrimination and protection against sexual harassment) looks at career trajectories and roadblocks, demands tracking of progress and setting of targets including identification of management potential, addresses issues of bureaucratically inflexible hours and inefficient meetings, and possibilities of horizontal movement between specialities.

Source: *Secrétariat d’état aux droits des femmes et à la formation professionnelle 2000. Conférence de Pékin cinq ans après la mise en oeuvre par la France des recommandations de la 4^e conférence mondiale sur les femmes Paris: La documentation française. p 98-99 and background from Mariette Sineau, Council of Europe expert.*

v. Belgium and Flanders: Choose your terms – language and anchoring techniques to overcome resistance: Gender in Balance and Steering Numbers Initiatives

Both national and regional governments in Belgium are reforming the civil service. The national and regional ministers responsible for gender equality launched efforts in collaboration with gender expert consultants to attempt to redress the long-standing problem of gender segregation in top functions using the reorganisation as a window of opportunity. By the late nineties, the words ‘quota’ and ‘positive action’ were like red flags to many public officials. Consultants worked on new ways to talk about increasing the presence of women in top areas in government, using the language of human resources management. They used organisational change techniques developed in the private sector, including top level seminars to secure legitimacy with key elites in the administrative structure. Instead of talking about positive action, the Flemish report refers to “Gender in Balance” and uses action research to secure cooperation

from all affected members of the bureaucracy. The national Belgian strategy talks about 'Knowledge Numbers (*Kengetal*) and Steering Numbers (*Stuurgetal*)' rather than targets. Both plans include new methods for calculating the level of segregation in an administration, and for planning targets for change: They have a step-by-step plan for attaining change and are good examples of talking the language of public management to convince public managers to undertake action. They emphasize the role and responsibility of regular policy actors in personnel management, and thus see themselves as examples of a mainstreaming approach. As the projects are still underway it is too early to pronounce on their success. The plans are available and a comparative European project (Nelens and Hondeghem 2000) has also documented and evaluated these efforts along with projects in Norway, the Netherlands and the UK.

Sources: Benschop, Yvonne, and Verloo, Mieke. 1999. *Gender in Balance. Mainstreaming in Human Resource Management*. Brussel: het Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap. and Annie Hondeghem and Sarah Nelen, 1999 *Ken- en stuurgetallen: instrument voor een evenredige vertegenwoordiging van mannen en vrouwen in de federale ministeries* Brussel: Kabinet van tewerkstelling en arbeid en gelijke-kansenbeleid.

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European Commission. 2000. *Gender Equality in the European Union: Examples of Good practices*. Brussels: European Commission Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs D.5.

Nelen, Sara and Annie Hondeghem, eds. 2000. *Equality Oriented Personnel Policy in the Public Sector* International Institute of Administrative Sciences Amsterdam: IOS Press

D. Social economic decision-making and the role of trade unions

No single social organisation has more effect on the economic and work conditions for individual workers than the trade union. Yet the penetration of gender equality issues into trade unions and national collective bargaining structures has been slower than in the political sector. Historical and structural reasons help account for the fact that women have been somewhat less likely to be organised in trade unions than men. Gender specific life situations including care of children and work patterns (including the high proportion of female part-time work) explain the continuing lower rates of representation in some sectors.

Today however, with the dramatically increased participation of women in employment and the feminization of some very important sectors, many trade unions have feminised or reached gender parity in their membership.¹ Unfortunately this is not always reflected in proportionately parallel representation in the higher regions of decision-making. The extent to which gender was an issue for organisers has also varied, and surveys of women in decision-making generally (Lovenduski and Stephenson 1999) note the desperate need for statistics and monitoring of membership and leadership of the different unions. Even the most recent ETUC survey in 1998-9 was thwarted by a lack of response (from 42 to 66.6%) which was sometimes based on the lack of membership data divided by sex. The situation in trade unions varies dramatically between countries and between industrial sectors. Some unions have memberships that are more than 70% female, while others are below 25%. Garcia et al report that generally the membership rate for women stands at around an average of 40% (Garcia et al 1999:12) with strong variance.

1. Specific conditions in the sector

i. Position of women

There are contradictory patterns of unionization among female workers discernible in the trade union sector. While political parties and public administration are relatively comparable, cross-cutting pressures of the national contexts for union cultures and distribution of employment opportunities for women produce widely varying representation of women in the trade unions themselves. In some countries women have become union members in a parallel process to becoming integrated in the work force. These countries tend to have strong union traditions as in the Rhine/Nordic model of high rates of unionization in homogeneous sectorial organisations and peaceful models of collective bargaining. In other countries, features such as short part-time employment undermine the female potential as unionized workers (UK).

¹ The European Trade Union Confederation commissioned two studies in the nineties which were among the first to assemble statistics on membership and representation in the trade union sector. (Braithwaite, Mary and C. Byrne 1995 and Ada Garcia et al 1999/2000) Cynthia Cockburn's analyses shed further light on the specifics of trade union dynamics across Europe. A further important source is the ongoing research of the European Foundation on the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin) which carried on a major 5 year project looking at collective bargaining and equal opportunities and identified good practices (Bleijenbergh et al 1999).

Across the board there is a skewed representation of men in the upper regions of unions relative to their representation in the membership as a whole. Only a few of the nordic unions begin to approach representativeness of the same proportion of men and women in leadership as in the membership.¹ The higher the level of decision-making; the more likely that the body will be unbalanced in terms of gender. (Cockburn 1997) This pattern reaches its most spectacular peak at the European level where the majority of European delegates to the ETUC are male. However, the optimistic news is that the ‘presence of women in trade union decision-making bodies has appreciably improved’ since the early nineties (Garcia et al 1999: 43). ETUC itself affirms that ‘greater numbers of women should be present at all levels of decision-making and the collective bargaining process in order to fully represent the needs of women in different policy areas’,² and pledges to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies to be proportional to the number of women members and increase gender balance in the collective bargaining process. More female bargainers will have a positive influence on equality bargaining, as ‘sometimes the presence of women among the negotiators was a decisive factor in obtaining a good collective agreement’ (Bleijenbergh et al, 1999:10).

ii. Roadblocks in relation to labour markets and national regulation

- The gradual integration of women onto the labour market. Women are only gradually approaching a labour market participation rate equivalent to that of men, and thus the perception that they are only sojourners rather than real participants can be difficult to overcome. This affects their acceptance as fully valued members within the union.
- Transformation of labour/employment markets. With the rise of new occupations- with different occupational cultures, traditional trade unionism faces significant challenges. The flexibilization of work forms also undermines traditional organising methods and women’s possibilities to meet. Most new jobs created in Europe are taken by women. The challenge is to develop forms of organisation that can reach these diverse sectors. The more that women are unionized, the more the context is open to women’s candidacy as leaders
- Gender cultures of trade unions. Trade unions in some countries were powerful actors in excluding women from certain occupations. The bad examples from the past act as a spook in some countries. These may be further underlined by what are described as ‘macho’ organisational cultures. This cocktail makes the catch-up actions especially desperate and may lead to quotas and positive action programmes as in France (CFDT) or Belgium (CSC) to remedy historical lags. As Garcia comments on aspects of institutional cultures: ‘At each level of trade union hierarchy these special characteristics tend to select women according to criteria and attitudes in accordance with traditional trade unionism. We must also take account of the organisational cultures which encourage ‘kitchen cabinets and all the other informal masculine networks which may influence and distort decisions including those directly affecting nominations’ (Garcia et al 1999:21).
- The special case of central and eastern Europe and rejection of the ‘worker woman’. In economies in transitions in central and eastern Europe, few things have changed as much as the position of women in the labour market. Moving from the old stereotypical employment patterns to new forms of work is still underway. Women in these economies

1 TCO Sweden and AKAVA in Finland are identified in Garcia et al as having reached parity representation in their Trade Union Congresses, while Turkish, Polish and Bulgarian unions seem to be at the bottom (1999: 16).

2 European Trade Union Confederation ‘Plan to promote equality in the ETUC and its affiliated organisations’ Brussels (n.d): 7.

are rejecting the socialist past, but have ended up under-employed or unemployed. What their attitude will be to the labour organisation forms available under capitalism is still in evolution. On joining the European Union potential member countries will have to adopt the equal opportunities directives (acquis). But in these countries female participation in labour organisation decision-making dropped drastically after 1989. In the ETUC survey central and east European respondent confederations had not incorporated equal opportunities into their constitutions or worked on policies

iii. Timing of concern for representation of women

Trade unions are perhaps next on the list of areas in social decision-making where balance issues will become more important. The International Labour Organisation has begun to devote more and more resources to gender equality in work organisation since the late nineties (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/>) and the role of women's bodies and caucuses in pressing for changes has been increasing. A special issue to be kept in mind is the necessity to look for inclusive strategies to reach out to new membership groups including ethnic minorities and flexible workers as globalization forces transform the European employment forms. Taking the challenge of gender seriously could prove advantageous to unions in a time of generally lessening union affiliation. They can increase their organisational clout by attracting previously unorganised workers.

2. Selection of cases

Garcia et al (1999) identify a number of different situations of representation of women in union decision-making, depending on the percentage of women members. Guaranteed representation on executive boards seems to be virtually the only answer when membership is lower than 30%, but a number of medium term strategies are suitable for increasing representation in situations where membership itself is balanced. Initiatives to improve gender balance have been stimulated internationally especially by the European Union, which through its European Foundation on Living and Working Conditions has also monitored aspects of equal opportunity in collective bargaining, funded cross-country co-operation and shared experiences. The International Labour Organization has been strongly pursuing a gender mainstreaming strategy that is also bearing fruits in Europe. While the northern European countries have been active in pursuing gender equality in unions independently, the impulses from international organisations have been crucial for first initiatives identified as smart practices in southern and eastern Europe.

The strategies employed closely mirror those in political decision-making, including awareness-raising techniques, the grooming and selection of candidates through special training, the development of structures to ensure the representation of women's interests (such as women's caucuses and committees), leadership training programmes and various forms of positive action. For this study, informants identified training initiatives being taken across western Europe as especially important. While men had long been groomed for taking their place at the bargaining table, there was a pressing need for training designed especially for women.

i. Spain – Gender Awareness Days for Trade Union Negotiators

The major promoter of equality between women and men in Spain is “The Women’s Institute” – (Instituto de la Mujer) a state organ attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Women’s Institute is active in all aspects of society. Since 1996, the judicial department together with the governments of the autonomous communities and three major trade unions,¹ have organized gender related sensitization days. This project was initiated within the frame of the IV Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (1996-2000) and is financed by the European Social Fund. The purpose of the project is sensitization of trade union representatives. This can increase active feminine participation – to increase women’s position in decision-making and to achieve a more balanced participation in public life.

The gender days have been held in 14 out of 18 Spanish autonomous communities. About 100 participants from the three trade unions and from the governments of the autonomous communities meet to discuss, and to learn more about, equal opportunity rights and official gender policies. European, national and regional regulations and conventions are studied. This more theoretical part is then complemented by more practical examples illustrating existing problems. All different areas where equal opportunities are important are treated.

Aware and well informed trade union representatives and human resource managers can take this knowledge back to their work places. Hopefully they will work more actively to introduce measures to achieve a more balanced gender representation and equal opportunities. According to Belén García de Andoain-Rays at the Women’s Institute, this is indirectly beneficial for increased gender balance in public as well as private organisations. She further explains that even though there has been no official evaluation of the project, it has, since its start, been received with great interest and a high level of participation.

Source: *Belén García de Andoain-Rays, European Relations Officer, Instituto de la Mujer, c/Condesa de Venadito, 34, 28027 Madrid Tel. +34-91-347.78.83 Fax. +34-91-347.80.76*

ii. Finland: From Fairy Tales to Fair Deals

‘In a good workplace everyone should be consulted, and this includes women so equal opportunities should not be regarded as an isolated issue’ Riita Partinen, Equality Secretary SAK-Finland²

Historically, Finnish women have been organised in a Women’s Committee within the SAK since 1938. Naturally, their emphasis has changed over time. Women today are trained to be self-aware as trade union members and negotiators. The focus in Finland has turned toward gender co-operation, as the work towards a fair deal needs men as well. Co-operation is stressed at all levels of the labour market organisation, as equal opportunities can benefit everyone. But in trade unions not everyone is convinced that gender equality can really benefit the whole. Getting

1 The participating trade unions are *Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT)*, *Comisiones Obreras (CCOO)* and *Unión Sindical Obrera (USO)*.

2 Quotation from ‘What makes a good workplace? Equal opportunities benefit all’ quoting Riita Partinen, Equality Secretary SAK-Finland, - site <http://www.sak.fi/fin/english/articles/paju.htm> 8/08/00.

men to work for gender balance and getting enterprises to support it wholeheartedly still requires tangible examples. To show that equality is advantageous for all, the social partners (employers and employee organisations) carried out an action research project with 10 companies in 1998/99 that demonstrated that more balanced opportunities lead to a more pleasant place to work. They raise the competitiveness of the organisation as well. The project will be continuing, as one of the findings is that men are still less likely than women to see that equal opportunities are a problem.

Source: Riita Partinen, Equality Secretary SAK-Finland.

Site <http://www.sak.fi/fin/english/articles/paju.htm> describes the projects in more detail.

iii. Denmark: The Starlet initiative - LO and KAD and international gender training

'The Starlet is not a stunning blond nor a blind Barbie, nor a blue-eyed brunette, but a young woman between 25 and 35 who wants to make a difference (Starlet project campaign brochure)'

In Denmark where the rate of unionization is very high, there has been long term effort to improve gender balance in the top of the labour movement. The National Trade Union confederation (LO) launched a survey to investigate the representation at both local and national levels and to develop new tools to correct gender inequalities especially at the top. The KAD (*Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund*), which is a woman-only union has been in the forefront in developing initiatives on training women to lead. The 100-year old union is the only union in the world which only organises women and with its 85,000 members is one of the larger members of the LO (Trade Union congress in Denmark). In co-operation with international partners, this union has developed a major package of good training practices and handbooks that can be used all over Europe to develop new talent for union leadership. Sponsored by the European Union¹, the training packet includes study sheets and set-up sheets for courses to mainstream gender into Unions and incidentally improve the climate for women leaders. An especially interesting project is aimed at young women, and called the Starlet initiative. The Vice President of the LO, Tine Aurvig Broendum notes 'There are many men in the trade union movement with grey hair or bald on top. They do a great job. But we also need to see more young women putting their mark on the trade union movement in the new millenium' (www.lo.dk/view.asp?documentID=1782 March 1, 2001). It aims to provide a springboard to a career as a union leader. Coordinated by the LO it will train some 25 women from 25-35 from all the different unions, mostly with children. The idea is that the union movement needs more women, and the training programme can make young women more effective, if set up to suit women's needs. The insights of KAD and the earlier international good practice experience have been influential in the construction of the programme.

Source: Marianne Brunn, KAD (www.kad.dk) and Equality pages of the Danish Trade Union Congress (www.lo.dk)

¹ CISL (Italian Confederation of Trade Unions), co-ordinator with the Trade Union Congress the Kvindeligt Arbejdersforbund, European Trade Union College and European Commission (n.d. 1999?) *Mainstreaming in the Trade Union Training Guide to Good Practice and Training for Men and Women*.

iv. Estonia: ILO pilot projects building networks of women's organisations for community economic development

Getting women to the decision-making table in international labour relations discussions is a long standing problem, as statistics gathered by the International Labour Organization (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/pol-set/conf98.htm>) indicate. In recent years Estonia has been at or near the top in terms of gender balance of delegations sent to international meetings organised by the International Labour Organization (62.5 % in 1998) . While this performance is no doubt related to a high and long-term integration of women in the labour force in Estonia, consistent effort by multi-national partners may also have contributed to Estonia taking the lead in parity in decision-making teams, even while facing the extreme challenges to women's employment placed by a transition economy. The ILO has been important in this task. Its work in Estonia around gender equality issues is primarily aimed at improving the work situation and employment opportunities for women. But the work seems to have had positive spin-offs in maintaining the position of women in decision-making. The Gender Promotion project National Action Plan for More and Better Jobs for Women (start 1997 in co-operation with the Finnish and Estonian governments) aimed at first to improve the situation of the poor and rural regions. However, the 400 rural women in Valga county received wide-ranging training in leadership and negotiation skills as well. "One particularly successful element of the pilot project has been the establishment of networks of women's organisations and the development of their regular dialogue with local authorities, ensuring women are starting to have a greater voice in their community's development", according to the contact representative. "Women are very educated in Estonia but we have a lack of free market experience," said National representative Riina Kütt to the *World of Work* (no. 31 September/October 1999). "We have very limited business traditions in Estonia, though some remain from the time between the wars. We have to learn everything." The Estonian case provides a good example of the role of international organisations in stimulating learning local networks and eventually local social partners to take on international good practices. It further highlights the usefulness of international sources for inspiration, ideas and network potential when local resources are low.

Source: Sriani Ameratunga ILO Gender Promotion Programme Employment Sector. Further information from National Project Coordinator Riina Kütt, Bureau of Equality of Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs +372 6269878 (Riinak@sm.ee).

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E. Women's non-governmental organisations

1. The continuing importance of women's organisations in new settings

Women's empowerment and the importance of gender balance in decision-making processes is a central target of European women's movement organisations. No survey of actions to improve gender balance can overlook the role of women's councils, organisations and grass roots activists in stimulating attention for this issue. Within their own ranks, as a special interest group, women's organisations are by their nature not gender balanced. Very few such groups include men in any level of activity. The sex-segregated nature of the women's movement is its source of strength as it provides a fruitful base for thought and networking, but this aspect may prove a roadblock to any future actions designed to harmonize masculinities and femininities in the aim of achieving gender balance. Women's organisations are conceived within an oppositional interest-group framework. They remain an essential participant in the work to achieve engendered decision-making. Their support of this goal provides democratic legitimacy for efforts and new arguments and strategies.

Today there are thousands of women's groups and organisations in the member states of the Council of Europe. As the Beijing Platform for Action states 'Non-governmental and grass-roots organisations have a specific role to play in creating a social, economic, political and intellectual climate based on equality between women and men' (§§289 1995). The activities of the United Nations provide a target and platform for nationally based women's movements as well as being an important source of sharing ideas. We can speak today of transnational networks of feminist organisations that provide important intellectual and moral resources to non-governmental organisations working with grass-roots activities¹.

Women's groups play an irreplaceable role in this struggle, and all the more so in countries where women's representation in decision-making has decreased, as in areas of central and eastern Europe. As one eastern European informant commented more generally about the fight for gender balance in her country, 'there is no wonderful example that springs automatically to mind. It is quite a struggle with gender equality issues here, and success is only ever partial.'² One of the most stunning examples of the importance of coalitions between West and East is the case of the countries of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, where 100 prominent women activists lobbied the negotiations of the Stability Pact in 1999 and managed to get a Gender Task force included as part of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe of the Organisation for Security and Cooperaton in Europe³. It now operates in 10 South European countries and has as a main priority "Equal Access to Power". The Serbian arm of the Task Force focused particularly on the election of women and received support from Austria, Switzerland and the

1 Moghadam, V. (2000). "Transnational Feminist Networks: Collective Action in an Era of Globalization." *International Sociology* 15(1): 57-86.

2 A.G. Neimanis, Latvia 25 October 2000.

3 Information provided by Nives Malenica and Tihana Ancevi, Brussels, referring to a very well documented website in English covering the activities of the Gender Task Force in the ten member countries. (<http://www.spgtf.org>) January 2001.

EU among others thanks to well thought-out projects flowing from the Gender Task Force initiative. Many Serbian opposition parties agreed to gender quotas for their lists. The December election in Serbia led to an increase in parliament from 5% to over 12% according to first results, and this was primarily thanks to the effort to get women on the lists in eligible places. The project's outreach has been considerable by using the strategy of providing Western training for trainers to reach women candidates (the Women Can Do It approach) and then mobilizing trainers to do local organising like rings on the water.

In central and eastern Europe, women's organisations have to forge a new identity, divorced from the official story of the old women's organisations, and perhaps also divorced from the socialist view of feminism which has made this a dirty word in some circles. Few identify completely with the feminism of the West either¹. Forging authentic identities and strategies specific to this environment is a major challenge. One of the techniques that has surely been of importance, but is perhaps beyond the purview of this brochure has been the creation of interlocking networks of women's organisations between the West and the former East. These have been particularly important in the area around the Baltic and in Russia, where for example, 'Femina Borealis' a league of nordic and Baltic women's organisations has been able to form a critical mass among feminists in the Barent Straits region in the mid-nineties with special interest for indigenous peoples. Sporadic efforts such as the Young Women and Democracy programme which enjoyed some funding from the EU PHARE/TACIS programme also brought Eastern Europeans interested in gender and democracy together in 1995-1997, but the longevity of these efforts seems to depend on the constancy of external funding.

Activist women in transition societies also use the platform of women's studies to build up a woman's voice in civil society. New centres of women's studies are arising across Eastern Europe. When they have access to the internet, these groups can link up with supportive centres elsewhere and form an important conduit for practical ideas. A further important technique to establish a base for promoting balance in decision-making has been the creation of umbrella organisations of women's groups such as the Russian Consortium of Women's Non-governmental Associations. Using the information highway has also become increasingly important for East-West and intra-East communication of practices and ideas through networks such as the Network of East-West Women (NEWW - <http://www.neww.org>).

The characteristics of women's non-governmental organisations that specifically structure their possibilities are the fact that they are relatively gender segregated and working within a single gender culture. Further, as non-governmental organisations they often rely on volunteer work and are frequently low on financial resources. Thus their ability to undertake expensive actions is lower than is the case for the other social organisations discussed above. As volunteer organisations they may also be short on management skills, and some educational schemes such as the brief EU stimulated REGINA project (European Network for Management of Women NGO's and Associations) with its French, Italian, Belgian and Dutch partners have focused specifically on developing training material for NGO managers. Much more remains to be done. Given their weakness, many NGOs find moral strength in being part of an international movement which may help them overcome some of the material roadblocks to effective action. Another source of strength is the commitment of members to the cause. High levels of energy and mutually reinforcing synergy can be produced, and networks can increase the potential

¹ Watson, P. (2000). "Politics, policy and identity: EU eastern enlargement and East-West differences." *Journal of European Public Policy* 7(3): 369-385.

impact surface. A good example is provided by the networks of professionals in emancipation such as the German national network of equal opportunities officers working in cities and in the public sector who meet regularly and share good practices and strategies (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft kommunaler Frauenbüros - www.bag.kommazwo.com/bag).

The specific dynamics of women's organisations make certain kinds of shocking awareness actions possible, as well as allowing infiltration into civil society when official channels are road-blocked. The women's movements in non-governmental settings in Eastern Europe have made savvy use of new techniques of organising such as the Internet to keep the message of diversity and empowerment in the public eye. Because women's non-governmental organisations are themselves not the target of these actions, the types of action are usually in the category of awareness raising, which is somewhat marginal to the task of this brochure. We have therefore only selected a very few examples. The ideas can, however, perhaps inspire other types of organisations in ways of targeting their own mixed membership and alerting them to the importance of balance.

2. Selection of cases

i. United Kingdom (Scotland): Putting women in the picture with the Gender Audits

How can we find out if gender balance commitments are being honored? Women's organisations are particularly well-placed to serve as a watch-dog and gadfly. They can goad other organisations into making good on their international and national commitments. Monitoring the progress towards gender balance should perhaps be the responsibility of the public administration (as is the case in the Statistics Sweden brochure mentioned above), but it seldom is. In some countries women's networks and NGOs take over the function of providing the 'Blunder Book' on gender relations for public authorities. Publication of the record on gender issues both shames those sectors of society where progress is lacking as well as rewarding those who are doing well.

The Scottish example is particularly nice.¹ Thanks to the Gender Audits produced from 1993-2000, general statistics on the status of women have improved. The Audits gather statistics together and further provide commentaries and interpretations of the situation by expert observers. From the beginning they were produced by volunteers in the group ENGENDER, a network of research and networking groups. The early years certainly demonstrate the energy available in civil society. Small amounts of support garnered from widely differing sources all contributed to a bringing about a high quality resource without substantial external funding.

ENGENDER always argued that 'the development of accurate data on women's lives is essential if action to empower women is to work, gender sensitive policy is to be made, targets are to be set, and progress is to be monitored'(ENGENDER 2000:3). The Audits became such a basic tool of information that the final year was sponsored by a major newspaper. With the

¹ Another good case is Ireland, where the Commission on the Status of Women carried out several lengthy audits in the early nineties and is now developing indicators to monitor gender equality. (Yvonne Galligan, private communication).

'Gender Audit 2000' the authors also declare their job to be done. The new Scottish regional government seems ready to take over auditing the progress of gender relations. They will make significant efforts to present gender transparent statistics so that the progress of attaining gender balance can be monitored.

The Gender Audit for 2000 reports on the position of women in contemporary Scotland in politics, on the rural countryside, in transport, education, health and in terms of sexualities. It updates information on gender relations in fields ranging from business and childcare to poverty, trade unions, violence and voluntary organisations. In past years it has focused on providing information on women of colour, and minorities or issues of poverty and disabilities.

As a 'smart' practice, the experience of the Scottish Gender Audits are notable particularly because of the networking features. The collaborators stimulated contacts across social boundaries and empowerment on a wider front. Information on women is spread in widely varying sources, and it took the efforts of people from universities, public administration, voluntary organisations and civic organisations such as trade unions to start along the road to a fuller picture of gender relations. This also develops a good basis for mainstreaming strategies. The encounters in preparing the reports may also have led to the training of new generations of candidates to share in decision-making thanks to skills acquired in the preparation of the audit. People active in Engender and publishing information about skewed gender balance in decision-making later lobbied behind the scenes with the result that the first Scottish parliament includes 37% women.

That the idea of the 'Gender Audit' is transferable is illustrated by the wide spread interest around the globe. It has been promoted by the British Council as an innovative model. Produced primarily by committed volunteers, it has always been democratically accessible to serve as a resource for campaigning, lobbying, training and teaching. The latest version of the Audit is published on the Internet (<http://www.engender.org.uk>).

Source: *ENGENDER. 2000. Gender Audit 2000 Putting Scottish Women in the Picture. Edinburgh: ENGENDER and Governance of Scotland Forum and F.Mackay and E. Breitenbach, University of Edinburgh.*

ii. Russia: New tactics in countries in transition: Consortium of NGOs

The splintering of civil society in societies in transition has meant that organisations have had to start from scratch in many places in Eastern Europe. Although visions of gender equality and tactics vary deeply between eastern and western Europe, alliances between East and West with sharing of information on organisation and lobbying tactics have been instrumental in helping those who wish to pressure for better representation of women. Especially important has been the constitution of networks of organisations. One of the largest may be the Consortium of Women's Non-governmental Associations, which was founded in 1993 between NGOs in Russia, the Ukraine and the US. In Russia alone it has some 98 member groups from 37 regions of Russia which work on many different projects. As a Consortium they have been able to be much more successful in gathering international economic resources to support their network and specific gender issues than they would have been as separate groups.

The 'smart' in this example is the effort put in to creating communication channels between often isolated and resource poor groups who can profit from strengths elsewhere. The sharing that is taken for granted in countries with active umbrella organisations of women's groups such as National Councils of women has needed to be (re) developed in many areas in Eastern Europe. The Consortium can offer support in helping groups present their arguments. It tries in general to "empower them", profiting from international aid (USAID) to train groups in lobbying and advocacy. They have been successful in building an e-mail network to help regional groups follow legislative developments. The number of women NGOs working with information technologies has grown. Again this project would have been more difficult without the substantial help from international aid (Ford Foundation)

Source: *Indirect information – contribution to the Women and Democracy Conference, 29 April 1999. The Consortium of Women's Nongovernmental Associations. Contact: wcons@com2com.ru*

iii. Croatia: Cybergirls - Using the net, gimmicks and empowerment training to get women back into politics through women's studies and the information highway

We believe that gender democracy is an essential part of any democracy, and that a state which denies equal rights to women and minority groups cannot call itself democratic. B.A.B.E Network. Be Active, Be Emancipated (Budi aktivna, Budi emancipirana)

Women were delighted with this activity, they need training and wanted to practice communications skills which are really important for professional politicians. As a result of our training, a greater number of women reached the parliament...and we hope for an increase in the local elections in 2001 as well.'

Civil education and engagement are controversial activities in many areas in Eastern Europe, and new communication techniques have been crucial to help counter critiques and rally supporters. The informal B.A.B.E (which also means 'old-granny' in Croatian) network began working for democracy in 1994 and launched a platform for the parliamentary elections in 1995 and 1997. It also protested strongly and repeatedly against violence and in 1998 won the EU-US Democracy and Civil Society Award through its committed human rights activities and new communication techniques.

Another initiative at the same time took place with the founding of a Women's Studies Centre. Women's studies in central and eastern Europe has had an uphill fight, but shares with its western European sisters a core of social engagement. The Centre for Women's Studies in Zagreb which was founded by feminists and scholars in 1995 immediately took an active role in encouraging women to take up leadership roles and working on public consciousness. Especially important has been its mission in political education with a goal of encouraging women to work across divides on issues of human rights for women and more women in leadership. The Center has successfully organised many pre-election activities to raise consciousness about the necessity of gender balance in decision-making. It sold t-shirts, organized a web campaign and was highly present in street actions. It has also reached out with a programme called 'Dissolving the fear of power: leadership training for women in local communities' (2000-2001) which gathered wide support (funding from American Embassy, Council of Europe, European Commission, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, USIA and Westminster Foundation for Democracy among others.)

The aim was to use training to empower women to be carriers of political changes within their local communities and teach them skills to enable them to make effective public appearances. The need for coalition building around specific issues and cooperation in the realization of interests at micro, macro and international levels has been key. The training sessions seem to have been important for participants and the combination of actions of the Centre has led to more women in parliament and optimism about an increase in women at the local level from the current meagre 4% in coming elections.

Source: *Council of Europe expert Smiljana Leinert Novosel and Aida Bagi, Vesna Terseli, Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia +4872406, and information on BABE in English at <http://www.interlog.com/~moyra/projects.html>.*

iv. European Women's Lobby: EU – Mobilising Young Women for Equality

The European Women's Lobby is the largest coalition of non-governmental women's organisations in the EU. It organises more than 2,700 associations of women across Europe and lobbies for them in the institutions of the European Union. As such it is well placed to receive resources and gather information on issues affecting women in Europe. The danger that new generations of women to fill places in decision-making may not appear automatically lead to a European Union supported project (1999-2000) to create new training material attractive to young people and to bring them together to voice their specific concerns. Bringing the young co-ordinators together resulted in a manifesto in Lisbon affirming young women's commitment to equality issues including fighting discrimination, violence, and sexism in the media and education and claiming a space in decision-making.

The overall objective is supporting the integration of young women's concerns into European and national policy concerns through an increased participation of young women. Thus far this has been done through the organisation of national and international seminars and the preparation of "The Young Women's Guide to Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities in Europe". The process of making the book was discursive, so that the book also has a special eye for the multiple aspects of discrimination in Europe. Not only gender is at work, but also differences of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and physical ability. Work on this project, as collective work in NGOs often functions, can also spin-off to reach the longer term goal of stimulate and support the contacts necessary for networks of young women to appear. The project gave young women a chance to meet, voice their concerns and confront the differences. It is one of several across Europe that looks towards the future of equality by preparing new participants.

Source: *European Women's Lobby (<http://www.womenlobby.org>) where the text of the Gender Guide is also posted.*

v. Turkey: Kader - Women help women to get into parliament

Women's NGOs can play a significant role in increasing the participation of women in decision-making, and the example of Turkey shows the spread of this knowledge. Kader is an association for the support and education of women candidates. It was founded in 1997 by visible and influential women including journalists. It helps improve the legitimacy of women's

demands for increased political participation and acts as an active NGO. One of its main aims has been raising the number of women in parliament from 2% women (then) to 10% in parliament. The percentage reached 4.2% in last elections.

Source: *Council of Europe expert Yesim Arat. Contact person: Zulal Kilic 0 212 273 2535.*

Additional Reading

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F. Non-governmental organisations

No area of social decision-making has been as little investigated as the role of gender in the management of non-governmental organisations. The activities of non-governmental organisations are among the most wide ranging covered here. They can range from Greenpeace and football clubs to the Red Cross. The gender problem is initially straightforward. In a large variety of voluntary organisations, the work is frequently done by female volunteers, but management and paid jobs are disproportionately in hands of men. The composition of boards of directors and executive boards of trustees is also disproportionately male. For these organisations, going public with their internal problems would undermine their legitimacy. Hence while non-governmental organisations linked to the UN may be in the forefront in developing instruments to gender test policy towards developing countries, they may be lagging in investigating the issues in their own backyard. This is not always the case however and it is in Development Assistance that the issue of gender balance in the organisation itself is most publicly raised, and where training efforts seem to be have been carried out.

There is an crying need for research and shared comparative projects on the issue of gender balance in the management of non-governmental organisations. The present lack may be related to the scale and resource poverty of the sector. It is also only relatively recently that non-governmental organisations have seriously begun to consider using professional management techniques and managers. We suspect, that at least as far as managing directorships and general secretariats are concerned, much is changing. Anecdotally it seems that many Brussels offices of NGOs are now headed by women, but there is little or no statistical evidence available. The EU study of women in decision-making noted that no area was so little studied as that of women in the 'third sector' of voluntary associations, charities, churches, and other non-profit-making organisations (Lovenduski 1999:19).¹

This sector should potentially be one of the most sensitive to the issue of representation. Many of the organisations are strongly committed to social justice. Yet the irony is that their economic survival may depend on support from sectors where decision-making is extremely unbalanced in terms of gender. The world of large corporations and finance is noted for its gender segregation, but is also an important source of financial support for some non-governmental organisations. Boards of directors of charitable organisations frequently include members who are able to mobilize the financial world to make contributions. These directors are disproportionately male. With the changing role of women, the base of activism of these organisations has been transformed. An important question for future research is how the decision-making structure has been responding to these social changes.

¹ The Council of Europe funded a report by Helge Hernes in 1984 which seems not to have been paralleled nor followed up since then. Yet the sector has evolved dramatically. (Lovenduski and Stephenson 1999:19).

1. Selection of cases

Unfortunately, for this report, very few examples of efforts to change gender balance in management of NGOs were forthcoming. We include here only one example. Some of the informants informally suggested that non-governmental organisations working with developing countries and who gender test projects in terms of development aid are also concerned about the gendered relations of decision-making within their organisation. Examples from the United Kingdom and Flanders were mentioned, but these seemed to be in a fledgling stage. This observation that the work within the United Nations framework stimulates a broader concern for gender issues goes for governmental organisations that work with NGOs as well as within NGOs themselves. The OECD also hosts a gender unit within its Development Assistance Commission that has prepared an exceptionally useful handbook (Schalkwyck and Woroniuk, 1997) for addressing some of the issues inside organisations including resistance to gender equity, and organisational culture. The literature lists in this guide provide a signpost to NGOs in the development sector such as Oxfam, who are carrying out gender training and gender balance efforts within their organisations.

i. Switzerland – “Woman to Woman”: A Mentoring Programme for Young Women¹

“One of the reasons we ended up doing a mentoring project was that we found out, through questionnaires to all our member organisations, that 50 percent of all the people involved at the grass-root level in youth organisations were women. So women were actually equally represented at the grass-root level, but when it came to more responsible jobs, higher up in youth organisations, women totally disappeared. A lot of our member organisations ended up having problems finding women to take on jobs that were a little bit more time consuming and responsible... a lot of them just doubted their capabilities”.

The Swiss Council for Youth Activities² (CSAJ/SAJV) - an umbrella organisation for about 90 different types of youth organisations reacted to the absence of women in key positions with the launch of a mentoring programme in January 2000. This one year pilot programme, gives young women the opportunity to meet and learn from older women, in the hope that they will later be more familiar with the responsibilities of leadership.

CSAJ/SAJV wrote women politicians to ask if they would be interested in becoming mentors and had an unexpectedly warm response from potential mentors. The young women were elected among applicants from different youth organisations. A common first meeting was held with all the participants in January 2000. The 30 “couples” were already paired up, but met for the first time. Since then they have met about once a month and spend an afternoon or evening together. The contents of the meetings are varied as it depends on the participants themselves. Some couples organise workshops together while others just discuss. Some participants have been able to shadow their mentor at her place of work.

1 All facts and quotations are based on a telephone interview with Dominique Grisard, 27/10 2000.

2 The name in Switzerland’s official languages are the following: Le Conseil Suisse des Activités de Jeunesse (CSAJ), Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Jugendverbände (SAJV), Federazione Svizzera delle Associazioni Giovanili (FSAG), and, Federaziun Svizra da las Unions da Giuventetgna (FSUG).

As the project evolves, it is evaluated. According to Dominique Grisard, who is responsible for the initiative, the reactions so far have been “very, very positive”. Yet, she points out that “obviously some couples have worked out better than others...if the two end up getting along very well on a personal level as well that really helps”. On the whole, Ms. Grisard sees the project as successful, not only for the young women: “most mentoring couples are very positive about what they have been able to learn...many mentors actually say that they have learned a lot...they have learned how to pass on their knowledge. They have also seen what motivates these young women, what kind of political problems are interesting to them and what they are interested in learning”.

Considering the success so far, the Swiss Council for Youth Activities (CSAJ), in co-operation with the Federal Commission for women's issues, decided to introduce a second cycle of mentoring. On the basis of an application and a personal interview, 23 duos were selected by the organisers of the project. The teams will meet regularly over one year, from June 2001 to June 2002. The experiences gained during the pilot project on mentoring have been included in a guide developed by the organisers of the project. This detailed guide, published in German, French and Italian in the magazine "Women's issues" No. 1, 2001, aims at encouraging other organisations to start similar projects.

Dominique Grisard thinks that this type of programme is very transferable to all sorts of different domains and national contexts. “It wouldn't even have to be in politics.”

Source: *Dominique Grisard, Conseil Suisse des Activités de Jeunesse/ Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Jugendverbände (CSAJ/SAJV), Postgasse 21, 3011 Bern, Switzerland, Tel: +41-(0)31-326.29.35, Fax: +41-(0)31-326.29.30 E-mail: dgrisard@sajv.ch*

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CONCLUSIONS?

This story of working together to change gender balance is not concluded. The very structure of this brochure makes plain that efforts spread like waves across the different sectors of decision-making and through different countries. We began with the area of political parties and found innumerable examples, but the further we depart from public control, the thinner and less continuous the experience.

In some places the tipping point has been reached in terms of increased awareness of the importance of gender balance and vigilance to see that it is maintained. It will be difficult to turn away from the sharing of political power between men and women that has occurred in the Northern countries. But in many countries, the magic combination of inspiration and individuals in the right context that can lead to tipping the balance can still make a difference.

Today, there are more resources than ever before to help people understand the context of gender inequality, its history and its specificities. This knowledge helps us generate better and more appropriate methods to challenge it. The range of instruments and pathways is considerable. There is no lack of good ideas, smart practices and enthusiastic experienced people to provide advice. This brochure is just one of the available tools to help concerned organisation members find each other to share experiences on strategies that work. People who want to make decision-making better will find more allies than ever. We hope that this brochure can be an extra help in winning support and that it stimulates both analysis and action.

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