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Gender mainstreaming in Greece

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Gender mainstreaming (GM) is a strategic component of the current gender equality policy in Greece and a challenge for coming years. In the first section of this short paper we briefly assess the policy context, economic circumstances and institutional/legal background for GM in Greece, while in the second we discuss the transferability of the good practices of Belgium and Sweden.

1. Policy context, institutional background and economic constraints on GM

A GM strategy was first implemented in Greece in the early 2000s with funds from the **3rd Community Support Framework** 2000-2006 (CSF). The General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) participated in the planning process of the 3rd CSF and subsequently in all its Monitoring Committees. Moreover, equality officers were appointed at the Managing Authorities of each CSF Operational Programme while Regional Committees for Equality were set up in the thirteen regions of the country.

However, GM was implemented in a limited number of policy areas and was confined to integrating quotas and positive actions in favour of women in these areas. For these and other reasons, pointing to the lack of a holistic view to GM, strong political commitment and other basic preconditions for an effective implementation of GM, the real effects of this first GM attempt were below expectations, although gender equality policies and measures significantly increased in number and scope in 2000-2008 relative to the previous period. It is noteworthy that many of the institutional innovations remained dormant. The most prominent example is the fate of the **Inter-ministerial Committee for Equality**, in charge of introducing the gender equality perspective in all policies, set up by law in 2000. This Committee, to which the GSGE was to supply secretarial, technical and scientific support, only met once to approve the National Action Plan for Equality (2000-2006) of the GSGE and was never called to meet again.

The beginning of the 2000s also saw more successful institutional changes i.e. the establishment of a **Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Equality Issues** and a 30% quota for the representation of women on administrative boards and promotion panels in the public sector. The gender equality policy infrastructure was next reinforced in 2006 by the creation of a number of agencies and committees within public administration, namely i) the designation of the ombudsman as monitoring agency for equality of treatment as regards access to employment, vocational training and advancement, and working conditions; ii) the establishment of gender quality sections within the Higher Work Council and the Directorate for Working Conditions of the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection; iii) the creation of gender equality offices in the Social Departments of Labour Inspectorates iv) the assignment to the Analysis and Documentation Unit of the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection of the task of monitoring gender equality measures integrated in employment and social policy. Another important innovation of that year was the creation of the **National Council for Equality between Women and Men** within the General Secretariat for Equality (Law 3491/2006), composed of representatives from the government, social

partners, NGOs and gender equality experts. Its tasks are to engage in social dialogue aiming at the promotion of gender equality in all policy fields, to submit policy proposals and implementation measures, and evaluate the impact of gender equality policy at the national and regional levels.

After the first experience of the 3rd CSF, the next opportunity for implementing GM in Greece was presented with the **National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013** (NSRF). This includes structural policies and actions implemented at the national and regional levels and co-funded by the European Structural Funds. In April 2008, GSGE presented to the public the special priority axis “Enhancement of Gender Equality in all Fields of Public Administration” of the Operational Programme “Administrative Reform” of the NSRF. This priority axis included policy actions aiming to the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of gender equality policies, the development of a variety of tools (including gender budgeting) enabling GM in all fields of public action at the levels of both central and local administration, and the reinforcement of the position and participation of women in decision-making centres of the public and social sectors. In the NSRF, GM is referred to as an improvement factor for the quality of public policies, covers almost all fields of public policy and does so in a more systematic way than in the 3rd CSF 2000-2006. The responsible authority for the development, coordination and monitoring of gender equality policies in the NSRF is GSGE.

However, the concrete planning and model of GM strategy as well as the decisions on the concrete actions to be implemented in application were carried out after the governmental change in autumn 2009.

GM constitutes today one of the three pillars – arguably the most strategic – of the National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 prepared by the GSGE. According to the Programme, “GSGE has ensured the required cooperation of the competent General Secretaries, who shall promote the strategic goal of gender mainstreaming in central and regional policies of the country, so as to decrease the gender gap in the target-group that the respective policies address. GSGE has thus developed and shall support the preparation and pilot implementation of **Action Plans on GM in National and Regional Policies**” (p. 26).

High-level political commitments have been undertaken by **all Ministries but two**. Action Plans for the promotion of gender equality will be thus prepared by the Ministries of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights; Finance; Interior, Decentralisation and e-Government; Foreign Affairs; Defence; Economy, Competitiveness and Shipping; Environment, Energy and Climate Change; Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs; Labor and Social Security; Health and Social Solidarity; Rural Development and Food; Citizen Protection; Culture and Tourism. Model measures/actions to be included in the Action Plan of each Ministry are already decided and present in the National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013. Besides, the recent reform of **regional and local government** passed by parliament in June 2010, included institutional measures to promote GM such as (a) the creation of Regional Committees for Gender Equality with the aim of integrating the gender equality dimension in development planning at the regional level (b) the assignment to Municipalities of the competence and creation of a special administrative unit in each of them for the development and implementation of social and gender equality policies. The Regional Committees for Gender Equality will be composed of five members, of which one will represent the GSGE and another will come from a representative women’s association.

The development, coordinating and monitoring tasks of the GSGE for GM implementation are grouped around **four projects** that will be carried out by the GSGE and are to be funded by the Operational Programme “**Public Administration Reform**”

of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (NSRF), which includes structural policies and actions implemented at the national and regional levels and co-funded by the European Structural Funds. In the NSRF, GM is referred to as an improvement factor for the quality of public policies, covers almost all fields of public policy and does so in a more systematic way than in the 3rd Community Support Framework 2000-2006. The responsible authority for the development, coordination and monitoring of gender equality policies in the NSRF is GSGE.

We briefly present the goals/objectives and main actions of the four projects of NSRF.

Project 1: Promotion of GM in Public Policies

GM in all sectoral, regional and local policies will be promoted by this project through

- Design and specification of a Model GM System at the central, regional and local levels.
- Drafting of three Implementation Guides of GM for the General Secretariats of Ministries and the newly elected authorities of the Regions and the Municipalities.
- Development of Sectoral Programmes for Gender Equality by the General Secretariats of Ministries as well as of Regional and Local Programmes for Gender Equality by the regional and local authorities.
- Education and training in gender equality and GM of civil servants who may be/are involved in the design, coordination, implementation and assessment of equality policies.
- Transnational experience-exchange meetings to transfer know-how of similar policies implemented by other European countries.
- Conducting a Regular Achievement Report to assess the level and the range of gender mainstreaming penetration per sector and policy area.
- Conducting a study and pilot implementation of the process framework for the creation of gender budgeting policy.
- Awareness raising of public administration officials on the implementation of GM in the preparation of the national state budget.
- Actions to enhance the Ombudsman's Equality Circle (seminars, conferences, etc).
- Actions to enhance the gender dimension in the surveys conducted by the Hellenic Statistical Authority.

Project 2: Civil Servant Gender Equality Training and Awareness-Raising

Civil servants and public administration officers are key players in the design and implementation of Action Plans. GSGE has thus developed training and awareness-raising projects in cooperation with the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government and the National School for Diplomats for:

- Public administration employees that will be recruited in the implementation, coordination and monitoring mechanisms of equality policies.
- Public administration officials who receive maltreated women victims of violence (police officers, hospital personnel of outpatients clinics, court members)
- Correctional officers in women's detention facilities,

- Employees in municipal and regional immigration services, to deal more appropriately with women immigrants and family reunification issues,
- Employees in new offices established under the national administration reform in municipalities, to deal with social policy and gender equality,
- Social Inspectors of the Corps of Labor Inspectors to promote the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the field of employment
- Diplomats, on issues related to the role of International Organisations in the field of gender equality, as well as related EU policy.

Project 3: GM in Public Policies Monitoring Structure

The objective of the project is the establishment and pilot operation of a GM monitoring structure in GSGE and its ultimate goal to create a GSGE Directorate for Monitoring Gender Mainstreaming. The structure will support governmental bodies in their effort to strengthen policies and actions on gender equality and establish monitoring systems.

As far as implementation of the GM strategy is concerned, we must note that some crucial actions of GSGE's projects 1, 3 and 4 have been recently initiated.

Project 4: Gender Equality Policy Implementation Guide

The guide shall provide the methodology and specific directions for GM in each Operational Programme of the NSRF 2007-2013, the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development and the National Strategic Plan for Fisheries. It will cover all aspects and phases of the respective Programmes (specialisation, implementation, monitoring, auditing and assessment) and is meant to facilitate the development of projects that promote gender equality.

Assessment

It is the first time that an all-embracing GM strategy is carefully planned and launched in Greece. The main ingredients of successful implementation are there: political commitment at the highest level, new institutional mechanisms, awareness raising and training of public officials, use and propagation of gender expertise, development of methodology and tools for policy design, implementation, monitoring and assessment, resources for institutional and administrative change and the development of tools.

However, the design and actual content of Action Plans will crucially depend on the resources available to the Ministries as well as to Regional and Local authorities. Although the actions included in the projects described above will be funded by the NSRF 2007-2013 whose resources come mainly from the European Structural Funds, the national part of co-funding is not guaranteed because of the sovereign debt crisis and the implementation of fiscal consolidation policies under the Economic Adjustment Programme of Greece for 2010-2013. In accordance with the general objective of cuts in public expenditure, not only budgetary allocations to Ministries and Regional and Local authorities and the personnel in the public sector (administration and public entities) have been greatly reduced, but also public investment expenditure has been diminished thus delaying projects under the NSRF. It thus remains to be seen if GM is an effective tool to safeguard/promote gender equality in times of severe and structural

economic crisis. The difficult economic circumstances that Greece is currently facing, making the implementation of GM a real challenge, needs to be kept in mind when discussing the transferability of Belgian and Swedish good GM practices.

2. Transferability of the Belgian and Swedish good practices

The GM Programme in Greece, launched some six months ago, is close to the Belgian “Strategic Plan for Equality Affairs” pilot project of 2000-2002 and the GM project-based programme run by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, but also differs in some crucial respects. The Greek ministries are not asked to achieve a set of objectives in relation to gender equality but draw Action Plans in which model measures/actions have been decided in advance and will be funded by the GSGE. In both the Belgian Strategic Plan and the Greek Programme, the role of the gender mainstreaming unit in supporting the whole endeavour is crucial. As for the projects for regional and local authorities, in Greece these will be run by the GSGE and not the Greek Association of Local Authorities. The GSGE will also undertake the education and training in gender equality and GM of civil servants working in central and local authorities who may be/are involved in the design, coordination, implementation and assessment of equality policies. This was undertaken in 2004-2006 by the GM Support Committee (JämStöd) in Sweden where there is availability of administrators and professionals with knowledge and experience in gender equality work. There is a lack of such personnel in Greece to cope with the needs of a large-scale GM Programme.

Greece can learn much from the Swedish well-developed methods and models for GM i.e. the 3R Method for gender impact analysis and evaluation of administrative operations and in public provision of services and resources; the METS checklist for organising gender mainstreaming work etc. However, Greece is still far from the strong and broad political commitment on GM and gender equality prevailing in Sweden, recently reaffirmed by the clear overall and interim objectives for gender equality adopted by the Swedish parliament. The adoption of such objectives by the Greek parliament can be achieved later on, after the current GM Programme has yielded tangible outcomes. In contrast, the adoption and use of a unitary – not necessarily the Swedish – theoretical framework for analysing gender differences and inequalities may be included among the tasks of the GM monitoring structure in GSGE, among the useful tools meant to improve the efficiency and outcomes of the GM endeavour. Last but not least, the 2001 Swedish law on Official Statistics is a good example that can be easily transferred in Greece after the implementation and evaluation of the pilot actions in the GM project, to be carried out by the GSGE and the Hellenic Statistical Authority.

Regarding the Belgian law on GM, it is rather premature to introduce a legal obligation of the Greek central administration for GM in public policies when the preconditions for its implementations are not yet fulfilled but are to be gradually created through the implementation of the GM Programme of the GSGE. Nevertheless, some of the key institutional arrangements of the Belgian law could be applied on a pilot basis in Greece, to enhance the opportunities for efficiently implementing the Action Plan for GM in each Ministry e.g. the “gender agent” in all Ministerial Departments. Moreover, following the Belgian good practice of establishment of an interdepartmental coordination group composed of high-ranking members of ministerial cabinets, the Greek government could consider reactivating the 2000 law on the establishment and operation of an Inter-ministerial Committee for Equality, in charge of introducing the gender equality perspective in all policies. Apart from institutionalising GM, the reactivation of the Committee would give momentum in the process and content of this

first GM experiment and would better ensure the commitment of all actors. Lastly, the GM monitoring structure in the GSGE would benefit from exchange of experience with its Belgian counterparts, especially as regards gender budgeting tools and processes and gender tests of bills and regulations where.

3. Policy debate

There are no relevant important issues that are currently being raised and debated in Greece. Public debate in Greece is dominated by the economic and social impact of the policies and measures taken in the framework of the Economic Adjustment Programme and by forecasts on the controlled default of the Greek state and restructuring of Greece's sovereign debt. In such critical economic and political circumstances, there is no room for debate on gender equality issues and GM. The same circumstances are also menacing the success of the first all-embracing and well-planned GM strategy to be implemented in Greece.