



**European Commission**  
Justice

## Exchange of good practices on gender equality

### **Implementation of gender mainstreaming**

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## Comments paper - Portugal

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# Gender mainstreaming in Portugal

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## 1. Introduction

The recent political context in Portugal has been largely dependent on economic circumstances. In fact, the worsening of the economic indicators and the failure of the approval of the 4th Stability and Growth Programme (PEG) by the Parliament led to the fall of the Portuguese government on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011. National general elections are scheduled for the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

Furthermore, early April the present (resigned) Government asked for international financial help and negotiations are currently being held with the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission.

This scenario of uncertainty makes it difficult to anticipate future developments in the policy context and institutional/legal background in Portugal. Therefore, the features and trends presented in this paper should be regarded as a picture of the existing situation up until to now.

In December 2010, Portugal adopted the *IV National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination, 2011-2013* (IV Plano Nacional para a Igualdade, Género, Cidadania e não Discriminação, 2011-2013, Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 5/2011, of 18<sup>th</sup> January). This Plan asserts equality as a competitiveness and development factor, in a triple approach: the re-enforcement of gender mainstreaming, as a requisite for good governance; specific action, including positive action; and the introduction of gender perspective in all areas of discrimination.

Along with this Plan, two other new plans related to gender equality were also adopted in the end of 2010, namely: the *IV National Plan Against Domestic Violence 2011-2013* (IV Plano Nacional Contra a Violência Doméstica 2011-2013, Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 100/2010, of 17<sup>th</sup> December); and the *II National Plan Against Human Trafficking 2011-2013* (II Plano Nacional Contra o Tráfico de Seres Humanos 2011-2013, Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 94/2010, of 25<sup>th</sup> November).

The co-ordination of these National Action Plans is under the responsibility of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género – CIG) which is hold by the Secretary of State for Equality. CIG's mission is to ensure the execution of public policies in the domain of citizenship and the promotion and defence of gender equality.

The Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego - CITE), is the other national mechanism for gender equality. This is a tripartite body, hold by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, and aims to fight discrimination and promote equality between women and men in labour, in employment and in vocational training; to the protection of parentality; and to the reconciliation of professional, personal and family life.

## 2. Transferability issues

### 2.1. Gender mainstreaming in Portugal: some relevant milestones

There is no law on gender mainstreaming in Portugal.

However, following the Beijing Platform for Action, several National Action Plans, policy measures and specific initiatives have contributed to the adoption and implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy in Portugal.

Some issues addressed in the discussion papers both on Belgium and Sweden have thus also been in focus in Portugal. The paragraphs below will synthesise some of the most relevant milestones in this path towards the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Already in 1997, after the approval of the *Global Plan for Equal Opportunities 1997-2000*, the Commission for Equality and Women's Rights (Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres – CIDM) (which later, in 2007, was transformed into CIG) conducted the project *Trampolim/Reda* (co-funded by the Community Initiative Employment – NOW Axis). This project aimed at the territorialisation of equal opportunities policy, raising awareness on the importance of the adoption of gender mainstreaming as a local development strategy, and providing training and technical support to the creation of local structures towards equal opportunities for women and men: with the creation of the role of local Equality Counsellors and of Information Centres for Women (Espaços Informação Mulher) in several municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

This strategy for the territorialisation of gender equality policies was further developed and strengthened, namely within the project *Bem-Me-Quer* (also run by CIDM, with NOW co-funding) and the *Taking Gender Equality to Local Communities* project (a European Commission funded project, run by CIG in Portugal, in 2006-2007). As an outcome of this last project a publication was issued containing practical guidelines and recommendations on the conduction of local diagnosis and local plans for gender equality<sup>2</sup>.

More recently, in 2010, a formal status of Local Equality Counsellors was established by law (Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 39/2010, of 25<sup>th</sup> May).

At the Ministerial level, the formal status of the Counsellors for Equality and of the members of the inter-departmental teams was established by law in 2008 (Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 161/2008, of 22<sup>nd</sup> October). However, the position and the role of the Counsellors for Equal Opportunities, as representatives of the different governmental areas, were foreseen already in 2001, namely regarding the Inter-Ministerial Section of the CIDM's Advisory Council.

Several awareness-raising and training initiatives addressed to the Counsellors for Equality at the Central Public Administration level have been conducted over the years by initiative of CIDM / CIG.

<sup>1</sup> A publication containing 'recipes for mainstreaming' was issued as an outcome of this project: Romão, Isabel and Santos, Sílvia (2000) *Receitas para o Mainstreaming*. Lisboa: Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres, Coleção Bem Me Quer, n.º 7.

<sup>2</sup> Perista, Heloísa and Silva, Alexandra (2009) *Igualdade de género na vida local. O papel dos municípios na sua promoção*. Lisboa: Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género.

The capacitation of the Public Administration agents responsible for the implementation of gender mainstreaming has also been pursued through the development and dissemination of manuals and guides. The *II National Plan for Equality 2003-2006* (II Plano Nacional para a Igualdade, Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 184/2003, of 25<sup>th</sup> November) foresaw this type of initiative as one of its structuring measures. A gender impact assessment instrument was published<sup>3</sup> as well as several sectoral guides for gender mainstreaming adapted to the different policy domains<sup>4</sup>.

The strategy for gender mainstreaming in Portugal includes the definition and implementation of plans for equality in Public Administration bodies, either at a local or a central / ministerial level. The Structural Funds have played a key-role in the granting of financial support to these plans, especially under the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, in particular under the Human Potential Operational Programme – Axis 7.2.<sup>5</sup> Actions eligible for funding include consultancy for the development of diagnosis, training, implementation and evaluation of the plans for equality.

Several Municipal Plans for Equality have been supported and implemented over the last years, especially since 2008.

Very recently, in mid March 2011, eleven Ministerial Plans for Equality were publicly presented. The definition of these plans, as well as of the diagnosis in which they are based, was actively supported by CIG through the dissemination of guidelines, the provision of training and of technical support by specialists on gender mainstreaming to the Counsellors for Equality and the members of the inter-departmental teams.

In order to developing access to external gender expertise (by any interested parties, such as local or central Public Administration bodies, companies, etc.), CIG has also compiled a (provisional) database containing information on gender trainers. The update of this database, also including gender experts, is foreseen.

The scientific support by experts is also assured at the level of CIG's Advisory Council: besides the Inter-Ministerial Section and the NGOs Section, a Technical and Scientific Group is in place.

The compilation and dissemination of gender equality indicators have been facilitated by the gateway of Statistics Portugal (Instituto Nacional de Estatística – INE). Under a protocol between INE, CIG and CITE, a Thematic File on Gender has been maintained and up-dated, including the following themes: population; education and training; health; activity, employment and unemployment; conciliation, employment and family responsibilities; family; decision-making; and crime and violence.

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<sup>3</sup> Perista, Heloísa and Silva, Alexandra (2005) *Impacto em função do género. Avaliação de medidas de política*. Lisboa: Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres, Coleção Bem Me Quer, n.º 10.

<sup>4</sup> Perista, Heloísa and Silva, Alexandra (2005) Guia para o mainstreaming de género na comunicação social. Guia para o mainstreaming de género na cultura. Guia para o mainstreaming de género na saúde. Guia para o mainstreaming de género na actividade profissional e na vida familiar. Guia para o mainstreaming de género – cidadania e inclusão social. Guia para o mainstreaming de género na cooperação com os países da CPLP. Lisboa: Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres, Coleção Bem Me Quer, n.º 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

<sup>5</sup> This line of financial support is also available to public, co-operative or private companies, entrepreneurial associations, and non-profit local or regional development associations.

## 2.2. Challenges and constraints

Some challenges and constraints to the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Portugal have been identified:

- The effectiveness of the awareness-raising and training initiatives addressed to the Counsellors for Equality, namely at the Central Public Administration, level has been hampered by the rotation of these counsellors. Since the assumption of this role depends on political nomination, changes in the balance of political forces always reflected upon the designation of new counsellors for equality, sometimes with large time gaps in between.
- The lack of a clear assignment in terms of working time and, in some cases, the lack of political recognition of their task, also often constrained the activity of the Counsellors for Equality.
- The lack of definition of concrete targets, deadlines and specific budget, namely in the *IV National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination, 2011-2013*.
- The women's rights NGOs have claimed for a more active advisory role on gender mainstreaming policies. Namely by occasion of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations *Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (in October 2008), the *Non-Governmental Report by the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights* refers to the lack of co-operation between CIG and the women's rights NGOs, namely for the preparation of the reports to be presented to CEDAW.
- The need to effectively monitor and evaluate the law, policies and programmes' implementation, namely in the area of gender mainstreaming. As an example, the Executive Summary of the *Evaluation Study of the III National Plan for Equality – Citizenship and Gender 2007-2010*<sup>6</sup> refers the difficulties experienced by the evaluation in building-up an information system based on the process and outcomes indicators foreseen in the Plan, given the lack of implementation of these indicators in the respective monitoring exercises.

## 3. Policy debate

As stated in the Introduction to this paper, the current scenario of political and economical uncertainty makes it difficult to anticipate any future developments which are likely to be relevant in Portugal, namely in the area of gender mainstreaming.

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<sup>6</sup> Commissioned to an external evaluation team co-ordinated by Virgínia Ferreira and dated by September 2010.