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WP2

Report on Analysis of Training Needs *Brief Version- ENG*

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INDEX

INTRODUCTION	3
DESK ANALYSIS	4
INTERVIEWS	6
FOCUS GROUPS	10
CONCLUSION	11
REMAINING WEAKNESSES	13
FINAL PROPOSALS	13

INTRODUCTION

The transnational project “FRO Curriculum” and this final report are co-financed by the EU Action Programme in the field Lifelong Learning programme LEONARDO DA VINCI.

The partnership consists of 7 partners representing NGOs, SMEs and chambers of commerce coming from 5 different countries: ANJAF (PT), European Movement International (BE), Centro di Iniziativa Europea (IT), European Association of Women Resource Centres (SV), Regional Association of Veneto Chambers of Commerce (IT), Business and Development Center (PL), Encounter AB (SV) The partnership has extensive knowledge in all relevant areas for the project realisation: VET, gender equality, management systems, Corporate Social Responsibility, SME development and innovation processes.

This report is therefore the first step toward the definition of a comprehensive professional profile and the designing of a new training program for those teachers and trainers.

To succeeded in correct analyses we used a plurality of tools such as desk analysis, interviews and focus group.

The definition of this comprehensive professional profile and the designing of the new training program are indeed the final outcome of the FRO curriculum project.

FRO Curriculum meets the need for increased professional qualifications amongst teachers and trainers in VET within the field of gender equality and reconciliation policies in Italy, Poland, Portugal and Sweden. Increased qualifications will enable teachers and trainers to offer adequate training for enterprises focusing on management systems for gender equality and Family Responsible Organisations (FRO).

European enterprises, especially SMEs, are faced with growing global competition requiring new knowledge, skills and policies. Studies have shown the correlation between gender equality, family friendly policies and profitability in enterprises. Gender equality has also been acknowledged as a “necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion”. VET is an important tool for reinforcing the implementation of management systems for gender equality but there is a lack of training offers in this field for SMEs, their entrepreneurs and managers. This can partly be explained by the fact that few teachers and trainers have the necessary knowledge and awareness of how work life balance influences equal opportunities.

DESK ANALYSIS

This desk analysis has confirmed that in Europe there are many training pathways for human resource managers.

In fact, if there is a lack of training in companies in Italy, not only at operational and intermediate level, but also among those who are in charge of managing human resources, the same lack is not registered in the other countries which take part in the project (Poland, Portugal and Sweden), even if in some cases, doubts are arisen about the quality of those training pathways (i.e Poland) or the general level of the education is quite low (Portugal).

Nonetheless only a few of these training course really focus on equal opportunities and work life balance, although, there is a continuous growing number of courses and master on the issue. Moreover only a few teachers and trainers who run these trainings have the necessary knowledge and awareness of how work life balance influences equal opportunities.

If, by one hand there is a wide variety of training courses in gender equality offered by different actors such as universities, private training companies, adult educational associations, social partners and public authorities, in general though we can say with absolute certainty that in the 4 countries which take part in the project, with the consistent exception of Sweden, most of the training activities addressed to managers in charge of managing human resources do not devote particular attention to the gender issue.

At the same time, we can also say that, again with the consistent exception of Sweden, the majority of trainers who deal with human resources management have only a limited knowledge of the gender issue and of the problems linked to conciliation of work and private life.

We should also underline that the only officially recognized standard concerning the concept of corporate social responsibility (SA 8000) does not pay particular attention to the conciliation of work and private life, even if two out of the nine requisites enlisted by the standard, *Discrimination* and *Remuneration*, refer directly to the gender issue.

However the SA 8000 certification is not yet very common. We must remember that only 1.461 companies have been certified (on 30 September 2007) of which 626 in Italy.

Therefore, in the four countries, there is a strong need to increase qualifications of teachers and trainers so to offer adequate training for enterprises focusing on management systems for gender equality and Family Responsible Organisations (FRO).

INTERVIEWS

The **areas involved** in this action are wider than the partnership country and were:

Questionnaire A : organizations and enterprises

- Poland
- Sweden
- Italy (with a special focus on the Veneto Region)
- Belgium
- Germany
- Greece

Questionnaire B: teachers and trainers

- Poland
- Sweden
- Italy (with a special focus on the Veneto Region)
- Portugal

The **target groups** of the interviews were:

Questionnaire A : organizations and enterprises (28 questionnaires submitted)

- Private enterprises (SMEs)and cooperatives
- Trade Unions
- Trade associations
- Special Agencies connected with the Chamber of Commerce and development agencies
- Gender Institute
- Public Body

Questionnaire B: teachers and trainers

- Poland
- Sweden
- Italy (with a special focus on the Veneto Region)
- Portugal

Two different **questionnaire** were prepared:

- An half-structured questionnaire to administering to a sample group of **trainers and teachers**.

The interview were aimed at presenting the FRO model and the FRO curriculum, detecting the interest of organizations in equal opportunities and conciliation matters, detecting training needs of

those organizations in the field of equal opportunities and conciliation, detecting the interest and availability to apply for a training, collecting information about other organizations which could be involved in the training

- An half-structured questionnaire, mainly based on closed answer questions to be administered to potential beneficiaries (**trainees**).

The interview were aimed at presenting the FRO model and the FRO curriculum, detecting the interest of organizations in equal opportunities and conciliation matters, detecting training needs of those organizations in the field of equal opportunities and conciliation, detecting their interest and availability to apply their staff (human resource manager and/or quality manager) for a training

The **main topics** for interviews were:

- Local acknowledge of equal opportunities and conciliation matters
- Impact of critical situations
- Local level of knowledge and training needs
- Existing training modules

Before **analyzing the answers recorded**, it is important to underline that the need to implement equal opportunities and conciliation policies should not be seen as a purely legislative or contractual issue, but rather it should be considered holistically: like gender, the policies linked to these topics are firmly embedded in the social context.

This also emerges from the qualitative researches which have been conducted: the interviewees' replies demonstrate that we cannot dwell only on the more "bureaucratic" aspects, we also have to go back and analyse a more "social" dimension.

We can start by analyzing the researches on companies. However, we should immediately clarify the following: the perception of the issue of equal opportunities and conciliation policies varies, even greatly, from one country to the other. The different degree of sensitivity is, in fact, closely linked to how the labour market is managed and organized. As is widely known, this is not uniform across the EU. Therefore, when we analyse the researches, we should also bear in mind the territorial differences on the subject.

As regards conciliation of family and professional life, companies claim that they have already implemented various working arrangements, for instance, part-time and teleworking, and evaluation methodologies on the application of these policies. This assumes lifelong learning (i.e. bilaterally, both by

companies and directly by the female and male workers) as well as considerable expenditure in terms of time and work required to achieve this.

This could have extremely positive consequences for companies as the higher level of conciliation equates to better performances and improved motivation of female and male workers.

However, companies should not consider equal opportunities and conciliation simply in terms of profit, but there should be an exchange, even of a political nature, between companies and their employees. To be really effective, these policies should develop from debates between the interested parties on the requirements, needs and difficulties (and, why not, also their specific desires) which should match up when trying to reconcile family and professional life.

It is also necessary to consider the company's readiness to making sizable efforts to achieve equal opportunities. As mentioned above, this depends on the perception that the companies have of the importance of the phenomenon, which changes considerably within the countries involved in our project.

It is important to underline that this perception is symptomatic of the different contexts in which companies operate. In frameworks where a basic scheme of equal opportunities has already been internalized, the problems will be completely different to those experienced in contexts where the foundations still have to be laid.

We can schematise the results of the researches in two macrosections.

The first refers to the importance of equal opportunities and conciliation policies for the trainers who were interviewed.

From their answers, three main levels emerged, which we should consider when preparing training courses on these topics:

- 1) an organizational level, regarding the most practical aspects, for example the place and manner of working and conciliation with the issues pursued by the participants;
- 2) a methodological level also relating to the methods of addressing the gender perspective - and not only this;
- 3) language (daily and formal) is fundamental in shaping gender-related issues and relations between genders as regards their specific concerns;
- 4) a 'content-focused' level, which on the one hand goes into further detail on the issue of conciliation of one's personal, family and work times, while on the other analyses stereotypes on how social roles are imposed and conveyed.

While, the second macro section refers to the actual usefulness of such a training course. All the trainers interviewed agreed on this point, although each one of them would then contribute their own expertise in order to outline “practical” dimensions.

Crossing the two macrosections, we can envisage training courses comprising different dimensions:

- an in-depth analysis on gender issues and their social implications, as well as the conveyance and changes in social roles over time and geographic extension;
- a debate and in-depth consideration on the trainers’ personal experiences as without this there would not be the empirical bases (or they would be weakened) for achieving effective and sound gender policies;
- understanding the social and family background of female and male workers, as their position on the labour market and their way of operating in it are firmly linked to existing gender conditions;
- proposing some gender and time conciliation policies, although focusing on the personal and collective contributions to these. We should not therefore draw up rigid policies, but rather we should allow female and male workers to actively participate in their formulation.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups with teachers and trainers to whom return the results of interviews and start a sensitization path on those topics, were organized in Portugal, Sweden, Poland and Italy.

Analyzing the four reports, we highlight the following points:

- the training was very positive, it has stimulate the attention and the interest of the respondents, who are overall satisfied and would like this training not to be only of 8 hours;
- the time should be not underestimated. Trainings of 8 hours have some positive sides, such as saving time and mobility; but they have also negative sides, because the topics risk to be condensed, and so they risk to become boring, or poorly implemented;
- from the considerations of the last questions, comes out a significant element: the necessity to include not only women, but also men. It's not a problem to underestimate: gender issues concern all of us, and they need a collective meditation to grow up;
- from the questionnaire, come out that there's a superficial interest on talk about the more sociological part of gender policies: this part has to become more dynamic and practical, involving the participants and inviting them to talk about their everyday life and their experiences;

One methodological notice: it could be useful to practice some recommendations:

- the multiple-choice questionnaires are simple to use, but they have the negative side to give very limited informations;
- the open-answer questionnaires, or interviews, have the positive side to give us more informations about a respondent, his/her workplace and everyday life, his/her perception about gender discrimination, etc.; but they have the negative side to be very long, and often people have no time to pay attention to them;
- we could think about a different way to take informations, more dynamic and qualitative, with the aims to avoid the risk to have limited surveys - about a theme, moreover, that couldn't be analyzed just on empirical data, but whose experiential dimension is fundamental.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion aims "to put together all the tesserae" of the pathway that was presented.

We have not concentrated on a general sort of summary, but we want to put together the focal points and the weaknesses that emerged from the desk analysis, from the report on the interviews and from the focus groups, in order to provide an overall vision, which can serve as the basis for defining the most appropriate training pathway.

Two main subjects were involved in the desk analysis and the report on the interviews: enterprises and the female/male trainers.

Enterprises

The enterprises can be analysed using various dimensions.

From the desk analysis and from the report, it emerges that enterprises have a good degree of interest in implementing gender and reconciliation policies. It is now necessary to understand which actions will actually help shape these policies.

First of all, it should be emphasized that these actions will have to be included in a social, economic and territorial context.

Social, because the female and male workers involved have different lives and origins, therefore they do not have standardized lives, i.e. based on a single standard (in economic terms) because men/women have salaries and economic backgrounds which can be very different (for instance, just think of the gap that exists between a manager and a cleaning staff person), and therefore not all men/women have the same resources, above all if we also take into account family responsibilities.

Territorial, because an enterprise cannot be unconnected to the national context, but above all from the regional and local ones. Therefore, different enterprises, set in different contexts, will have their own catchments area, their own "population" of female/male workers, their own management of relations with them, etc.

Thus, with these premises in mind, interventions by enterprises should be carried out along the following lines:

- analysis of the typologies of female and male workers in the enterprise: bearing in mind the context of their origin, both in economic and social terms (and focusing special attention on female and male immigrant workers);
- involvement of the female and male workers in decision-making on and implementation of gender and reconciliation policies;
- the exchange between an enterprise and its employees should not be top-down, it should be of a dialectical and participatory nature.

Trainers

The issue of female and male trainers reveals various aspects.

Firstly, we should not view them as a homogeneous group. The differences between the trainers can be seen both in terms of qualifications and experience, but also at territorial level among the different regions which are taken into consideration. Moreover, the trainers interviewed came from different enterprises, also within the same territory.

Therefore, when we analyse the replies given by the trainers, we should bear this heterogeneity in mind.

As regards their position in a training pathway on equal opportunity policies, we can say that these have the more "dynamic" task, as they are affected by the enterprise's requirements for greater competition and production, but also by the reconciliation needs of female/male workers.

We have identified the following focal points for the female/male trainers:

- a greater participation of the subjects which are to be trained;
- this participation should be based on a bilateral exchange between trainers and female/male workers which implies a less formal way of relating to one another in favour of a more collaborative one.

The following questions have emerged from the analysis of the focus groups:

- What type of perception is there of the reconciliation policies, both by the enterprises and by the workers? The perception that they have of the phenomenon is fundamental for laying the ground for reasonable and sensible reconciliation policies;
- Do enterprises have the tools and skills needed to develop new policies, as well as new methods for discussing and managing issues related to this subject?
- Why are some policies and practices considered "unfeasible"? What are the weak points in their organisation that do not allow these to be implemented?

- What are the most significant dimensions to be taken into consideration in the cost/benefit analysis of reconciliation policies?

REMAINING WEAKNESSES

Despite these premises, the following weaknesses remain:

- There is still a superficial awareness of what gender and reconciliation policies really are;
- Practical experience, in terms of dialogue and comparison of these policies, is lacking;
- There is a low propensity to elaborate different strategies and daily practices;
- There is a low involvement of female/male workers, and there is a lack of an in-depth analysis of the social, economic, territorial, cultural context (above all as regards female and male immigrant workers).

FINAL PROPOSALS

In trying to design a course that takes into account all the above-mentioned dimensions, we should consider the following points:

- an in-depth analysis on gender and its social implications, as well as the transmission and the changes of social roles over time and in terms of space. This analysis should also take into careful consideration the social, economic, territorial, cultural and political context;
- this analysis should be followed by careful contemplation of one's daily life, by everyone concerned, in order to be able to abolish those elements that do not allow equal opportunity policies to be put in place;
- ample room should be given to female/male workers to allow them to contribute, both personally and collectively, to the enterprises' plans for gender and reconciliation policies. We should therefore not devise rigid policies, but rather policies that are created through the active participation of all parties.

Note: The Completed Report can be consulted at: <http://fro.anjaf.pt>