EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

Assessment of the National Action Plan for Employment 2002 from a Gender Perspective

Austria

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Assessment of the NAP 2002 from a Gender Perspective

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

NAP 2002 does not contain an introductory note. It seems that gender equality bodies were not involved in the preparation of the NAP.

A. NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY IN CONTEXT

Women are mentioned twice in this context. Firstly, NAP 2002 states that the overall rise in employment is predominantly due to female employment; and, secondly, that women account for the majority of the marginally employed. The presentation of the results of a study on “atypical employment” does not differentiate between men and women.

B. NATIONAL ACTION TO ARISE EMPLOYMENT RATES AND IMPROVE EQUALITY AT WORK

With regard to measures aimed at increasing female employment, NAP 2002 refers to the increase of statutory retirement age for early retirement as well as to the introduction of a childcare benefit as policies on legislative level (cf. Report 1). Additional measures include “a number of sensitisation programmes, the review and update” of the information brochure entitled “Girls Can Do More” (published by the Ministry of Social Security and Generations) and the “women in technology programme” (in co-operation with the Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology) running from 2001 to 2003: “Its main objective is to prepare and implement measures to raise women’s share in new technologies through pilot projects in co-operation with selected employers” (NAP 2002:14). The initiative “Just for Girls” introduced by Magna Steyr is to provide a further contribution to increasing employment among women (see also below: examples of good practice).

Other than that, women and/or the gender dimension are not taken into account in this section of the implementation report.

NAP 2002 does not set national medium-term targets in terms of employment rates overall and for women but merely states – as did NAP 2001 – that the objectives of raising the overall employment rate to 70% and the female employment rate to 60% have almost been attained.

C. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION

NAP 2002 only in part responds to the gender equality recommendation (gender gaps and childcare provision). With regard to the gender pay gap, NAP 2002 first provides an “analysis into the reasons”, including childcare-induced labour market absences, reductions in weekly
working hours, labour market segregation, etc. The report then goes on to present a number of policies to fight the gender pay gap. Most of these measures, however, are not designed to reduce the gender pay gap and may even serve to widen the pay gap further in future (e.g. introduction of the childcare benefit) (cf. Report 1). Among the key measures that could lead to a reduction in the gender pay gap in the long term are: the “women in technology programme” mentioned above, a project already included in NAP 2001 on “Non-Discriminatory Work Evaluation and Work Organisation”; subsidies for policies within the ESF programmes and the EQUAL community initiatives aimed at reducing the gender pay gap and gender-specific segregation; projects whose objective is to “foster novel, non-traditional careers for women” (e.g. FIT – Women in Technology, and MUT – Young Women and Technology) as well as a new research project commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour to identify the potential for skilled part-time jobs.

As to the pressing lack of childcare facilities in Austria, NAP 2002 merely states that with the introduction of childcare benefit parents will have additional financial resources at their disposal to pay for childcare provisions\(^1\) and “will thus stimulate the creation of childcare options (especially for infants)” (NAP 2002:14). In addition, NAP 2002 also lists extra grants for parents on low incomes available from the Austrian public employment services AMS (a measure introduced in 1968).

**D. PROGRESS REPORT**

**D.1. Gender mainstreaming (GM)**

*Institutional Mechanisms*: In the context of GL 16 (Gender mainstreaming), NAP 2002 mainly refers to the inter-ministerial working group for gender mainstreaming (IMAG GM), which is continuing to operate on several levels: This includes, firstly, the training of public servants and senior executives in the ministries, the development of implementation strategies and the preparation and dissemination of information material. Secondly, three working parties were formed in order to draw up recommendations for the next working programme (e.g. the presentation and scientific evaluation of GM projects in the individual ministries; development of guidelines for reviewing legislative projects).

In spring 2002, the Austrian Council of Ministers implemented gender mainstreaming as a new strategy for action in gender equality policies. The involvement of both women and men (!) in GM activities is seen as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming (cf. NAP 2002:52).

Further measures listed in this context include: GM within AMS (Austrian public employment service) (cf. Report 1), the GM co-ordination office under the ESF Objective 3 programme (cf. NAP 2001) and additional GM pilot projects at the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture.

\(^1\) The report however does not provide any arguments to back up this claim (cf. Report 1).
Policies: The section dealing with Horizontal Objectives only mentions women and/or the gender dimension in three instances: Firstly, it states that the access of women to education and training is to be facilitated (objective C). Second, the report once more refers to the “campaign to increase women’s employment rate launched by the Federation of Austrian Industry” already announced in NAP 2001 (objective D); and third, it mentions tackling gender gaps in the labour market and reconciling work and family life as part of the policy mix (objective E).

With regard to GL 1 (Prevention) and GL 2 (Activation), NAP 2002 provides separate data and indicators for men and women and in general points towards a positive development for women. GL 1 policies to be implemented in future do not differentiate between men and women.

GL 2 (Tax-benefit system and activation): Changes within unemployment insurance legislation accompanying the introduction of the childcare benefit mean that now regional AMS offices have to ensure that women returners are offered a suitable job within four weeks, or are given the opportunity to participate in a skills training or reintegration programme. People who lose their jobs while or after drawing childcare benefit are now also entitled to claim unemployment benefit.


With regard to labour market policies, the implementation report refers to the extension of employment promotion schemes (especially for women over 45). However, the figures provided in the Annex to NAP 2002 indicate that these measures involve more men than women.

GL 4 (Improving the quality of education and training systems) and GL 5 (Development of e-learning): Among the numerous interesting policies mentioned, women are only explicitly referred to in the context of the “wider access certificate” (*Berufsreifeprüfung*), stating that in 2001 54% of participants were women, and new priorities set within the “Women and New Technologies” programme.

GL 6 (Bottlenecks): “To raise the number of women working in occupations predominantly held by men priorities have been set at regional level to give women and girls better chances in the labour market on the one hand, and to counteract the lack of skilled workers” (NAP 2002:35). Furthermore, AMS has established “Sites for Women” as part of its internet-based services.

GL 7 (Discrimination and social inclusion): The gender dimension is only taken into account in the context of the so-called “Disability Billion” and the “EQUAL Community Initiative”. Although the report claims that in “all the measures for disabled persons taken by the federal offices for social welfare, the particular needs of women with disabilities have been considered” (NAP 2002:36), the relevant table provided in the Annex to the report does not differentiate between men and women. One of the six topics of the “EQUAL Community Initiative” specifically addresses “reducing gender specific discrepancies between women and men in the labour market and promoting an end to the gender gap in the working life” (NAP 2002:39).
Within Pillar II, women and/or the gender dimension are only taken into consideration in GL 9 (Encourage taking up of entrepreneurial activities) and GL 11 (Regional and local action for employment). Although plenty of space is given to GL 9, especially in the Annex, the only reference to women is made with regard to the foundation of a business centre for women (BUSSINESSfrauenCENTER) in the Austrian province of Carinthia. As far as GL 11 is concerned, the Annex refers to the creation of a gender mainstreaming working group (TEP Salzburg) and a skills training programme targeted on women (ICT) offered by TEP Vienna.

In Pillar III, women come up twice: once within GL 13 (Modernisation of the work organisations: initiatives of social partners), where further exemptions from the ban on women’s night work on collective agreement level are mentioned; and secondly in both GL 14 (Modernisation of the work organisations: regulatory environment) and GL 15 (Supporting adaptability in enterprises) with reference to the exceptionally high rate of women among those claiming further education benefit (approx. 90%). What the report fails to mention, however, is the fact a majority of these women used this option to extend parental leave.

D.2. Gender equality

GL 17 (Tackling gender gaps): This section of NAP 2002 refers to the same measures and policies already mentioned in the context of the response to the gender equality recommendation (see above: Response to Recommendation). Additional key measures include: training and further education projects by the AMS offering enhanced career opportunities for women, especially in occupations and sectors where women are still underrepresented (e.g. women as financial advisors); the “Plan to Promote Women” in the purview of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture; subsidies for women’s initiatives and projects by the Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations; the amendment of the “Equal Treatment Act” (e.g. extension of deadlines for the enforcement of claims in court).

GL 18 (Reconciling work and family life): In addition to measures and policies already listed above, including childcare benefit, ESF measures and the EQUAL Community Initiative, the report refers to the following key measures: a range of AMS measures targeting women returners; the “Family & Work Audit” and federal competition to identify the “women- and family-friendliest enterprise” already included in NAP 2001; a pilot coaching project on

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2 With regard to GL 16, see above: Gender Mainstreaming: institutional mechanisms.
3 The rate of women in AMS activation measures amounted to 55.6% in 2001 and thus was higher than the rate of the unemployed (43.4%).
4 The so-called “legislation for more objectivity” (Objektivierungsgesetz) implemented by the government however very much reduces the effectiveness of this “Plan to Promote Women”.
5 Overall, the financial situation of women’s initiatives and projects that have been going for a number of years has deteriorated since the abolishment of the Ministry for Women’s Affairs.
6 In this context, the report indicates a marked increase in the number of men claiming part-time parental leave benefit. With the introduction of childcare benefit, this option is no longer available in the same form (cf. Report 1).
“family competencies” as a “key to greater success in ones’ job” (NAP 2000:58)\(^7\) and the introduction of unpaid “home care leave” to enable employees to care for close relatives who are dying. The last of these policies especially will no doubt contribute to strengthening a gender-specific division of labour.

With regard to the expansion of childcare facilities, NAP 2002 – as did NAP 2001 – simply states this is within the competency of the Austrian Länder (provinces) and Gemeinden (communities).

As far as budget allocation is concerned, NAP 2002 only provides detailed figures in some instances, which in general refer to 2001. The amount of expenditure planned for 2002, as quoted in Pillar IV, remains below the level of 2001.

E. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

PREV1 = C/A Indicator of efforts; PREV2 = D/B Rate of non compliance; PREV3 = B/A Rate of inflow into long-term unemployment: indicators are used, but reference period changed (January-August 2001).

ACT1 = E/(E+F) Activation rate; ACT2 = Rate of return to unemployment; ACT3 = Rate of return to employment = indicators are missing.

EO c9 = Coverage of childcare services: indicator used.
EO c10 = Structure of elderly care: indicator is missing.

F. EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Among the four examples of good practice included in the report, the “Just for Girls” project is aimed at promoting the entry of (young) women in the automobile industry.

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\(^7\) According to NAP 2002 (58), “the evaluation of the family competencies project has shown that the objective of the programme was reached successfully”.