EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

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

Belgium

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ASSESSMENT OF THE 2002 NAP FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE
BELGIUM

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Introductory note

1/ There is no mention of any implication of the gender equality bodies in the NAP preparation. Emphasis is put on the implication of social partners and of the different levels of government.

A. National employment policy in context

1/ In this chapter the specific gender gaps and gender developments are not quoted, even the data are not given by sex

B. National action to raise employment rates and improve quality of work

1/ There are some comments on gender disparities however, gender equality is not a major concern:

- The European objectives concerning women’s employment rates are compared with the Belgian situation (the women employment rate in Belgium was 51% in 2001 to be compared with 45.4% in 1996), it is stressed that the full time equivalent employment rate give a better picture of the Belgian situation compared with the European mean.
- Future policies will “have to take into account gender equality”.
- Concerning the quality of employment, it is said
  - that women in Belgium have a higher level of education than the European mean,
  - that 55% of women working part time explain their choice by family reasons
  - that two policies will particularly affect women: the premium paid to long term unemployed lone parents and the reduction of personal social contributions for low wage workers.

2/ Concerning medium term targets: The Walloon government is aiming an increase of women employment rate 30% higher than overall employment rate

C. Response to recommendations

- Overall quality of response: only few comments attesting of gender mainstreaming
- Recommendation 2: measures to increase women’s employment rates:
  - Women benefit from employment policies in a higher proportion than their percentage in unemployment (60% versus 56%)
  - Specific policies to improve women’s employability
    - Premium in favour of unemployed lone parents
    - Increasing of child benefits in favour of unemployed maintained in case of job taking
    - Tax reduction for low wages
Different policies related to working time and flexibility
Development of proximity services
Training programmes on new technologies
Neutral job classification to reduce gender wage gap

D. Progress report

1/Analysis of gender mainstreaming in terms of mechanism and policies

The reading of the different fiches related to the three first pillars shows an absence of any kind of mainstreaming process: in this NAP, women are visible in the parts especially devoted to her, pillar IV and recommendation 2 that are more developed than in the previous years NAPS. However, in four fiches women are quoted, like % of women benefiting from the “convention 1er emploi” in fiche 1, in fiche 6, it is said that training policies aiming at the formation of nurses mostly benefit to women “due to the fact that this sector is extremely feminised”, in fiche 7 the number of handicapped women who benefited from a guidance program is mentioned and in fiche 10, the non market sector in which the government hope to create employment is also qualified as a feminised sector. These are the only references to women in the fiches concerning the three first pillars.

2/ Analysis per guideline of the IV Pillar

LD16: gender mainstreaming

-Progress made in implementing previously announced measures, impact and effectiveness
  - “plan stratégique en matière d’égalité”: decision of January 2001: each minister had to fix a strategic objective in terms of equality, the only results quoted are those obtained by the ministry of employment in the field of women and new technologies
- New policy initiatives
  - “Institut de l’égalité des hommes et des femmes”: building of a new body in charge of gender equality: development of studies, recommendations, information, court actions
  - “coordination pour l’égalité des chances” in the french speaking part of Belgium, to elaborate a project in favour of equal opportunities(December 2001)
  - “Kleurrijk Vlaanderen” in the Flemish speaking part of Belgium, this project also address the question of gender, its purpose is to achieve equal access in all the fields of social life in 2010.
  - “Plan mobilisateur TIC” in the Walloon region: three experiences dealing with the training of women in the field of new technologies
- Monitoring: in this part the providing of statistical data by gender is addressed and different studies looking at the topic are presented (some results in annex underpinning the under representation of women in employment policies in the Flemish region)
- Budget Allocation: no information

LD17: Discrimination

“Women will benefit from general policies aiming at increasing the overall employment rate”

-Progress in implementing previously announced measures, results, impact, effectiveness
• Classification of function: the reform is still in the implementation process

-New policy initiatives

• Walloon region: different measures to raise the participation rate of unemployed women are mentioned: in the field of childcare access, mobility (driving licence), training (no information on budget allocation)
• Flemish Region: measures to encourage the participation of women in training programmes (with budget information) (VESOC project), education of social partner (DEUCE project) (with budget information), communication actions (Groot gelijk) and also actions in order to encourage young people to choose different training fields

LD18: Conciliation

-Progress in implementing previously announced measures, results, impact, effectiveness

• Care of dependants: extension of measure for aged dependant persons (numbers and budget)

-New policy initiatives

• Publicity actions in order to encourage men to reduce their working time (no budget information, no detail)
• Child care facilities: improvement of the work status of people carrying child in their house (no budget, no detail)
• Chilcare facilities: help to lone parents with low incomes
• Chilcare facilities: in the Flemish and the Brussels regions: increase of the number of places for children (data objectives but no budget)
• Chilcare facilities: research project concerning child care after school time
• Building of an ‘Observatoire des politiques de l’enfance et de la famille’ (Observatory of family policies) (no details, no budget)

-Budget allocation: In this guideline some partial information is given but there is no systematic presentation of data concerning beneficiaries and budget allocation.

E. Statistical information

1/ requested indicators in the Nap

Six tables are provided regarding the four pillar:
Table 36/ employment Rates (15-64)- gap men/women (1997-2001)
Table 37/ global unemployment rate – gap men/women (1997-2001)
Table 38/ sectoral segregation index (2001)
Table 39/ Women growth wage/compared with men (1995)
Table 40/ Chilcare for children less than 3 years old (2001-2004)
Table 41/ Numer of persons 75 and over living in institutions (2001)

We don’t have information on:
Transitions between employment and unemployment and within employment by type of contract
Elderly care: no breakdown
Childcare nothing concerning children over 3 years old

F. Example of good practice

It is very difficult to select an example of good practice as far as the information in the NAP are not detailed.

I can quote the “Plan mobilisateur TIC” in the Walloon region aiming to develop 3 experiences:
The first to train unemployed women for the internet system and to build web sites
The second in order to give the opportunity to women living in rural area to be familiarised with information technologies
The third to train with in the field of electronic

However there is no information on the number of women concerned and on the budget allocated