EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

Assessment of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion from a Gender Perspective

Belgium

2003

EWERC, Manchester School of Management, UMIST

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Preliminary note

On the 18th of May 2003, elections were held at the federal level in Belgium. At the time the NAPincl was being finalised, the new government was not yet in place. A government agreement was concluded on the 8th of July which has allowed to include the new government’s priorities for the next 4 years into the present NAPincl at the last minute. However, this also means that what is presented in the NAP are intentions rather than actual actions and measures. The practical details of their implementation such as the budget that will be assigned to each of them or the calendar of their realisation will still need to be negotiated. Consequently, as far as the federal level is concerned, only the political initiatives carried out in the course of 2003 are presented in a concrete way. It will be up to the new government to complete the chapter on “Strategic approaches” at the time of the intermediate evaluation.

Grid One : gender mainstreaming and gender issues raised by the Member States under the various objectives

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<td>- The rate of poverty risk: percentage of people living in households with total equivalised household income below 60% of median equivalised national income, by sex</td>
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<td>- Persistence of poverty risk: people living in households with total equivalised household income below 60% of median equivalised national income during the year ‘N’ and during at least two of the years N-1, N-2, N-3, by sex</td>
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<td>- Persistence of poverty risk: people living in households with total equivalised household income below 50% of median equivalised national income during the year ‘N’ and during at least two of the years N-1, N-2, N-3, by sex</td>
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<td>Relative impact by comparing % before and after transfers</td>
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<td><strong>II. EMPLOYMENT</strong></td>
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<td>Long-term unemployment rate: total number of long-term unemployed (&gt;=12 months – ILO definition) as a proportion of the total active population, by sex</td>
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<td>The number of long-term unemployed (&gt;=12 months – ILO definition) as a proportion of all unemployed people, by sex</td>
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<td>Very long-term unemployment rate: total number of long-term unemployed (&gt;=24 months – ILO definition) as a proportion of the total active population, by sex</td>
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<td>Immigrants' access to employment (difference in employment and unemployment rates between non-EU nationals and EU nationals), by sex</td>
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<td>Proportion of persons earning a wage but who are nevertheless part of a household exposed to the poverty risk (working poor), by sex</td>
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<td>Degree of activation (number of participants to professional training programmes and other measures of employment policy as a percentage of unemployed people looking for a job), by sex</td>
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<td>Regional cohesion: coefficient of variation of the employment rate at the NUTS 2 level (in Belgium: the provinces), by sex</td>
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<td><strong>III. HOUSING</strong></td>
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| | Proportion of people who rent a home from a public or
### Community Institution, by Sex

- Proportion of people who have one or more of the following housing-related problems: lack of basic comfort, at least two housing problems, insufficient space (by sex)
- Proportion of people with housing that does not provide for one of the following elements of basic comfort: a bath or a shower, hot water supply, a toilet with flush in the home, by sex
- Proportion of people with at least two of the following housing problems: a leak roof, no adequate heating system, humidity and mouldiness, ramshackle doors and windows, by sex
- Proportion of people with housing that does not provide for at least one room for each household member (bathroom, toilets, … excluded)

### Health

#### Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Occurrence of obesity (BMI +30) among the adult population (18+), by sex

#### Tobacco Use
- Percentage of heavy smokers (20+ cigarettes daily) among the population aged 15+, by sex

#### Life Expectancy at Birth
- Number of years a person can hope to live, starting at age 0, by sex

#### Life Expectancy and Life Expectancy in Good Health
- Difference between the highest and the lowest level of education (in years)

#### Auto-evaluation of the State of Health
- Percentage of the population aged 16+ considering their state of health as bad or very bad according to the OMS definition, by sex

#### Proportion of People Diagnosed as Depressed
- Proportion of people (15+) diagnosed as depressed on the sub-scale SCL-90-R for depressions (the state of depression depends on the presence of a certain number of symptoms, 13 items (auto-evaluation)), by sex

#### Proportion of People with Problems in Daily Activities
- Proportion of people aged 16+ with problems in their daily activities due to an illness, or a handicap, by sex
- Occurrence of tuberculosis: number of new cases of active tuberculosis (recurrent cases included) by 100000 inhabitants, by sex
- Cancer prevention: Proportion of women of whom no smear has been taken to detect cancer of the uterus cervix in the last three years
- Proportion of persons living in a household of which the reference person or any other member has had to postpone or renounce medical care for financial reasons during the last year, by sex

V. EDUCATION
- Young people leaving school early and refraining from all further studies or training of any form: proportion of the total population aged between 18-24 having reached level 2 of CITE (lower secondary education) or less and not pursuing any studies or training, by sex
- Proportion of people with a low level of education – level of education at level 2 of CITE (lower secondary education) or less – in the total adult population, by sex
- Proportion of young people in special education, by sex
- Proportion of young people who are 2 or more years behind in school, by sex
- Participation in life-long learning (LLL), by sex

VI. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION
- Frequency of social contacts: percentage of people aged 16+ who meet up with friends, acquaintances or family members living elsewhere less than once a month, by sex
- Limited social network: percentage of people aged 15+ with less than 3 close friends or acquaintances
- Low level of instrumental social support: percentage of people aged 15+ who cannot count on neighbours, family or friends in case of an unexpected need for help, in case of a problem that needs to be solved or in case they need to talk to someone.
- Low level of functional social support: percentage of people aged 15+ who receive no good quality functional support.
that is who do not live in an environment that can play different roles: instrumental (tangible help), informational (advice), emotional (listening, empathy), recreational (recreational and relaxing activities), and/or affective (love), by sex

- Proportion of people aged 16+ who during the last year have not participated in one of the following activities: cinema, sports event, pub, restaurant, dancing/disco, bowling/snooker, by sex

- Proportion of people aged 16+ who during the last year have not participated in one of the following activities: concert or musical event, exposition or museum visit, conference, by sex

- What is missing
  - specific statistics and indicators to identify gender issues

- At present, most indicators are broken down by sex. However, for the monetary indicators, this breakdown offers only partial information on women’s and men’s comparative situation with respect to poverty since it is the household’s total income (the sum of the individual incomes) that is considered in the evaluations. It is implicitly assumed that all household members have equal access to the household’s financial means. As a result, the different situation of women and men within households is rendered invisible. Poverty rates by sex reveal men’s and women’s differing intra-household positions indirectly in the sense that they will differ when the situation of men and women living alone or in households with an unequal number of men and women is different.

### 2- Review of progress during 2002/2003

The Belgian NAP Inclusion 2001-2003 proposed as many as 300 actions. By May 2003, two thirds had either been realised (126) or were running or being prepared (80).
To help with activation the European Social Fund granted an envelope of €9.1 million euro to the federal government of Belgium for the 7-year period 2000-2006. 15% (€1.4 million euro) have been dedicated to men’s and women’s equality at work (priority 4).

To make it easier to combine a family life with a professional career, efforts were made in the field of childcare. In Flanders, the number of childcare places has increased substantially, quality requirements were set up, infrastructure was improved and the cost of childcare was reduced by means of tax measures. A reduction in working hours has also been actively pursued. In Flanders, the fact that projects were well subsidised has encouraged and supported firms to implement human resource policies that take into account gender and childcare issues.

In the French-speaking community, a pilot project for out-of-school childcare was jointly elaborated by schools, local, regional and community authorities, parents and various associations.

### 3 - Strategic approach, main objectives and key targets
"targets should be disaggregated by sex whenever available + if relevant"

For each political measure included in the NAP Inclusion the specific incidence on men and women has been examined.

### 4 - Policy measures
"indicate how the gender perspective has been taken on board"

#### 4.1.1 facilitating participation in employment

- **To fight discrimination**
  
  On the 25th of February 2003, a law was promulgated that prohibits discrimination, both direct and indirect, based on sex, race, colour, origin, sexual orientation, etc. The law charges the Centre for Equal Opportunities and for the Fight against Racism with the prevention of and action against these forms of discrimination except for discrimination based on sex for which a special organ was created.

- **To develop an equal opportunities policy for women and men (4.1.1.)**
  
  In 2003 a law was passed that provides for the creation of an Institute for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. In collaboration with all other relevant bodies, this institute is

#### 4.2 Prevent risks of exclusion

- **Prevent social exclusion of children (4.3.2.)**
  
  In Flanders, a video with 5 good examples of good practice to manage the diversity of childcare was composed and will be distributed in 2003.

- **Promote access to culture (4.1.2. d)**
  
  The French-speaking community liberated financial means to develop women’s practice of sports and to financially support the actions of the Neighbourhood Sports Network.

- **Promote literacy among adults (4.3.3.)**
  
  The Walloon region will grant a subsidy to 42 associations of the “immigrant” sector to organise literacy courses and courses in
4.2.1. knowledge society, ICT
4.2.2. prevent life crisis
4.2.3. preserve family solidarity
4.3. help the most vulnerable
4.3.1. those at risk of persistent poverty
4.3.2. children
4.3.3. areas marked by exclusion

charged to develop instruments and strategies necessary to achieve an integrated approach to EO, to carry out studies and suggest gender break-downs of statistics, advise authorities on EO, support associations that actively try to promote EO, inform a large public on EO issues, take legal steps in case of non-respect of the law.

With respect to equality of treatment, a decree is being prepared to fix the minimum qualitative requirements for job classification systems in order to guarantee their gender neutrality. Employers changing to gender neutral job classification systems will be fiscally rewarded.

In the Flemish Action Plan on the European Employment Guidelines for 2002, that was adopted on the 19th of April 2002, the issue of EO between men and women and the concept of gender mainstreaming have clearly been incorporated. To assure a more balanced participation of women and men in professional training and activity, financial means were assembled. Important points on the 2003 agenda are, on the one hand, the promotion of a human resource management that is concerned about EO of men and women on the labour market and gender mainstreaming in the context of employment and, on the other hand, awareness-raising among politicians, social partners, sectors but also among women themselves to improve both vertical and horizontal mobility.

French as foreign language for adult first-generation immigrants. The pupils are principally illiterate people or people with little schooling and 69% are women. Each association applies a participating pedagogy. An agreement with the association Read and Write (Lire et Écrire) provides for methodological support to an inter-cultural dimension. Each year there will be a call for projects and a platform on French as foreign language will be set up in the framework of the European Fund for Refugees.

More specifically with respect to those looking for a job, a cooperation agreement will be concluded by the end of 2003 between the Walloon Region, the Region of Brussels-Capital and the French-speaking Community with the aim of doubling the number of literate people (from 10000 people in 2002 to 20000 in 2010 in the whole of French-speaking Belgium). Special attention shall be given to the education and training of immigrant women in order to act preventively against the reproduction of inequalities and social exclusion.

- Promote the work/life balance childcare (4.1.1.)

On the 1st of April 2003, all authorised and subsidised childminders received a new social status. They are now covered for sickness, work incapacity, professional illnesses and accidents at work. They are also directly entitled to family benefits and a pension. Furthermore, they receive a compensation in case children are absent.

In Flanders, Initiatives of Out-of-school Care (IOC) were launched as an experiment in the framework of the action “Weer-Werk”. In 2003, a study tried to determine how the wages of contractual subsidised agents in the framework of “Weer-Werk” could be harmonised at the level of local authorities and to what extent the competence such agents are required to have could play a role to determine the required qualifications. At present, the involved Ministers are negotiating the political management of the IOC. The outcome should offer legal security to IOC demanders from the 1st of January 2003 onwards.

Backed by the European Social Fund, the Regional Employment...
Office of Brussels will open a second Children’s Home (Maison des Enfants) for job seekers.

The French-speaking Community is very actively pursuing the co-ordination of childcare-related actions by all competent authorities in order to implement a coherent childhood policy and to guarantee public childcare of high quality by increasing the number of places for the 0-3 year old, by giving a status to subsidised childminders and by reinforcing the working environment of crèches. The rate of coverage is 23.8% at present and will be increased to 33% in 2010, thus reaching the EU target. Segregationist practices will be fought, efforts will be made to diversify the supply of childcare and the affordability of public childcare will be watched over; in matters of subscription/enrolment no difference will be made between parents. To create more places, the contractual financing of places by firms was studied as well as the increase of the reception rate of childminders who become subsidised childminders.

The French-speaking Community will work out the conditions necessary to supply childcare beyond school hours. A public childcare service, open for all and of high quality, will be progressively put in place in 2003. Organised at the municipal level, this policy will enhance the coordination of all child-care related activities carried out on the municipality’s territory.

In its framework programme 2001-2006 with the non-private sector, the German-speaking Government and Community have committed to doubling the coverage rate of childcare places for infants by the end of 2004 as well as to include the municipalities in the improvement of childcare for school-attending children and to restructure the Regional Centre for Childcare.

- Make employment more attractive than replacement incomes (4.1.1.)

From the 1\textsuperscript{st} of January 2004, an employment bonus will be introduced to be added to the net hourly wage of low earner. The effects of this bonus will decrease only partially when the wage increases. The income guarantee for part-timers will be modified so that working more will increase income. Both these measures
are to compensate for low earners the tax advantage associated with unemployment. The self-employed and spouses helping their self-employed husbands with a low level of earnings will also be encouraged to work by an increase in the existing tax credit.

- **To fight the grey economy (4.1.1.)**
  
  To implement the law of 20/07/2001 on the development of neighbourhood services and jobs, the Walloon Government has passed a decree introducing "Service Entitlements" aimed at facilitating the development of neighbourhood services and jobs in the sector of domestic help and in that of care for the elderly, the sick or the handicapped and guaranteeing lasting and durable employment to the workers providing such services. As a result, many job seekers will leave the grey economy for waged work. The two privileged sectors of domestic help and care for dependent people are very feminised sectors in which women work in very precarious conditions because their jobs are illegal.

- **To fight discrimination at the recruitment stage (4.1.1.)**
  
  In March 2003, a pilot project "driver's licence vouchers" was launched in the Walloon Region (FOREM Formation) as part of a process of qualifying training targeted at women. Women end this training course with a driver's licence to top up their technical and professional capabilities. This reinforces their position when they go out looking for a job. If the project gets a positive evaluation, it will be broadened to the entire population of job seekers in qualifuing training.
  
  Before the end of 2003, the German-speaking Community will have incorporated the European directives on non-discrimination in its decrees. Every discrimination at work, at recruitment or in access to professional training that is based on sex will then be legally prohibited.

- **Medical prevention (4.1.2.)**
  
  In 2003, the screening for breast cancer that has been carried out over the last 2 years in Flanders will be evaluated and will continue
after the evaluation results have been taken into account. In 2003 in Brussels, a screening campaign for breast cancer will reach out to all women aged 50-69.
Concerning tuberculosis, the different impact of the illness on men and women will be analysed.

<table>
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<th>Institutional arrangements</th>
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<td>relevant bodies, those at risk of exclusion, NGOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Involvement of Equality bodies, NGOs, others specific organisations</td>
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<td>- Balanced participation of women and men in committees involved in drafting and implementing the NAPs</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Service charged with the Fight against Poverty, Precariousness and Social Exclusion is represented in the two groups “Actions” and “Indicators” set up to draw the NAP. This Service supports the participation of the poor to the process of drawing the NAP. The Committee charged with the Fight against Poverty of the Federal Public Service for Programming (FPSP) in the field of Social Inclusion, Fight against Poverty and Social Economy is responsible for the general co-ordination and the redaction of the draft texts.</td>
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<td>The organisations of the poor are gathered together within the accompanying Commission of the Service charged with the Fight against Poverty, Precariousness and Social Exclusion which permanently negotiates between the responsible politicians and the set of actors involved. The Service was created in 1998.</td>
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<td>On the 26th of June 2003, the draft version of the NAP was submitted to the accompanying Commission for debate. This move can be seen as the first step towards a broader collaboration that will be organised to follow-up the NAP and to draft future NAPs.</td>
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<td>In order to appropriately represent the poor, the Service charged with the Fight against Poverty, Precariousness and Social Exclusion consulted a diversified sample of 50 associations in the field in order to obtain sufficient feedback. Afterwards, a study day was organised with these associations and networks to further reflect on the NAP.</td>
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<td>In order to improve the implication of the poor and their representatives in the elaboration of future NAPs and to enhance the efficiency of the fight against poverty, a permanent source of information for the NAPincl will be the biennial report of the Service charged with the Fight against Poverty, Precariousness and Social Exclusion. In order to let the NAPincl become more known, to increase its influence and to support the participation of all partners, a public debate will be organised based on the NAPincl and the biennial report.</td>
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Grid two : Assessment of gender mainstreaming

**Progress made since last NAP**

Improvements compared to the previous NAP concern essentially the statistical aspects. Where indicators were often lacking a gender perspective in the previous NAP, they are now almost systematically broken down by sex. As far as the gendering of analyses is concerned, no major improvements have occurred compared to the NAP 2001-2003. It is still the case that “most of the gender-related strategies concern the overall population and do not as such address the issues of poverty and social exclusion” (NAPincl 2001-2003).

**Identification of challenges**

GENERAL REMARK

Statistics are nearly systematically broken down by sex but very few specific actions or genuine efforts of gender mainstreaming exist even in the areas identified as major challenges.

MONETARY POVERTY

The poverty risk for the female population is still higher than for the male population, 14% and 11% respectively. Among single non-parents, women are more likely than men to have to rely on low incomes, especially in the age category 25-64 years of age. 9% of women compared to 6% of men are permanently exposed to the risk of poverty. A subjective estimation of poverty puts forward a rate of 10% for men and of 13% for women. However, the Belgian social security and social assistance system are able to considerably decrease the risk of poverty. Nevertheless, people relying almost entirely on social allowances remain very vulnerable.

The recently adopted policy measures that provide for a reduction of fiscal and para-fiscal charges and an increase in minimum social security allowances have reversed the trend of a decrease in the standard of living provided by minimum allowances and wages in the 80s and 90s. The gap between GDP per inhabitant and these minimum allowances and wages was narrowed. Furthermore, from the 1st of January 2004, an employment bonus will be introduced to be added to the net hourly wage of low earner. The effects of this bonus will decrease only partially when the wage increases. The income guarantee for part-timers will be modified so that working more will increase income. Both these measures are to compensate for low earners the tax advantage associated with unemployment. The self-employed and helping spouses with a low level of earnings will also be encouraged to work by an increase in the existing tax credit.

EMPLOYMENT

Long-term unemployment is slightly higher for women than for men. However, more women than men participate in some kind of activation programme (53 % and 45% respectively). Furthermore, measures have been put into practice to prevent discrimination against women in the recruitment process, to facilitate the work/life balance by improving the supply and quality of public childcare, by improving the status of typically female jobs such as housekeeping and childminding, by introducing employment bonuses that make employment more interesting compared to living on a replacement income and thus attracting more women to the labour market, etc. The difference in employment rates between EU nationals and non-EU nationals is larger among women than among men. This has given rise to specific measures to increase the literacy rate and improve the education and training among immigrant women (see Grid 1). Regional differences in employment rates also tend to be more marked for women than for men.

HOUSING

No specific attention was given to gender mainstreaming or gender issues as regards the problems and challenges related to housing.
**HEALTH**

Women as a separate category only enter the picture as far as cancer screening is concerned. Low educated women have turned out a lot less likely to have been screened for uterus cancer during the last three years than high educated women. All other measures implemented in order to improve the population’s health and the access to medical care, its quality and affordability, are presented in general without making any difference between men and women.

**EDUCATION**

Starting out from the reflection that the risk of poverty decreases as education increases, a series of measures were elaborated targeted at optimising the transition of young people from school to employment as well as policies enhancing life-long learning. However, no special gender mainstreaming approach was presented nor were specific measures for women implemented in the field of education with the exception of the actions to fight illiteracy among immigrant women which were mentioned above and in Grid 1. Disaggregated statistics show that more women than men are interested in life-long learning as 53% of women have participated in some form of activation programme compared to 45% of men.

**SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION**

The discussion of the social network indicators in the NAPincl does not distinguish between men and women. The frequency and extent of social contacts are discussed with respect to employment status, health status and level of education but no breakdown is done between men and women.

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<th>Statistics and indicators</th>
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<td>As far as gendered statistics are concerned, Belgium scores extremely well. Nearly all indicators for social inclusion are broken down by sex. Unfortunately, besides systematically disaggregating data by sex, no specific gender measures are taken or no specific gender indicators are suggested. In the analysis of the indicators, no special attention is given to gender even when information is available for both sexes separately. Indicators are structured into 6 categories: income, employment, housing, health, education and social inclusion and participation. Besides the common primary and secondary European indicators, Belgium has developed a quite substantial series of tertiary indicators, the majority of which are broken down by sex. However, instead of covering new thematic areas these tertiary indicators extend the 6 already existing categories of data. As a result, important gender issues such as the work/life balance and the unequal division of paid and unpaid work remain impossible to analyse. Amongst the identified challenges, there are no specific gender issues. Gender is only modestly accounted for. Consequently, no additional need for indicators arose from the process of identifying major future challenges. To sum up, as far as the common European set of statistics is concerned, Belgium is performing very well with nearly all indicators broken down by sex. On top of this basic set of data, Belgium has developed a series of additional indicators which are also disaggregated by sex. However, as far as identifying specific gender challenges and constructing the necessary indicators to deal with them are concerned, Belgium is still at a very remote stage. No specific gender analyses are carried out.</td>
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<th>Strategic approach and targets</th>
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<td>Although there seems to be a clear willingness to assess the different incidence on men and women of the political measures presented in the NAPincl, no special financial, human or organisational means have been produced to this purpose. To mobilise the stakeholders the Service charged with the Fight against Poverty, Precariousness and Social Exclusion consulted a diversified sample of 50</td>
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associations in the field in order to obtain sufficient feedback. Afterwards, a study day was organised with these associations and 
networks of the poor to further reflect on the NAP. However, in this entire operation, at no time was specific attention given to 
gender. For example, no targets were fixed for a balanced representation of women and men in the different bodies and services 
representing the interests and views of the poor.

Although the NAPincl does not contain a list of clearly defined quantitative and qualitative targets, Grid 1 has shown that a lot of 
efforts were made and are intended to be made in the future to improve social inclusion. In each case, these measures responded to a 
clearly identified need. For example, although childcare is not identified as a major challenge, participation in the labour market in order 
to fight poverty is and therefore a policy aiming at an increase in the provision and quality of child care places responds to a very 
important need.

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<th>Design of policies and measures</th>
<th>Implementation of policies and measures</th>
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| Gender mainstreaming is successfully applied to the statistical exercise induced by the NAPincl. Statistics are almost systematically 
disaggregated by sex. However, in the part on actions and measures to enhance social inclusion, gender mainstreaming is given a lot 
less attention than specific measures introduced to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to sex. On the one hand, specific 
measures are chosen to address identified gaps in education, inequality in access to the labour market and to durable employment, to 
respond to gender-related health risks, to balance the access to culture and civil society, etc. On the other hand, gender mainstreaming 
has been applied to the job classification system and to avoid discrimination taking place in the course of recruitment processes. |

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<th>Monitoring and assessment of policies</th>
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| The only way the impact of gender is assesses is through a breakdown of all statistical data by sex. Disaggregated data are the only 
means for gender impact assessment. This means is very widely used though since practically all social inclusion indicators are available 
for both sexes separately. |

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<th>&quot;mobilisation of relevant stakeholders&quot;</th>
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| Unfortunately, no stakeholders for gender issues have been involved in the draft of the NAPincl. The fact that their implication in 
future NAPs or in the follow-up of the present NAP is not discussed or announced is troubling. The main stakeholders mobilised are 
associations representing the poor but even their involvement has been very limited although it will be improved in the future. As far as 
these associations are concerned, no importance is attached to their balanced composition in terms of gender. Emphasis is also put on 
the implication of social partners and of the different levels of government. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Once again note the contrast between the statistical and the analytical part of the NAPincl. While gender is a systematic component of 
the statistical part, it is almost entirely absent from the analytical part. Improvements compared to the previous NAP concern essentially the statistical aspects. Where indicators were often lacking a gender perspective in the previous NAP, they are now almost systematically broken down by sex. As far as the gendering of analyses is concerned, no major improvements have occurred compared to the NAP 2001-2003. It is still the case that “most of the gender-related strategies concern the overall population and do not as such address the issues of poverty and social exclusion” (NAPincl 2001-2003). To conclude, note that for future NAPs it is of utmost importance that a gender mainstreaming approach be applied in a much more systematic way. Not only is there a lot to be done regarding gender mainstreaming but it is of course equally important to encourage and facilitate the implementation of specific measures to guarantee equality between men and women in practice. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good practices mentioned</th>
<th>Q 1 Gender dimension</th>
<th>Q 3 - positive impact on gender equality</th>
<th>Q 4: negative impact on gender equality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidance of over-indebted persons</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flemish decree regarding the fight against poverty</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The multi-annual Action Plan regarding permanent housing in tourist facilities in the Walloon Region as an example of an integrated action covering various sectors and negotiated with the involved actors</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The legal instrument of the annual report of Brussels on the state of poverty</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project “Article 27” as a model of cultural participation</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decision to assess the state of poverty in the region of Brussels-Capital was made after it had been observed between 1980 and 1985 that the poverty rate decreased only very slowly in Belgium. Moreover, Belgium is one of the five European MS where the poverty rate of households headed by a woman is considerably above the national average. Two factors explain this feminisation of poverty: the number of divorces and the non-payment of maintenance. With the annual report the state of poverty is assessed each year; progress is evaluated and new recommendations are addressed to policy-makers. In the fight against poverty associations representing the poor are involved but no targets are set as to a balanced representation of men and women. To conclude, the reason that motivated legislators to require an annual report on the state of poverty had a clear gender dimension. Unfortunately, in the way the report is realised no specific gender-conscious approach is applied and recommendations that are made based on the observations presented in the report are not systematically gender mainstreamed.

Potentially, this measure may significantly improve gender equality given that it relies on the observation that women are the more likely victims of poverty. A yearly assessment of the poverty situation for men and women separately, the formulation of gender-specific recommendations to policymakers and a profound impact evaluation of newly-implemented measures to fight poverty could be extremely successful to reduce the poverty rate and more particularly the gender gap in poverty rates. Unfortunately, such a systematic accounting for gender does not yet exist nor is it one of the main intentions for the near future.
Cooperation between the Employment Office and the Public Centres for Social Aid in the German-speaking Community  |  no  |  no  |  no  |  no