EUROPEAN RECONCILIATION PACKAGE

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The Structural Funds are financial instruments of European Union regional policy, which aims to narrow the development disparities among regions and Member States. The Funds are developed around a seven-year period and are allocated to national, regional or local authorities who are also the co-financers of the projects to be implemented. The two funding streams that will be considered in this document are the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): in particular the European Social Fund, set up in 1958, contributes to the integration into working life of the unemployed and disadvantaged sections of the population, mainly by funding training measures; while the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has provided support for the creation of infrastructure and productive job-creating investment, mainly for businesses since 1975.

For the period 2007-2013, the budget allocated to regional policy amounts to around € 348 billion, comprising € 278 billion for the Structural Funds and € 70 billion for the Cohesion Fund. This represents 35% of the EU budget and is the second largest budget item.

In this document we will briefly present the two funds and several examples of projects financed through these funds that aimed at supporting women in the labour market or provide those services that affect their possibility to reconcile work and family life. While reconciliation policies should not aim at women only but should also promote a shift in mentality and support a higher level of engagement of men into care and family responsibilities, these projects can be examples of practical activities that the EU is implementing to support families.

As mentioned above, Structural Funds are managed by national authorities in the Member States that have also their own website in the local language. To facilitate dissemination and promote activities that may be of interest for families and citizens, we included a list of national contacts for the ESF (which is the most relevant fund for citizens) at the end of the document.
THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF)

The European Social Fund is a funding instrument used by the European Union to fund projects supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and improving job prospects for groups in vulnerable situations. ESF finances around 10 billion euro a year and the level of ESF funding and the types of projects that are funded differ from one region to another depending on relative wealth. EU regions are divided into three funding categories based on their regional GDP per head compared to the EU average (EU with 27 Member States).

The ESF does not advertise jobs but is funding tens of thousands of local, regional and national employment-related projects throughout Europe. Citizens can not apply directly to the EU to ask for financing a project. Each Member State, in partnership with the European Commission, agrees on one or more Operational Programmes for ESF funding for the seven-year programming period. This describe the priorities for ESF activities and their objectives for the specific country.

Once the agreement is signed, the EU distributes ESF funding to the Member States and regions to finance their operational programmes. Each Member States will, at that point, fund employment-related projects which can be run by a range of public and private organisations. ESF does not fund 100% of the project but a co-financing by public or private funds is required. Co-financing rates vary between 60% and 85% (95% in exceptional cases) of the total project costs depending on the relative wealth of the region. A list of national contacts is available at the end of this Annex.

The European Social Fund is designed and implemented with a collaboration between the European Commission and national and regional authorities. This is called the “partnership principle”. This partnership also involves a wide range of other partners, such as NGOs and workers’ organisations, in the design of the ESF strategy and the monitoring of its implementation.

THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)

The ERDF aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions.

The ERDF focuses its investments on several key priority areas, specifically: innovation and research; the digital agenda; support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); the low-carbon economy.

The ERDF also gives particular attention to specific territorial characteristics. ERDF action is designed to reduce economic, environmental and social problems in urban areas, with a special focus on sustainable urban development. At least 5% of the ERDF resources are set aside for this field, through ‘integrated actions’ managed by cities.

Areas that are naturally disadvantaged from a geographical viewpoint (remote, mountainous or sparsely populated areas) benefit from special treatment. Lastly, the outermost areas also benefit from specific assistance from the ERDF to address possible disadvantages due to their remoteness.

Citizens or civil society organization are not direct beneficiaries of the ERDF funding. Member States and local authorities receive the funding based on the type of region and the operational programmes negotiated with the European Commission.
The European Social Fund has been used already in the previous programming period to support inclusion of women in the labour market and reconciliation measures. This can go from training to counselling for young mothers, to support to families with disabled children or professional training for child care teachers.

The European Regional Development Fund, has also been used to promote and support women’s employment or entrepreneurship during the past programming period.

Below a number of practices co-financed by the ESF and the ERDF in the period 2007-2013, in alphabetical order by country. The ESF database as well as the ERDF database will all projects financed in each country is available on the European Commission website.

The lack of childcare facilities is a labour market bottleneck that can keep experienced and ready-for-work parents away from making a real contribution to supporting their families and the wider economy. To alleviate this problem, the ‘Employment House’ in the French Department of Seine et Marne launched a counselling service to offer made-to-measure solutions for young mothers looking for work.

Through this project, parents seeking a way back to work – instead of searching on their own – were offered personalised help in finding the childcare facilities that suited their needs. Altogether, 113 parents were helped, 110 of them women. Of these, 69 secured the childcare facilities they sought and went on into work, while a further 44 undertook training to become child carers themselves.

A key element in the project’s success was the multidisciplinary approach which involved networking activities among local stakeholders concerned with childcare provision, and the establishment of an ‘observatory’ to evaluate the matching of supply and demand. And the success of the project led to a second centre opening in Marne la Vallée in 2009.

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**La Balle au Bond**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Area of activity:</td>
<td>Women and jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project duration:</td>
<td>2007 to 2010</td>
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<tr>
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<td>€ 41 204</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total budget:</td>
<td>€ 82 610</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants:</td>
<td>113</td>
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<tr>
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<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Maison de l’emploi de Sénart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact details:</td>
<td>Nathalie Borel <a href="mailto:nborel@mdef-senart.fr">nborel@mdef-senart.fr</a> <a href="http://www.mdef-senart.fr/">http://www.mdef-senart.fr/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More women in crafts and technology

Women are still underrepresented in professions and training linked to technology and crafts. Career guidance can enable them to make the most of their talents by helping them overcome traditional gender roles.

In the German Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, an initiative was launched to improve the awareness of gender issues among those providing professional counselling services to girls preparing career choices.

The ‘Holly Wood’ project, made possible thanks to financial support from the European Social Fund (ESF), organises workshops for career guidance staff and provides advice and training to improve their ‘gender competence’.

This involves raising questions such as: how does the gender dimension influence the learning process? How can crafts and technology be made more appealing to girls?

Activities also include crafts workshops for girls.

“We aim to break down gender stereotypes”, is the creado of the ‘Handwerkerinnenhaus’ (‘House of craftswomen’) in Cologne which is running the project.

Thanks to the project, 460 girls and 266 career guidance counsellors received advice or practical training. Building on this success, another such project was started in 2013.

Project name: Achieving more gender competence in career guidance services: Holly Wood – more girls in crafts and technology

Area of activity: Opening pathways to work

Project duration: August 2011 – December 2012

ESF contribution: EUR 163 600

Total budget: EUR 207 344

Participants: 460 girls / 266 counsellors

Country: Germany

Organisation: Handwerkerinnenhaus Köln e. V.

Contact details: Brigitte Haas
gender@handwerkerinnenhaus.org
http://www.handwerkerinnenhaus.org
+49 (0)221 7390555

Examples of the use of the Structural Funds for reconciliation measures
Flexible Training in Hamburg
Germany

Balancing work and family commitments is challenging at the best of times. Looking after young children, the disabled or elderly is a commitment that requires significant time and energy.

The time commitment involved in looking after loved ones does not mean however that parents or carers should put aside their professional ambitions. With ESF assistance, flexible training schemes allow people to both improve their job prospects as well as look after their family.

The ‘Part-time training in Hamburg’ scheme supports young mothers and fathers as well as carers to balance their commitments at home with training that will give them the opportunity to improve their employability and fulfil their potential.

The programme offers free comprehensive advice and allows programme participants to receive flexible training, which is usually around 30 hours a week.

Every case is treated as unique. Some people will be able to undertake a larger number of training hours a week, some less. Participants are given professional advice about training options that match their skills and ambitions and support to find placements in local companies to receive valuable on the job training.

Since the scheme’s launch in March 2010, over 600 people have been given the opportunity to enhance their skills through vocational training.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name:</th>
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<td>Participants:</td>
<td>648 persons (April 2012)</td>
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<td>Country:</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Beschäftigung und Bildung e.V.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Contact details: | Gabriele Tegethoff-Finke
gabriele.tegethoff@bb-ev.de
www.teilzeitausbildung-hamburg.de
0049 40 65 90 90 0 |
"FAMILY CENTRE OFFERS PRACTICAL SUPPORT"

HUNGARY

The Gézengúz Foundation for Children with Birth Defects has expanded its remit by establishing a family resource centre in Hungary's Győr micro-region.

The centre’s goal is to provide a network of guidance and support services to local families who are raising young children, regardless of whether those children are handicapped or not.

The centre offers mothers a regular, weekly forum where they can share their worries, experiences and problems. The resource centre team provides advice on matters such as returning to work and how best to balance work and family life.

Staff are on-hand to help with legal issues and work-related legislation that affect new mothers and those on maternity leave. To help mothers back into the labour market, the team assists with interview techniques, drafting effective CVs and understanding workplace rights.

The programmes are designed to strengthen solidarity among the families while raising awareness of the importance of family life and the value of raising children in a constructive way.

Group activities at the centre therefore aim to encourage lobbying and the organisation of self-help networks. In addition to running counselling sessions, the centre helps local families by providing organised child-minding. Plus, it supports young people who are thinking about starting a family.

Project name:

Area of activity:

Project duration:

ESF contribution:

Total budget:

Participants:

Country:

Organisation:

Contact details:

Establishment of a Family Resource Centre in the Győr Micro-Region

Opening Pathways to Work

May 2012 – November 2013

HUF 19 515 196

HUF 22 959 055

600

Hungary

Gézengúz Foundation for Children with Birth Defects

Mónika Kovácsné Lengyel
gezenguzgyor@gezenguz.hu
http://www.gezenguz.hu
Tel: +36 96 439 115
While working parents in Lithuanian cities can count on a broad range of options for balancing childcare and other family responsibilities, in the countryside there are fewer opportunities. The ‘Working for the welfare of the family’ project set out to change this situation in Tauragė county by offering rural women the chance to break with traditional ‘home-centred’ roles as carers, and to enjoy both family and work responsibilities together.

For the women, the project provided encouragement, career advice and training, for example in languages and computer literacy. For the families, social workers offered support for childcare and looking after elderly family members while the women were away. And for local employers there were consulting and seminar sessions on promoting family-friendly working practices. In its implementation, the project drew on the ESF experiences from other countries, and also on expertise from Norway on supporting families at risk of social exclusion.

The project outcomes were significant as it helped the municipal authorities to upgrade their whole approach to groups at risk. In all, 25 individuals were helped in their jobs through the provision of homecare support, and in particular several families with disabled children who are now cared for in a new rehabilitation centre during the working day. A major local company set up crèche facilities for its workers – a first in the region. And the local authority workers now have the inspiration and tools to take a fresh, positive attitude to helping families balance their responsibilities.

<table>
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<th>Project name:</th>
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<td>Area of activity:</td>
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<td>Participants:</td>
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<td>Country:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Centre of Social Services of Pagegiai Municipality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Contact details: | Nijole Kovaliova  
n.kovaliova@pagegiai.lt  
http://www.pagegiai.lt  
+370 441 56081 |
A project based in Kaunas, Lithuania has been helping young people find the right work-life balance while trying to establish more family friendly workplaces.

The Success project offered a basket of support measures to ensure that both unemployed people and those in work did not lose out in the labour market because of their family obligations. Success provided childcare services for working people and those keen to find work. Project staff also helped individuals look for jobs, and support was available to improve participants’ language, communication and computer skills.

In addition, seminars about reconciling work and family life were held for local employers and municipal officials. Finally, models which aim to balance work and family needs have been introduced in project partner workplaces.

Success helped 389 people – 193 of which were unemployed and 196 were in work. 32 % of the unemployed participants went on to find jobs.

The Kaunas Women Employment Information Centre implemented the project. The organisation believes that good levels of cooperation were established between employers, municipality representatives and workers. 151 employers and 235 local authority staff attended the Success seminars.

**Examples of the use of the Structural Funds for Reconciliation Measures**

"Making a “success” of work and family life” Lithuania

**The Success project**

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<tr>
<th>Project name:</th>
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<td>Area of activity:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total budget:</td>
<td>EUR 597 429</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants:</td>
<td>389</td>
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<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Kaunas Women Employment Information Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact details:</td>
<td>Monika Cepiené</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:monika@muic.lt">monika@muic.lt</a></td>
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<tr>
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<td><a href="http://www.muic.lt">www.muic.lt</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+370 37 200 392</td>
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“CHILDcare TRAINING AIMS TO BOOST JOB PROsPECTS”

LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg’s Valiflex project provides training in the field of childcare for out of work people who are registered as jobseekers with the public employment agency. In addition, the project offers people with previous relevant experience the chance to undertake higher levels of training which could lead to a degree. Valiflex has mechanisms in place to assess and validate people’s experience.

The project offers information workshops and ten weeks of basic training for all participants, along with examinations and certification for successful candidates. Applicant tracking ensures each person receives their own action plan and tailored training.

Guidance and counselling are used to establish the validity and extent of previous experience. Those who have suitable experience can take part in an additional three-week long training module. Candidates with validated experience earn diplomas, providing they meet Ministry of Education requirements.

So far, the project boasts a 0% drop-out rate, and class attendance runs at more than 92%. The first cycle of training saw all 17 participants complete their basic training and receive certificates. Of these, 12 went on to find jobs within three months.

Project results will be disseminated through conferences and other events, with the aim of sustaining the use of Valiflex’s methods.

Project name: Valiflex
Area of activity: Opening Pathways to Work
Project duration: January 2011 – December 2013
ESF contribution: € 194,589
Total budget: € 389,178
Participants: 100 (target)
Country: Luxembourg
Organisation: Confederation Caritas
Contact details: Elisabeth Werner
elisabeth.werner@caritas.lu
www.caritas.lu
Tel. +352 40 21 31 1
An ESF-backed operation in the Azores is offering unemployed women a taste of working life by providing them with temporary positions to cover for people who are taking maternity leave. The project finds the employer a suitable replacement while their member of staff is away having a baby – and provides the necessary funding.

Cradle of Employment is open to all women who are registered with the Public Employment Service and receiving unemployment benefits. Postings are limited to the duration of the maternity leave, plus two months. The scheme has been embraced by all types of employers – including private companies, non-profit cooperatives and central, regional and local government.

The operation is generating solid results for the employers and the individuals who are taking part.

Firstly, it has encouraged employers to hire young women – if they go on maternity leave they can quickly be replaced by someone enrolled in the project. The Public Employment Service continues to pay the participant’s unemployment benefit, plus the difference to make up the full wage.

Secondly, around half of the project participants have gone on to find regular work. Since its start in 2008, and until end-2012, the initiative involved over 554 women.

The operation’s versatility and adaptability is well suited to the Azores which is made up of nine islands, each with its own ‘micro-economy’.
The regional government of Castile-La Mancha in Spain has developed a plan which aims to help residents combine family responsibilities with their right to a decent job.

The plan’s key objectives include:
- reconciling the right men and women with families have to employment;
- promoting the employment of women, who more often act as primary carers;
- supporting the creation of jobs and businesses in the childcare sector;
- making it easier for local companies – especially SMEs – to voluntarily establish flexible working strategies that help staff balance work and family responsibilities.

More generally, the plan seeks to increase the competitiveness of local companies in an economy increasingly based on the value of human capital, knowledge and innovation. Plus, it is also hoped that the plan will promote changes in society’s of perception of how tasks are divided between men and women. By the end of 2011, almost 34 000 people had participated in actions covered by the plan, 53 % of whom were women. About 85 % of male participants have completed conciliation plan measures, which reflects the initiative’s efforts to promote greater family responsibilities among men.

More than 320 companies have also benefited so far, including 291 SMEs. In addition, 48 companies have implemented measures to combat gender inequality in the workplace. Almost 50 communication, outreach and awareness campaigns have helped spread work about the plan and its goals.

Examples of the use of the Structural Funds for reconciliation measures

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<tr>
<th>Project name:</th>
<th>Opening pathways to work</th>
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<td>Area of activity:</td>
<td>Conciliación de la Vida Laboral, Familiar y Personal</td>
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<td>Number of participants:</td>
<td>34 000 people affected, more than 320 companies</td>
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<td>Country:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Council for Employment and Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact details:</td>
<td>Ricardo Fernandez de Quero <a href="mailto:ricardof@jccm.es">ricardof@jccm.es</a> <a href="http://empleoyformacion.jccm.es/principal/conciliacion-de-la-vida-laboral-familiar-y-personal/conoce-el-plan/">http://empleoyformacion.jccm.es/principal/conciliacion-de-la-vida-laboral-familiar-y-personal/conoce-el-plan/</a> Tel: +34 925 269794</td>
</tr>
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"HELPING YOUNG MUMS OVERCOME BARRIERS TO LEARNING"
UNITED KINGDOM

Young parents with few qualifications can find themselves at risk of isolation and long-term unemployment. It is therefore essential to offer them the necessary support to improve their skills and overcome barriers to finding a job.

This is where the award-winning Young Mums Will Achieve (YMWA) project in Cornwall in the UK steps in. Established in 2009 to support young parents to engage in education, employment or training, the project offers closely targeted, tailored learning opportunities and intensive personal support to participants.

Teenage pregnancy Coordinator Alexa Gainsbury notes, “Learners have benefited from gaining qualifications and have also demonstrated marked improvements in transferable skills such as self-esteem, confidence, team-working and job-search capabilities. The high percentage of achievement and retention on the programme by the young parents has shown that this project is highly successful.”

Cornwall Council works with a team of partners who bring a diverse range of perspectives to the project. Since it was established, the number of young parents engaged in education, employment and training in Cornwall has increased from below 20% in 2009 to 34% in July 2012. The achievements of YMWA were recognised in November 2010 when it won the National ESF Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Leader Award.

<table>
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<th>Project name:</th>
<th>Young Mums Will Achieve (YMWA)</th>
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<td>Area of activity:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Cornwall Council</td>
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</table>
| Contact details: | Alexa Gainsbury  
Teenage pregnancy Coordinator  
Young Mums Will Achieve  
againbury@cornwall.gov.uk  
www.cornwall.gov.uk |
A two-year project has been helping women gain the skills and knowledge they need to find jobs, particularly in traditionally male-dominated areas such as ICT/technology and entrepreneurship.

Begun in 2010, the Winnet 8 project aimed to get more women into work and creating new businesses as a means of boosting growth across Europe’s regions. As well as this personalised approach, it also set out to shape regional, national and EU-level policies that relate to women’s status in the labour market and ensure these approaches are integrated into mainstream policies. In this way, addressing, at the level of policy development, the challenges that exist and that can make it difficult for women to secure jobs or further their careers in certain sectors and roles.

Bringing together nine regions in eight member states (Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom) the project drew on the best practice that exists across Europe to develop ways to support women. It especially aimed to spread the model of the Woman Resources Centres developed in Sweden - a network of grassroot-run centres that offer support to women with the overall aim of serving as a tool for promoting gender equality - throughout Europe.

The main target group of the WRCs is women who want to realise their ideas for new businesses, innovation, employment, projects etc. The WRCs provide these women with business counselling, education, training, project development and finance, enterprise support, mentoring and joint action networks at different levels (local, regional, national and international).

Policymakers and civil servants also constitute an important target group for WRC activities and to address this target group, regional Multi Actor Groups (MAGs) were created to be a forum for co-operation between Managing Authorities, local and regional authorities, businesses, research institutions, Women Resource Centres, WRCs and other voluntary Sector and NGO organisations.

Through the experience and knowledge collected via the interregional training sessions, study visits and workshops, nine regional Actions Plans were developed by the Member States involved. The results of these Regional Action Plans should serve as an input for Europe 2020 and the Cohesion policy 2014-2020 both in the regions concerned and across the EU as a whole. A Policy recommendation book “Innovation & Policies, for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth” has been produced and disseminated at regional, national and European levels.

A Winnet Centre of Excellence was established in Sweden in 2011 and will be further developed as a test bed within the framework of the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy. The Centre will analyse, disseminate and mainstream the experiences from Women’s Resource Centres (WRCs) in Europe since the mid-90s and help elaborate strategies to influence policy and implementation of good practices.

Finally, thanks to the interregional exchange of best practice, study visits and research, the project has developed a guide book “Women Resource Centres, Innovation & Practices for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth” featuring a series of selected good practice examples from Member States. A range of other best practice publications have also been produced.

Total investment for the project “Winnet 8 - an Interreg IVC capitalisation project, Improving gender equality in employment, human capital and education” was EUR 2,356,778, with the EU’s European Regional Development Fund contributing EUR 1,835,850. The project is funded through the priority “Innovation and the knowledge economy” of the “Interregional co-operation programme INTERREG IVC” for the 2007 to 2013 programming period.
### Total Investment

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### Contact

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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tel.: +33 328827051</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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Gender budgeting is an important part of Europe’s goal of policy funding that takes both men and women into consideration. Highlighting the value of cross-border cooperation, 15 municipalities in Austria and the Czech Republic successfully joined forces on a project to achieve greater gender equality and adapted their budgets accordingly.

A relatively new concept and core component of gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting aims for gender-equal allocation of financial resources. Advantages of this process include more efficient and effective budgets, greater transparency in terms of the criteria that underpin budget-making decisions, and better targeting of available funds for different social groups.

In the ‘Gender Fokus’ project, which ran from 2008 until 2011, the Lower Austrian Regional Government worked on gender budgeting with two regional administrations in the Czech Republic. Their objective was to determine the necessary procedures for gender budgeting at local and regional levels. The partners – including a total of 15 pilot municipalities from the two countries – met regularly and were connected in a common network.

Gender assessments

Following basic training on gender equality and under the guidance of experts, taskforces worked in all the municipalities on their particular budgets. Their main goal was to conduct gender-relevant assessments of the expenses of the municipalities, and to learn more about the problem of recognition of gender gaps. Key questions included: Who lives in our municipality? Are men and women there impacted in different ways by public policies? What services do local authorities provide and for whom? At what cost?

Once these questions had been analysed, the project teams looked at the influence of expenses on gender equality. They also assessed the actions required to achieve equal opportunities for men and women. As a result, and where necessary, the municipalities adapted their budgets.

Depending on their particular situation, the municipalities concentrated on various different activities to boost gender equality. Among these were facilitation of childcare for children under three years of age (which enhances women’s employment prospects); employing women in a municipality-run tourism project; integrating the gender perspective into mobility; drafting gender-relevant guidelines for subsidies for associations or societies; and implementing the gender perspective into a new data warehouse for municipal finances.

The project helped to make gender equality a cornerstone of each municipality’s budgets. This is especially important in Austria since January 2013, as the nation’s Federal constitution requires federal and regional governments as well as municipalities to aim at gender equality in their budgets. Gender Fokus also developed a practical guidance document on gender budgeting and easy-to-read brochures in Czech and German, describing the lessons learned. These documents were disseminated in meetings and conferences, as well as via the project website.

International interest

In February 2012, a representative of the Lower Austrian administration was invited to present the project in Brussels, Belgium, to a gender mainstreaming meeting organised by the European Commission. Three months later, a delegation of the South Korean Gender Budgeting Research Institute and the South Korean Ministry for Gender Equality and Family visited Lower Austria to learn about Gender Fokus. Project results have also been transferred to Malaysia and Ukraine.

Total investment and EU funding

Total investment for the project “Gender Fokus” was EUR 495 900, with the EU’s European Regional Development Fund contributing EUR 110 475 for the 2007 to 2013 programming period through the Operational Programme “European Territorial Cooperation Austria-Czech Republic 2007-13”.

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

“GENDER BUDGETING, A NEW PILLAR FOR POLICYMAKERS”
CZECH REPUBLIC, AUSTRIA
Total Investment

Total Investment: EUR 495,900
EU Investment: EUR 110,475

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“CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN”
UNITED KINGDOM (EAST WALES)

The Access to Lifelong Learning (ALL) Project taught basic job skills to economically disadvantaged women, including many from immigrant and minority groups. After completing the training programme, 68% of participants went on to find work, volunteer or become trainers themselves.

Run by the Cardiff-based Women’s Workshop, ALL taught numeracy, English as a second language, basic math and computer literacy to underprivileged women so that they would be able to one day find work.

With the range of activities, the programme emphasised personal development to ensure the women could make informed choices about their future, based on their needs, abilities and circumstances. In broader terms, the project added to the number of working-age adults with functional skills as laid down in national and regional strategies.

All 184 participants received computer training, which not only made them more employable but also gave them access to information and services, fostered social inclusion and opened up further learning opportunities. Some 108 participants continued with further courses at other institutions.

Promoting a better understanding between the diverse ethnic groups was an intrinsic part of the project, both within classes and as a natural consequence of the women all working towards the same goal and spending time together. Field trips to cultural sites of interest also inspired an appreciation of local heritage.

Training and support

The project was led by the Women’s Workshop in Butetown, Cardiff, one of the country’s most economically deprived communities and with a high percentage of its population from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. An agency run by and for ethnic minority women and lifelong career planning group Careers Wales provided supplemental support to participants, while the Black Environmental Network helped design and plan field trips to local environment and heritage sites.

The project set out to offer training in a way that was culturally acceptable to the women and their families, providing for example on-site childcare and a prayer room for participants. Every participant was assigned a personal tutor and participated in weekly group tutor sessions.

Although the project finished in 2005, it has had a lasting impact. The Women’s Workshop, which now has a better understanding of the communities it serves, has since introduced additional training courses. In addition, some project partners have introduced courses on parenting skills and art at the Women’s Workshop premises.

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Contact

The Women’s Workshop
United Kingdom
http://www.womensworkshop.org.uk/index.html
The Micro Finance Institute promotes entrepreneurship among economically deprived women by helping them come up with a business plan and then get the funding to make it happen. Nearly 110 women representing 25 nationalities and varying educational backgrounds participated, with 16 of them starting their own businesses.

Inspired by the project, two local banks now offer microfinance low- or no-interest loans as part of their regular product mix. Project managers have also established an ongoing policy dialogue with local authorities, banks, politicians and others about the use of microfinance as a tool for social inclusion.

Encouraging entrepreneurship

Covering four counties, the project targets women who are unemployed or working part time, newly arrived immigrants and those ages 18-30 with little or no experience. By providing access to financing and three years of personalised support, the program helps these women start a business, employ themselves and others – and thus lead meaningful lives.

As a first step, the Micro Finance Institute helps participants draft a business plan based on their own talents and socio-economic circumstances as well as detailed market research. It then assists with the loan application. An Innovation Bureau screens every idea, helping each participant tap into her own creative potential.

The project grew out of five years of experience in promoting entrepreneurship among immigrant women, often excluded from participating in business by a lack of sustainable financing and by prevailing prejudices in society. The Micro Finance Institute originally targeted 80 women in Stockholm, Sörmland, Östergötland and Västra Götland counties, but has already mobilised nearly 110 women since it was launched on 1 January 2008.

After helping participants draft a detailed business plan, experts then help fill out an application for a loan fund to the Regional Development Fund and Tillväxtverket, the Swedish Agency for Growth of Economic Development. Ideas for microfinance products are developed with the beneficiaries and are based on cooperation with several banks.

Each region has one organisation responsible for implementing the project locally as well as an area of expertise for the entire project including innovation, microfinance, entrepreneurship and networking.

Cooperation with the European Micro Finance Institute offers an insight into best practices across Europe. Outreach to various community actors has led to the creation of two courses for immigrants at a local high school.

**Total Investment**

<table>
<thead>
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</table>

**Contact**

Micro Finance Institute
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http://www.mikrofinansiering.se
Older jobseekers often find that their age and even their experience count against them when it comes to finding employment. But a European Territorial Cooperation project in the Baltic Sea region has sought to challenge the preconceptions, prejudices and the ageist recruitment practices of some employers.

With many countries in northern Europe currently experiencing declining birth rates and ageing populations, the so-called ‘Best Agers’ project aimed to highlight the positive effects of demographic change for both employers and employees.

Improving health means that most people remain active until an older age than was the case with previous generations and are in a position to continue working longer, either as employees, coaches, mentors or as entrepreneurs.

These aims were achieved by producing and publishing analyses of the potential level of economic activity of older workers and by implementing pilot initiatives in which the potential of older citizens is put to good use.

Changing attitudes to older workers

Project manager Hartwig Wagemester said that, while larger companies often had systems in place to monitor and ensure that older workers are recruited, this was often not true of small to medium sized enterprises and the problem is particularly acute for jobseekers with few qualifications. "We have found firms who work with us to implement our policies," he said, "and they have acted as lighthouse companies for others to follow."

It is expected that when the current project comes to an end around 70 small to medium sized enterprises, public institutions and non-governmental organisations will have taken on a ‘best ager’ in a coaching, mentoring or consulting role. In addition, it is expected that 140 mentor / mentee relationships will have been established and 60 business plans created by members of different age groups.

An example of the project’s work is the creation of a Latvian website that matches unemployed older workers from Riga with employers from the countryside. Meanwhile, in Denmark, mentors are providing support to people who have trouble entering the labour market.

A European Territorial Cooperation project, funded through the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG IV B Programme 2007-2013, the project is made up of 19 official partner organisations in Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and the UK as well as one unofficial Russian partner. In addition there are 20 associated participating organisations from all over the Baltic Sea region.

The project “Best Agers” had a total budget of EUR 4 423 071, with the EU’s European Regional Development Fund contributing EUR 3 441 738 through the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG IV B Programme for the 2007 to 2013 programming period.
**Total Investment**

Total Investment: EUR 4,423,071

EU Investment: EUR 3,441,738

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Bulgaria has put in place a national action plan to dismantle 130 large scale children’s homes and move all children and young people currently in these institutions into alternative, suitable accommodation, and put in place the necessary support services, within a 15 year timeframe.

This plan has received funding from the EU of more than EUR 100 million from various funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Moving into the community

Part of the work is a four-year project, “Childhood for All”, which began in 2010 and targets some 1,654 children (from aged three years onwards) and young people with physical and intellectual disabilities who currently live in specialised institutions around the country.

Its overall aim is to bring about a shift in the way children with disabilities, an especially vulnerable group, are cared for in Bulgaria. Each child/young person will be able to access community-based support services according to their individual needs and have the opportunity to live with family or in a family-style environment. These services are currently not sufficiently developed and available for all in need. Equally, suitable accommodation is not always available and needs to be renovated or built. Thanks to the project, children/young adults will have equal access to services and be cared for in the community, thus encouraging their inclusion in Bulgarian society.

Tailor-made homes for the future

The project focuses mainly on the first part of this process, namely preparing and implementing the transfer of children/young adults with disabilities from institutions into suitable housing.

In the framework of the project, a grant scheme has been launched under the Operational Programme “Regional Development” to provide funds to 62 municipalities to build, repair, equip and furnish accommodation. Energy efficient measures are being installed in the buildings, including insulation, double-glazing and links to efficient heating supplies. The buildings are being equipped so that they are able to benefit from renewable energy sources as a means of meeting their energy needs. Equipment and furniture are also being provided that are adapted to the children’s care needs.

Under the grants distributed so far the construction of a total of 133 family-type housing centres and 27 protected homes is planned in towns or cities throughout the country. Another 16 family-type housing centres and 9 protected homes will also be funded through the Rural Development Programme.

The scheme “Support for deinstitutionalisation of social institutions providing services to children in risk” has a total investment of EUR 54,700,000 with the EU’s ERDF contributing EUR 46,500,000. It is part of the “Childhood for All” project and is funded through the priority “Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development” of the Operational Programme “Regional Development” for the 2007 to 2013 programming period.
Total Investment

Total Investment: EUR 54,700,000
EU Investment: EUR 46,500,000

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