

# The European Conference on new ways in overcoming gender stereotypes





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<b>PREFACE</b>	
Michael Kocáb, Minister of the Government of the Czech Republic for Human Rights .....	6
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER OF THE CONFERENCE .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1 TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIAS IN CHILDHOOD</b>	
Coloring book Daddy, mama ... Ivana Šindlerová .....	12
Comics "Fit for change" Nina Bosničová .....	14
Instruments for a gender sensitive education Teresa Pinto .....	18
Gender awareness into teacher education and schools Elina Lahelma .....	20
<b>2 TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIAS IN MEDIA</b>	
Promoting gender equality in public and private media Tereza Wennerholm Čáslavská .....	27
Image of women and men in advertising Michel Pasteel .....	36
Seeking 45 + woman: experience and commitment Monika Ksieniewicz .....	42
<b>3 TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIAS IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES</b>	
Examples of legal and policy good practices on trans equality and inclusion Julie Ehrt .....	47
Project Presidentka.cz - a path for women into politics and public life Jana Smiggels Kavková .....	52
Party leaderships - from main obstacles to main allies in combating stereo- types about women in decision making Sonja Lokar .....	54
<b>ANNEX</b>	
Program of the Conference .....	57



„ I am deeply persuaded of the justice of promoting equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of the life of society. The main barrier to freedom of choice of men and women in their lives is in particular the prejudices over the predetermined roles of men and women. One of my aims in the area of equal opportunities for men and women is the achievement of positive change in public opinion. Overcoming prejudices and stereotypes is a complex and drawn-out matter for anyone. I believe that the path we have set out on will turn out, in spite of the difficulties, to be the right one in the end.“

Michael Kocáb  
Minister of the Government of the Czech Republic for Human Rights

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Kocáb'.

Prague, 27 May 2009

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**T**he main obstacle in the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union is not legislation, but especially preconceptions and stereotypes which prevent women and men from making free choices and deciding on their lives. Changing legal regulations alone is not enough to overcome these preconceptions. Above all, it is necessary to change the public's deep-seated opinions in support of equal opportunities for women and men as a foundation stone of every democratic society and a basic condition of that society's successful development. The methods and tools with which change can be reached in a positive sense especially include awareness and education, informational events, best practice examples and so on.

In the European Pact for Gender Equality<sup>1</sup>, the Roadmap for Equality for Women and Men (2006-2010)<sup>2</sup> and in the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>3</sup>, overcoming gender stereotypes is one of the priority areas. In the area of equal opportunities for women and men, the Trio Declaration on Gender Equality by the trio of presidential countries (France, Czech Republic, Sweden), is an important document for the Czech presidency. This declaration was accepted at an informal meeting of ministers responsible for equal opportunity between women and men on 14 November 2008 in Lille. Measures on the labour market are considered the basic tool for reaching equal opportunities for women and men, which lead to an increase in employment for women and a decrease in differences in financial remuneration, the fight to remove gender stereotypes, an expansion of the possibilities for career promotion, reaching balance in working life in all aspects and the development of women's entrepreneurship, support for women in decision-making positions. For this reason as well, the topic of tools for removing gender stereotypes in the areas of education and upbringing, the media and positions of power is the basic axis of this conference.

The conference is a continuation of the very stimulating conference which took place in January 2008 by the Slovenian presidency on the topic of gender

stereotypes, their creation, results and removal. For this reason, the European Conference on New Ways to Overcome Gender Stereotypes will not devote itself to the roots and mechanisms with which gender stereotypes are created and are acting, but is focused especially upon effective means for overcoming gender stereotypes. In other words, there will be fewer words on the topic of what to overcome, but more words on how to overcome.

The goal of the European Conference on New Ways to Overcome Gender Stereotypes is an exchange of experience within Europe on effective tools and methods for overcoming gender stereotypes.

<sup>1</sup> European Pact for Gender Equality, adopted by the European Council in March 2006

<sup>2</sup> Roadmap for Equality for Women and Men (2006-2010), Communication from the (European) Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions

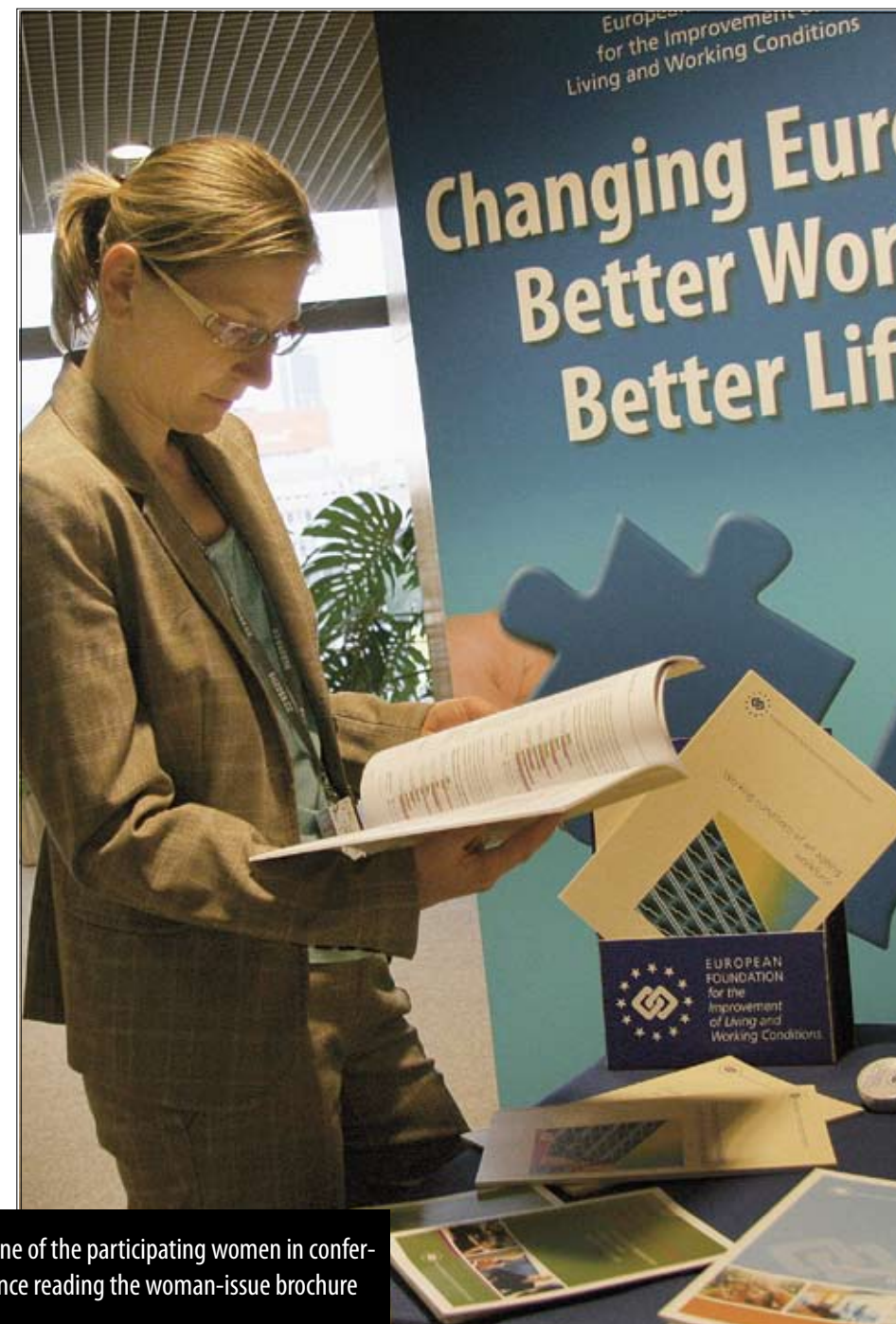
<sup>3</sup> Beijing Platform for Action, United Nations, 1995

## I. TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES IN CHILDHOOD

From early childhood, individuals are formed by societal values and knowledge, but also by stereotypes and preconceptions. Gender socialisation is part of the socialisation process, and its product is an identification with a male or female role. Identification is understood as an adoption of norms, values and at the same time stereotypes, preconceptions and societal expectations derived from affiliation with a male or female role. Gender socialisation starts already at an early age. Traditional examples of behaviour, activities “suitable” for men or women are presented to children in all areas of their lives (games, education, sports, division of roles in the family, and so on). The tools, means and methods for overcoming gender stereotypes in childhood will be the topic of the first block of the conference.

## II. TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES IN THE MEDIA

Differing behaviour towards individuals on the basis of affiliation to gender can also be monitored in an environment that strongly influences public opinion, and that is in the media. The media not only influences perceptions of the roles of women and men, but also directly creates them through its activity. The second block of the conference is focused on methods to support the creation of equal opportunities for women and men through images of women and men in the media and advertising, including employment advertising.



One of the participating women in conference reading the woman-issue brochure

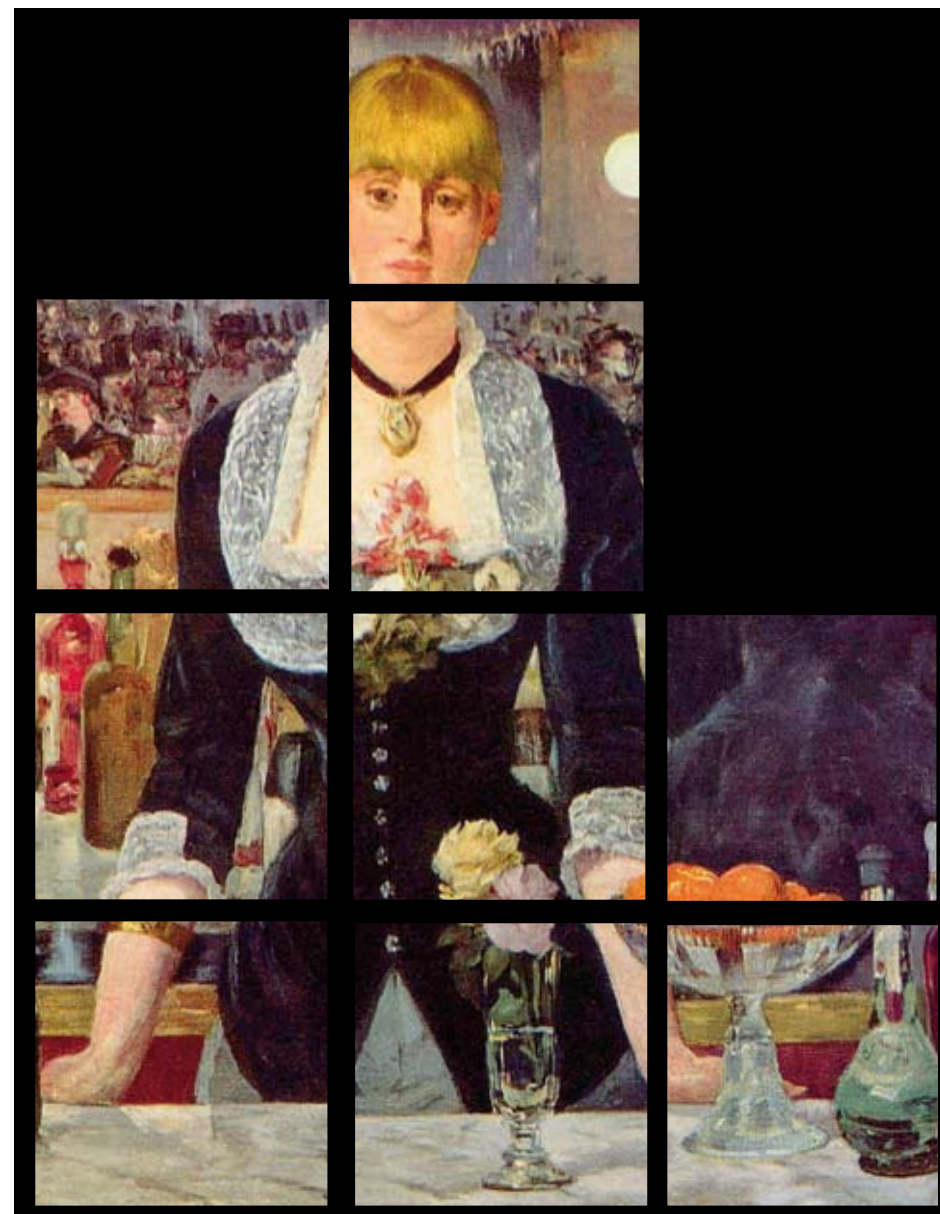
### III. TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Despite women making up half of the European population, their representation in decision-making processes in both the public and private spheres does not correspond. The share of women in public administration or in the management of companies is constantly very low, even though women have the necessary education and skills. The representation of women in politics is low and their low share in public administration is a serious deficit in democracy. In the private corporate sphere as well, the share of women decreases further up the hierarchy of positions. The main cause for the low representation of women is gender stereotypes – while with men it is unfairly automatically assumed that they have “inborn” management abilities, for women, these management abilities are constantly underappreciated and women in leading positions must constantly prove that they have these abilities. Reaching equal representation of women and men in decision-making and power positions is therefore conditioned especially upon the removal of gender stereotypes. Contributions in the third block of the conference will provide information on fulfilling these goals.

The European Conference on New Ways to Overcome Gender Stereotypes has as its goal a strengthening of the exchange of experience among EU member states on innovative approaches, tools and means to overcome gender stereotypes, which, in a European context, will attain positive change in public opinion.

## TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIAS

### IN CHILDHOOD



## **“COLOURING BOOK: DADDY, MUMMY - MUMMY, DADDY, IN THE KITCHEN AND AT THE CAR”**

The European Contact Group in the Czech Republic is a non-governmental non-profit organisation, whose vision is to share in the creation of a society where equal opportunities for men and women can be taken for granted. The gender-sensitive colouring book entitled Daddy, Mummy - Mummy, Daddy, in the kitchen and at the car is the outcome of one of the projects aimed at promoting gender equality. It is aimed at a target group of children of pre-school and early school age (5-8 years old) and serves as a teaching aid in kindergarten and in elementary schools.

The colouring book contains six pictures from the life of one family, accompanied by humorous verses. It offers children an alternative to the standard stereotypical division of family roles, in the form of cooperation between mother and father in caring for children and taking care of the household. In the colouring book we find situations which the family encounters in the course of a single day. It is morning in the family, when father gets the children ready and mother takes them to school in the car, a visit by the father with the children to the doctor, a family afternoon together in the park, father doing homework with one of the children while mother plays with the other, evening bathtime and getting ready for bed.

Children can colour in the pictures and with the help of teachers develop the ideas further, learn the verses, compare the model situation with their own experience, prepare playacting on the themes of the colouring book, and so on.

The target group, the format, theme and content of this teaching aid were chosen based on a search for answers to these questions:

- When do people start to encounter gender stereotypes? IN CHILDHOOD
- How can one address children and present to them men and women living together as equals? THROUGH AN ACTIVITY WHICH IS LONGER TERM, IN THE PRESENCE OF ADULTS
- Where do children most often encounter gender stereotypes? IN THE FAMILY
- Which environment do children know intimately, in order to reflect on the difference between a stereotypical gender role and an unbiased view? THE FAMILY
- Who can best introduce this topic to children? TEACHERS
- Who can the European Contact Group approach? KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The outcome therefore is A GENDER SENSITIVE COLOURING BOOK, WHICH IS AN ACCESSIBLE FORM NOT ONLY FOR CHILDREN BUT ALSO FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS WHO THEMSELVES OFTEN MAINTAIN GENDER STEREOTYPES.

The Project was implemented by the European Contact Group in the Czech Republic in 2006 in cooperation with graphic artist and teacher Leona Marcinko and was supported by the Slovak-Czech Women's Fund foundation. The budget for the project was 120 thousand CZK (4500 EUR). In total 12 000 copies were distributed to kindergarten and elementary schools throughout the Czech Republic. As a result of significant interest from teachers a reprint was organised. The project had relatively widespread feedback from teachers, because evaluation questionnaires formed part of the project. The issue of gender stereotypes was seen by teachers as an integral part of teaching in kindergarten and elementary schools. Experts have confirmed that as early as the age of three children are influenced by the stereotyped view of male and female roles in the family.

The colouring book was seen as an appropriate interactive aid for presenting the topic, offering the possibility of not only of colouring but of wider use as well. The colouring book also aroused significant media interest, being presented on the front pages of the dailies and also on the CT1 and CT24 television channels. At the present time the European Contact Group is following up the project with activities focused on creating workbooks for children aimed at free choice of careers unimpeded by gender segregation, as current-

ly applies in the Czech labour market. The workbooks on the topic - what will grow up to be, will be completed and distributed by the end of 2009.

The colouring book can be seen and downloaded on [http://www.ekscr.cz/content/files/omalovanky\\_male.pdf](http://www.ekscr.cz/content/files/omalovanky_male.pdf)

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## **“BREAKING DOWN (MORE THAN JUST) GENDER STEREOTYPES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE”**

This paper focuses on two projects implemented by the Gender Studies o.p.s., a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, whose principal target group is young people of secondary school age and the first years of university. My aim is to summarise information about the main project outcomes and a set of recommendation for activist gender work with young people (arising from practical experience of the projects mentioned).

Since the end of September 2008 Gender Studies has implemented an annual project Fit for change: flexicertainty and gender equality in the labour market, financed by the European Commission representation in the Czech Republic and by the Slovak Czech Women’s Fund. One of the main outcomes of this project is the results of quantitative on-line research investigating attitudes of the younger generation in Czech society to gender equality. To the best of our knowledge this is the first research of its kind in the Czech Republic and for this reason also the Czech media showed intense interest in it.

The output research report of the Ipsos-Tambor company, which undertook the research on behalf of Gender Studies, can be downloaded without charge at the following website:[http://www.genderstudies.cz/aktivita/projekt.shtml?cmd\[2828\]=x-2828-2067197](http://www.genderstudies.cz/aktivita/projekt.shtml?cmd[2828]=x-2828-2067197). The results of the results were very

helpful to members of the Gender Studies team in implementing further project activities - free seminars for secondary schools and universities and student, which we “made to measure” for the groups in question. An important part of the project was also its external PR aspect in the form of various innovative infomaterial. To directly approach young people we chose the attractive comics format, which became part of the project leaflets, videos, on-line quiz (<http://www.genderstudies.cz/kviz>) and project T-shirts. The video was placed on YouTube with the purpose of disseminating it to the target group through the principle of viral marketing. In terms of content the comics cover various gender themes, such as women in non-traditional professions, men in non-traditional professions, sexual harassment, access to the labour market, and the family.

The second project Young People in Action: Facts or Fiction? ran from 15th October to 31st December 2008, the donor was the Directorate General for Education and Cultural (the “Young People in Action” programme). The main project output was a student film entitled “Facts or fiction?” created by the RelaKs student club from Ústí nad Labem. The film contains five examples of discrimination based on gender or ethnic identity, which young people encounter. RelaKs arranged for the film scenario, filming and editing, Gender Studies provided coaching for the student creative team. The film was placed on YouTube and became the basis for a project postcard. As in the previous project, a comic was generated on the theme of discrimination against Roma men and women, which became part of the project leaflet and was also “transferred” into video format: The video, like the student film, can be found on YouTube (and on Gender Studies website: [http://www.genderstudies.cz/aktivita/projekt.shtml?cmd\[2828\]=x-2828-2130704](http://www.genderstudies.cz/aktivita/projekt.shtml?cmd[2828]=x-2828-2130704)). As part of the project we also offered (for secondary schools and student and youth support clubs) an interactive lecture based on showing the student film and using experiential pedagogy (in conjunction with a theatre expert).

Below we give our basic recommendations for activist work with young people in the area of gender equality. We stress that these recommendations are based on the specific practical experience of Gender Studies when implementing the “Fit for Change” project. The recommendations make no claim to be universal tips for work with young people in every historical, cultural and thematic context.

The recommendations were printed in the With a gender perspective: aimed at the Czech education system publication issued by Gender Studies as part of the “Gender sensitive education” project supported financially by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung foundation.

Before each lecture or seminar it is important to agree with the teacher on their role. In many cases it has proved easier and more productive to work with student-only groups, the presence of a teacher at the seminar or discussion group can have a negative impact (young people for example don't have the courage to state their views, teachers become too involved in the discussion, etc.) A basic agreement with the teacher is essential for the success of a lecture.

It is advantageous when, where possible, seminars and discussion groups are attended by two of the teaching staff, ideally a man and a woman. In young people this can strengthen the perception of the gender issue as something which concerns men and women equally, in contrast to the frequent stereotype.

One of the best ways to deal with the problem of the dominance of boys over girls or girls over boys is working, where this is possible, with homogenous gender groups or at least with homogenous gender working groups which will have equal access to presenting the conclusions and results of work groups.

Homogenous gender groups can have a further positive effect - both for boys and girls this creates a safe space and fulfils their possible need to share certain specific themes.

In order for non-profit organisations to get into schools at all, it is necessary to find one contact person who is positively inclined towards the gender issue, and to communicate with that person.

In communication and discussion it necessary to use clear and comprehensible language (that is, not weighed down with too much use of expert terminology) and to avoid complex academic definitions (better to use clear models and examples).

Young people are playful - they appreciate interactive games, and will be glad to get involved in them (dramatic forms of educational activities, scenes etc., in working groups).

Young people prefer conciseness, colourfulness and wit in PR products (as in comics).

The most productive way in which to implant the idea of gender equality in young people, is not to categorically condemn their often mildly stereotyped, sometimes sexist, point of view, but rather to debate it with them carefully, to point out the absurdity of believing in absolutes - an important

aim of these activities is to start up discussion on themes linked to gender stereotypes and equal opportunities for men and women, thereby increasing the sensitivity of the younger generation to these topics.

We have confirmed for ourselves that young people actively consider stereotypes and are willing to reevaluate the most obvious and the most flagrant of them. Seminars with young people may become more attractive by also discussing less obvious stereotypes (for example, in the context of advertising the theme of the so-called new men can be analysed).

Young people are interested in gender equality as a matter of conscience and a just world, and as a possibility of a FREE CHOICE to live their lives as they see best (and not in line with social traditions), as is shown in research on the topic of equal opportunities for men and women in the younger generation.

The most attractive topic for young people was that of gender in the media and marketing, the one that most "provoked" them was that of gender correct language. It is best to deal with themes which have a direct impact on young people's lives (a given age group) and in this way bring closer themes which may to them seem abstract or distant - relate them to their current life situation, family, relations, future career and so on.

Quantitative on-line research has proved to be an effective survey instrument - high level of penetration, attractive for the media.

## “STRATEGIES AND INSTRUMENTS FOR GENDER SENSITIVE EDUCATION”

### Synopsis:

The contribution describes the Portuguese experience by presenting several strategies that have been implemented, where the objective has been integrating gender issues into education, formal schooling in particular. The examples that will be exposed have been chosen in consideration of how important it is to define a global framework for an integrated approach to gender issues that is gradually more consistent and sustainable, the sine quo non condition for improving the quality of education. In this sense, the presentation will examine intervention strategies that are diversified but convergent and networks and instruments created to support them. The paper also evaluates the importance of knowledge as well as resistance and a lack of attention given to gender issues in the educational system. Close attention will be paid to areas that where greater openness is necessary in respect of the gender perspective, such as curricula, programs, educational materials, teacher training, and the organization and development of every educational community.

The contribution will be supported by a PowerPoint presentation that shows the topics, diagrams, and images that concern the projects and instruments referred to during the lecture.

### INTRODUCTION

I want to thank the organizers for inviting me to the Conference, which has such an important subject. In my view, the importance ascribed to strategies and instruments is a value added of this Conference, where the objective is to reflect on ways of overcoming gender-related stereotypes.

I will attempt to examine several strategies that have been recently implemented in Portugal with the purpose of integrating gender-related issues into

the educational system, and I will highlight instruments created and planned for supporting these strategies. I believe that the strategies and the instruments need to be used concurrently to ensure a greater impact as regards gender issues in education because the involvement of political leaders is necessary.

### I will begin with three background comments:

Firstly, the majority of students in Portugal attend public schools (more than 80%).

Secondly, the educational system is highly centralized, and the Ministry of Education determines all the curricula and programs for individual disciplines as well as the curricular orientations for the initial teacher training.

Finally, as far as gender-related matters in education are concerned, however, initiatives come from the National Mechanism for the Equality of Women and Men, researchers pursuing gender studies at universities, and certain schools. Considering the centralized nature of the system, action on the part of the Ministry of Education is indispensable for wide-ranging integration of gender issues into education.

### CONCLUSION

Recommendations produced at the international level already exist, and they have been followed by actual proposals; however, they have not been accomplished despite the possibility to implement certain changes. Most problems, difficulties, and challenges concerning the integration of gender issues into education have been identified at the global level, and proposals have been made for measures aimed at overcoming them.

In particular, I want to refer to documents created within this framework, such as the NU (Articles 5 and 10 of the CEDAW Convention or the Action Plan approved by the Peking Conference, for example), the Council of Europe (Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of 2007 relating to integrated approach to the equality of women and men in education, to mention the most recent document), or the EU (Action Plan attached to the Recommendation of 1985 relating to proposals that need to be pursued, to mention only one example).

I believe that the priority at this time is to formulate strategies that are actually efficient for ensuring the implementation and success of measures

concerning gender-related issues in education and to support such measures by appropriate instruments according to the context. To conclude, I want to say that defining strategies in the framework of the European Union needs to be anchored on two levels:

The first is a global level supported by harmonized policies of the Member States and put into force through a resolution approved by the Council of Ministers of Education with definitions of convergent strategies having as a goal the elimination of gender stereotypes in education.

The second level is intended to follow the process in all Member States in the framework of working groups, European conferences, and the like on the one hand, and to function as a specific European monitoring center for questions concerning gender-related stereotypes in education.

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#### **“GENDER AWARENESS INTO TEACHER EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS”**

**“GIRLS, THEY WOULD COME TO SCHOOL EVEN IF THEY WERE NOT COMPELLED TO. BOYS, THOSE STARRY EYED YOUNG RASCALS WOULD NOT COME VOLUNTARILY.”**

This extract is from field notes about a head master's talk in a parents' evening in a lower secondary school. It was accompanied by parents' understanding laughs. Everybody seemed to share the opinion that school is more suitable for girls – as well as the undertone, that there is something heroic in boys' attitudes.

Several studies suggest that teachers tend to argue that there is no difference in their behaviour in relation to girls and boys as pupils. But in the next sentence they might express stereotypical expectations about gender difference. Moreover, they might admit that they are more interested

in boys and appreciate higher the behaviour that they regard as boyish. Gender is a taken-for-granted dichotomy in our cultures, and it bears a taken-for-granted hierarchy in which everything that is regarded as male is regarded as important.

In Finland promoting gender equality is an obligatory responsibility for teachers and teacher educators. Already 1987 The Act on Equality between Women and Men stated the purpose and delineated concrete responsibilities for educational authorities in this respect. During these two decades, however, much change has not happened in schools or teacher education. One major stumbling block is that institutions regard gender equality as something that has already been achieved, and the prevailing gender difference as something which is in the nature of boys and girls: boys are wild and girls are submissive.

I will give some examples of stubborn patterns in educational processes and practices that challenge the aim of gender equality.

Firstly, repeated studies suggest the centrality of male experience in the contents of the curricula and text books. Sometimes this is even made on purpose. For example, mother tongue teachers might admit that they choose literature that is written by men with male heroes, because they want to get boys interested in reading – girls are supposed to read whatever they are offered.

Male as a representative of a human being is taken-for-granted, like in a sentence in a history text book: “A typical Finn [...] is a white-collar worker whose wife works outside home” Another book included a chapter with the title “President – the father of the country”. It was published just before Tarja Halonen was elected the president of Finland.

Secondly, teachers' expectations about girls and boys are stereotypical: high achieving girls are regarded as 'only' hardworking, whilst boys' achievement is more often discussed in terms of talent. The following is an example from a teacher interview. “Boys do not have the patience for systematic work. But then, on the other hand, especially among boys there are many who are so talented that whatever goes down well with them.”

Thirdly, even if all schools in Finland are co-educational, some subject choices tend to repeat gendered patterns. Handicrafts are divided into technical and textile options in the primary school already. The possibility to choose just one of them is an early step towards the division of male and female spheres in future educational choices, labour market, families and leisure

activities. When I asked about the choices that turned out to be gendered, a teacher answered: "We must accept this biological difference that girls like different things than boys." A girl, who liked metal work but chose textile handicraft had a different reason for her choice. She argued: "I did not want to be in the group of boys in technical work." She had experience of sex-based harassment in her class.

But gendered labels of subjects can be challenged. For example, in Finland home economics has been a compulsory subject for boys and girls since the 70ies, and it is not regarded as a girlish to be interested in it.

Teachers or teacher educators who suggest that gender is not a problem in schools might, however, express a general worry about boys. There is a wide concern about boys' lack of achievement that currently travels from one country to another. This discourse tends to provoke 'intuitive' strategies that actually may be counterproductive also for boys. One example from our field work is a teacher, who let two low-achieving boys present a horrifying, sexist and violent video during the lesson. She explained to the researcher, that "the boys get practice to perform, and they will remember that they have been allowed to choose themselves". This kind of 'pedagogy for boys' actually emphasises the kind of masculinity that contributes to these boys' underachievement. Moreover, it does not improve the learning environment for girls or for other boys.

At school, young people live through a period when they constantly build, negotiate, test, challenge and perform their identities as male or female. Their understanding about what is possible, expected or forbidden for a girl or for a boy is learned by repeated small hints that they receive from teachers' reflections, contents of teaching and from their peers, as well as from the cultures outside the school. If the school environment, teaching materials and teachers' attitudes repeatedly suggest that male and female fields of knowledge or behaviour form a dichotomy, and that the male spheres are more valued than the female spheres, it does affect young people. Here gender awareness of teachers is needed.

### **I now move to teacher education.**

Gender differences in school achievement and classroom behaviour are taken-for-granted backdrops of which every student teacher is aware. We have high standard gender studies in which these patterns are analysed and simple

gender dichotomies questioned. This research is not, however, included in the main stream teacher education. When gender questions are not in the agenda, taken-for-granted cultural assumptions about gender are reproduced in teacher education.

We have examples of national, Nordic or EU projects with the aim to include gender sensitivity to schools and teacher education. Projects generally have aroused enthusiasm among participants, but the common finding is that the results tend not to be sustainable. It is not easy to convince teachers or teacher educators about the importance of this specific perspective whilst there are so many vital issues that they should include in the curriculum. However, a general finding after gender courses in education is characterized by a comment from one participant: "This kind of course should be obligatory for every teacher student."

Now, based on decades of sustainable networking among gender researchers in education, and funded by the Ministry of Education, a national research project Gender awareness in teacher education is founded in Finland. The project is coordinated at the University of Helsinki, and it has a wide network in all universities. To engender this project, we have reviewed current curricula of teacher education programs, started some research projects and organised courses on gender studies in teacher education. The wide network helps to disseminate good ideas on what are necessary contents needed for each student teacher, and what literature we should suggest for those who plan to do their master thesis in this area, and how to negotiate with those colleagues who are sceptic or negative or even hostile towards the project. This is another short period project, but we now look forward to a more solid process towards gender aware teacher education – with the further aim in gender aware schools.

But what does gender awareness mean in schools and in contents of teacher education. I will continue by giving some examples.

Gender awareness means that the teacher takes gender issues in the agenda and pays special attention to girls, or to boys, when necessary, but avoids reflecting on gender as a taken-for-granted dichotomy. For example, in a classroom where boys are active in answering, the teacher should sometimes wait for a moment, before the first girl raises her hand and ask her. But she should not categorise and make it an issue by asking why girls are not active. In some other classroom the gender pattern might be the opposite,

and the teacher needs to encourage boys especially. Gender awareness also means that teachers should not regard girls and boys as opposite groups, but also recognise differences within the group of boys and the group of girls. There are other dimensions of difference that intersect with gender, such as ethnicity, social class, sexuality or disabledness.

Strategies involve talking with pupils. For young children, texts in which girls and boys are in non-traditional positions are sometimes a good starting point. Discussions where these stories are contrasted with more traditional ones can help children to reflect whether males should always be strong, and whether females should wait to be rescued by the male heroes. We have experiences from lessons when critical reflections on stereotypical representations of gender have evoked new ways of thinking. For example, in a lesson of Finnish, students read synonyms of 'man' and 'woman' from the dictionary, and a vivid discussion followed when they realised the sexualised connotations of tens of synonyms to the word 'woman'.

Use of sexist or racist language is a situation where action by the teacher is important. Sometimes teachers consider it wiser to adopt an attitude of neu-



participating women  
on conference

trality. In practice, however, bypassing negative comments communicates to students that such language is acceptable. When the issues concerning gender and sexuality are sensitive, it might be easier to discuss them with the same-sex peers only.

Gender awareness is important when gendered prejudices seem to affect young people's subject choices or choices of post-compulsory education. It is typical for young people to exclude, without another thought, options that in our culture have labels as fields of the other gender. Trying to challenge this is not to argue that girls should choose mathematics or apply for technical education. But more sensitive ways of encouraging students to consider other options should be developed. Moreover, if girls are in a minority for example in some courses, teachers should develop ways of dealing with them so that the girls do get assistance when they need it, but in ways which do not make them seem incompetent to themselves and to others.

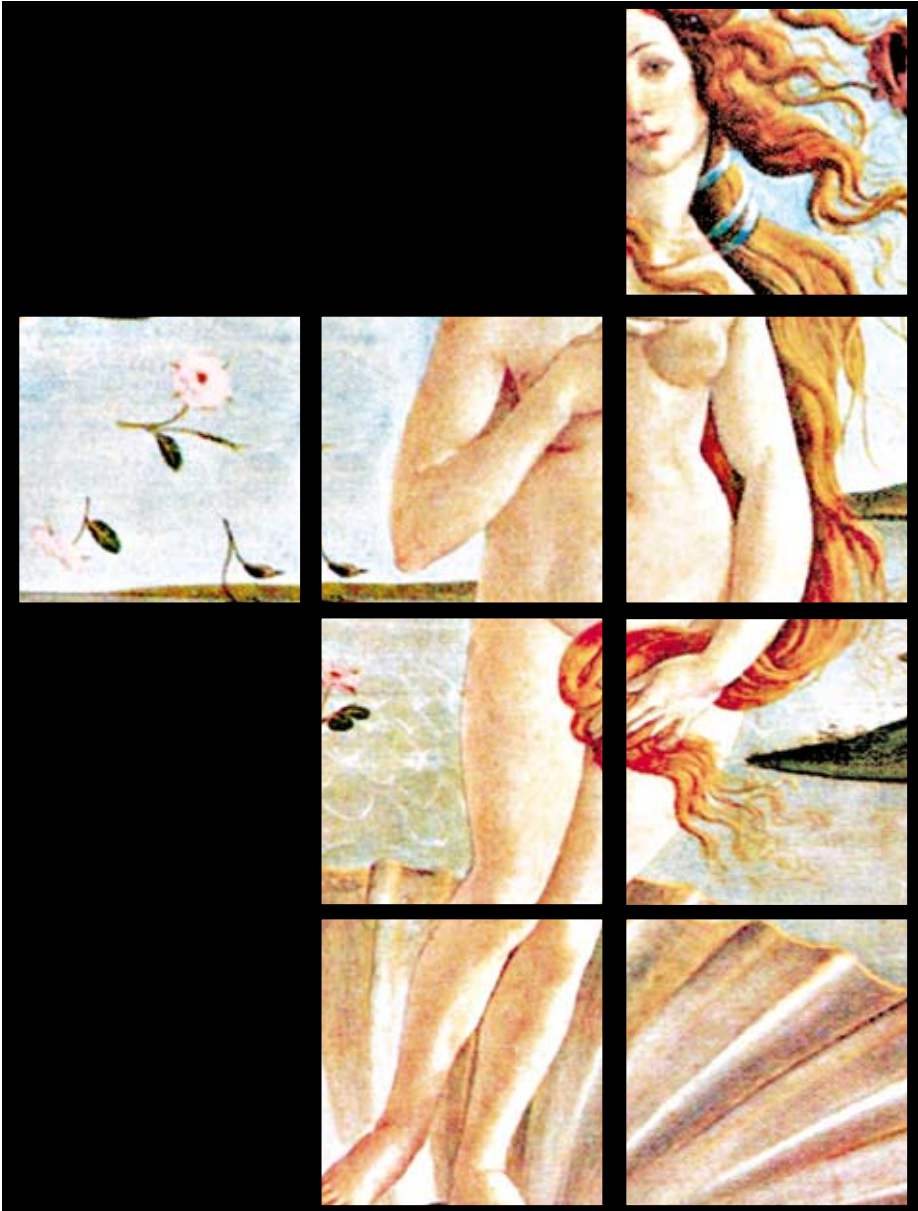
We have good experience of female engineers or male nurses visiting schools, as well as for practice periods for girls in technical workplaces and for boys in nurseries.

To conclude, it is important to add that knowledge about gendered injustices sensitise teachers also to inequalities based on other differences. It is important also to emphasise that gender awareness – or awareness on ethnicity or sexuality – is not a personal trait that teachers should have. Theoretical knowledge on gender, in relation to other dimensions of differences, is needed. Practical pedagogical training is needed as well.

# 2.

## TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIAS

### IN MEDIA



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### “GENDER, THE MEDIA AND ADVERTISING - OPTIONS FOR (SELF-)REGULATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA AND ADVERTISING”

#### Introductory Summary

The media (audiovisual, print, electronic, internet<sup>4</sup>) and their content, including advertising, form an important part of our everyday life. The media are a source of information about the world around us, the media are also a source of entertainment and are a mean of commercial communication.

In the media, either state or commercial, the question of securing non-discriminatory depiction of men and women is dealt with in different ways: through legal decrees, provisions of television and radio councils or by internal directives.

In advertising these are most often voluntary recommendations issued and monitored by members of the advertising industry.

At the European level the question of the depiction of men and women in the media and advertising is handled by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The most important laws in the media area are: Act no. 483/1991 Coll., on Czech Television, Act no.484 /1991 Coll. on Czech Radio and Act No. 231/2001 on the operation of radio and television broadcasting.

Czech legislation does not contain any special provisions against sexist or schematic depiction of men and women in advertising, nor does the advertising industry ethical codex contain any such provision. When formulating advertising requirements it is no less important to ensure that advertising not only reflects, but also influences social attitudes. For this reason advertising should not degrade or discriminate. Advertising aimed at Czech consumers (male or female) is in no respect an exception - it also should be subject to

<sup>4</sup> We do not deal with the internet in this study, internet regulation and messages published in this medium are not regulated.

the same requirements for non-discriminatory and non-stereotype depiction of men and women. Advertising should reflect the fact that men and women today do very varied work and activities and in private life share house work and the overall management of the household. Those commissioning advertising and those creating it should also be aware of what concepts and values the advertising is communicating and what influence and impact advertising messages have on girls and boys and not least on younger children. In the Czech context, moreover, the degree of enforceability of regulatory legislation before the courts is debatable. The Advertising Council is necessary also for the reason that in its mission statement it states the ethical and social responsibility of advertising. We believe that the non-discriminatory and non-stereotype depiction of men and women falls into the ethical dimension and social responsibility of advertising.

#### **THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN REINFORCING GENDER STEREOTYPES.**

When we talk of gender stereotypes in the media, this is primarily regularity in the depiction of certain topics. This regularity is conditioned by media logic, but also by the dominant ideology of the society in question. The media influence the way in which the roles of men and women are perceived in society, what value significance we assign to topics linked socially to the roles of men and women and what significance the words of men and women have. The influence of the media on the individual in society is a function of the possibility of the media to influence the process of stereotypisation.

To the depiction of gender in the media is also linked another question in gender studies which is the representation of women in the media, that is, the composition of work teams and the involvement of women (or minorities) in the creation of the information content itself. The need to monitor and support the involvement in the process of information production comes from discursive analyses which point to the fact that media institutions function within a particular context, where other factors from the environment also come into play. The insufficient representation of women in media institutions causes an insufficient representation of individuals in society (women) with a differing life reality.

#### **THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN REINFORCING GENDER STEREOTYPES.**

Approximations and communications short cuts cannot be avoided in the media. This process is technically known as stereotypisation and is common to all types of media communication, including advertising. In this sense

stereotypisation is not always harmful - for a person it is partially a cognitive need, in order to be able to digest large quantities of information and sort it. To a certain extent stereotypes in the media make the work of a journalist more effective and in advertising they serve as a short-hand prompt for a commercial message (Svobodová 2008). But some stereotypes, in view of their simplifying nature, can be dangerous: they can contain sexist, racial, ethnic or other kinds of prejudice, which are so widespread that they become a major (sometimes even a dominant) part of a particular culture, more exactly, a particular social practice (Jirák, 2008) A frequent example of stereotypisation is the media depiction of minorities and foreigners, men and women in advertising. According to Jan Jirák we "often do not realise that the media do not reflect social reality, but re-model it in a distinct and major way" (Jirák, 2005).

#### **PROBLEM AREAS OF MEDIA REGULATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

- Monitoring, content regulation and promotion of gender topics in state media are, in contrast to other countries, low.
- No detailed content analyses are regularly prepared of various kinds of broadcasting with indicators of the gender issue.
- The Councils of state media do not function as moderators of media content and do not contribute conceptually to improving media ethics.
- For the commercial media there does not exist an advisory media institution which would be of help in preparing codices and standards to support equal opportunities for men and women, diversity and further requirements for depiction in the media.
- The print media do not consider content monitoring with reference to the gender issue as important.
- The means of dealing with complaints on broadcasting content or print content is not transparent. Inputs are dealt with too slowly and inefficiently.
- The political independence of the representatives on the regulatory bodies of state media is not guaranteed; nor is their expertise in the area of gender studies.

#### **SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA**

- First of all, a discussion on the current situation should take place at the political level between specialists from the media field (the media and advertising), representatives of the non-profit sector, the public, representatives of cultural

and educational institutions; such a discussion would establish standpoints for the consolidation of state and commercial media. For the print media this activity could lead to an improvement in the standing of the Syndicate of Journalists. If this institution is not perceived as a moderator between public administrations, the courts and journalists, it will be very difficult to regulate the content of print media (regulation meant here not in terms of censorship, but positive action to support policies for equal opportunities). On the basis of discussion the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV) would be strengthened; it would develop an active approach to supporting equal opportunities policies and diversity in broadcasting content and to educating broadcast providers, particularly in the area of gender, multiculturalism etc.

- The Council should offer such education mainly for television, radio, and possibly the internet, the Syndicate of Journalists could offer and arrange education in the area of print media, along the lines of the Council.
- At the present time all the Councils (for Broadcasting, Czech Television, Czech Radio) are elected by political appointees, which means that Council members are selected along party lines. This causes many clashes of interest and possible influence of content and license awards. The media Councils are not political neutral, as a result of the way members are elected. The Councils must have their independence formally guaranteed. The Councils should have elected to them representatives from specialists, the selection of members should be transparent and public.
- The Broadcasting Council should deal with comments, complaints and monitor broadcasting content, as defined by law. We recommend broadening the organisational structure of the Broadcasting Council with a department which will work with the radio and television content providers in the area of content self-regulation and media development. The Broadcasting Council should be an advisory body for the creation and observance of ethical codices, should offer advice and training in the area of providing content which meets the policy of supporting diversity in broadcasting and informing (that is, also meets the policy of equal opportunities for men and women).
- The Broadcasting Council should create or initiate the preparation of content analyses which would be created by specialists from the area of gender and the media; part of the Broadcasting Council's budget would be allocated to this.

- The Broadcasting Council should monitor the public's demands in respect of broadcasting and advertising, as well as trends abroad. It should communicate its findings to the Czech Parliament, the public and to representatives of the media and advertising.
- Support should be increased for the introduction of ethical codices in general and for the enforcement of the requirement for multiculturalism in the media, which would be actively supported by the various Councils. The Broadcasting Council should base its allocation of licences more on the basis of compulsory ethical codices from applicants and of content commitments and should include this requirement in assessments when allocating licences to radio and television broadcasters.

#### THE MOST FREQUENT STEREOTYPES AND MEANS OF EXPRESSION USED IN DEPICTING MEN AND WOMEN IN ADVERTISING ARE:

**Objectivising advertising:** Women are depicted in positions indicating subordination, parts of their bodies are shown, models in advertising are shown as reduced in relationship to a man. In this context, we sometimes speak of fragmentation of the human body - when only "selected" parts of the male or female body are shown.

An illustrative example might be a KFC advert from 2002: a truck driver is driving down the road, and the commentary asks the viewer, whether he would like grilled thighs and crispy breasts. This is followed by a shot of two girls standing by the road, with a view of their buttocks and breasts along with the commentary (Ramešová, 2007). Here it is worth mentioning that complaints about sexism led the advertising industry to start using men in some cases instead of women, so they also are now depicted as sexual objects.

**Gender stereotypisation in advertising:** Here it is a question of depicting careers and social roles: Men have positions linked to authority, are experts, whereas women receive advice from men and are shown traditionally as carers, secretaries, home makers and mothers. This trend has weakened in recent years and women appear more frequently in non-traditional roles, but in spite of this traditional female role dominate, particularly those of home maker and mother ((Curran, Renzetti, 2003).

Here the research study "Women at work have no work to do" is apposite: "thin, long-legged, attractive women managers drink coffee or chat about how they can depend on their hair spray, breath freshener or deodorant under any



Tereza Wennerholm Čáslavská (left) during her speech

circumstances - as if the only thing that interests women at work is looking good" (Valdrová, 2006, p. 82)

**The voice of authority in advertising:** Available research shows that in 75% of advertising the accompanying text is read out by a man (Curran, Renzetti, 2003, p. 201). The advertising industry gives as its reason the fact that female voices are not authoritative, are not credible and that consumers trust male voices. But available studies do not support this view.

For example in an experiment called And what if the Duracel bunny was female? the authors come to the view that male voices do not automatically

mean more successful product promotion. Here as in other studies it was confirmed that the voice of authority need not belong only to men, but those women as well, both in person or as animated figures - can persuade equally well. Everything depends on the situation and context of the product being promoted (Peirce, 2002).

**Sexism in advertising:** this is the sexualisation of the female body, for example when a model in an advert has a purely decorative role, has no other link to the product and is shown only because of her physical attractiveness and sex appeal. This approach represents women not as individual people with unique personal characteristics, but as an object which can be defined in all kinds of ways (Valdrová, 2006).

The Czech advert for the Soudal brand of adhesives can serve as an example; next to the slogan "Soudal - the universal silicon" there is a photograph of a woman with her blouse undone and wearing a bra.

#### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CZECH REPUBLIC FOR IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

- The Arbitration Commission of the Advertising Standards Council assesses advertising in respect of the depiction of men and women, but has nothing to base its assessment on, that is, the Council has no standing recommendations on how to assess sexism in advertising or what kind of depiction of men and women is harmful. The first recommendation of our analysis therefore assumes the preparation of clear and comprehensible guidelines for

advertising strategy and campaign managers, which would be communicated as part of the “copy advice” service.

- As the best example of good practice we view the codices of the Canadian and Swedish self-regulatory bodies, in which concepts such as gender stereotypes, objectivising advertising and sexualisation in advertising messages are all explicitly defined.
- In the complaints area we recommend reformulating the title of the complaint category “women in advertising/sexism” as the depiction of men and women in advertising which broadens the issue. As part of this we recommend the monitoring of complaints, where we recommend giving numbers, how many complaints arrive for individual adverts and for which areas,
- We propose closer cooperation with the expert academic field and with representatives of civic society who have dealt long-term with the question of gender stereotypes and the equality of men and women in the Czech Republic. We specifically recommend that these representatives participate in assessing complaints on the Arbitration Commission and help at the very least to create the aforementioned recommendations. As in the case of France where the equivalent Advertising Standards Council also has representatives of interest and expert groups, or the Canadian Advertising Council where representatives of the wider public work on the assessment commissions.
- We further believe that the Advertising Standards Council should take account of the commitments which the Czech government has made internationally, for example those affecting the advertising industry from recommendations of the European Union, the Council of Europe and not least the Czech Republic (for example, directives adopted on media regulation, recommendations arising from Council of Europe resolutions and so on). From these commitments it follows that equality between men and women cannot be achieved while stereotypical depiction of men and women continues in the media and in advertising. For example the EU Plan for the Achievement of Equal Status for Men and Women (adopted by the Czech Republic) emphasises the struggle against stereotypes as a priority area, since continuing female and male stereotypes are a major cause of inequality between men and women. Here in line with the model of the French Advertising Standards Council we recommend cooperating with the Department for Equal Opportunities which comes under the aegis of the Minister for Human Rights.

- We believe it is appropriate for the Advertising Standards Council to have the function of an educational and information institution. In the area of advertising, media studies have for a long time devoted attention to the impact of sexist and stereotypical advertising on social attitudes. The Advertising Standards Council has scope for educational and information activities, educational activities could for example be offered as part of a copy advice service or could be part of measures when assessing the justifiability of complaints against advertising. As part of its information activities the Advertising Standards Council could be more actively involved in government campaigns promoting equal opportunities for men and women.
- Not least, we call for those placing adverts and for advertising agencies to be aware of their social responsibility. Advertisers invest significant amounts in the advertising and marketing of products and through their activities contribute to the creation of values across society. In their work they should therefore take account of, and reflect, shifts in the social standing of men and women and be aware of the impact that gender stereotypes, the playing down of violence against women and advertising in general have on the self-perception of (above all) young girls, boys and children. For this reason we recommend that creative and advertising agencies adopt their own (agency) codices for their creative departments.

In our paper we have drawn on the following:

Kubálková P., Wennerholm Čáslavská T. Analysis: Gender, the media and advertising: The options for (self-)regulation of gender stereotypes in the media and advertising. Praha : Centrum proEquality při Otevřené společnosti o.p.s., 2009. Available at [www: http://www.proequality.cz/res/data/005/000660.pdf](http://www.proequality.cz/res/data/005/000660.pdf).

## IMAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN IN ADVERTISING<sup>4</sup>

“Mobilizing the entire society with the aim of eradicating sexist stereotypes in advertising” – that is the primary concern expressed by the European Parliament in its resolution of 3 September 2008.,,

Responding to this issue in Belgium, the Federal Senate adopted in March 2006 a resolution concerning the image of women and men in advertising. This resolution states that advertising very often fails to represent the social role of women and men in a realistic manner, where the Senate criticizes advertisements for showing an image of women that many perceive as humiliating, degrading, dishonorable, and consequently liable to provoke violence against women or gender-based discrimination.

The resolution identifies several levels where it is necessary to take action in order to improve the image of women and men in advertising. The resolution addresses public institutions responsible for equal opportunity policies, self-regulatory bodies, and civil society.

In the framework of the resolution, the Belgian Federal Senate called on the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, which I represent here as its director, to carry out an extensive study of the image of women and men in advertising in Belgium.

As part of the project, which was executed in 2008, an opinion survey was conducted among advertisers on the one hand and individuals active in associations that defend equality on the other hand. The goal was to determine their opinions on certain advertisements considered acceptable and non-acceptable with regard to their representation of women and men. In total, close to 1,000 respondents participated in the study.

It can be concluded that certain persons are more aware of the existence of sexist advertising, such as individuals active in women’s or men’s organiza-

tions, women in general, older people, nonbelievers, and persons with higher education.

The survey has also demonstrated that advertisers that have substantial influence over the content of advertisements, namely those who possess decision-making powers in advertising agencies, do not protest against sexist advertising. Paradoxically, this applies more strongly to influential women than their male counterparts. This finding lays to rest a hypothesis according to which an increase in the number of feminine advertisements would decrease the production of advertisements unfavorable to women.

Most respondents in the survey expressed a position against advertisements representing women as objects of sexual desire. In addition, they criticized porno-chic advertising and surprisingly also ads involving the theme of a man dominated by a woman.

## WAYS OF FIGHTING SEXIST REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN ADVERTISING

### Self-Regulation

First and foremost, I want to insist on the importance of self-regulation, a mechanism that allows the advertising industry to regulate its own practices. There are three groups of players involved in the process: distributors, advertising agencies, and the media. The objective of self-regulation is to promote, develop, and defend advertising communication. In particular, their mission is to establish codes of ethics and to process complaints made by consumers.

However, only a small number of complaints (on average 10% per year) concern public uneasiness with regard to certain representations of women and men in advertising. This uneasiness does exist among the public, but it is rarely brought to the attention of self-regulatory bodies. How can this discrepancy be explained? Do consumers not want to complain to an official institution out of fear to be perceived as censors? Is it perhaps that self-regulatory body is insufficiently known to consumers?

It is therefore important **to increase the awareness of self-regulatory bodies among the general public as well as their task consisting of handling complaints that concern the image of women and men in advertising.**

Are consumers discouraged because self-regulatory bodies only penalize flagrantly sexist advertising and close their eyes to more subtle forms of chauvinism?

**It appears desirable to encourage self-regulatory bodies to embrace in a clear manner respect for the principle of equality between women and men and to explicitly integrate gender perspectives into codes of ethics.**

In addition to banning sexist advertising, codes of ethics should encourage advertisers to represent women and men in an equal manner in non-stereotypical roles, for example through recommendations, proposals for good practices, etc.

These practices could also be incorporated **in decisions** taken by self-regulatory bodies with regard to complaints about sexist advertising. Under a demand requesting modification or withdrawal of an offensive advertisement, the advertiser at issue could be obligated to create a new version of the advertisement for the product in question, where the new version would offer an image more favorable to women and men or an image counteracting the traditional roles. Such decisions would be highly educational.

I want to propose one last recommendation to self-regulatory bodies regarding the **complaint processing system**. The resolution of the Belgian Senate mentioned earlier suggest the inclusion of consumer representatives in the Belgian self-regulatory body to ensure that civil society will have an actual say in the matter. This reform has already been put in place. On 1 January 2008, the first-instance jury of the Belgian Advertising Ethics Jury (JEP), which handles complaints and preliminary inquiry requests, adopted **a multiparty structure** – two of its members come from the advertising sector and two from civil society. In addition, the JEP has recently decided to increase its membership to six and made a demand to the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men to appoint one of its representatives as a member of the jury.

In an effort to ensure that one of the members of the first instance jury possesses profound knowledge of equality matters, the JEP has clearly expressed its commitment to respect this principle. This development and the relevant good practices should be appreciated.

## LEGAL ACTION – ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING THE EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN

Apart from self-regulatory bodies, organizations promoting the equality of men and women also play an important role in the framework of their research activities and legal actions.

In 2007, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, an organization promoting equality in the sense of Directive 2002/73, filed a complaint initiating a judicial procedure before the Tribunal of Commerce of Brussels against the “Rent a Wife” advertising campaign, which was deemed sexist in view of the humiliating and insulting message toward women the advertising contained. The campaign promoted an Internet-based DVD rental service. The promotional video offered, as a metaphor, to rent a woman tied and placed in a box that could be delivered by mail with the possibility to order several examples at the same time and to return them for exchange repeatedly. In the ruling, the judge agreed with the arguments presented by the Institute, confirmed that incitement of gender-based discrimination had taken place, banned this discrimination, and ordered the withdrawal of the advertising from the Internet subject to a fine. The ruling was based on the legislation aiming to fight gender-based discrimination and the law regulating commercial practices. This way, a judge has qualified a sexist comportment as gender-based discrimination for the first time in Belgium.

## ADOPTION OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

In assessing whether it is realistic and achievable to institute **specific legislation that would ban sexism** in advertising, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men commissioned in 2008 a **study into the definition of the concept of sexism**, which is about to be concluded. The outcome of the study will be available on our website at [www.iefh.belgium.be](http://www.iefh.belgium.be) at the end of June 2009.

Already the first available results illustrate that sexism is a general concept that stems from a given time and place and is related to the culture. Society changes permanently, where standards and values develop, including the standards and values relating to the social role of men and women. It is therefore difficult to define from a legal viewpoint what precisely the notion of sexism involves. In addition, practices employed by advertisers develop constantly, as well. In defining the legal standard for determining advertising considered detrimental to the image of women or men, it is difficult to take into consideration such continual changes.

Moreover, the legal decision made in the Rent a Wife case has established a precedent and a new judicial practice, where legislation aimed at combating gender-based discrimination in effect in Member States could bring a response that is sufficiently satisfactory for penalizing advertising containing flagrant sexism as well as advertising inciting gender-based discrimination or violence.

objective is to help young people understand how the media function and to stimulate their critical thinking by means of a humorous comic strip and signs distributed in schools. This campaign was launched after a study into sexist stereotypes spread by the media conducted among young people by the French Community in 2007.

[http://www.egalite.cfwb.be/medias/stereotype\\_toi\\_meme/](http://www.egalite.cfwb.be/medias/stereotype_toi_meme/)

## SUMMARY

This overview of good practices is not meant to be complete. There are certainly other initiatives and strategies that prove to the contrary.

Nevertheless, in attempting to eradicate sexist advertising, all the key players concerned, that is to say the advertising world, self-regulatory bodies, the public sector, and civil society, need to be mobilized. It is crucial that they do not act in an isolated manner; they need to form partnerships and take advantage of synergic effects.

Finally, actions that are taken need to target both the creators of sexist advertisements and the recipients of such advertisements.

## ADVERTISING AWARDS

Advertising does not spread only images that are stereotypical, degrading women, or sexist. Advertising also depicts women who are emancipated, liberated, or occupying non-traditional roles and shows gender-related issues in a creative manner.

Such positive advertising deserves to be rewarded, for instance by means of public awards. In Belgium, the success of such positive awards has already been demonstrated. The advertising awards of ZORRA, a think tank attached to the Center of Women's Studies at the University of Anvers (in Flanders), and Vie Féminine, a francophone feminist movement, attract every year the interest of the marketing and communication sector, organizations dealing with equality issues, the general public, and the media.

## CIVIL SOCIETY WATCHDOGS

Giving awards is not the only initiative of women's associations and think tanks from the academic world. These institutions also act as watchdogs that pay attention and respond to sexist advertising in the public space and in the media.

This way, Vie Féminine has created this year a **Vigilance Committee** (Vigipub) that denounces sexist advertising with regard to the entities concerned and gets public authorities involved, such as the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men. ZORRA works in a similar fashion, using online discussion as a platform.

To guarantee the permanence of these initiatives, financial support from public sources is recommended.

Until now, I have mentioned examples of actions directed at creators, in other words advertisements or advertisers. It needs to be stressed that the **recipients of advertising messages**, in other words consumers, also have a role to play. The consumer has to be sensitive, aware, and responsible. The consumer has to learn to employ a critical attitude in assessing images presented by advertisements. It is essential to promote media education, particularly among young persons.

In Belgium, this issue is in the competence of public organizations that come from the country's three communities. The French Community has launched an extensive awareness campaign titled "Stereotype Yourself". The

## “SEEKING 45 + WOMAN: EXPERIENCE AND COMMITMENT”

When compared to other EU countries, Poland ranks last as regards benefiting from the potential of people aged over 50. Their early withdrawal from the labour market leads to a serious loss of human capital; this also means a necessity to allocate public funds for their financial support. The early escape into inactivity is also a social problem as many people who retire lose social bonds that are often job-related, which evokes the sense of solitude, depression and social exclusion.

Prolonging the working life of employees over 50 constitutes one of the EU's priorities. In accordance with the provisions of the Lisbon Strategy adopted by EU countries in 2000, one of the goals of the European Union is to increase the employment rate for people aged 55-64 to at least 50%. In Poland this rate amounted to 29.7% in 2007 and to 32 % in 2008, which means that it represents one of the lowest levels among all EU countries.

Discrimination against women on the labour market starts practically from the moment of their graduation from the university: employers are reluctant to employ young women because they fear that a new female employee “would have no experience”, and “can get pregnant”. Mothers returning from maternity or parental leave are not attractive employees because their skills may become out of date during their absence on the labour market.

However, we can say without exaggeration that women over 40 are in the worst situation on the labour market. Statistics can only prove that: the employment rate is higher for men between 55 – 64 years old: 44.6 %, while for women is only 21.1 % in Poland.

Employers often perceive women in this age group as those who are less efficient than the young ones, who work slower, who are more often ill and take sickness leaves. In addition, they often believe that older women are less

flexible and open to novelties, that it is difficult to change their habits and that they are not capable of learning. This attitude results in reduced access of these female employees to skill-raising trainings and courses. At the same time, professional experience of older women is not valued on the labour market.

The media keep reminding us that more and more people leave Poland “in search for bread” and that employers soon will be forced to change their attitude to female and male employees over 45. However, women more often face double discrimination – both on account of age and gender. As the Portugal presidency Council Conclusions on poverty and women and recent Czech presidency Council Conclusions on dignified ageing, underlines that women are more exposed than men to a higher risk of poverty in old age as compared with men.

The government has therefore prepared a package of measures directed at increasing the employment of people over 50 in Poland, that is a programme entitled **Solidarity across generations. Measures aiming at increasing the economic activity of people over 50**. The main goal of the programme is to achieve the employment rate for people aged 55-64 set by the Lisbon Strategy by 2020.

The programme introduces the measures that, on the one hand, increase incentives for entrepreneurs to employ people over 50, and on the other hand, foster the improvement of qualifications, skills and effectiveness of work of older people. Some of the solutions offered in the programme are also addressed to people over 45. This results from the expert analyses which suggest that in order to maintain the economic activity of people over 50 it is necessary to adopt appropriate measures towards younger people too.

The programme includes all four flexicurity components, which are: flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, comprehensive lifelong learning strategies, effective active labour market policies and modern social security systems.

Gender stereotypes which have to be blamed for the worse situation of women at the labour market, haven't got an expiration date, therefore there should be many actions counteracting them. One of the examples I want to share with you, is Polish campaign **Wanted: women over 45 – reliability, commitment, experience**. The campaign won the best prize in social advertising and was

aimed at changing the attitude of employees and employers by modifying the stereotype image of working women 45+ and through promotion of older woman as a person who:

- has experience resulting from many years of professional work,
- is more focused on work than a young person because she has less family responsibilities,
- is meticulous because she has already been through learning on her errors,
- is disciplined because she values stability,
- is loyal to her employer because she values her job,
- has a higher motivation to work because she knows what she wants,
- and in addition – what is more and more often valued today – a person who has better understanding of needs of the ageing population of customers because she belongs to it herself.

Three TV spots have been broadcasted on television, each of them illustrating the present situation of women over 45 on the labour market and how it should be. Aim of the campaign was to promote women 45+ as mature, competent and committed to their work, and show how strongly unfair stereotypes are. All of 16 voivodeship capitals featured 20 billboards informing about the campaign and connected with the TV campaign.

At the same time, there was a campaign on the internet website [www.kobieta.gov.pl](http://www.kobieta.gov.pl) which provided its users with legal information concerning counteracting discrimination, addressed to employers, senior citizens and women. At the end of the campaign all articles from the website were published in a book form.

The campaign was supposed to provoke a discussion on the planned system solutions with respect to gradual levelling of retirement age of women and men and equal access to employment and lifelong learning for representatives of both sexes, especially older people. In Poland this aspect of promoting women over 45 on the labour market had not been addressed in the media before. We sincerely hope that elimination of gender stereotyping ends one day and we will find another field of interest.

For now, we concentrate on two systemic projects: first, entitled Social and economic activation of women on the local and regional level is designed

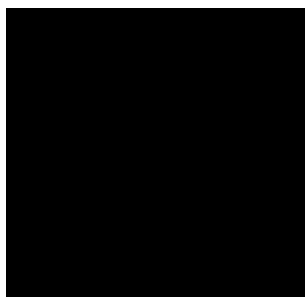
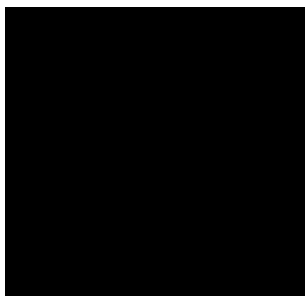
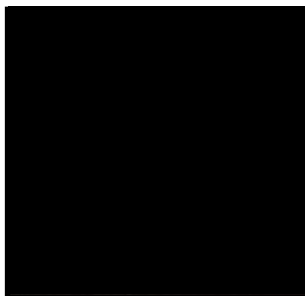
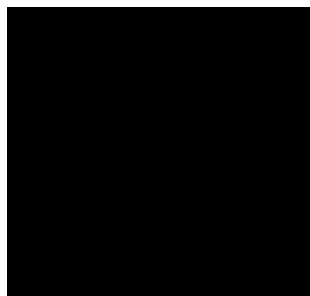
to improve the situation of women on the labour market, through, among other things, intensifying actions of Labour Market Institutions in this field. Strengthening the potential of the existing entities and awareness-raising in regard to the importance of actions towards ensuring equal opportunities will contribute to the improvement of women's situation on the labour market. The problems raised in the project include the pay gap between women and men, barriers in promotion, and unequal treatment on account of gender. The project consists of, among others, creating a pool of knowledge for institutional changes in the field of supporting women on the labour market, including women over 50.

The second project: Reconciliation of professional and family roles of women and men is designed to contribute to reducing the scale of discrimination of women with children on the labour market. Reconciliation of work and family life is advantageous to the balance in sharing family responsibilities between men and women and thus facilitates women's participation in the labour market, contributing to eliminating pay gap.

# 3.

## TOOLS AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIAS

### IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES



Julia Ehrt  
Transgender Europe, Belgium

Silvan Agius  
ILGA-Europe, Belgium

### “EXAMPLES OF LEGAL AND POLICY GOOD PRACTICES ON TRANSEQUALITY AND INCLUSION”

In their speech ILGA-Europe<sup>5</sup> and TGEU<sup>6</sup> highlight the difficult situation in which trans people find themselves across the European Union. They subsequently, highlight two initiatives that may serve as good practice models for other EU countries:

1. Scotland’s policy for governmental cooperation with transgender organisations
2. Sweden’s new comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation

### THE NEED FOR LEGAL CERTAINTY AND CLEAR PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION OF TRANS PEOPLE

The current absence of adequate legal protection against discrimination of trans people within several Member States of the European Union is of concern, and potentially in breach of European Directives on gender equality. In fact, at the moment, there is no shared understanding at Member State level on the protections that should be afforded on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression. Sixteen Member States interpret ‘gender identity’ to fall within the wider definition of ‘sex’, ‘sexual identity’ or [less appropriately] ‘sexual orientation’. In another eleven Member States, however, there is great legal uncertainty as there is no express articulation on the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of gender identity.<sup>7</sup>

In 1996, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in its decision in *P v. S*, and subsequent reaffirmations in *K.B.* (2004) and *Richards* (2006) held that;

“the scope of the principle of equal treatment for men and women cannot be confined to the prohibition of discrimination based on the fact that

a person is of one or other sex. In view of its purpose and the nature of the rights which it seeks to safeguard, it also applies to discrimination arising from the gender reassignment of a person.”<sup>8</sup>

To this effect, ILGA-Europe and TGEU call on the eleven<sup>9</sup> Member States that do not yet have any express references to the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression to amend their sex (or gender) equality legislation and make direct reference to the Recital 3 of Directive 2006/54/EC Gender ‘Recast’ Directive (quoted above).

## WHY ARE GENDER BINARY CATEGORIES PROBLEMATIC FOR TRANS PEOPLE?

Trans people experience significant problems due to the fact that legislation across Europe is built on binary men/women categories. Although in *B v France* (1992)<sup>10</sup> the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) held that countries are obliged to provide for a mechanism whereby trans people are allowed to change their legal gender, two EU Member States still preclude such a possibility<sup>11</sup>. Worryingly, the countries that provide for such a mechanism, often require unreasonable conditions such as permanent infertility, divorce and/or mandatory sex reassignment surgeries.

Another consequence of the exclusively binary gender approach is that transgender people face a disproportionately high level of discrimination. In Scotland, research in 2007 on social attitudes found that 50% of the survey respondents said that “they would be unhappy about a relative forming a long-term relationship with a transsexual person” – the highest such result for any minority group referred to in this study.<sup>12</sup>

### 1: Scotland’s policy to involve transgender organisations in policy development and legislation initiatives

#### The Gender Equality Duty (GED) in the UK

The gender equality duty came into force in April 2007 and requires all UK public authorities to carrying out their functions in due regard of the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds or sex
- Promote equality of opportunity between women and men

The GED expressly includes transgender people<sup>13</sup> and states that:

“[...] authorities also have an obligation to eliminate discrimination and harassment towards current and potential transsexual staff and to transsexual service users.”

#### The Scottish implementation of the GED

The Scottish government realized that there was a lack of trans related expertise in Scottish public authorities and that the only way to overcome this was to work together with transgender people themselves.

Through a pilot project, the Scottish Transgender Alliance (STA) was provided with public funding for one year, to provide trainings on transgender issues to the Scottish Parliament, government and public authorities, and to develop transgender policies and function as a partner for other equality NGOs. The success of the approach led to a three year extension of the funding. Last years training focused on the situation in the employment sector where gender stereotypes are most prevalent.

Moreover the work of STA lead to an inclusion of “transgender identities” as aggravating factor in the Scottish hate crime legislation<sup>14</sup>. The law states:

“Actual or perceived **transgender identity** means any of the following:

- (a) Transvestism, transsexualism, intersexuality or having, by virtue of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, changed gender, or
- (b) Any other gender identity which is not standard male or female gender identity.”

#### Working with the Scottish Transgender Alliance paid back

Patrick Harvie, the Scottish Member of Parliament who introduced the Offences (Aggravation By Prejudice) (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament stated:

“I have been very grateful for the work of the Scottish Transgender Alliance, both in relation to the Offences (Aggravation by Prejudice) Bill and in wider terms. Far too often transgender issues are left as an afterthought in policymaking, or missed out altogether. Even when there are people in public services or in government trying to correct this, they may lack the specific expertise or the language to raise the issues with confidence. It has been of great value in Scotland to have access to an organisation which can ensure that the voice of transgender community is heard, and I hope that this experience will be of benefit throughout Europe.”

#### 2: Sweden’s new antidiscrimination expressly referring to gender identity and gender expression

On 1 January 2009, the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567)<sup>15</sup> and the Act Concerning the Equality Ombudsman (SFS 2008:568)<sup>16</sup> entered into force.

## The Discrimination Act

The Discrimination Act codifies all EU equality legislation into one Act of law and brings together all gender equality legislation along with the 2000/43/EC Race Directive and the 2000/78/EC Employment Framework Directive. In Chapter 1 Section 1 it states:

“The purpose of this Act is to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of **sex, transgender identity or expression**, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.” (emphasis added)

The reformulation of this law is particularly interesting in that it clearly listed the grounds of “transgender identity or expression” as one of the grounds of anti-discrimination and hence it gave legal certainty to transgender people who are not transsexual on the protection that they are afforded by law.

Through the current formulation transsexuals are included under the ground of “sex” as per ECJ case-law, and transgender people who are not transsexual are now also included through the grounds of “transgender identity or expression”.

Chapter 1 Section 5 provides the following definitions for ‘sex’ and ‘transgender identity or expression’:

**1. Sex: that someone is a woman or a man.**

**2. Transgender identity or expression:** that someone does not identify herself or himself as a woman or a man or expresses by their manner of dressing or in some other way that they belong to another sex.

## The Act Concerning the Equality Ombudsman

The Act Concerning the Equality Ombudsman on the other hand, provides the Equality Ombudsman with the power to ensure that no discrimination occurs in Sweden and to advise and other provide support to victims of discrimination.

## Conclusion of Swedish discrimination legislation change

As in the case of Scotland, the above was achieved through direct work between the Committee that was set up by the Swedish Government and LGBT equality organizations, most notably RFSL.

ILGA-Europe and TGEU advise other governments that have not yet done

so to enter in contact with organizations working for transgender equality (whether LGBT umbrella organisations and/or transgender specific organizations) in the reformulation of their policies and legislation as this is the only approach that will guarantee adequate legal protection and the right policies to fight discrimination.

<sup>5</sup> The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe) [www.ilga-europe.org](http://www.ilga-europe.org)

<sup>6</sup> Transgender Europe (TGEU) [www.tgeu.org](http://www.tgeu.org)

<sup>7</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity on the EU Member States: Part I –The Social Situation, 2009, p. 113

<sup>8</sup> Recital 3 of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)

<sup>9</sup> Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia

<sup>10</sup> This decision was upheld in *Goodwin v UK* (2002)

<sup>11</sup> Ireland (birth certificates), and Lithuania (personal registration number).

<sup>12</sup> Bromley, C, Curtice, J, Given, L. (2007) Attitudes to Discrimination in Scotland: 2006, Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research

<sup>13</sup> UK Gender Equality Duty, Overview of the gender equality duty , pg 3 <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/Documents/Gender/Public%20sector/Gender%20equality%20duty/Specific%20gender%20equality%20duty/Overview%20of%20the%20duty/Overview%20of%20the%20Duty.doc>

<sup>14</sup> Offences (Aggravation By Prejudice) (Scotland) Bill <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/09-AggPrej/b9s3-introd.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> See [http://www.do.se/Documents/pdf/new\\_discrimination\\_law.pdf?epslanguage=sv](http://www.do.se/Documents/pdf/new_discrimination_law.pdf?epslanguage=sv)

<sup>16</sup> See [http://www.do.se/Documents/pdf/new\\_do\\_law.pdf?epslanguage=sv](http://www.do.se/Documents/pdf/new_do_law.pdf?epslanguage=sv)

## **"PROJECT PRESIDENTKA.CZ - A PATH FOR WOMEN INTO POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE"**

### **1) A Czech woman President**

**T**he free non-party platform A Czech woman President encompasses about a hundred women from various political parties and without political affiliation. Most of them were former participants of "Training for female politician and political aspirants" organised by Forum 50% and led by lecturer Miluš Kotišová. The first two sessions of the training took place in Spring 2006 using financial support from the Slovak Czech Women's Fund foundation. Membership of the platform is also open to other women with an interest in public affairs, and a group of female politicians which has gathered around Forum 50% was also involved.

The members of A Czech woman President meet regularly to discuss various topics, such as the impact of the electoral system on the proportion of women in politics, mental pressure in politics or feminist economics. They also issue occasional press releases. One of the positive features of this platform is the sharing of experience and mutual support regardless of party affiliation.

The basic events for A Czech woman President are still the A Czech woman President symposia, which are lectures by important women in Czech public life, open to the public, on the subject of: What is good for our country, and the direction it should take. Both of the past symposia (which took place in October 2007 and 2008) were very successful events, which have now almost become a tradition. Presentations were made at them by significant female personalities not only from politics, but also for example from the field of science, the judiciary and the arts. As the name of this event implies, its aim is not only to present to the Czech public interesting female personalities who might serve as positive female role models, but also to contribute to the election of the first women as head of state of the Czech Republic. In the words of the organisers the Symposium will continue to be held until the election of the first-ever Czech woman President.

### **2) The depiction of women in election campaigns**

Stereotypes associated with men and women in politics are projected into the manner in which they are presented in election campaigns. Campaigns are visually and practically dominated by men, while female politicians are often so to speak invisible. Forum 50% undertook research before the regional and senate elections in 2008, focused on the way in which female politicians were portrayed in the campaign. Individual political parties varied significantly in their approach and their representation, but we can state one thing with certainty: An increase in the number of women in politics has become an election issue.

For example the Civic Democrats in Central Bohemia chose the slogan "More Women in Politics" as one of their election slogans. This did not unfortunately show in the composition of the candidate list, where women appeared mainly in unelectable places and only half as many of them were elected as in the previous elections. A poster calling for support for women in the elections was put together for example by the grouping Mayors for the Liberec Region; also of interest was a joint poster for female candidates for the Senate for SNK-ED and Public Affairs parties in Prague 5 and Prague 9.

We also noted however very improper forms of representation of female candidates. For example the Christian Democrats in the Hradec Králové region boasted on their website of having "the youngest and prettiest candidate" on the candidate list. "In 27th place we have student Jana Janečková, just turned 20, from Rokytnice in the Orlické mountains."

We also encountered examples of women in the campaign figuring as support for individual (male) candidates. A typical example is a Christian Democrat poster from the Liberec region. "I hope that it will work in the Liberec region the way it does here. I am going to vote for Dr Michael Vraný": nursing sister Kateřina. Very typical is the fact that while candidate Dr Vraný appears on the poster with his full name and title, the nursing sister is rather familiarly labelled just "nursing sister Kateřina".

## **PARTY LEADERSHIPS - FROM MAIN OBSTACLES TO MAIN ALLIES IN COMBATING STEREOTYPES ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION MAKING**

### **T**HE MOST COMMON STEREOTYPES ABOUT WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING:

- Women by nature are not capable and can not cope with the challenges of political life
- Other, more important women's roles (housekeeper, wife, mother, worker) do not let women enough free time to work as serious politicians
- Women themselves do not want to become politicians - they do not want and do not know how to use power
- Voters reject women in politics or at least give more credit to the male politicians
- Women voters reject women in politics (do not vote for women)
- Women have equal possibilities as men to succeed in politics if only they want to engage and try hard enough

The problem with these stereotypes: they are internalized by women and men nearly alike, and seem like self evident, easy to prove facts.

Different obstacles that women and men MP-s meet all over the world (See: IPU Global research on life-work balance of MPs in 2008):

#### **Three main obstacles in the MP's political work:**

##### **Women MP-s:**

Household obligations - lack of time

Traditional views of the women's role- stereotypes

Lack of family support- economic and social dependency of women

Women have to cope with structural barriers which work in favor of their male colleagues!!!

##### **Men MP-s:**

Lack of voters' support

Lack of money

Lack of party support

### **Party leaderships - crucial gatekeepers**

One man band parties

Parties of the old boys' networks

### **Strategies that party leaderships use to eliminate promising gender sensitive women politicians:**

- beauty qualification
- too young, too old and nothing in between
- women for single use
- use a woman to defeat "dangerous" women
- do not let women to organize within the party
- if the women succeed to organize, make sure to install an obedient leader
- if this is not possible, reduce logistic and financial support to the women's organization to the extend that it can not function

### **How do women politicians deal with the open and hidden hostility of the party leaders?**

Three strategies:

Play with men - token women

Become a man - change of the sex or queen bee syndrome

Become a woman leader with agenda of transformative politics

### **Best practices in overcoming stereotypes on women in political decision making:**

Party leadership change only when they have to - when there is the pressure strong enough to make them change:

- Lost elections - a chance for women in political parties
- International standards - the example of Socialist international
- Strong enough women's internal party organization
- Parity coalitions with strategic approach in civil society
- Win -Win strategy within the party - getting new voters with new approach and new agenda
- Profiting from the miracle of the gender equality sensitive and supportive male leader

## The impact of international support for changing of the stereotypes about women in political decision making:

- International support for development of the internal party democracy and gender equality policies within sister parties - CEE Network for Gender Issues, political foundations
- GTF and Women Can Do It project in the SEE region
- Why European Commission does not have a “Daphne” project for political empowerment of women, targeting specially empowerment of women within political parties?

## ANNEX

### Program of Conference

## THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON NEW WAYS IN OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Held by the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU

Congress Centre Prague  
Prague, Czech Republic  
27th May 2009



### Program of the Conference

#### 26th May 2009

19.00 Welcome dinner  
Entrance n.10 of Congress Centre Prague  
Restaurant Zoom

#### 27th May 2009

8.30 – 9.00 Registration of participants  
Entrance n.10 of Congress Centre Prague  
9.00 – 9.30 South Hall 3rd floor  
Opening speeches

**Mr. Michael Kocáb**, Minister of the Government of the Czech Republic for Human Rights

**Mr Christos Zois**, Deputy Minister for the Interior, Greece

**Ms. Belinda Pyke**, Director for Equality between Men and Women, Action against discrimination, Civil Society, DG EMPL, European Commission

**Ms Karin Karlsbro**, political adviser to Ms Sabuni, the Minister for Gender Equality in Sweden

**Ms Elisabeth Tome-Gertheinrichs**, Head of the Office for Women's Rights and Gender Equality

9.30 - 11.00 South Hall 3rd floor  
Tools and methods for overcoming gender stereotypes and bias in childhood

**Coloring book Daddy, mama ...** – Ms. Ivana Šindlerová , NGO, Czech Republic

**Comics “Fit for change”** – Ms. Nina Bosničová, Ms. Kristýna Ciprová, NGO - Gender Studies, Czech Republic

**Instruments for a gender sensitive education** – Ms. Teresa Pinto, President of the Portuguese Association of Women Studies, Portugal

**Gender awareness into teacher education and schools** – Ms. Elina Lahelma, University of Helsinki, Finland

### Discussion

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break

11.30 – 13.00 South Hall 3rd floor  
Tools and methods for overcoming gender stereotypes and bias in media

**Promoting gender equality in public and private media** – Ms. Tereza Wennerholm Čáslavská, Center for Equality, Czech Republic

**Image of women and men in advertising** – Mr. Michel Pasteel, Director of the Institute for the equality of women and men, Belgium

**Seeking 45 + woman: experience and commitment** – Ms. Monika Ksieniewicz, Department for Women, Family and Counteracting Discrimination Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Poland

### Discussion

13.00 – 14.00 Zoom restaurant 1st floor  
Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 Hall IV 2nd floor  
Meeting of ministers and heads of delegation

15.00 – 15.30 Hall IV 2nd floor  
Press conference

14.00 -15.30 South Hall 3rd floor  
Tools and methods for overcoming gender stereotypes and bias in decision making processes

**Examples of legal and policy good practices on trans equality and inclusion** -Mr. Silvan Agius (ILGA-Europe) and Ms. Julia Ehrt (Transgender Europe), Belgium

**Project Presidentka.cz** - a path for women into politics and public life – Ms. Jana Smiggels Kavková, Forum 50% Czech Republic

**Party leaderships** - from main obstacles to main allies in combating stereotypes about women in decision making – Ms. Sonja Lokar, Slovenia

### Discussion

15.30 – 16.00 Closing – Mr. Michael Kocáb, Minister of the Government of the Czech Republic for Human Rights

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE  
ON NEW WAYS IN OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES



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