

4.

Analysis of existing situation and of the needs of target groups: summary and comparison of the work conducted in Partner countries

During the first phase of the project, as described in the previous chapter on project activities, all partners worked on:

- the teaching and training environments in which gender-sensitive teaching is used and the gender dimension of the labour market is taken into account;
- the needs of the target groups by analysing the main motivations and perceptions of education and career choices of a sample of male and female students.

Each partner has carried out the following activities:

- analysis of the national strategies applied in VET national systems in the field of gender-sensitive education;
- analysis of the curricula of a selected sample of upper secondary schools;
- analysis of the motivations that influence education and career choices of students between 14 and 16 years of age (using a sample of final beneficiaries who were asked to fill out two questionnaires);
- analysis of gender distribution in the schools participating in this phase;
- identification and mapping of project/initiatives concerning gender-sensitive teaching and gender-sensitive guidance for education/career choices (if any) in the schools involved in the transfer;
- a gender analysis of local labour markets.

The results of the analyses carried out by each partner country were published, as prescribed by the work plan, in a two-part report.

The first part included:

- results of the desk-based research carried out by each partner country;
- results of the field research conducted out by each partner country.

The second part contained the in-depth review and comparison sheets, which included:

- comparison of the needs identified by desk-based and field research;
- description of the main factors that are behind the “resistance” to the eradication of gender stereotypes in education systems;
- possible lines of action.

In this section, we present the three review and comparison sheets. They detail the

similarities and differences, as well as the elements for the transfer of the good practice that have been agreed upon by the partners. Moreover, they outline the sustainability of the measures/actions for the eradication of gender stereotypes in VET systems. The fact sheets are the result of the analysis and comparison work carried out by the partners on the information and data collected through the desk-based and field research analyses conducted at national level⁵.

As prescribed by the work plan of the Ipazia project, the first phase was focused on the analysis of the structure and the features of the VET system into which the good practice was going to be transferred and integrated, as well as on the assessment of the needs of the indirect and direct beneficiaries of the transfer.

The information gathered in this phase is essential for implementing the process of adaptation of the good practice while at the same time ensuring the sustainability of the test phase and the successful integration of the tools and outputs that will be produced and transferred during the project.

In particular, and given the specific nature of the good practice and of the objectives of the Ipazia project, the partners obtained the following information through desk-based research:

- the description of the structure of the school system;
- the description of the different upper secondary school education and training programs (fields of study, subjects and duration);
- the analysis of the national strategies applied in VET national systems in the field of gender-sensitive education;
- the map of the projects/initiatives concerning gender-sensitive teaching;
- a gender analysis of local labour markets;
- analysis of the 2008/2009 gender distribution in partner schools;
- the description of upper secondary school History courses.

The above-mentioned information provides an overview of the current situation in each of the countries and highlights a series of elements (e.g. strategies, the ways in which students make choices and teaching/learning methodologies) that need to be taken into account and, in some cases, transposed, during the adaptation of the good practice.

As regards the analysis of target groups' needs, the partners used a field-based research approach and conducted surveys on a small sample of students (upper secondary school male and female students). In particular, two questionnaires were administered in each partner country: "YOUNG PEOPLE AND STEREOTYPES IN EDUCATIONAL, VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHOICES" and "WOMEN AND SCIENCE"⁶.

The questionnaires allowed the partners to systematically collect the gender-related considerations and motivations involved in the choice of a specific school and the meaning ascribed to such choice. All partners submitted the information and data obtained through desk-based and field research to the project steering group, which proceeded with the comparison of the data.

5. The summary and comparison report on the Analysis of the current situation and of the needs of target groups is available for download at www.ipazia.eu

6. See Appendix.

The comparison aimed at identifying:

- the ways in which the content of the good practice had to be updated vis-à-vis the new needs identified through the surveys and the new subjects involved;
- the procedures for updating and adapting methodologies and tools according to the characteristics of the direct and indirect beneficiaries that were chosen as target groups.

The results were summarised in three in-depth comparison sheets, which covered the following macro-areas:

- matching of the needs identified through the desk-based research against those identified through field research
- description of the main factors that are behind the “resistance” to the eradication of gender stereotypes in education systems;
- possible lines of actions.

SCHEDA n. 1

MATCHING DEI BISOGNI RILEVATI ATTRAVERSO L'ANALISI DESK E ON THE FIELD

The first step of the analysis of the needs of the direct target group of the Ipazia project, i.e. upper secondary school teachers, tutors and teachers/trainers, involved a survey on gender-sensitive teaching in the VET systems of the partner countries, as well as on projects and measures, if any, for its development and implementation.

The survey confirmed that partner countries had strategies aiming at providing equal education and training opportunities.

In fact, in line with the Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament of 8 September 2006 «Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems» which calls upon Member States to ensure high quality education and training systems that are both efficient and equitable, partner countries have implemented national strategies that aim at guaranteeing the principles of efficiency and equity, with a particular focus on the measures aiming at ensuring equality of opportunity for men and women in the above-mentioned systems.

Although the strategies that have been reported and described by the project partners suggest that the introduction of gender-sensitive teaching practices would be desirable, there are still no national-level strategies specifically concerning gender-sensitive education.

On the other hand, there have been several projects/initiatives in this field. Indeed, over the last five years, all partner countries have launched initiatives, mainly funded by state or Community resources, aimed at developing gender-sensitive teaching methodologies and/or raising the awareness of those who work in the sector and of opinion leaders in the field of design and application of these methodologies. Italy, Spain and Portugal have the highest number of gender-sensitive teaching projects/initiatives, followed by Latvia and Turkey.

As regards the comparison of the quantitative data on the gender distribution in vocational education and training and in the labour market, in spite of the significant progress made in the last decade, we are still far from the targets established by the “Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A roadmap for equality between men and women 2006-2010 - SEC(2006) 275”. The data collected through desk-based research confirm what is stated by the Commission “Education, training and culture continue to transmit gender stereotypes. Women and men often follow traditional education and training paths, which often place women in occupations that are less valued and remunerated. [...] Women still face both horizontal and vertical segregation. Most of them continue to be employed in sectors traditionally occupied by women, which are typically less recognised and valued. Moreover, they generally occupy lower echelons of the organisational hierarchy”.

In fact, while there is an increase in female employment, it should be noted that the main areas of growth for female employment continue to be concentrated in activities and occupations already predominantly feminine. This has reinforced segregation in the labour market.

Indeed, both sectoral and occupational segregation continue to rise in the EU (by 25.4% and 18.1%, respectively). More than four in ten employed women work in public administration, education, health or social activities, compared to less than two in ten men. In the private sector, however, business services remain an important source of job creation both for women and men. (Source: Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on equality between women).

The desk-based research therefore indicated the need to step up the measures to facilitate women's entry into non-traditional sectors and to promote men's presence in sectors traditionally dominated by women. These actions should focus on combating gender stereotypes from an early age, providing awareness training to teachers and students and encouraging young women and men to explore non-traditional educational paths.

Thus, it seems clear that the Ipazia project, and particularly the transfer and integration of the good practice into VET systems, provides an adequate answer to the implicit and explicit needs of the education and training “system” as it offers and delivers tools and methodologies aimed at disseminating gender-sensitive education through which the educational system can provide students with education and guidance paths that do not promote and perpetuate sexist stereotypes. As regards the needs identified through field research, i.e. the implicit and explicit needs of upper secondary school students (the sample is mostly made up of students enrolled in classes in which they will make their choice about the future, i.e. in the last year of the school cycle or in the year before the one in which students have to choose a specific program of study), the information collected by the partners was rather homogeneous.

Indeed, the comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data showed that the partner countries share some common elements:

- males and females usually like different subjects, while they often, albeit not always, tend to dislike the same ones;

- the more positive attitude of males towards concrete and operational subjects (most liked) is moderately confirmed;
- no clear and predictable male and female “profiles” regarding preferences or dislikes for specific subjects;
- students perceptions of upper secondary school choice varied significantly by gender, that is if a boy chooses a mostly female school, it is because he likes that school, whereas a girl who enrolls in a mostly male school does it because she thinks she needs to go to that particular school and she does not care if the school does not perfectly match her real preferences;
- gender differences (in school and career choices) are described by respondents as the product of a free decision that is motivated by their own (and “unique”) inclinations and not as an obligation to conform to fixed categories that impose constraints, prescriptions and prohibitions.

In conclusion, the comparison of the perceptions expressed in the field survey shows that gender stereotypes (in the sense of a sub-class of stereotypes) i.e. automatically associate categories or behaviours to gender, are still applied both at individual and system level. “Gender stereotypes lead to a rigid and distorted perception of reality based on what we mean by “feminine” and “masculine” and on what we expect from men and women. These are deeply-rooted (and unchallenged) expectations regarding the roles that men and women should play on the basis of their being a biological male or female.”

The answers provided by interviewed students show that they use “formulas” to categorise reality, they use generalised images that decrease environment complexity but, at the same time, erase individual differences within the individual groups.

On the other hand, the surveys showed that there has been a significant “evolution” (in qualitative and quantitative terms) in the way VET systems address gender stereotypes.

Indeed, private and public institutions have acknowledged the fact that social and economic pressure plays a key role in the application, enforcement and perpetuation of stereotypes.

Partner countries’ legislation does not contain specific indications concerning the instruments to be used to combat stereotypes. Conversely, in VET systems, we find norms and recommendations aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity and, at operational level, there are several projects that are mainly focused on providing gender-sensitive guidance to students to help them choose their education/career path.

It should be noted that the analysis indicated that, indeed, while the projects, actions and measures that have been implemented were aimed at providing guidance and raising awareness on gender stereotypes, there is no evidence of systematic actions aimed at stimulating innovation in educational practices and/or introduction of new content that challenges stereotypical gender role expectations. The only example has been the Italian project, i.e. the one that produced the good practice.

In reality, what emerges from students’ perceptions and from the analysis of the structure of VET systems is that there is not necessarily a need for “guidance” but the need for a renewed everyday teaching practice that is fully aware of its guidance function and especially of its active role in the destructuring of stereotypes that are often learned and emphasised in the family.

The comparison and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative information collected during the surveys provided us with precious food for thought. In the following fact sheets we will review these concepts which form the basic building blocks of the process of adaptation of the good practice in view of its transfer and integration into VET systems and ensure sustainability beyond the end of the Ipezia project.

SCHEDA n. 2

MAIN "RESISTANCE" FACTORS AGAINST THE ELIMINATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS

The report on equality between women and men 2009 of the European Commission indicates that the overall progress recorded in 2008 is still too slow in most areas and gender equality is far from being achieved. More women have entered the labour market, however the quantity objective ('more' jobs) has not been matched in quality ('better' jobs).

On average, partner countries are still far from achieving the 2010 EU benchmark of an 85% upper-secondary school completion rate. It is clear that lifelong learning education and training policies are crucial for knowledge-based societies and for improving the quality of labour.

In partner countries, although women have made progress in the education sector – there is an increase in undergraduate and graduate women from five years ago – there is still a wide gap between men and women in the scientific and technical sectors. For instance, gender differences remain as regards the fields of study, especially in engineering and computing, while women predominate in business, administration and law.

In the majority of partner countries, sectoral and occupational segregation remained practically unchanged over recent years, indicating that the increase in female employment has taken place in sectors already dominated by women. Women are mainly working in 'feminised' sectors and professions and remain in lower job categories with less access to senior positions.

Although the level of education among women has increased, this didn't lead to a better gender balance across studies and occupations.

We should note that the "destructuring" of gender stereotypes is a process that requires continued action that needs to be part of an integrated and coherent framework of measures. Hence, it requires the allocation of adequate human and financial resources (quantity and quality) in education and training systems.

The current resistance factors are mainly ascribable to erratic planning and, above all, to gender mainstreaming programs that, in the case of education systems, are very often focused on setting criteria for priority of access and not on actual practices or methodologies aimed at the eradication of stereotypes.

Moreover, progress still has to be made in the following areas:

- creation of a system of indicators for the assessment and self-assessment of education and training processes aimed at establishing equal opportunities

- for men and women, promoting the valorisation of the female gender and self-care for both men and women;
- development of methodologies and instruments that will enable schools to analyse local social and economic environments from a gender perspective to and identify the education and training requirements of male and female students;
- training of experts in education design, methodologies, teaching, training of school personnel, to improve the quality of the education offered by schools in the field of equal opportunity, guidance and attention to gender;
- collection and dissemination of education and training experiences and the provision of informational materials that can be used by different entities and professionals and in different geographical settings to promote the dissemination of good practices on gender equality at local level;
- production and dissemination of materials that will support gender mainstreaming in education and training;
- actions to facilitate and encourage the active involvement of the school community and of local partner structures through effective implementation of existing regulation in the field of educational innovation and school autonomy and the development of links with other local research and training institutions.

The school environment is a place that is specifically designated for the acquisition of behavioural models that are mediated by cultural and social influences; it is also where professional and career self-fulfilment choices are made and that is why it is imperative to allocate the necessary human and financial resources for ensuring the implementation of practices aimed at combating and “preventing” gender stereotypes.

In particular, the policies and the strategies that have been implemented at national and Community level have until now devoted only marginal attention to the fact that these issues play a key role in the establishment of a gender-sensitive culture.

In order for guidance services to be adequate to support personal and social development across all systems (education, training, labour services, etc.), we need to work toward the development of a “continuum of action” and “common action” system. This system would be more effective than the fragmented and erratic initiatives that have been implemented so far and, moreover, would ensure the exchange required for medium-long term results.

Last but not least, one of the critical issues is the lack of continued acquisition and availability of statistical data covering the socio-economic evolution of the “men-women equality” phenomena, which should become the instrument for making “visible the invisible”, as well as exposing implicit prejudices and apparently neutral procedures.

Indeed, what is lacking is a system of integrated and systematic evaluation indicators for collecting and using sex-disaggregated data in order to establish gender-sensitive criteria and benchmarks to be used for gender analysis.

SCHEDA n. 3

POSSIBLE LINES OF ACTION WITHIN THE IPAZIA PROJECT

Once they completed the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data and information collected during this research phase, the project partners identified a number of possible lines of action through which the actions foreseen by the Ipazia project, also in consideration of the specific nature of the good practice, can be used to remove the resistances and promote innovative education and training approaches.

In particular, it seems crucial (and consistent with identified needs) to use a guidance-oriented approach that will permeate teaching practices and prevent them from becoming “naturalised” and therefore evanescent. The purpose is to reduce the tendency for young people to “naturalise” social and cultural conditioning thus making them evanescent and transparent.

At transnational level, we believe it is imperative to work on renewing teaching and guidance practices. This renewal process should focus more attention on personal characteristics that have been more or less neglected up to now, perhaps due to an excessive emphasis on curricular activities and on students’ performance.

We are referring here to some of the so-called “transversal skills” (communication, relational, motivational, emotional and self-control skills) but also to more general aspects of the personality of the student that play and will play an increasingly crucial role in his/her chances of a successful and fulfilling professional life.

Consistently with the aims of the good practice, we must conceive and pursue a new notion of guidance that will:

- enhance young people’s awareness of socio-cultural development conditions;
- strengthen the awareness of the guidance role inherent in any form of teaching;
- use everyday teaching as a conscious guidance tool;
- place greater emphasis on the extra-disciplinary aspects of the person and on their role in professional achievement.

The IPAZIA project aims to pursue the following lines of action:

- train human resources working in both (school and training) systems in the valorisation the specificity and diversity of roles;
- promote the culture of the valorisation of differences and the necessary cooperation for the creation of social-cultural environments in which women and men have equality of opportunity and access to the careers of their choice;
- strengthen the guidance functions performed by the school in accordance with its mission
- provide students with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and gain a better understanding of their social-economic environment;
- teaching students the concept of “personal and professional development – learning for life”;
- stimulate their creative potential.

In order to carry out the above-mentioned activities, it is necessary to implement gender mainstreaming tools and action plans (starting from an initial test implementation and gradually reaching full operational stage) aimed at:

- recognising the value of diversity and differences as resources for society and as multidimensional factors that have to be considered in development and choice-making processes;
- combat discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes and instead promote the dissemination of equal opportunities in the form of promotion of human development, men's and women's development, and of elimination of barriers that prevent the full participation of man and women to VET systems;
- promote the social inclusion of individuals who are considered to be disadvantaged according to demeaning and simplified visions by adopting concrete measures against cultural, psychological and economic segregation that lead to exclusion, by encouraging the valorisation and self-promotion of individual ideas and vocational inclinations, while ensuring, at the same time, that the mediation process is consistent with the local needs. Moreover, there is the need to promote the establishment of a network of relations, as well as the development of practices that will provide the necessary space and time for continuous personal development;
- foster and apply principles of cooperation and subsidiarity: this will contribute to the creation and dissemination of a new vocational guidance paradigm that will support individuals in their choice-making process and that will also be influential across a number of institutional and economic spaces in promoting equal rights and opportunities for men and women, social and professional visibility in innovative and proactive ways.

As regards further possible lines of actions, the Ipazia project identified the need for:

- enhancing the quality of equal opportunity, guidance and gender-sensitive education in upper secondary school programs of study;
- encouraging, through specific initiatives, the collection and dissemination of education and training experiences and the provision of informational materials that can be used by different entities and professionals and in different geographical settings to promote the dissemination of good practices on gender equality at local level;
- setting up an equal opportunity and gender differences Working Group to promote initiatives for: the analysis of local situations, the design and implementation of training, the promotion of awareness-raising, monitoring and final assessment activities;
- creating a productive network of relations with the other local players that deal with these issues.

