

ESF Jämt (ESF Forever)

Sweden

2009 – 2012

## Fulfilling a commitment to gender mainstreaming

### Summary

ESF Jämt was a project run between 2009 and 2013 Sweden's 21 county administrative boards (*Länsstyrelser*) to entrench gender mainstreaming in the ESF and the projects it supports across the country. It was based on a survey which showed that although gender mainstreaming was an obligatory part of all ESF projects, its take-up was being impeded by unclear problem analyses and objectives.

The project established a team of support workers in eight Swedish regions, with a central co-ordinator. It developed a set of tools and methods including techniques such as SWOT and 4R analysis and information and training materials.

It offered a support service to people and organisations designing or running ESF projects, and was often called up on by project promoters anxious to comply with the gender mainstreaming requirements laid down in the application procedure.

The project organised 900 training sessions and delivered more than 2,000 counselling sessions, which attracted 9,000 women and 4,000 men.

It has resulted in a better implementation of gender mainstreaming in Swedish ESF projects however its effectiveness was limited by the fact that it worked only at project level and not at programme level, and it found that collaboration between the ESF managing authorities and the national ESF council could have been better.

### What's the problem?

In Sweden, gender mainstreaming has been the guiding principle for achieving gender equality since 1994. Currently, national policy states that the goals set out for gender equality policy should be reached through the systematic integration of a gender equality perspective with all policy areas, at all levels and stages, and by the actors involved in the policy-making processes. The policy focus is divided into four specific objectives:

1. equal distribution of power and influence
2. economic equality
3. equal distribution of unpaid care and household work
4. men's violence against women must come to an end

In addition, the official statistical office is mandated to present all official statistics concerning individuals or groups disaggregated by gender.

Achieving these objectives has played an increasingly important role since the European Commission recognised that gender equality policies are vital for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. The Swedish European Social Fund (ESF) programme for 2009-2013 stipulated that 'all projects supported by the ESF are expected to integrate gender into their work'. Yet, to successfully address this requirement, some challenges had to be faced.

According to the baseline study conducted by four county administrative boards before the

implementation of the ESF programme for 2009-2013, the lack of clear objectives and problem definitions related to the on-going monitoring of gender mainstreaming in ESF-funded projects restrains gender mainstreaming at national and regional levels. At the project level, a considerable knowledge gap has been identified, which limits the effectiveness of the projects.

### Supporting ESF projects

In order to tackle these issues, a three-year project called *ESF Jämt* (ESF Forever) was launched in 2009 to support gender mainstreaming within the ESF and to integrate a gender perspective into ESF-funded projects. It is a joint initiative of the 21 Swedish county administrative boards (*länsstyrelser*), co-ordinated by that for Örebro county. The main purpose of ESF Jämt is to offer regional-level support in the form of counselling, training and monitoring for existing and prospective ESF-funded projects in order to increase the quality of gender mainstreaming within these projects. The project's staff comprised eight project supporters and a national coordinator. A steering group composed of gender experts, a chairman and a national coordinator was responsible for the initiative's strategy.

ESF Jämt was established to support the infusion of a gender perspective into ESF projects by putting into practice and cementing what gender equality and gender mainstreaming actually means and how these principles can be integrated into the projects. Its specific objectives were as follows:

- Increasing the number of projects that were eligible when assessed for ESF support by incorporating the gender dimension into their core activities;
- Reaching a customer satisfaction index of 95% among the participants at the workshops and gender training sessions organised to support their activities;
- Arranging seven basic training sessions or workshops in the regions for ESF project applicants and approved ESF projects (i.e. project managers and steering and management groups);
- For 2012, Providing individual counselling for 25 projects each year and enhanced support for four or five projects per region, as well as working towards the strategic impact objectives defined by the steering group.

The project supporters have during the year helped projects by offering custom made courses, tools and methods

2009-2013

More than **2000** different social fund projects have received individual guidance



ESF Jämt have also arranged and participated in a large number of conferences and courses, among other things.

## **Better knowledge and better co-ordination**

The project was expected to increase knowledge of gender mainstreaming among the organisations and individuals implementing the ESF programme, including project leaders, steering group members and the project owners, and to increase the quality of ESF projects.

This was to be achieved by improving collaboration between the institutions involved in supporting ESF projects, such as the state institutions involved in the project cycle, and by disseminating good practices and results among local, regional, national and international actors. This approach acknowledges that gender equality plays a pivotal role in the development and growth of every region.

The scale of the challenges can be estimated from the fact that during the period 2008-2011, the ESF supported 833 projects involving more than 153,000 people. Against this, ESF Jämt organised no fewer than 900 training sessions and delivered 2,000 counselling sessions, which attracted 9,000 women and 4,000 men.

Overall, the project has contributed to the development of knowledge on gender equality among its participants and the effective implementation of a gender perspective in the ESF projects at all levels. The training offered as a part of ESF Jämt has increased the projects' quality and contributed to a better analysis of the project work through different gender analysis methods.

As regards the impact of ESF Jämt at policy level, the Swedish ESF Council has submitted 10 proposals to the government for the ESF programme 2014-2020. It has been noted in the evaluation of the ESF programme 2009-2013 that ESF Jämt strongly contributed to the development of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

## **Tailored support for projects**

The analysis undertaken by the county administrative boards in 2008 highlighted the lack of knowledge and understanding with regard to the theoretical and practical dimensions of gender mainstreaming within ESF projects. Therefore, ESF Jämt emerged as a response to the need to set up a specific mechanism to offer practical tools along with theoretical learning to increase the quality and target achievement of the projects. To support this process, the project developed tailored training sessions, tools, methods and other assistance. In general, the assistance is offered on an on-going basis and involves a mix of theoretical and practical tools. The theoretical tools usually involved national gender policy and objectives, gender theory and the presentation of statistics disaggregated by gender. The practical instruments were mainly tailored discussions about specific issues emerging from projects and possible solutions to overcome them. During this process it was important that the participants understand the potential of integrating a gender mainstreaming perspective into their work.

Project managers, leaders and steering groups were able to request gender trainers' support, and they typically asked for this when they lacked the knowledge to meet the gender mainstreaming requirements of the Swedish ESF Council. The form of support that was provided depended on the stage of the project's development, the knowledge of a target group on gender mainstreaming, and other specific needs related to the project. For instance a wide range of tools such as guidelines to the regional ESF office, manuals for project implementation and workshop material like the book *Momentum! Gender mainstreaming and ESF Jämt* were developed by ESF Jämt, the Swedish government, consultants and gender trainers. There were also briefings on ESF funding, individual consulting including telephone and e-mail support, and training in basic gender knowledge and skills. In addition, workshops, seminars and conferences were organised to allow the transfer of knowledge and the exchange of experiences.

## **The 4Rs: representation, resources, realia and realisation**

An interesting aspect of the ESF Jämt support mechanism is coaching and mentoring the projects towards innovative ways of delivering services. The methods and tools used to determine the strategy of the projects included SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) with a gender perspective and the 4R method. This is a development of the 3R method and stands for *representation, resources, realia and realisation*. It involves carrying out a gender analysis by surveying the gender representation of women and men, examining how resources are allocated, analysing gender patterns and how they affect both genders, and finally formulating objectives, measures and plans to address the problems. It helps to develop a general picture of how the operation is run and financed and explore what changes are required to meet differing needs of women and men. Its goal is to integrate the gender dimension in different activities through quantitative surveys and qualitative analyses.

## **Evaluating the long-term impact**

The quality of the support offered was discussed on a continuous basis with the project supporters, by the steering group, and with external observers. Throughout the project, a group of evaluators used questionnaires given to participants after every training session, case studies and in-depth interviews with the people engaged in the project, gender trainers, ESF administrators and other people involved. The criteria used for the evaluation are directly linked to the objectives of the project. The coordinator presented the results of the evaluation to the steering group on a regular basis.

In addition, a sample of four to five projects from each region will be used to show the long-term results and provide learning examples on integrating a gender perspective into the ESF-funded projects. The questionnaires developed to assess these initiatives are designed to elicit an understanding of specific behavioural aspects, such as beneficiaries' opinions on the support, as well as the main benefits it has brought. Based on the responses collected, a final group of eight projects will be selected for further in-depth stakeholder interviews.

There were some ways in which the project's effectiveness could have been improved. Support could have been provided on a long-term regular basis instead of temporarily, and at programme level as well as project level. Also, collaboration between the managing authorities and intermediate bodies and the ESF Council could have been stronger. These aspects will be addressed in the 2014-2020 programming period.

The project was funded by the ESF and the total amount of resources spent on gender training in 2012 amounted to SEK 8.8 million (€950,000).

## **Need for a programme-level approach**

The project was successful for several reasons. Firstly, the Swedish ESF Council requires ESF-funded projects to integrate a gender perspective, which resulted in the more systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming in ESF projects. Secondly, the gender mainstreaming perspective of ESF Jämt is compatible with both the Swedish government and the European perspective. Thus, it is not perceived as a new obligation by project applicants and beneficiaries. Thirdly, the eight project supporters work in all ESF regions, which allowed them to gain a good knowledge of the peculiarities of each area. Lastly, direct contact with gender trainers contributed to modifying the project through various gender analysis methods (4R and SWOT analysis).

The main obstacles the project faced were that, at the national level, the working model for gender mainstreaming was insufficiently developed, and there were too few reviews of project work from a gender equality perspective. More specific challenges were that the support structure for gender mainstreaming within the ESF remains a temporary solution,

ESF Jämt only worked at the project level and not at the programme level, and managing authorities, intermediate bodies and the ESF Council put too little effort into monitoring and evaluation.

These challenges are considered as risk factors, which may affect important aspects of a sustainable gender mainstreaming process. Several measures have been developed to tackle these problems, including a seminar with ESF managers in the second half of 2012 and a conference at the end of November 2012 to share knowledge through the dissemination of learning examples.

### **Three lessons**

Three lessons emerge from the project. Firstly, in order to design an effective gender mainstreaming project, it is important that the gender perspective implemented at the project level is compatible with the national and the European perspective. Secondly, when mainstreaming gender into ESF-funded projects, the gender perspective should be taken into account when the programme is conceptualised, not only at the specific project level. Thirdly, gender training should be tailored to the specific needs of ESF projects. These needs can be more accurately identified if a gender trainer is familiar with the demands of the participants and the local context (e.g. cultural specifics).

### **Contact:**

Kerstin Lillje  
Länsstyrelsen Örebro /County Administrative board of Örebro  
Tel:+46 10-224 86 06 mob: +46 706- 24 86 04  
[Kerstin.Lillje@lansstyrelsen.se](mailto:Kerstin.Lillje@lansstyrelsen.se)

Monica Forsman  
Länsstyrelsen Västerbotten/ County administrative board of Västerbotten  
Tel: +46 10- 225 43 16 mob. +46 703-83 71 48  
[monica.forsman@lansstyrelsen.se](mailto:monica.forsman@lansstyrelsen.se)

### **Further information:**

*Empowering women on the labour market*, case study compendium by Prof. Gill Scott, June 2010: [http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/Projects/WEED/outputs\\_media/case\\_studies\\_2\\_02.pdf](http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/Projects/WEED/outputs_media/case_studies_2_02.pdf)

*Momentum! Gender mainstreaming and ESF Jämt*, Örebro County Administrative Board in collaboration with the other County Administrative Boards, 2011: [http://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/Socialfonden/Processt%C3%B6d/J%C3%A4mst%C3%A4ldhetsintegrering/DRAGKRAFT\\_ENG\\_Webb.pdf](http://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/Socialfonden/Processt%C3%B6d/J%C3%A4mst%C3%A4ldhetsintegrering/DRAGKRAFT_ENG_Webb.pdf)

Swedish ESF Council page on ESF Jämt: <http://www.esf.se/jamt>

A journey into gender equality through Sweden [http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/orebro/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/jamstalldhet/esf-jamt/A%20journey%20into%20gender%20equality%20through%20Sweden\\_eng.pdf](http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/orebro/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/jamstalldhet/esf-jamt/A%20journey%20into%20gender%20equality%20through%20Sweden_eng.pdf)

Collected methods for gender mainstreaming from ESF JÄMT <http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/orebro/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/jamstalldhet/esf-jamt/esf.gor.webb.pdf>

14 ways of working equally!  
<http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/orebro/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/jamstalldhet/esf-jamt/14waysofworkingequallyt.pdf>

Film, "Könsspelet", (in Swedish)

<http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/orebro/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/jamstalldhet/esf-jamt/Pages/metodmaterial-konsspelet.aspx>

All material is produced within the project ESF JÄMT.