

July 2004

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)

**TWELFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN
AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Nitra, Slovakia, 18-21 October 2004

**INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR RURAL WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT IN AUSTRIA¹**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. More than three quarters of the population in Austria live in either predominantly rural areas or significantly rural regions. Ninety one percent of the Austrian territory belongs to rural regions, which reflects the high degree of rurality at the regional level in Austria (Dax, 2003). With structural adjustment and the integration of agriculture into the rural economy, the concern for the development of rural areas in general has risen considerably over the last recent decades. Since Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995, rural policy has received increasing political and economical attention. During this dynamic process, many new actors have emerged at various spatial levels and the professionalization of rural and regional policy as a result of the framework of EU-programme planning has been evident (Steiner, 2002). Rural policy is no longer primarily about agriculture, but has to address specifically all the various different economic sectors and actors in the area. Rural areas need the participation of all their members in order to develop optimally. However, until now, because gender aspects have not been taken into consideration, a great deal of the potentials developed either by women or men due to their diversified life plans and life situations have not been identified and, hence, not sufficiently regarded because gender aspects are not taken into consideration (Aufhauser et al. 2003a; 2003b).

2. Equality between women and men and between different social groups correlates directly with the economic growth of a nation or a region. This is a mutual effect; while

¹ This paper was prepared by Dr Theresia Oedl-Wieser as a background paper to the Session. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

economic growth is seen to improve equality between women and men in general, gender equality also entails economic growth. The gender dimension becomes relevant to rural and regional policy if effectiveness and efficiency of public subsidies are called into question. In case of the European Union structural funds policy, the optimum use of human potential is seen as a key concern (Fries, 2000). Integrating gender equality in rural development also means recognizing the diversity amongst rural women when planning and implementing interventions. They are not a homogenous group and they have different needs and interests because they have different backgrounds with regard to occupation, income, education, age, social class, culture or ethnicity. It should be a strategic objective of rural development policy to create a positive climate for this wide variety of life models of men and women in rural areas.

3. Neglect of the numerous potentials developed by women and men leads to increased social costs in rural areas. The extent and the regional diversity of gender inequality in the Austrian rural areas are still not taken into consideration. The following problems can be identified from a perspective of gender equality (Aufhauser et al. 2003, 117): (i) the spatial segregation of female and male workplaces is sharpening, (ii) regional policy interventions tend to strengthen the development of male dominated working places, (iii) a growing gap between female and male incomes, (iv) a growing differentiation between female and male training structures, (v) in many regional contexts young women find only few suitable workplaces in many regional contexts, (vi) neglect of the necessity for the development of social infrastructure in the regions (child care, elderly care), (vii) very few women who are political decision-makers.

4. The agricultural sector still plays a decisive role in rural areas in Austria although even in the predominantly rural areas, less than 10 percent of the work force is working in the agricultural sector (Dax, 2003). A pluriactivity of many Austrian farm families and the external effects of agriculture, e.g. for tourism, are important factors in the rural development process. Many incentives and innovations to start this dynamic process of pluriactivity and diversification have come from farm women. They are often more sensitive toward new ideas and products or alternative methods in agriculture (Dax et al. 1995a, 1995b; Boenink 2004). Farm women have always played a crucial role in the rural economy and the social life in the villages and in the regions through their work on the farm, the care providing work for their families and their voluntary work in society. Their engagement and the benefits from this for the public are always appreciated but this rarely strengthens their position in the local and regional public sphere (Oedl-Wieser 1997, 2001). It is therefore necessary to analyse the causes and barriers for this unbalanced relation in public representation and decision making between men and women. Ways must be found to integrate the women's needs and interests, e.g. through the politicizing of and stronger networking between women.

5. The Austria farm structure survey 1999 (Statistik Austria, 2001) and an EU-wide statistical survey (European Commission, 2002) show that approximately 30 percent of the Austrian farms are managed by women and that 53 percent of all family members working on the farms are female. The increasing number of female farm managers since 1995 has also been caused, to some extent, by social insurance law and subsidy considerations. But these figures reflect the real working relations on the Austrian farms and make women's work more visible and it may be considered a relevant legal step for women.

	1995		1999	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Farm managers	25.7	74.3	29.6	70.4
Family members	55.6	44.4	53.3	46.7

Sources: Farm structure surveys 1995 and 1999 (Statistik Austria, 2001)

6. Two thirds of the Austrian farm managers are over 40 years old and 32 percent of the farms in this group are managed by women (Table 2). Thirty four percent of the Austrian part-time farms are managed by women, and 37 percent of the Austrian mountain farms and organic farms have female managers. The analysis of INVEKOS² - data from 2002 show that women tend to manage rather the small farms – 40 percent of the farms with 20 ha have female managers but only 16 percent of the farms with 100 ha. There are also variations within Austria. In the western part (Vorarlberg, Tyrol) less than 20 percent of the farms are managed by women and in the central and eastern part (Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Burgenland) more than 45 percent of the farms have female managers (Oedl-Wieser, 2004a).

	< 30 Years	30 – 40 Years	> 40 Years
Women	24.5	27.7	31.8
Men	75.5	72.3	68.2

Source: Special analysis of the farm structure survey 1999, Department II/5 (BMLFUW, 2003a)

7. What are the reasons for the fact that 30 percent of the Austrian farms are managed by women and only 14.6 percent of the representatives in the chambers of agriculture are female? This is only one example of the under-representation of women in the most official political bodies and interest-group bodies in Austria. In the following paragraph the current situation and conditions for institutional capacity building for rural women's empowerment will be explained. As a first step, the extent of the integration of women in political bodies on national, Länder and local level will be analysed and the stage of implementing gender mainstreaming will be described. Further, the problems and challenges with respect to building institutional capacity for rural women in Austria will be discussed and best practice examples will be presented. Finally, recommendations are made for an upgrading of the institutional representation and the empowerment of women in rural areas.

² Integrated administration and controlling system.

II. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL BODIES REPRESENTING INTERESTS IN AUSTRIA

8. Since the end of the World War II, the institutional framework of the Austrian political system has been characterized by a bipolar party system and by a high degree of centralization, concentration and privilege of the monopoly-like interest-group organizations. It was in 1966 that the first woman became a member of the Austrian government. Until the end of the 1980s there was an intensive cooperation between bodies representing interest groups, political parties and the administration. Although the influence of the so called “social partnership” has declined, the representatives of organized interest groups continue to take part in the pre-parliamentary policy process in multiple ways: through developing drafts for bills, assessing the legislation, and partially to some extent through implementing policies. Above and beyond this their influence is secured through formal and informal interconnections with the decision-makers in government and in the civil service. The majority of the players at all (spatial) levels in this political arena are male. This setting makes the substantive representation of women in the policy process especially difficult. Nevertheless, the number of women in political bodies has been increasing since the 1970s (Sauer and Tertinegg, 2003).

FOUR STAGES OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN AUSTRIA

9. Until the late 1970s, women’s policy remained limited to issues of waged labour or family and children. Following this initial stage women’s equality policies consolidated in the 1980s, expanded in the 1990s have stagnated with the new government coalition between Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) since 2000. The year 1979 was a milestone year for women’s politics in Austria. Not only was the “Equal Treatment Act” passed, but the first Women’s Policy Agencies were also established. The consolidating phase of the 1980s was characterized by an institutionalization of equal opportunity politics. The institutionalization of two state secretaries for “issues of working women” and “general women’s issues” was a sign in the direction of the integration of women into the labour market and towards the recognition of women’s politics as a special policy field. The greater influence of parties, primarily the newly formed parties of the Greens and the Liberal Forum (LIF), the latter in the 1990, led to a potential increase in the presence and influence of women in the framing of problems in a gender discourse (Sauer und Tertinegg, 2003; Sauer 2004). The 1990s was the period of growth, consolidation and expansion of women’s politics in Austria. In 1990, the state secretary for general women’s issues was restructured to become the “Federal Ministry of Women’s Affairs”. The Minister’s status also expanded beyond the previously limited advisory function, gaining a veto right in the Cabinet of Ministers as well as the power to initiate further political women’s initiatives. The Ministry still maintained its cross sectional style of work. Since the 1990s, women’s departments and women’s issues commissioners have been set up in the governments of the Austrian Länder and in some larger cities (Aufhauser et al, 2003). In 2000, the new ÖVP-FPÖ government dissolved the Federal Ministry of Women’s Affairs. In the re-organization of the government in 2003, the Ministry for Health and Women’s Issues was established.

10. In line with the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Austrian government started to implement structures and measures for gender mainstreaming in July 2000. Austria claims to apply a dual-track approach in equality policies. The main focus of women’s policies is still proclaimed to be on positive actions for women. In fact, the new

government has cut down the resources for positive action and funding of women's projects, sometimes legitimized by reference to gender mainstreaming. An inter-ministerial working group for Gender Mainstreaming (IMAG Gender Mainstreaming) has been set up. As a result of the IMAG GM initiatives, all ministries have at least adopted the language of gender mainstreaming and established a gender mainstreaming section on their websites. Most of the ministries have started implementing gender mainstreaming by organizing gender training by external experts according to the "top-down focus" of the gender mainstreaming approach. This building up of a gender mainstreaming infrastructure at the federal government level has only worked because the existing infrastructure of women's policy agencies took over the tasks of gender mainstreaming³ (Sauer, 2004). Engagement with gender mainstreaming has started at provincial level, too since 2000⁴. For many administrative departments, gender mainstreaming has become a main objective and is embedded in the legislation. The initiative for the integration of gender mainstreaming was, to a large extent, prepared and organized by the offices of the women's issues commissioners at national and Länder level (Bergmann et al, 2003).

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN AUSTRIA⁵

11. Women are under-represented in the political institutions in Austria. The following data show that the political presence of women on national and Länder level has been steadily increasing since the 1970s and has sometimes reached the 30 percent limit, but that the institutionalized political involvement of women at the local level is very low. To some extent, women in Austria seem to have a different understanding of politics than men do. They tend to prefer to engage in non-institutional and informal political movements and not so much in institutionalized political bodies and parties. Younger and well-educated women, in particular, tend to be "unconventional" actors in the political scene (Haller 2001). What are the reasons for their political behaviour? Do women have problems with the existing political institutions? Is it the political system itself that excludes women? Which social and institutional changes are necessary to raise the level of women's participation in the Austrian political system?

12. Approximately 40 percent of the Austrian members of the European Parliament delegates are women – a top position in the ranking of gender relations of EU-15. At the national level about 30 percent of the members of the parliament are women. Sixty-one of the 183 members of the National Council are women and 29 percent of the Federal Council. The Austrian Social Democrats and Greens are clearly above the 30 percent level, the Austrian People's Party and the Freedom Party have less than 30 percent female members of parliament. The current number of women in parliament would not have been possible without the women's movement starting in the 1970s. The pressure of the women's movement highlighted the need for change and women's view on political issues became more publicly relevant (Steininger, 2000). The Austrian cabinet has 12 members, and three of them are women: (i) Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, (ii) Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture and (iii) Federal Minister for Health and Women's Issues. In the Länder governments 18 of the 72 members, or 25 percent, are women.

³ Report of the Federal Minister of Health and Women Issues: Umsetzung von Gender Mainstreaming. Vortrag an den Ministerrat. Vienna, 09.04.2004 GZ 140.240/0-II/1/04.

⁴ Overview on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Austria: <http://www.imag-gendermainstreaming.at>

⁵ Report of the Federal Minister of Health and Women Issues: Umsetzung von Gender Mainstreaming. Vortrag an den Ministerrat. Vienna, 09.04.2004 GZ 140.240/0-II/1/04.

13. At municipal level women's participation in political functions is very low. In May 2004⁶ only 2.7 percent or 63 of the 2 359 mayors were women. In 1991 only seven and in 1998, 32 women were mayors. This is a rapid increase of female mayors over the last decade but in comparison with men it is very small. There are also large regional variations: Styria and Lower Austria have the most female mayors and vice-deputy mayors (Steininger, 2000; Schröder, 2004). In the municipal councils only 14 percent of the delegates are women. The larger the municipality, the more women councillors there are (Klammer, 2000). Being a mayor in Austria is a "typical" male profession. What are the reasons for this gender imbalance? In many rural municipalities the gender roles are fixed and not very flexible. This means that in addition to their professional and political work women are still primarily responsible for the household and caring work. Women's involvement in politics often depends on the opinion and agreement of the partner. These circumstances make it more difficult for women to engage in local politics than for men, but the political socialization at local level is often seen as the basis and the gate for a political career at Länder level or national level (Hofer and Wolfgruber, 1999, Oedl-Wieser, 1997).

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE AUSTRIAN CHAMBERS OF AGRICULTURE

14. The agricultural sector is still of major importance in Austria's rural areas although the agricultural ratio⁷ is only 5.1 percent (BMLFUW, 2003b). The influence of this interest group dealing with agriculture and rural development is high and has even expanded in some fields since Austria's accession to the EU in 1995. In the Standing Committee of the Presidents of the Chambers of Agriculture the presidents of the nine provincial chambers of agriculture are members of the board⁸. This statutory body is representing the interests of agriculture and forestry on a national level and coordinates the work of the nine provincial chambers of agriculture of the Länder.

15. Today, as previously, agricultural policy is still a male-dominated field of policy. There were no women to be found in a biographical handbook on the Austrian agricultural elite in the 20th century (Lebensaft and Mentschl, 2003). Table 4 shows the gender relations in leading and managing positions of the nine chambers of agriculture. All nine presidents are male; three of the 12 vice-presidents are women. All administrative directors are men and only 17 percent of the managers of the departments of the chambers of agriculture are female. The departments for which women are responsible are dealing with extension service, pluriactivity, diversification, women and youth in agriculture and nutrition. In the 80 regional chambers – Bezirksbauernkammern – in Austria only two women are managing a unit (Oedl-Wieser, 2004b).

⁶ Elections at municipal level in Salzburg and Carinthia were in March 2004. Data are available 1st week of May 2004.

⁷ Persons employed in agriculture and forestry as a percent of all employed people in Austria.

⁸ The Austrian Raiffeisen Association is also member of the board of presidents.

Province	President		Vice-president		Director of Administration		Manager of Departments	
	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
Burgenland	1		1		1		6	0
Carinthia	1		2		1		8	2
Lower Austria	1		1	1	1		6	1
Upper Austria	1		1		1		7	1
Salzburg	1		1	1	1		4	2
Styria	1			1	1		11	1
Tyrol	1		n.c.	n.c.	1		5	2
Vorarlberg	1		2		1		3	1
Vienna	1		1	1	1		4	1
Total	9	0	9	3	9	0	54	11

Source: Oedl-Wieser, 2004b

16. As Table 4 shows, the delegates to the assemblies of the nine chambers of agriculture are overwhelmingly male. Only 14.6 percent of the delegates are women. The assembly of Upper Austria has the largest number of female delegates with 25.7 percent. These figures underline the argument of male dominance of the agricultural sector in Austria.

Province	Mandates				
	Total	♂		♀	
		abs.	percent	abs.	percent
Burgenland	33	29	87.9	4	12.1
Carinthia	36	31	86.1	5	13.9
Lower Austria	36	30	86.1	5	13.9
Upper Austria	35	26	74.3	9	25.7
Salzbourg	28	24	85.7	4	14.3
Styria	39	34	87.2	5	12.8
Tyrol	20	18	90	2	10.0
Vorarlberg	14	12	85.7	2	14.3
Vienna	20	18	90.0	2	10.0
Total	261	223	85.4	38	14.6

Source: PRÄKO, 2003:277

FARM WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN AUSTRIA

17. In Austria there is one major association of farm women, the “Association of Rural Women – in the Standing Committee of the Presidents of the Chambers of Agriculture,”⁹ which is integrated into the Austrian chambers of agriculture (Table 5) and some smaller groups e.g. the “women’s section of the social democratic farmers“, “Green Farm Women” or the “Working Group on Farm Women” of the ÖBV¹⁰ (NGO). Most of these farm women’s organizations see their main tasks in the social and educational field. The “Association of Rural Women” develops a regional annual education programme in cooperation with the chambers of agriculture on regional level which is intended to reach farm women and rural women at the local and regional level. The main topics are vocational training, personal training and wellness and health issues. The issues for this educational programme are to a large extent reflecting the wishes and needs of the women at the local level. Other groups have the aim to politicize and empower farm women through grass-roots concepts of education, e.g. the educational approach of the ÖBV’s “Working group on farm women”. They have, for example, developed a “farm women’s cabaret” about the Agrarian Policy of the European Union for which they were awarded with the international prize for Rural Women in 2003¹¹.

18. Networking and co operation among farm women’s organizations is just at its starting point in Austria, and there are still many ideological and political resentments. The first initial cooperation among some farm women’s organisations was a campaign in the early 1990s for an old-age pension system for farm women when the amendments to the Equal Treatment Acts were being discussed. Ten years later a motion for a resolution on “Gender equality in rural areas”, prepared by the Greens, was supported by women from all political parties of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture. This motion for resolution¹² was passed by the National Council in December 2003.

Province	Members	Representatives at local level	Representatives at regional level	Representatives at Länder level
Burgenland	9,000	128	7	1
Carinthia	21,202	148	8	1
Lower Austria	43,890	559	63	1
Upper Austria	39,362	452	15	1
Salzburg	10,751	123	5	1
Styria	30,000	879	16	1
Tyrol	18,500	330	8	1
Vorarlberg	5,401	102	9	1
Vienna	400	25	5	1

Source: Oedl-Wieser, 2004b

⁹ In short term “Association of Rural Women“.

¹⁰ Österreichische Bergbauern und Bergbäuerinnen Vereinigung.

¹¹ A comprehensive overview of the large offers and programmes of education for adults in rural areas is given by Baumhöfer (2003).

¹² Entschließungsantrag 51/A(E).

19. The low rate of participation of women in relevant agricultural bodies and their engagement rather in social and educational issues indicates that the decisions on agrarian policy, rural development policy and agricultural subsidies are made primarily by men. As mentioned above, women do often prefer to engage in non-institutionalized forms of politics. This assumption is also relevant for the agricultural sector. Women are very active in many NGOs dealing with agricultural issues, e.g. environmental organizations (Greenpeace, Global, 2000), biodiversity protection groups, animal protection groups, etc. Women also hold leading positions or are board members of organizations of organic farming organizations. Many incentives and innovative actions, in this field have come from women (Oedl-Wieser, 2004b).

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN RURAL AND REGIONAL POLICY IN AUSTRIA

20. The presence of women in the Austrian regional policy setting has markedly improved over the recent years, but there is still a marked gender gap in this policy area. The involvement of women at various levels differs according to the political or administrative structure. Women are increasingly working as managers and counsellors in regional policy partnerships and projects. An important function for the implementation of gender equality is fulfilled by the women's issues commissioners of the Länder who are often also involved in regional policy questions, although their departments are usually understaffed and short on funds. While acceptance for women's issues and equality commissioners at the federal and Länder level has already progressed adequately, women active at the regional and local levels are far less well-established in institutional regional policy structures also because of the lifestyle of being a "family woman" that is socially ascribed to them.

21. Although the representation of women in the Austria agrarian and regional setting is still rather low, some dynamic processes regarding institutional capacity building for the empowerment of women in rural areas can be seen. Since Austria's accession to the EU, many gender sensitive projects have been started in the regions¹³. The women's issues commissioners of the Länder have often been the driving forces in building up project partnerships and networks among women and women's organizations in the regions. The Austrian farm women's organizations are not yet involved to a large extent in this dynamic process of gender sensitive rural and regional development projects. Taking part and engaging in these newly established networks would intensify communication with other women's organizations and strengthen the position of women in rural areas.

III. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR RURAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AUSTRIA

22. Some best practice examples are presented below to illustrate the process of institutional capacity building for rural women's empowerment in Austria in the last few years. These projects are dealing with institutional capacity building, empowerment of rural women, implementing gender mainstreaming in rural and regional development, deconstruction of fixed gender roles and strengthening the chances for women on the

¹³ EQUAL-projects: GesiR (Lower Austria), Just GEM (Styria), EQUALIZE (Carinthia), F&MPower (Vorarlberg), WoMen (Tirol) etc. (<http://www.equal-esf.at>); INTERREG IIIa-project: MAP – Mentoring als Instrument der Personalentwicklung (<http://www.alom.at>).

local and regional labour market (Aufhauser et al, 2003a, Gindl et al, 2004; Pimminger 2001).

***CONFERENCE OF THE WOMEN'S ISSUES AND/OR EQUALITY
COMMISSIONERS OF THE LÄNDER***

23. An important function for the practical implementation of gender equality is fulfilled by the women's issues and/or equality commissioners of the Länder who are often also involved in regional policy questions. They are catalysts for networking among women's organizations – also with different ideological, religious or professional backgrounds – and with women in the regions themselves. Their offices are often the driving forces in financing studies to gather information on the situation of women and men in the regions and to make the differences visible. The various formal and informal networks of the women's issues and/or equality commissioners were the basis for cooperation on gender equality projects under EQUAL, INTERREG III or LEADER+. The "Conference of the women's issues and/or equality commissioners of the Länder" is an institutionalized body which has, for example, stimulated a study on "EU-regional policy and gender mainstreaming in Austria" (Gindl et al, 2003).

▪ **Three-Country-Women (3-Länder-Frauen)**

The women's issues and/or equality commissioners of Liechtenstein, St. Gallen (CH) and Vorarlberg (A) have formed a network to intensify the contacts and exchange information on the various women's organizations and women's initiatives and their services and events. They aim to make these programmes visible for women living in this area and want to strengthen the cooperation in this region (<http://www.3laenderfrauen.org>).

▪ **Vorarlberg Women's Network (Frauennetzwerk-Vorarlberg)**

The women's issues commissioner of Vorarlberg has initiated a Länder-wide network among women. This network is working in all of Vorarlberg's regions and municipalities of Vorarlberg. The Office of the Women's Issues commissioner accompanies and promotes this process with educational services, programmes and events. The aim of this networking process is to reach all women in the regions and provide them with the opportunity for empowerment in this process of networking. There is a "women's speaker" in each municipality and a "regional speaker" in every region.

▪ **Political Training Courses for Women (Politiklehrgänge für Frauen)**

Political training courses for women in Austria have been established since 1999. The first training course was held in Salzburg, a province in which there was no female mayor until 2004. Also the women's issues and/or equality commissioners of Upper Austria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg have developed political training courses for women. The aim of this political training for women is to allow women to acquire the necessary tools for political work and to have better chances of being elected into local or regional political bodies.

TERRITORIAL EMPLOYMENT PACTS (TEPS) IN AUSTRIA

24. A Territorial Employment Pact is a contractual alliance of protagonists from different sectors pursuing the joint objective to take all necessary measures for job creation and job protection. The aim of the TEPs is to coordinate the employment policy at regional level with the economic and structural policy, the educational policy and the regional policy. This "experiment" of cooperation between different regional actors to safeguard and to create jobs has also improved the relations between the federation, the

provinces and the municipalities. Employment pacts have been implemented since 1997 in all nine provinces. Additionally, some TEPs have been set up at local level (NUTS III) (<http://www.pakte.at>).

TEPGEM-Plattform

- The gender mainstreaming platform of the TEP's in Austria – TEPGEM- platform – is a network of TEP- coordinators, gender mainstreaming commissioners and other actors in the Austrian TEP's. The aim of this TEP platform was to develop and find together instruments and tools for implementing gender mainstreaming in the TEP's.

GENDER SENSITIVE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GESIR)

25. Gender specific inequalities have hardly been taken into consideration in regional development programmes so far. Comprising the relevant institutions, the GesiR Development Partnership's vision is to move from “merely” sustainable to sustainable, gender sensitive regional development. GesiR wants to analyse these inequalities and develop approaches to overcome them along the “value-chain” of regional development, i.e. at the level of:

- regional development programmes: gender sensitive regional development programmes and aid schemes, analysis of the gender specific status quo and development of assessment and monitoring instruments, pilot programme on NUTS III level;
- regional development institutions: action programme to increase gender sensitivity and female participation in local and regional development institutions, analysis of the entry barriers, elaboration of a catalogue of success factors, elaboration of an innovative action programme, comprising information and sensitization, training, mentoring, networking and social infrastructure, development of self-evaluation and monitoring instruments;
- regional development projects: equal opportunities in regional projects, gender balance and gender synergies, analysis and selection of fields of regional projects (e.g. promotion of entrepreneurship, business cooperation and networking, business infrastructure etc.), special focus on the compatibility of job and family (<http://www.gesir.at>).

LEADER+ NETWORK OFFICES (LEADER+ NETZWERKSTELLE)

- **Gender mainstreaming information service**

Free information service for project managers about integrating and implementing gender mainstreaming in LEADER+ projects.

- **“Gender mainstreaming working group”**

The aim of this working group is to find ways for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the LEADER+ projects and regions. One of the first results of the gender mainstreaming working group was the publication of the LEADER+ magazine Österreich 2_03 2003 “Focus on Equal Opportunities”. Existing projects, initiatives and approaches with respect to gender equality in the regions should be made visible. For the working group it is important to recognize changes in the gender roles in the regions and to develop new ideas and projects from these potentials and experiences (<http://www.leader-austria.at>).

***PROJECT MANAGERS FOR EQUALITY IN LUNGAU AND PINZGAU –
SALZBURG***

26. The “project managers for equality” in the Lungau and Pinzgau districts in Salzburg are members of the regional managements in their districts. Their tasks are: initiating the networking among the women and women’s organizations inside and outside the regions. Women in the districts are to be encouraged and empowered to participate in the process of rural/regional development. The project managers for equality should engage themselves in the improvement of child-care facilities and the promotion of women on the regional labour market.

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REGIONS (CHIRON)¹⁴

27. The aim of this gender sensitive project at regional level is to overcome the fixed gender roles, which in rural areas are often very strict. This project also influences the Local Agenda 21 process in the region of Mühlviertler Alm (Upper Austria – bordering to the Czech Republic). The sensitive bottom-up approach deals with issues like women’s participation in decisive structures and on the labour market and the role of men in their families. Women and men in this rural area are to have the possibility to live their own way of life and CHIRON is intended to open the gate to this.
(<http://chiron.muehlviertleralm.at>).

FARM WOMEN AS DAY-CARE MOTHERS (BÄUERLICHE TAGESMÜTTER)

28. The problems within the labour market policy are due to the following factors: the number of jobs in rural areas is diminishing. This is accompanied by a strong tendency within the rural population to move away from farming and agriculture into other areas of the job market. At the same time, the number of parents with under-age children who need to commute to work is steadily increasing. Another problem is the regional deficit in child-minding facilities, especially for children under the age of four. There are also few day nurseries for school-age children. Added to this, the opening times of the existing facilities are often either too short or too inflexible to permit full-time employment. It naturally follows that women who are the main carers for the children are particularly affected. Figures in the “Austrian Family Report 1999” show that the employment rates for women in rural areas are 8.5 percent lower than those in comparable urban regions. This is a result of the lack of child-minding facilities. Despite a generally decreasing birth rate, the demand for child-minding facilities outside the family is on the rise. The most important targets are:

- the establishment of a stable source of additional income for farmers (male/female) and their respective relatives;
- the establishment of additional income for workers (male/female) and other residents of agricultural areas who presently have limited sources of income (e.g. part-time workers);
- to secure jobs in all areas of farming, particularly during the high season (e.g. summer holidays) by offering child-minding and child-care facilities;
- to consider and improve the labour laws and social situation of day care within the agricultural community;

¹⁴ Chancengleichheit In der Region.

- to strengthen the structure and potential for self-management in rural areas relating to the situation in the labour market policy (promoting empowerment by networking). (<http://www.equal-esf.at>).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

29. Along the lines of the above discussion, institutional capacity building for rural women's empowerment and the implementing of gender equality and gender mainstreaming are not seen as a priority area by many politicians and actors of rural and regional development. To improve the situation and position of rural women in Austria institutional capacity building for rural women should be enhanced through the following measures:

- To reach gender equality in society and the empowerment of rural women in respect to institutional capacity building it is fundamental to overcome the fixed gender roles in many spheres of our society.
- The number of female representatives in all political bodies and in interest groups at national, regional and local level should reach a critical mass of 30 percent in a short-term perspective. Political training courses for rural women, mentoring projects, etc. are important steps to strengthen the participation of women in the public sphere.
- The process of institutional capacity building for rural women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming should start in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW) and should be expanded to all measures, programmes and projects (e.g. Rural Development Programme). In the top-down and trickle-down sense, the support of people in decisive positions is essential. But in time, it will be necessary to plan a budget for the financial and administrative framework.
- Gender equality should be seen and communicated as an economic issue to be taken into consideration in the current rural/regional policy discourse.
- The embodiment of gender sensitivity and gender equality in rural and regional policy is only successful when the different institutional, political and social backgrounds of the actors in these fields are reflected and there is continuous communication between these stakeholders.
- Systematic and proactive interventions are necessary for improving and strengthening the institutional capacity building for rural women's empowerment and for gender equality in rural areas in a long-term perspective.
- The concerns of women should be reflected more intensively in the priorities and strategic orientation of regional policy processes and programmes.
- Rural and regional policy should become more aware of the gender images underlying its programmes and sets of measures. In particular, women should be identified as a potential for regional development and as capable actors in the regional policy process.
- The involvement of women, commissioners for women's issues, experts on women's issues and equality in regional policy bodies should be safeguarded by providing sufficient financial and time resources; their participation should be given greater authority on the basis of a clear-cut definition of their tasks.

- It is necessary to establish small budget funds for women and gender specific issues, e.g. transnational events and to finance pilot projects on these issues.
- Networking is one of the most important activities in regional and rural development. Some funding should be provided, e.g. by the Austrian Rural Development Programme, to promote networking among women in rural areas.
- Despite ideological barriers and resentments, the need of farm women's organizations' involvement in the (new) regional intermediary structures should be seen as a major objective.
- The wide variety of farm women and rural women in general should be taken into account when formulating programmes and measures. It should also be an objective to create a positive climate for this wide variety of men's and women's life models.
- Systematic and proactive interventions are necessary for improving and strengthening the institutional capacity building for rural women's empowerment and for gender equality in rural areas in a long-term perspective.

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