



Nordic-Baltic Ministerial Meeting – 24 September in Reykjavik, Iceland
Ministers Responsible for Gender Equality

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NORDIC-BALTIC CO-OPERATION ON GENDER EQUALITY 2004-2006

Introduction

In the first phase, from 1990, the co-operation on Gender Equality between the Nordic Council of Ministers and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania primarily aimed at the distribution of knowledge to attract interest in questions of gender equality by financing and arranging relevant conferences and seminars.

The second phase the Nordic-Baltic Co-operation Program on Gender Equality (1998-2000) was adopted by the Nordic and Baltic ministers responsible for Gender Equality on 7 December 1997 in Oslo, Norway. The general goal for the first co-operation program was to contribute to a more efficient and richer national effort to attain gender equality in each of the respective countries, and to integrate a gender perspective into all activities. The Nordic Baltic Co-operation Program on Gender Equality for 2001-2003 was adopted on 15 June 2001 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The goal was to establish sustainable co-operation between governmental gender equality institutions in the Nordic and Baltic countries. A Nordic-Baltic Working Group on Gender Equality was established in 1998, and has co-coordinated the Nordic-Baltic activities on gender equality until the end of 2003.

The Nordic-Baltic co-operation on gender equality has been intensive and fruitful, and has spawned numerous projects on different themes. Training courses for civil servants, conferences and seminars for politicians, researchers and NGOs have been organized in all the Baltic countries, and information materials have been produced and disseminated for different target groups (see Appendix 1).

The third Nordic-Baltic Co-operation Program on Gender Equality (2005-2006) shall inspire and encourage gender equality policy to give women and men the same rights and opportunities as well as responsibilities in all areas of life.

The third program has been designed to continue the intensive and fruitful co-operation that exists currently between the Nordic countries and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There is still a great need for continuing this co-operation in order to establish a firm ground for a gender equality policy.

The goals of the new co-operation program

At the moment, the overarching goal is to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men at all levels and to encourage and promote shared values in the northern parts of Europe. As the region develops, co-operation must evolve, and responses and contributions must adapt to the new challenges.

The aim of co-operation is to support the integration of gender equality policy into decision-making processes at the international and national levels. The objective is also to co-ordinate Nordic-Baltic gender equality co-operation in such a way as to increase its synergy effects and overall effectiveness, focus on cross-sector contributions, and achieve improved co-ordination of projects and activities within sectors and co-operation programs and plans in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Nordic-Baltic Co-operation on gender equality is part of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health and Wellbeing, contained within the framework of the European Union's Northern Dimension Partnership. It is important that policies are formulated clearly within the framework of the Northern Dimension and that existing activities be coordinated between the Nordic Council of Ministers and its partners in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Areas of political prioritization will be a particular focus. The goal is to co-operate on gender equality issues with the international organizations in the Northern Dimension region.

The countries have different approaches to policymaking in gender equality. Hence, the co-operation program will be built upon dialogue between ministers, regional and local authorities, researchers and NGOs, and will form the basis for the development of co-operation. Strategies will be worked out to reach common goals, including issues related to equal representation, violence, trafficking, and budgeting.

Governmental Co-operation on Gender Equality

The development of an infrastructure for gender equality in which relevant legislation is developed and applied is an important cornerstone of a well-functioning gender equality policy.

The national machineries have the responsibility of initiating and coordinating gender equality policies at the national and international level. Development and implementation of gender sensitive legislation is a central part of the co-operation, and in that context, the exchange of experiences in introducing new legal processes is of high importance.

Nordic-Baltic governmental co-operation will focus on the development and exchange of proven practices, views, methods, tools and indicators to implement gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve equality between women and men. It is important to initiate and support positive actions to eliminate inequality between women and men in all areas of society.

The goal is to establish and develop fruitful co-operation between governmental gender equality institutions in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Networking, research and information dissemination

Information and education are also important cornerstones in Nordic-Baltic co-operation on gender equality. Information on gender equality in the Nordic and Baltic countries will be prepared and introduced jointly.

An important part of Nordic-Baltic co-operation is networks, which provide significant flows of information about the situation of women and men. Nordic-Baltic co-operation on gender equality supports the Nordic-Baltic networks of researchers and NGOs. The networks of researchers are especially important for eliminating prejudice and changing attitudes through the knowledge they produce, and as arenas where new ideas and co-operation projects can be formed. There is a need for ongoing research projects from a gender perspective both on women and men.

The main themes of the co-operation will be the following:

- Equal representation in political, economic and academic life
- Gender budgeting
- Men and gender equality
- Trafficking in women and violence against women
- Youth in a gender perspective

Organizing and financing the co-operation

The co-operation shall be in accordance with the new guidelines of Nordic Council of Ministers project co-operation with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The planned co-operation activities must be coordinated with national and bilateral activities, plans and programs. Co-operation on both formal as well as informal levels is important, as well as political co-operation and co-operation with civil servants and NGOs.

Part of governmental co-operation will consist of meetings of the Nordic and Baltic Ministers of Gender Equality every second year and regular meetings of the Executive Committee on Gender Equality (ÄK-JÄM) with Baltic colleagues.

Nordic-Baltic Working Groups can be appointed to draw up working plans for joint co-operation activities, programs and projects. The joint activities can be financed through the Nordic Council of Ministers' yearly budget. Individual projects can be financed bilaterally or nationally.