

Summary Report

1. List the stakeholders in your community who participated in the group discussion

Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad (Dutch-speaking Women's Council),

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The *Vrouwenraad* is an umbrella organisation for associations that work on equal opportunities for men and women. Quite a number of women's associations with various backgrounds belong to the Dutch-speaking Women's Council.

The *Vrouwenraad* calls for equal rights and opportunities for all men and women, regardless of age, origin, sexual orientations, convictions, etc. It is the voice of all women's organisations, closely works alongside them in the field and regularly consults with their colleagues. The members of the NVR represent the major stakeholders in Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region.

In this umbrella organisation emphasis is placed on consultation and dialogue with policy makers, academics, various organisations and interest groups. In addition the organisation aims to encourage the social debate by capitalising on the news and to disseminate this information to the press, academics and civil society in general.

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policy

The *Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique* is a pluralistic umbrella organisation for approximately 50 women's organisations and individual members. The aim of this organisation is to group together, associate and represent women and women's organisations from a variety of environments and situations, with different opinions, in order to put their rights and social, cultural, political and economic interests on the political agenda. To this end the Council works closely with other organisations, institutions, private and public entities at international, federal, regional and municipal level.

One of the many committees of the CFFB is the Brussels-Capital committee, whose task it is to study social issues with which women are faced in the capital. This committee disseminates and collects information for its individual members and for its organisations. By means of personal testimonials by women in the capital, the Committee exchanges its experiences, conducts studies, investigations and research.

The Brussels-Capital Committee also takes part in various workshops, seminars and conferences.

In addition the Committee also has means at its disposal for awareness-raising and questioning of the political world.

2. Record any comments and/or notes regarding the Self-Assessment Framework process

Meetings:

Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad: 9 November 2006

Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique: 7 November 2006

Attached you will find the position of the Brussels Capital Region within the Self-Assessment Framework (in grey).

3. List the three areas (from the ten listed in the Self-Assessment Framework) in which the community/city's expertise can be improved upon

Provide mentoring for women leaders: level 2

Introductory remark: "women leaders" are understood to mean as many women leaders at both the political and economic level

A. Importance of networking and mentoring/coaching:

Women make little use of professional networks. The exchange of contacts, knowledge and experience, word of mouth advertising or just a good conversation with a colleague ... A good network is crucial to integration within the political or economic environment. Men have understood this, but if we look at network events women can hardly be found. They

have no time, do not feel at home there, and do not recognise the usefulness of networks.

Mentoring and coaching are major tools to support women on their way to top levels within companies and the world of politics, areas in which they have thus far been underrepresented.

B. Existing initiatives:

Networking, job coaching and mentoring are considered to be an important tool in the Brussels equal opportunity policy for the promotion of gender equality between men and women. There can be no question of the institutionalisation of this mechanism. It is also not structurally developed. The importance of networking is demonstrated and supported for each policy area. Such as, for example, the area of “women entrepreneurship”, within which a number of projects have been launched on networking, coaching and mentoring. In addition, thematic workshops are often organised to which all players in the field are invited and given the opportunity to network informally.

C. Areas for improvement for the Brussels Capital Region:

- Working on an extensive form of job coaching, for politicians, start-ups and top management in companies and administrations
- Encouragement and institutionalisation of mixed and unmixed networks

Gender Budgeting: level 3

A. Importance of gender budgeting:

Gender budgeting is highly important in checking whether the policy budgets lead to the promotion of gender equality or instead serve to oppose it. An analysis of the budgets may lead to adjustments or preventive measures when it appears that the budgets perpetuate or increase inequality between men and women.

B. Existing initiatives/current status:

The Brussels Capital Region has earmarked an amount of €729,000 for 2007 for the equal opportunity policy, distributed between expenditure for general policy, for subsidies to organisations for projects involving equal opportunities, for subsidies to municipalities for projects involving equal opportunities between men and women, and for initiatives aimed at the fight against domestic violence.

Gender Budgeting is not yet applied to the general budget of the Brussels Capital Region or within the equal opportunity policy area.

C. Areas for improvement for the Brussels Capital Region:

- Application of gender budgeting: imposition of advice by financial inspection to all administrations with respect to the impact of their policy on men and women in

- order to expose gaps in this area and provide adequate tools
- Support of gender mainstreaming through increased personnel and adequate financing
- Gender audit: examination in order to draw up a state of affairs for all the organisation's gender aspects or for the project in question: HRM policy, activities, processes, internal and external communication
- Structural anchoring of gender audit and gender budgeting

Economic inclusion

A. Importance of economic inclusion:

Women's economic inclusion is one of the basic conditions for achieving gender equality. Compared to men, women still occupy an inferior position on the job market. It remains difficult for women to move up to more important positions, and women are more frequently confronted with precarious job conditions. Certain female groups experience specific problems, as in the case of women of immigrant origin, for example.

B. Current status in the Brussels Capital Region:

In the Brussels Capital Region, the Brussels Observatory of the Job Market and qualifications is in charge of investigating unequal treatment of men and women in the Brussels job market. The gender dimension is included in all their studies.

The Brussels job market is a segregated job market. First off there is horizontal segregation. There is a great concentration of women in specific sectors and professions such as health care, social services and education. It may be observed that within the Ministry of the Brussels Capital Region there is a relatively even distribution of men (47%) and women (53%). But there are no women at the top. The number of women at director level is also very low, i.e., 10%.

Taking into account Brussels' multicultural context, ethnic segregation also plays a major role for women in the job market. There is a great concentration of women of Moroccan, Turkish and African origin in specific sectors such as health care, retail and social services. It is often very difficult for highly educated immigrant women to find a job corresponding to their degree.

C. Areas for improvement for the Brussels Capital Region:

- Despite the large number of women in the administration, their number remains small in management positions. Suitable action must be taken in order to enable women to move up to the top.
- Additional studies must be carried out on the invisible barriers that prevent women from moving up to the top in the administrations.
- Substantial emphasis must be placed on diversity in the job market. The challenges for companies and government that exist in this area must be focused on.
- Discrimination in the job market must be countered.

- Taking action in order to make optimal use of the potential of highly educated immigrant women. For example by supporting them in the set-up of their own business, through starter courses, premiums, micro credits, etc.

4. List the three areas (from the 10 listed in the Self-Assessment Framework) to share your community/city's expertise at the CIFAL Workshop

Gender sensitivity/awareness: level 5

A. Importance of gender sensitivity and awareness-raising within the administration:

Gender sensitivity and gender awareness-raising are two concepts that are very important in daily policy and that is why these concepts have to be effectively created within the executive branch of politics, i.e., the administration. The equal opportunity policy within the administration consists in tracing the hidden inequalities, to rectify the actual impediments to women in the administration and to upgrade equal opportunities for men and women in the administration.

(In addition to the traditional tools for the promotion of equal opportunities, i.e., legal equality and affirmative action, whereby affirmative action is viewed as targeted measures and overtaking manoeuvres, the Brussels Government opted for an integrated approach to equal opportunities for men and women aimed at gearing the general policy and measures to the equal opportunities).

B. Current status:

Within the Brussels administration, an Equal Opportunities/Diversity division was set up in order to promote actions in favour of equal opportunities in the Brussels Region and in the regional administration. The aim of the division is the improvement and follow-up of the equal opportunities policy, and the ensuring of financial aid to associations that develop projects or conduct awareness-raising campaigns on equal opportunities. Internally this division established a diversity plan for its personnel, and within this framework it conducted several awareness-raising campaigns.

In addition, within the Administration for local administrations a division was set up for equal opportunities. This division supports initiatives in the 19 municipalities that promote equality between men and women. It organises training on equal opportunities for local officials and for municipal personnel, and provides advice or proposals to other departments in the administration from a gender mainstreaming perspective. This training is extremely important, as officials need to conceptualise the integrated equal opportunities policy and the importance of gender within the administration's existing training policy.

C. Good practices:

- Within the Brussels administration there is an internal equal opportunity support committee, which has advisory and supervisory competence with respect to the implementation of the equal opportunity policy of the Ministry of the Brussels Capital Region. It sometimes also formulates new proposals.

Four lines of thought are distinguished for the promotion of equal opportunities within the administration, i.e., telecommuting, child care and sick children, start-up of odd jobs services and quotas or parity.

- The organisation of equality afternoons within the administration of the Brussels Capital Region. Various aspects of the equal opportunity policy are presented to personnel in a playful way in order to bring about a change in mentality for increased gender equality.
- The legislation also provides for a number of laws that structurally promote equality between men and women in a variety of areas. The most important of these laws is the Ordinance of 5 July 2001 amending the ordinance of 27 April 1995, which states that advisory bodies may consist of no more than 2/3 persons of the same gender.
- The Diversity charter of the Brussels administration aims to be an external sign that account will be taken of the diversity of Brussels society and this both in the internal organisation culture and in contacts with citizens, in compliance with European and federal legislation. For all administration staff members, executives and employees, regardless of their personal qualities, are entitled to a work atmosphere in which compliance with the principle of non-discrimination goes with the development of skills. The administration will ensure compliance with this diversity charter by motivating its employees to enhance the differences and agreements that provide complementarity. In order to encourage employees to take diversity into account in a positive way, a number of concrete initiatives are taken, such as the Equality Afternoons for example.

Participation in Electoral Politics: level 4

A. Importance of women in politics:

Women in politics can no longer be avoided. For increased balance in politics leads to improved balance in policy. A good mix of men and women represents major riches and leads to better and more dynamic policy results. The (Belgian) population is made up of 50% women, which represents 50% of skills and talents that cannot be circumvented.

B. Current status:

The Brussels Regional government consists of eight members of which three are women.

The Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region consists of 89 representatives, of which 37 are women.

Compared to other Belgian regions, the Brussels Capital Region is not doing badly, but it still cannot be referred to as a balanced representation of men and women.

Number of women elected officials in the 1999 and 2004 local elections.

	Brussels Capital Parliament	Flemish Parliament	Walloon Region Council
1999	34.67%	20%	11%
2004	41.57%	31%	19%

Local elections were held on 8 October 2006. The official figures are not yet known, but the 19 Brussels municipalities have the greatest number of female officials.

Number of women municipal council members, aldermen or mayors (1988-2006) in Belgium and Brussels

Period	Women in council		Women aldermen		Women mayors	
	Belgium	Brussels19	Belgium	Brussels19	Belgium	Brussels19
1988 - 1994	14%	26%	10%	16%	4%	10.5%
1994 - 2000	23%	26.3%	15.2%	30%	5.6%	10.5%
2000 - 2006	27%	39%	20%	30.5%	8%	16%

C. Good practices:

The promotion of the participation of women in political decision-making has been one of the basic concepts since 1985 around which the Belgian equal opportunity policy was developed. In the Brussels equal opportunity policy this theme is also one of the priorities. Measures are taken at three levels, i.e., legal/structural, awareness-raising and support to civil society.

- Legal measures:

Since 1994 structural measures have been taken in Belgium to achieve a democracy with equal representation. In 1994 the Smet-Tobback law was passed, which imposed the 1/3 quota of the same gender on election lists and this for all election levels.

In 2002 the quotas were extended: on each of the election lists the difference between the number of candidates of each gender may not be greater than one, and the first two candidates must be of a different gender. This forced the various parties to draw up their candidate lists in line with equal representation. These equal representation laws also apply at European, federal and regional level, but not at municipal level.

In view of the October 2006 local elections, the Brussels Capital Region imposed equal representation for candidate lists through an ordinance before the local elections. In addition, the first two places had to be filled by candidates of a different gender.

- Awareness-raising measures:

Equal representation on the election list does not guarantee effective representation in the political “seats”. That is why Ms Brigitte Grouwels as a result of the local elections of 8 October 2006 launched a “vote female” campaign. As more than ever it remains necessary to launch a campaign to vote “female”. The historical disadvantage women have compared to men must be caught up, women are less well-known, are given fewer good places on the list, receive fewer preferential votes and in public opinion/debates they are not yet allowed to speak as they should, which results in them not being easily elected.

- Subsidies:

As a result of the local elections of 8 October 2006, various organisations have submitted applications for the financing of their projects. The projects varied from campaigns for the support of women candidates, through public responsibility courses especially targeted at women to courses teaching people to vote electronically, etc.

A. Importance of cooperation with women's organisations, universities and municipalities:

In order to be able to achieve gender equality in a metropolis, there is a need to create an open dialogue with the people in the field working on it. Close contacts with those in the field fuel the development of Brussels equal opportunity policy. This also legitimises the policy and ensures strong support. The sphere of action guides, supports and provides training to women on the one hand, and on the other hand acts as a signal for all political, economic and social officials.

A strong civil society framework is a major prerequisite for the structural development of an inclusive equal opportunity policy. Social organisations serve as information centres, not only to report discrimination and sticking points, but also to shape the equal opportunity policy concretely and to help it to propagate it.

Social organisations play a mediating role in contact with the local population and individuals and from the grass roots communities in which they are active provide a critical sounding board for the policy. They provide solutions carried by the local grass roots organisations and often play a pioneering role.

B. Current status:

Since 1985 in Belgium a minister has been responsible for equal opportunities. Yet it was not until 2004 that in the Brussels Capital Region a state secretary was specifically entrusted with the development of a Brussels equal opportunity policy across the various policy areas. In addition to this transversal policy, a specific equal opportunities policy is conducted with its own priorities, structures, means and personnel.

C. Good practices:

- The most important partners for the specific external equal opportunity policy within the Brussels Capital Region are the municipalities and associations. They are backed by subsidies and motivated in their actions for the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women. The amount made available by the Brussels Capital Government is respectively €280,000 and €50,000. A subsidy guide has been drawn up for associations and municipalities alike. This guide is a manual for the submission of projects.
- Last year the Brussels State Secretary for Equal Opportunities organised the forum "Women develop Brussels". No fewer than 450 Brussels women and organisations brainstormed on a number of pressing issues within the framework of the equal opportunities theme. The forum was organised in cooperation with the women's council and a number of Brussels women representatives from various political parties. The forum resulted in the drawing up of concrete policy recommendations and the signing of a Charter for women in Brussels. The forum's conclusions form the basis of the equal opportunity action plan until 2009.

- On a quarterly basis, the State Secretary in charge of equal opportunities conducts target group conversations at her office, which keeps her informed of the ins and outs of politics in the field in Brussels, where both issues and positive remarks are also given a chance.