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THE BENEFITS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING TO AN ORGANIZATION

The use of knowledge about gender requirements and outcomes increases the effectiveness of measures at the same time that it increases the focus on gender. All measures aimed at certain target groups require the application of gender specific knowledge in order to be effective. It is easier to recognize problems in target groups if the gender conditions have been analyzed. By focusing analysis on a target group, planning can be conducted at the appropriate level of detail.

A state government endeavors to provide its citizens access to its policies via the internet. Applying gender mainstreaming requires that gender differences in the use of the internet must be taken into account. This will reveal that some groups of women don't even have access to the internet while some groups of males use it on a daily basis. This knowledge will in turn influence the contents of the web site and perhaps initiate a search for other communication channels¹.

A pharmaceutical manufacturer tests a new product not only on young males (as it did in the past), but also includes elderly women, many of whom are in poor health. This allows the manufacturer to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the product's side effects, make more specific dosage recommendations and increase the effectiveness of the medication. An analysis of counseling for welfare recipients reveals that women typically lack skills in childcare and that lacks of schooling or alcohol problems often play a role in the biographies of male recipients. The gender perspective leads to the provision of different services for men and women. In many cases, gender analysis also provides a basis for preventive measures that help save costs in the future.

A gender analysis of health behavior reveals that young men between 16 and 18 years of age have particularly risky behavior: They rarely heed physical signals of sickness and subject their bodies to strains that have effects of which they are unaware. The early implementation of health education for young males helps save future costs in the social security system.

Gender mainstreaming enhances the effectiveness of administrative processes. When gender analysis targets specific problems, it may require crossing

¹ Bothfeld, Silke, Gronbach, Sigrid, Riedmüller, Barbara, 2002: Gender Mainstreaming – eine Innovation in der Gleichstellungspolitik, Frankfurt

departmental boundaries; project management and cooperation are then necessary. A research project of the Occupational Safety Department at the Ministry for Labor, Women, Health and Social Affairs in Saxony-Anhalt revealed that many women are exposed to harmful substances during pregnancy and that many small and medium-sized companies do not submit reports in compliance with the Maternity Protection Act. Information and counseling campaign involving all departments of the ministry was started on the basis of an analysis of the sources of these problems. For example, the ministry's health department co-operated with the state medical chamber to develop a continuing education course for gynecologists and the labor department evaluated job-rotation models for companies that have to deal with this problem².

Gender mainstreaming affects all tasks of an organization. In the public sector, it has effects on all public services. In particular, services that have been considered as gender neutral must be scrutinized: city planning, the planning of transportation and the promotion of the local economy must be analyzed in regard to their effects on gender and gender relations. But this is nothing new. In some cases, the introduction of gender mainstreaming will make the work of equal opportunity officers easier and give it more substance. In many cities, equal opportunity officers have been trying for years to promote the participation of women in city planning or to conduct surveys of mothers' needs with respect to public childcare services. The implementation of gender mainstreaming makes participation even more important and ensures that it is an integral part of planning processes. Participation is often the only means for evaluating the effects of planned measures on men and women.

The earmarking of funds is already part of affirmative action policies in many areas. Financial assistance is provided only when recipients can demonstrate that they are capable of applying the gender perspective and following gender policy objectives (examples include the EU Structural Fund, international co-operation and Germany's Higher Education Act)³.

Gender mainstreaming serves the promotion of an organization's image. Openness to gender issues can not only help an organization in the search for employees but improve its image in the eyes of its potential clientele. Large international companies know how to publicize their equal employment strategies and hope, with good reason, that this will improve their image.

²Jung, Dörthe, Küpper, Gunhild, 2001: Gender Mainstreaming und betriebliche Veränderungsprozesse, Bielefeld

³ Woodward, Alison E. 2001: Gender Mainstreaming in European Policy: Innovation or deception? Discussion Paper FS 1 01-103