

Vienna, Austria – A Model City for Gender Mainstreaming – Prabha Khosla

In 2000 Vienna anchored the principles of gender mainstreaming within Viennese administration, with the Municipal Department for Promotion and Co-ordination of Women's Issues being the responsible body. Additionally, under the guidance of the Coordination Office for Planning and Construction Geared to the Requirements of Daily Life and the Specific Needs of Women, this first phase of the initiative involved establishing pilots in specific parts of the city to integrate gender in parks, housing design, pedestrian friendly design, public transport, etc, as well as developing and implementing projects geared to women's specific needs. During this first phase, concepts and methods were developed and tested to provide approaches and standards for municipal-wide implementation of gender mainstreaming in all areas. In October 2004 Council had a special meeting on gender mainstreaming and in January 2005 another special meeting on Gender Budgeting. In October 2005, the Chief Executive Director, announced the setting up of a gender mainstreaming unit in one of his Executive Groups – the Executive Group for Organisation, Safety and Security to address gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue in the administration. Now, in the second phase of the Initiative, the focus is on sensitisation, consciousness raising, knowledge transfer, the development of evaluation and reporting methods, i.e. the structural and systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming.

The Initiative began with the following objectives:

- Consider the different life situations of women and men in all decisions.
- Ensure opportunities are available to both women and men.
- Create spaces for women and men in the city.
- Give women and men a sense of security.
- Distribute chances, opportunities, and responsibilities equally.

Gender Mainstreaming implementation will:

- Evaluate and consider all users of public services and their different needs.
- Consider not only gender, but also social, ethnic, and health-related differences.
- Adapt the products and services provided by the City Administration.
- Gender equality can no longer remain a fringe topic, but has to become an integrated part of all processes, measures, and of quality management.

Benefits:

- Increased planning accuracy
- Quality and effectiveness of measures

The success of gender mainstreaming is already visible in many areas such as in labour market policies and the design and planning of public spaces, parks, playgrounds and day care centres. So far there has been a particular emphasis on gender in the areas of urban planning, housing, public health, youth, and parks and gardens. Nineteen departments of the City Administration have already initiated gender mainstreaming activities. Gender mainstreaming is financed by the City and has targeted municipal officers responsible for this as well as a focus on particular services. The City aims to achieve positive socio-political changes for all its citizens. One of the top goals of the City Administration is to orient itself towards the needs and wishes of its citizens. In the context of gender mainstreaming this means that the different life situations and needs of women and men have to be understood and considered. Some examples below illustrate what was done.

Public Lighting

Women become victims of crime more often than men. They experience sexual harassment more frequently, and therefore have a higher need for security. Typical places that cause fear and insecurity for women are dark doorways, parks at night, empty and badly lit streets, underground car parks and pedestrian underpasses. The optimum use of high quality lighting in public areas meets the need for security of women, as well as of pedestrians and cyclists in general. Good lights are not only

important along the roads, but also along pedestrian walkways. In Resselpark at Karlsplatz all paths and bicycle stands now have excellent security lighting. In a park focus campaign, the municipal department responsible for public lighting assessed the lighting situation in 200 parks in Vienna and is currently making the necessary improvements.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting

In gender budgeting, the different living situations of women and men are systematically considered into the budgeting process. The central question is whether the budget is distributed fairly and benefits women and men equitably. Since the 2006 budget, gender budgeting has been firmly integrated into the policies of the city of Vienna. Not only is the entire budget assessed but also all items are reviewed with regards to their relevance to gender differences. A separate chapter in the budget proposal shows who benefits how much from the individual items in the budget.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries are mostly visited by elderly women, and grave maintenance is usually assumed by female relatives. The municipal department responsible for cemeteries is currently in the process of implementing the following measure: i) Water taps should be low enough for smaller and elderly persons to use them with ease; ii) The paths should be smooth and even for people who use wheelchairs or walking aids; iii) Small carts should be available for transporting water and soil; iv) There should be seats and benches; and v) Clearly visible signage and safe restrooms.

New Awareness Building Campaign

In order to make the term gender mainstreaming more tangible for the employees of the city administration and for all citizens of Vienna, the city has initiated a campaign called "Vienna sees it differently". Posters and advertisements are designed to raise awareness for gender mainstreaming. The campaign centres on commonly known pictographs and signs and reverses the genders. For example, changing tables in public restrooms will now also show a man changing a baby. The sign that shows men engaged in construction will now also show women engaged in construction, etc.

Additionally, there is an extensive programme of gender seminars and trainings for municipal employees to assist them in integrating gender in their work.

Lessons Learnt

- Gender mainstreaming initiatives needs commitment from top-level decision makers and the engagement of the leaders at the top.
- Gender mainstreaming needs to be based on a wide political consensus and support.
- Support from existing women's department or initiatives in the city is central and the advancement of an active women's policy and affirmative action programs for women are critical.
- Key to successful implementation is the need for a database such as a census on personal circumstances and the needs and demands of women and men.
- Gender mainstreaming has to be integrated in the administrative and personnel systems of the city.
- The lessons from the pilot projects were critical to establishing guidelines and standards for gender mainstreaming across municipal departments.

Source: <http://www.wien.gv.at/english/administration/gendermainstreaming/index.html> and personal communication with Ursula Bauer, Project Manager for Gender Mainstreaming, Vienna.