GUIDELINE ON EVALUATING THE CROSS-SECTORAL GENDER EQUALITY GOAL IN PROGRAMMES

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INTRODUCTION

Promoting gender equality as an explicit cross-sectoral goal of the European Social Fund (ESF) is a binding requirement of all ESF-funded programmes and projects. The Federal Operational Programme under the European Social Fund for the funding period 2007-2013 pursues a dual strategy, which includes both specific gender-equality measures and the implementation of the cross-sectoral goal. All programmes and projects carried out with ESF funding must therefore be assessed for their implementation of gender mainstreaming and their contribution to promoting gender equality.

**ESF Regulation**

“Evaluations undertaken in relation to ESF action shall also assess the contribution of the actions supported by the ESF to the implementation of the European Employment Strategy and to the Community objectives in the fields of social inclusion, non-discrimination and equality between women and men, and education and training in the Member State concerned” (ESF Regulation, Article 4(5), emphasis by the authors)

**Federal Operational Programme**

“Promotion as a cross-sectoral theme concentrates on integrating this objective in the whole implementation system, that is, across planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ESF-funded measures and all priorities” (Operational Programme, p. 218, emphasis by the authors)

The binding programming documents for ESF implementation in Germany also set out the priority gender-equality areas of ESF that make up the primary framework for the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in ESF programmes. The Federal Operational Programme itself defines raising employment among women as a general gender-equality goal, which it details at many points, such as the “…large remaining overall backlog in the participation of women in paid employment and self-employment to secure a livelihood, their access to advancement opportunities and their occupation of senior positions, their participation in courses of training and study with good prospects for future, financially viable work and related occupational positioning.” (Operational Programme, p. 125)

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1 Employment policy guidelines, EU Gender Equality Strategy, structural funds regulations, National Strategic Framework
In the implementation of gender mainstreaming in programmes, evaluation is a major step; it aims at analysing the relevant practical experience and at assessing the results and impacts of a programme in terms of achieving the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality. This lays the essential foundation for a more in-depth understanding of gender-mainstreaming implementation and ongoing improvements.

The evaluation of the cross-sectoral gender-equality goal comprises:

- Evaluating gender mainstreaming as a strategy: At the implementation level, the integration and implementation of gender mainstreaming are analysed in the organisational setup and operations of a programme.

- Evaluating gender equality as the goal of gender mainstreaming strategy: At the level of programme results and impacts, the focus is placed on gender impacts and the contribution of the programme to promoting gender equality.

The best way to evaluate a programme for the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality is as an integral part of all survey and evaluation steps. This means carrying out the programme evaluation as a whole from a gender-equality perspective. This is not confined to recording the ratios of women and men in project participation. The results and impacts of the programme in promoting gender equality must be examined both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This includes compiling and evaluating all relevant data by gender and assessing the programme’s performance in attaining the respective gender-equality objectives. In the impact assessment, it should be evaluated as a whole for its quantitative and qualitative gender-equality impacts.

A specific task of programme evaluation for the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality is to assess the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming in the programme under review. Here it must examine whether and to what extent gender mainstreaming has been integrated and implemented in the programme and whether the necessary framework has been created for this. A particular focus here is on the organisational setup and operations of programme implementation.

In the following, we shall provide pointers for evaluating the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality in ESF programmes both at the level of implementation procedures and results and impacts. After an introductory summary of the necessary preparations and competencies for a sound evaluation of the cross-sectoral objective of equal opportunities, we propose a number of evaluation questions for each of the two levels.

\[\text{See gender mainstreaming guidelines of the Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Gender mainstreaming in programmes, } \text{http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/105.html}\]
1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE CROSS-SECTORAL GOAL OF GENDER EQUALITY

A sound evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality in ESF programmes calls for certain preparations and competencies both on the part of those in charge of the programme commissioning the evaluation and of the evaluation teams.

For those commissioning the evaluation, it is important to specify the assessment of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality as an explicit part of the contractual task of programme evaluation and plan for the requisite resources. The more thoroughly the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality has been established in a programme beforehand, particularly by setting definite gender-equality objectives, the more purposive and directed the evaluation can be.

For a sound evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality, the evaluation teams need gender competency, including theoretical knowledge as well as process, sectoral and methodological competency:

- Theoretical knowledge: familiarity with gender as a concept and social gender patterns (women and men in their diversity, gender as a structural category)
- Process competency: familiarity with gender mainstreaming as a consistent strategy, the prerequisites for this and methods and tools for implementation
- Sectoral competency: familiarity with gender aspects in the respective field of intervention of the programme (for example, start-ups, vocational training, etc.) and the ability to define sound sectoral objectives and targets
- Methodological competency: ability to apply and combine qualitative and quantitative methods and to generate and interpret gender-based data and gender-equality indicators
2 EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

Gender mainstreaming in a programme means establishing the gender-equality perspective in all operations and procedural steps. Gender mainstreaming is carried out as an integral part of the programme cycle steps: analysis, objectives, planning implementation strategy and projects, project selection, monitoring and steering as well as evaluation.

In the following, we shall discuss the requirements for gender-mainstreaming implementation in the individual steps and cite a number of related evaluation questions for this. The evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality at implementation level centres on ascertaining the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been appropriately and adequately established and implemented. This should be done with the aim of generating proposals for improvement and gaining a deeper understanding of coherent implementation.

2.1 GENDER ANALYSIS

The starting point for implementing gender mainstreaming in ESF-funded programmes is the analysis of the intervention sector of a programme for existing gender inequalities (= gender analysis). Where possible, this should already be carried out as an integral part of the problem analysis of the field of intervention as the basis for programme planning.

A gender analysis never solely depicts the status quo in quantitative terms but looks for the causes, factors of influence and impacts of inequalities due to gender patterns.

A sound gender analysis requires knowledge of gender aspects in the respective sector and the availability of relevant gender-based data.

Example 1: One programme aims to improve the opportunities of disadvantaged youth in the transition from school to employment. As is known from the relevant literature, in Germany young men are overrepresented in this target group, because they have poorer average qualifications. However, young men with low school-leaving qualifications have better chances of finding a training vacancy than their female counterparts. Altogether, young women cannot take advantage of their “educational lead” for the relevant training careers in the occupational integration phase. This means that young men and women are disadvantaged to a different extent.

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3 Cf. Agency for Gender Equality within ESF (pub.): Junge Frauen und Männer im Übergang von der Schule in den Beruf. (Young women and men in the transition from school to employment), Berlin 2011, for downloading at www.esf-gleichstellung.de.
Example 2: One programme targets long-term unemployed persons. The statistics of the German Federal Employment Agency indicate that the ratio of men in this group is higher, but that women remain even longer in unemployment on average. As is also known, many women who have been out of work for a longer period are no longer recorded in the statistics (the so-called ‘hidden reserve’ of the labour market). It would therefore be short-sighted to confine the programme target group to the long-term unemployed and only promote the male majority accordingly.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- What are the relevant gender patterns in the programme field of intervention?
- Is a sound gender analysis available as the basis for programme planning and implementation? Have all relevant gender patterns in the field of intervention been adequately identified and accounted for?

2.2 GENDER-EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

Translating the global gender-equality goals of ESF into definite and verifiable objectives for specific measures in the respective programme means their operationalisation in line with sectoral needs and conditions as a key step in implementing gender mainstreaming.

The gender-equality objectives of a programme should be defined in keeping with the respective field of intervention and fit in with the set of programme objectives. The key question here is:

What contribution should and can be made as part of the intervention scope of a programme to promote equality between women and men?

Example: Aimed at the long-term unemployed, a programme defined its gender equality objectives as addressing women and men in keeping with their ratio of the target group. The evaluation must, however, determine whether this objective contributes to achieving a definite gender-equality impact. Considering the points identified in Step 1 (the longer period in long-term unemployment among women and their frequent absence in unemployment statistics in Germany) and with a view to the objective defined in the Operational Programme of increasing employment among women (cf. Operational Programme, p. 121), this cannot be rated as an adequate contribution to the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality. The objective defined by those in charge of the programme simply reflects the status quo. Only if long-term unemployed women have above-average participation in the programme, a beneficial gender-equality impact can be achieved. This would have to be discussed in the evaluation report and communicated to the contracting entity of the evaluation as a steering shortcoming.
Operationalisation of gender-equality objectives

When setting the gender-equality objectives of a programme, the respective impact objectives have to be defined and the inferred participation and result objectives.

- **Impact objectives** denote the anticipated impact of programmes in the field of intervention. For the most part, they can only be quantified to a limited degree and are worded in qualitative terms. Gender mainstreaming requires the definition of gender-equality objectives as pragmatic and strategic impact objectives, which specify the substantive alignment of a programme as a guide for the design of projects to be promoted (for example, the reduction of horizontal or vertical segregation on the labour market, reducing horizontal segregation in the educational system, etc.).

- **Result objectives** pertain to the anticipated result of programmes, such as educational qualifications or successful labour market integration. From a gender-equality perspective, the quality of educational certificates or labour-market integration (for example, stable employment to secure a livelihood in keeping with qualifications) plays a major role here. This is why result objectives should also be defined in qualitative terms and not reduced to quantitative quotas.

- **Participation objectives** (in programmes with participants) are concerned with the ratio of women and men aimed for in an ESF-funded programme. The frequently targeted quota of women and men in line with the ratio of female and male unemployed persons is too indiscriminate in many cases. This kind of quota at aggregate programme level merely depicts the existing distribution and can at best prevent under-representation. Depicting a status quo, however, is not enough to make an active contribution to gender equality. For certain fields of intervention, it can also be overestimated, for example, where the ratio of women or men in a specific area is small (such as in the training segment of technical occupations or in the health and social service employment sector).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- Which gender equality objectives does the programme have?
- Are they based on a gender analysis and are they sufficiently well-founded and appropriate for the sector?
- Have the gender-equality objectives been adequately and appropriately operationalised (impact, result and participation objectives)?
- Are the gender equality objectives appropriate for the problem and the intervention scope of the programme; are they realistic and ambitious?
2.3 PROGRAMME PLANNING

The implementation strategy for an ESF-funded programme, as set out in the announcement and/or the funding guideline, specifies the priorities and projects for achieving the programme objectives.

All envisaged programmes, also those without participants, such as networking or research programmes, should be appraised in the course of this planning for their possible impacts on gender equality and designed accordingly (gender impact assessment). This ensures that the gender-equality objectives set for a programme can be achieved.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

• Was an appraisal made beforehand of possible effects of the programme on gender equality (gender impact assessment)? Were the findings taken into account in the alignment and design of the programme?

• Is the overall programme geared more to perpetuating or mitigating existing gender inequalities?

• Can the measures planned in the programme contribute to achieving the gender equality objectives defined?

• Was gender mainstreaming sufficiently integrated and detailed in the funding guideline?

• Was a gender mainstreaming strategy explicitly framed for the programme and is it documented?

Example: One programme addresses young businesses in the post-start-up phase and provides advice on all issues to do with start-ups. Studies on start-up activities in Germany make clear that fewer women start businesses, but if they do, it is far more as an extra source of income or part-time employment than for men. There are also other visible gender patterns in start-up activities. This is why the funding criteria were revised: Start-ups as sources of extra income can also be promoted if they are planned for the long term as employment to secure a livelihood.

Measures planned in the programme to reach diverse male and female start-up entrepreneurs also include gender-sensitive outreach through public relations measures, information events by advisers on gender patterns in start-up activities and an evaluation of satisfaction with the advisory service - also by start-up person gender.

2.4 PROJECT SELECTION

For the implementation of gender mainstreaming throughout a programme, the individual projects it promotes must apply gender mainstreaming. This can be ensured in the procedure of project selection and entails the following:

- Applicants are informed beforehand of the requirements they must meet for implementing gender mainstreaming in projects (in the funding guideline and the additional documents and forms). This makes clear that gender mainstreaming is a major criterion for the appraisal of the application.

- The appraisal of the project applications submitted also assesses the information of the applicant on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the relevant project. The appraisers are instructed on how to specifically check and assess gender mainstreaming in the applications.

- The project selection criteria include binding yardsticks on the assessment of the information on gender-mainstreaming implementation in the project applications.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- How did the selection procedure ensure that gender mainstreaming will be implemented in the projects?

- How obligatory and specific were the requirements? What evidence was required of the applicants?

- How was gender mainstreaming taken into account in the appraisal of applications? Were gender mainstreaming assessment criteria applied?

- What experience has been made here? What appears effective?

Example: One programme provides prospective applicants a guideline with directions on what to consider in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects for the integration of gender-equality issues. The contents are specifically tailored to the promotion sector of the programme. The guideline also makes plain what an application must contain to achieve the highest points score for the cross-sectoral goal. The individual steps at project level (analysis, objectives, implementation, evaluation) are discussed and illustrated with examples from the promotion sector. The guideline is published prominently on the programme website. Contact persons with gender competency are available at the management authority to deal with any questions of the applicant on the gender-equality requirements of the programme. On approval, applications that score less than a third of the points are requested to make improvements in integrating equality of women and men.
2.5 MONITORING AND STEERING

The tasks of programme steering for gender mainstreaming include the ongoing monitoring of whether the gender-equality goals set for the programme can be achieved and the possible need for adjustments and steering interventions. The more discriminate the indicators monitored for this, the sounder the basis for a purposive steering of gender-mainstreaming implementation. As far as possible, all indicators should be surveyed and compiled by gender.

In programme monitoring and steering, the gender mainstreaming requirements also include ensuring gender-mainstreaming implementation in the projects funded. The more detailed the information and evidence on gender mainstreaming implementation required in the projects, in fund use vouchers or progress reports, the greater the reliability and scope of steering. Project executing agencies, however, frequently need guidance on what gender equality means in the respective promotion sector and what specific requirements are entailed. Steering does not, then, mean delegating the task of implementing gender mainstreaming to those who practically carry out the projects. As a steering strategy, gender mainstreaming is geared to objectives and engages in dialogue among ESF steering levels.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- Are the planned indicators appropriate for assessing the gender-equality impacts of the programme?
- How were the requirements of gender-mainstreaming implementation communicated to the projects? Were information and training made available?
- What obstacles face the project executing agencies in the implementation of gender equality objectives? What has proved effective?
- Was the implementation of gender mainstreaming adequately verified with fund use vouchers and progress reports?
- What was done with the information gathered? What (counter)measures were taken in steering? Were these successful?
**Example:** One programme pursues gender equality in two ways: first, with a participation target (the ratio of women and men, based on the analysis) and second with the substantive aim of generating good practices in gender-equality promotion in pilot projects.

The executing agencies were informed of this at information events on the promotion theme, with illustrations from project case studies. The programme objectives and related targets and indicators for gender equality were communicated and published on the website.

Via monitoring, the programme records the annual participation figures of women and men in the programme. The annual gender budgeting report\(^5\) of the Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF provides a source of information.

In the form for the progress report, there are clear pointers on which statements are expected from the project executing agencies on gender equality. The programme agency also reviews these reports for the plausibility of the gender-equality objectives achievement of the project. As the results were still in need of improvement, the programme management held an information event on the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of gender equality objectives in the projects. Two project executing agencies that take ongoing account of gender equality as an objective with plausible operationalisation plans in their projects were given the opportunity to present their projects on the programme website.

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**2.6 EVALUATION**

The evaluation is not just the final step of a programme cycle; it is also a major foundation for the development and implementation of successor programmes.

Taking verifiable account of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality, the evaluation report...

- ...contains an assessment and recommendations on gender mainstreaming in the implementation procedure of the programme,
- ...contains a consistent gender-based presentation of data and indicators,
- ...does not just contain statements on disparities (benchmarks), but also provides explanations on possible causes,
- ...contains an estimated evaluation of gender equality impacts (positive or negative, intended and unintended?),
- ...draws conclusions and possibly gives recommendations for a closer gender-equality alignment of the programme.

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\(^5\) See Frey, Regina/Savioli, Benno: Gender Budgeting in the German European Social Fund – 2010; published by the Agency for Gender Equality within ESF. Berlin 2011, for downloading at www.esf-gleichstellung.de/102.html
3 EVALUATION OF RESULTS AND IMPACTS

In a closer examination of how gender mainstreaming has been established and implemented in programme operations, the evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality finally centres on the question of the gender-equality impacts of a programme. The issue of the results and impacts of a programme as a contribution to gender equality entails both verifying how far the self-defined gender equality objective(s) has(ve) been reached and a general analysis of the alignment, results and impacts of a programme in terms of gender equality.

A frequent difficulty when evaluating the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality is that no or no specific gender equality objective has been defined in many programmes. In these cases, no actual verification and assessment of objectives achievement in the narrower sense can be made. An evaluation framework for a gender-based assessment of results and impacts in ESF-funded programmes is, however, provided by the binding programming documents on ESF implementation, which also include the ESF priority measures of gender-equality policy.

Even if a programme has set specific gender-equality objectives, a sound evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal does not just examine the attainment of the objectives set but also their suitability for the problem complex in the sector and for meeting ESF requirements and makes an overall assessment of the gender-equality impact of the programme: As practical experience has shown, the specification of well-founded gender equality objectives for the sector tailored to a programme and their operationalisation still pose great difficulties and uncertainties in most cases.

The guiding question of the evaluation at result and impact level is whether the programme results achieved have mitigated or perpetuated gender inequalities in the field of intervention. All results and impacts of a programme are examined here by gender to be able to identify and assess all intended and unintended gender-equality impacts.

In the following, we propose a number of evaluation questions for participatory programmes and those without participation.

3.1 PROGRAMMES WITH PARTICIPANTS

In programmes that promote projects with participants (such as education and employment measures), the evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality is obviously first concerned with the participation rates (participation ratio of women and men). The cross-sectoral goal of gender equality is not, however, confined to participation rates. The assessment of the gender-based results and gender-equality impacts of a programme also calls for more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The evaluation of the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality here comprises the programme aspects of participation, results and impacts (see remarks on p.7).

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6 Employment policy guidelines, EU Gender Equality Strategy, structural funds regulations, National Strategic Framework
EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Participation

- What is the ratio of male and female participants?
- What are possible explanations for the distribution of participation by gender?
- Was the possible predefined target reached? Why or why not? Is the set target appropriate to the sector?
- How do you assess the gender distribution from a gender equality standpoint? What is the benchmark for this?

Benchmarks:
A benchmark is a target for measuring a contribution to gender equality. It thus functions as a reference standard or set point to be reached.

The formula applied is ARA - appropriate, realistic, ambitious

- Benchmarks are not supposed to schematically depict a 50:50 distribution between women and men but must be appropriate to the promotion theme or the target groups. For example, in promotion sectors with a high ratio of female employment, such as in nursing occupations, a parity distribution for the participation target would be inappropriate. Important here is that the appropriateness can only ascertained on an empirical basis. Sometimes other distinctions are also appropriate for the object of promotion, e.g. by age group.

- Benchmarks should also be defined in line with the programme objectives and target groups. These should also be realistic. A target of 40 per cent ratio of women in technological start-ups would not be realistic, for example. Either the target is geared to the number of male and female graduates in this sector or the programme must be extended to include other disciplines (humanities and social sciences with higher ratios of women).

- Benchmarks should not just depict the status quo, but contain a gender-equality objective geared to the overall goals of ESF. A contribution to gender equality can only be made if the benchmark is ambitious, that is above/below the status quo. As according to the Operational Programme the goal of ESF is to raise the ratio of women in employment to secure a livelihood, the target of the proportion of women in promoted technology start-ups in keeping with their ratio in this type of start-up, for example, would be insufficient. The target should therefore exceed the present ratio by some percentage points.

7 The Online-Verwaltungslexikon (Online administrative lexicon) on the term benchmark: “Reference standard for measurement or assessment, for example of performance data in IT educational results, etc. .... as a setpoint (operational indicator), it corresponds to the English term ‘target’ [http://www.olev.de/], accessed on 30 May 2011]
Results

- Are there different results for male and female participants, e.g. in educational qualifications or successful employment starts? What are possible explanations for this?
- Was the possible predefined target met? Why or why not? Does the possible target set make sense for the sector?
- How do you assess the results overall from a gender-equality standpoint, e.g. in terms of stable labour-market integration to secure a livelihood?

Impacts

- Were inequalities mitigated or perpetuated (for example, segregation in the educational system and the labour market)?
- How do you assess the programme impacts overall from a gender-equality standpoint?

3.2 PROGRAMMES WITHOUT PARTICIPANTS

In programmes without direct participation that promote networking or research projects, for example, the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality cannot be assessed by ‘sex-counting’; it requires a qualitative assessment of the alignment and impacts of a programme by means of specific, appropriate evaluation questions. We only therefore cite some examples here.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

e.g. cooperation and networking programme:
- How was the gender equality theme addressed in the networks?
- Were gender experts and gender equality institutions systematically involved in the networks?
- Was gender competency increased among involved actors?

e.g. research programme:
- Was participation by female researchers promoted?
- Were gender questions substantively addressed as a research topic?
4 LITERATURE

Programming documents of ESF

The relevant programming documents of the Federal ESF Programme with excerpts of direct relevance to the cross-sectoral goal of gender equality are compiled in an overview prepared by the Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF. The overview entitled, Gender Mainstreaming im ESF: Auszüge aus den Rahmendokumenten (Gender mainstreaming in ESF: excerpts from the programming documents) is available for download at www.esf-gleichstellung.de.

- General Regulation on Structural Funds (EC) no. 1083/2006 of the Council of 11 July 2006
- Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (2010/0115 NLE) of 12 October 2010

Working aids for implementing gender mainstreaming

The website of the Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF, www.esf-gleichstellung.de, contains an archive of literature providing a selection of methods and instruments as well as reports and studies all about gender mainstreaming in ESF, especially also on evaluation.

All working aids of the Agency for Gender Equality within ESF are also available at www.esf-gleichstellung.de for downloading:

- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Einführung in die Umsetzung von Gender Mainstreaming (Introduction to gender mainstreaming)
- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Gender Mainstreaming in Programmen (Gender Mainstreaming in programmes)
- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Gender Mainstreaming in Projekten (Gender mainstreaming in projects)

Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Ein Wegweiser durch den Begriffsdschungel aus gleichstellungspolitischer Perspektive“ - Erläuterungen zu Begriffen und Konzepten der Arbeitsmarktstatistik (Guide through the complex terminology of gender-equality policy - notes on terms and concepts of labour market statistics)
Expert reports on priority themes of ESF

The Agency for Gender Equality within ESF prepares expert reports on selected priority areas of ESF dealing with gender aspects of the respective activity area. The expert reports and a related collection of literature are available on the website, [www.esf-gleichstellung.de](http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de), under the heading Daten und Fakten (Facts and figures).

- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Gender-Aspekte in der Existenzgründung (Gender aspects in business start-ups)
- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Junge Frauen und Männer im Übergang von der Schule in den Beruf (Young women and men in the transition from school to occupation)
- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Soziale Integration von Migrantinnen und Migranten (Social integration of male and female migrants)
- Agency for Gender Equality within ESF: Gender-Aspekte in der betriebliche Weiterbildung (Gender aspects in in-company further training)

The heading Daten und Fakten (Facts and figures) also includes gender-based information and data sources on the ESF target groups.