



## **MEASURES FOR CONCILIATION OF PRIVATE, FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE**

### **INFORMATION ON EEA FUNDED PROJECT IN SPAIN**

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#### **Background**

Demography is assuming increasing significance in all European countries, as reduced population growth combined with increased ageing continue to transform the age pyramid at an accelerating rate. The effects of this marked transition towards a much older population are set to be felt through to the middle of the century. Whether the subject is social protection, employment, health, migration or structural policy, the demographic variable is an essential factor in analysing problems and developing appropriate policy responses – and a key factor behind social and economic cohesion.

At the same time, Norway has one of the highest birth rates in Europe, 1.96, implying that each woman has an average of almost 2 children. The birth rate has been increasing gradually and is believed to be partly due to the positive framework for conciliating work and family life, e.g. kindergartens, after school services, mothers leave, fathers leave, flexible working hours etc. as well as financial benefits for families with children. In addition, the professional activity of Norwegian women is high. According to statistics from 2002, 77.7% of women aged 25 to 66 have paid work outside home – although many of them only part time.

#### **EEA PROJECT SPAIN**

KS is participating in a three year long EEA project in Spain focusing on measures to balance family life and professional life.

The 3 year EEA-project in **Spain** was approved in June 2008 with a budget of 10 million NOK. The Spanish partners are the Institute of Women, Instituto de la Mujer, and the Spanish Federation for Municipalities and Provinces, FEMP.

The Norwegian partners are the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, and the county municipality of Vest Agder, the municipality of Bærum and the five municipalities in the Lindesnes region Audnedal, Lindesnes, Mandal, Marnardal og Åseral.

The Spanish municipalities are Coruña, Alcalá de Henares, Aranda de Duero, Barbate, Eivissa (Ibiza), Icod de los Vinos, Jaén, Puente Genil, Valls and Vilagarcia de Arousa.

The implementation of the project is mainly outsourced to Spanish consultant agencies; CEET and Enred.

### **The project goal**

The goal and objective of the EEA project is to improve the possibilities of conciliating family life and professional life – important prerequisite for social and economic development. Within the EU this is called ”conciliation” or ”work life balance”.

Spain has a low birth rate, around 1.4 children per woman, and a high unemployment rate; around 20% and up to 30% for young people.

In total this picture creates huge demographic and economical challenges at a local and national level, both on a short and a long term.

Therefore Spain consider measures within conciliation as a highly prioritized strategic field. In general Spain has put equality high up at their political agenda, both nationally and in the EU. In Norway we know that a balance between professional and personal life is of strategic value; not only for the well being of employees and their satisfaction at work as for equality, bur also for the social development of the nation.

Norway has come relatively far in this field, but at the same time we are facing huge challenges such as the debates around the extended practice of part-time work, cash support, birth leave and pay gap.

There are also big regional differences in Norway. Some regions, among them Agder (in the South), see gender equality and a greater participation of women in the work force as a strategic priority for local and regional development.

## **Project activities**

- March 2009: Introduction conference with representatives from the Ministries of Equality in Spain and Norway, Spanish and Norwegian partners, organizations in Spain, and the media
- June 2009: Study visit from Spain to Norway
- November 2009: Study visit from Norway to Spain
- November 2009: Best practice conference for Spanish and Norwegian partners and relevant organisations in Spain
- June 2010: Selection of 10 Spanish pilot municipalities
- October 2010: Survey of status and identification of possible new measures in the 10 pilot municipalities
- November 2010: Publication of guides in Spanish and English with best practices from Spain and Norway
- Support and guidance to the 10 Spanish pilot municipalities
- February 2011: Closing Seminar in Madrid

## **Information about Norwegian experiences**

Norwegian experiences tend to show that a conciliation of professional and personal life requires measures at several levels:

- national: laws and economical support systems
- regional and local: services for children, young people, elderly and disabled people
- working life: recruitment, salary policies, working hours and leave rights
- investigation and research: documenting status, development trends and possibilities
- private: sharing of duties, measures to include men's perspectives in the debate

Norway emphasizes the exchange and passing on of experiences from all these levels, focusing on the coherence between measures at the various levels.

## **Strategic involvement of Agder municipalities**

KS chose the Agder region as a partner for the project in Spain for strategic reasons.

They prioritize equality and want development in this field, among them more women working. The project has made it possible for KS to use an EEA project as a strategic tool for regional and local development in Norway within a field that the actual region has already given priority.

In addition there are synergy effects as well as practical and economical advantages by a geographical concentration of the Norwegian municipalities.

The Gender Equality Council in Agder is a common connector body for the two EEA projects with Spain and Portugal. The Equality Council is pleased that local authorities in Agder participate as partner in the EEA projects, and find that the the participation may have positive effect also for the equality work in Agder.

The Gender Equality Council has also accepted the role as a reference group.

The centre for equality at the University of Agder is the ecretariat for the Gender Equality Council in Agder and has also played a part in the project.

### **Division of responsibilities between the KS and the Norwegian municipalities**

KS is the formal Norwegian partner for the Spanish and the Portuguese projects and has administrative and financial responsibility for the implementation of activities, reporting and economics when it comes to Norwegian participation. Norwegian municipalities, enterprises and other partners are formally subcontractors of KS. Regarding study visits, travel and acommodation expenses are covered; but as a rule, working hours are not. The Norwegian municipalities and enterprises deductibles are working hours; other deductibles are not expected.

### **Cooperation with governmental bodies and agencies**

The Norwegian Embassy in Madrid has supported the project and participated in many meetings and seminars in Spain. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minsitry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and KS cooperated arranging an equality conference in Oslo in June 2010, inviting delegates from the 15 beneficiary countries under the EEA and Norway Grants as well as practitioners in relevant governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations. The program focused on informing about the premises for equality in Spain and the EEA project between Spain and Norway, as well as dialogue and sharing experience with the 15 beneficiary countries. The conference was called "Equality pays!" On the link below you find the programme and the presentations.

<http://ksk.event123.no/bld/conference/program.cfm>

### **Information for all european organizations**

The project is nearing completion, and the plan is to inform relevant european institutions

about the project and its results. This applies for CEMR, EEP and EFTA through the consultative body of EFTA.

### **EEA grants**

The project is funded by the EEA grants. The EEA and Norway Grants are related to the European Economic Area Agreement, which ties the EEA EFTA States Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein to the EU, allowing them to participate in the EU's internal market and cooperate in areas such as research and education, the environment and consumer protection.

The EEA Financial Mechanism includes a goal to reduce social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area (EEA), and the EEA EFTA States have contributed to European cohesion efforts ever since the EEA Agreement entered into force in 1994.

### **Financial Mechanism (1994-1998)**

The first programme for economic support covered Greece, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Portugal and Spain. Projects were supported within the fields of environmental protection, education and training, and transport. In addition to ECU 500 million in project support, interest rebates were granted on loans amounting to ECU 1.5 billion in the European Investment Bank (EIB). When Austria, Finland, Sweden left EFTA for the EU on 1 January 1995, the European Commission took over responsibilities for the contributions of these three countries.

### **Financial Instrument (1999-2003)**

Through the Financial Instrument, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein made €119.6 million available for projects in Greece, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Portugal and Spain over the five-year period of 1999-2003. Projects were supported within the field of environmental protection, urban renewal, pollution in urban areas, protection of cultural heritage, transport, education and training, and academic research. About 93 % of the funding was spent on projects related to environmental protection.

The EEA Financial Mechanism was adjusted in 2007 when new EU member countries were expanded from ten to twelve, when Bulgaria and Romania became members.

The funds are now 10.4 bill NOK May 2004- April 2009 and cover support for 12 new EU

member states in addition to Greece, Spain and Portugal. Norway contributes with 97% of the funding.

The object is contribution to reducing economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area through projects in various priority areas, including sustainable development, conservation of cultural heritage, human resources development, strengthening of civil society and regional development. Only institutions and organizations in the beneficiary EU countries can apply for EEA funds, but the Norwegian institutions and organizations can benefit from the scheme by engaging in various forms of project cooperation.

### **More information about the project**

A lot of information on the project is available, both in Spanish and English. The project has a website, <http://www.balanceequilibrio.net/>, more information can be found at the homepage of KS <http://www.ks.no/EEASpain>

