

# «*DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GENDERS*»



## Needs Analysis for Gender Trainers

### Survey Report

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Education and Culture

**Socrates**  
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## “Dialogue Between the Genders” - Project and Partners

This survey is part of the Grundtvig 1 project “Dialogue between the genders”.

This project aimed at designing a training course for female and male trainers and facilitators of adult learning with the objective to help them to fully address issues surrounding gender equalities within their own personal and professional context via experiential and reflective learning.

Having a better understanding of gender issues in general and an increased awareness of the own gender identity, trainers will have the opportunity to explore and to understand the roots of the inequalities, stereotypes and prejudices within inter gender communication.

The training offers trainers a safe and confident space to address difficult or conflictive issues in their professional work with clients, seminar participants, learners etc. In order to improve the communication between the genders and finally to implement real and sustainable changes on an individual level and within the professional sphere.

Sub-products of the projects are:

- A background study of gender trainings regarding European gender equality policies and an analysis of gender awareness trainings being currently run.
- A needs analysis among trainers defining their training needs on issues of gender and personal development.
- A guide for trainers and facilitators who participate in the courses including: educational strategies that contribute to better communication and equality of opportunities and co-responsibility, a series of exercises and tools for facilitators
- A public web page including documents, articles, reports and case studies

The partnership is composed by 6 main organisations:

- El Arte de Ser Persona, Barcelona, ([www.elartede.es](http://www.elartede.es))
- Espais per a la Igualtat, Barcelona ([www.espaisbcn.org](http://www.espaisbcn.org) )
- Dissens e.V./genderWerk., Berlin ([www.genderwerk.de](http://www.genderwerk.de) / [www.dissens.de](http://www.dissens.de) )
- Academy of Humanities and Economics (WSHE), Lodz, Poland ([/www.wshe.lodz.pl](http://www.wshe.lodz.pl) )
- Institute of Creative Proceedings (IPT), Lodz, Poland ([www.ipt.pl](http://www.ipt.pl) )
- Presence in action partnership (PIA), Totnes, United Kingdom

With the support of other members:

- The city council of Sitges, Spain
- The Katholische Hochschule für Sozialwesen Berlin (KHSB)
- Youth Welfare Department of the city council of Berlin/Marzahn-Hellersdorf

## Introduction and Methodology

To develop and design the training course concept, “Women & Men in Dialogue: An Experiential Course in Gender Issues for Trainers”, the project partners in their countries conducted a needs analysis to be able to adequately address the actual needs of trainers within the field of personal development in gender training.

This qualitative survey addresses the personal and emotional issues and difficulties for gender trainers/facilitators that arise in their work with groups of adults and adolescents of both sexes.

The survey analysed data that was collected through local interviews in the 4 countries (Spain, United Kingdom, Poland and Germany), with the help of a questionnaire<sup>1</sup>, jointly created by all partners.

Each partner has carried out between 5 and 10 interviews in their respective country (with a total of 31 interviews) using a mix of different methods (face to face, telephonic interview, distribution of the questionnaire through electronic format). Balance between male and female interviewees has been respected.

The chosen interview partners were gender trainers or trainers who have experience in working with “gender issues”.

The questionnaire was designed to focus on the personal experience and emotions of trainers when facing and/or addressing difficult and conflictive situations regarding gender issues with the clients they work with (learners, colleagues...) and within their personal life. Our limited and informal prior survey had shown that many trainers have difficulties to address some of the emotional and conflictive aspects in situations with difficult “gender content”.

In summary crucial issues at stake were conflicts, tensions, anger, discontent, uncertainties for example:

- related to biographical experiences with own parents, life partners and children,
- private situations with the one close friends’ parents, life partners and children,
- in relation with with close groups of same sex (jokes about the other sex...)
- in the professional working situation (internal formal or informal hierarchies, mobbing)

These situations can provoke ‘resistances’ and ‘blocks’ in the trainer, influencing the quality of their training and even leading to stress and burn-out.

The different questions aim to explore gender trainers’ inner feelings and behaviour when facing conflictive situations in order to point out what special training might help to address these difficulties more effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> See the model of the questionnaire in annex

## **Needs analysis results**

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Here we describe the results of the Needs Analysis theme by theme.

### ***The disparity of background and approaches***

The absence of common educational or skills based criteria for gender trainers is perfectly outlined by the survey. A professional profile is extremely difficult to draw up, backgrounds and education being very different.

Two approaches are the most represented: psychology and personal development experience and academic/social background.

This division deeply influences approach and methodology, attitude and behaviour of the trainers.

### ***The diversity of gender trainings objectives***

The survey shows clearly the wide diversity that the gender training field covers.

Influenced by the diversity of background and experience, but also by the target and the diversity of learners, the objectives of trainings performed by the interviewed trainers go clearly from simple gender awareness to a more personal development issue that includes the issue of self esteem:

#### **1. Sensitising / awareness**

- Sensitisation for the social category gender, making the gender stereotypes visible
- Sensitisation and consciousness about the relevance of the category gender
- Sensitisation for gender in organisation within running organisational gender mainstreaming consultancy
- Own sensitisation of personal gender role attributes

#### **2. Knowledge transfer**

- Knowledge transfer, e.g. theoretical approaches, empirical and professional knowledge/information out of gender research
- Interlinkage between gender and structural, social, geographical, ethnic circumstances (intersectionality approach)
- Transfer of gender background/aspects into the professional collaboration with the aim of the equity of the genders
- Knowledge transfer, e.g. for gender budgeting, gender concepts
- Training to better reflect the background of gender relations
- Imparting information about the aim of gender mainstreaming and its main goals in the own professional work

#### **3. Implementation**

- Internal in the organisation: To mobilise collaboration within the own organisation as an experiential learning field

- External at a community level: gender audit and gender policies implementation
- Implementation into the practical work of the participants
- Gender mainstreaming and gender sensitisation
- Acknowledgement that gender relations are changeable and sensitisation of participants for their gender stereotypes
- Interrelated learning of the genders about potential aims in gender mainstreaming processes

#### **4. Reflection**

- To learn to play with dichotomies; to question, learn and deal with gender roles
- To educate the acceptance of “otherness” and the fact, that gender is being constructed
- Reflection and destruction of gender oriented stereotypes and violence

#### **5. Personal development**

- Increasing self-esteem
- Transformation of power relations between men and women
- Pacifistic relationship between the genders
- Relationship issues
- Openness to other people, cultures and ethnicities
- Reflection on sexuality

#### ***The different areas of work***

The trainers interviewed work in different areas such as ONG's, institutional and public sector, private business, personal development training field (coaching, supervision, mediation). The objectives of gender training in these contexts are an important element of differentiation between trainers regarding their emotional commitment and personal difficulties.

Trainers working within the public sector and with public sector institutions, for example, experience serious difficulties in dealing with emotional and conflictive situations within hierarchical and formal administrative framework. Gender trainings in public sector often remain on a social dimension and it is difficult for the trainer to solve conflictive emotional situations with participants only with “sociological” inputs, as statistics or information demonstrating that gender inequalities are a social reality.

#### ***Training in Gender issues is a source of conflictive situations***

The majority of interviewed gender trainers stressed the existence of tension times, difficult and conflictive situations when performing trainings.

These difficulties can come from:

- Learners blocks and resistance

This happens especially when participants have done some self assessment inquiries and were then confronted with experiences from their past biography which were emotionally difficult to handle.

Resistances happen more frequently with men participants. For men, the gender theme is often new and frightening. The gender theme and gender equality can seem a danger for their position and power in the company or organisation and for others a huge and impossible requirement for change with little support from other men.

- Negation, minimization, “neutralisation” of gender issue, incomprehension or lack of interest

Trainers often experience situations of negation of the gender issues. Both, male and female participants, often say, that they have no problems with gender (in-)equality. In their comprehension all are in the same equal position as it is, in the end, written by law.

This often places the trainer in a very uncomfortable role of trying to convince rather than to train or accompany, and trainees often react with irritation.

A conflictive situation may also arise from the extrusion of one’s own gender identity.

This situation happens as well with younger participants who assume frequently that “girls and boys situation are the same” because they have the same legal rights.

Difficulties appear in situations of a low level of commitment of participants to the course topic.

Some trainers emphasized the frequent situation, that managers oblige their employees to attend the training without really having or motivating their interest.

- Different or “unacceptable” participants’ beliefs

Some trainers experienced difficult situations resulting from intolerance (regarding division of power, sexual orientation, etc...), misogyny and even justification of gender violence.

Female trainers outlined the fact that it is difficult to keep a “professional” distance when for example female participants are being “attacked” with sexist arguments or jokes.

- Emotional commitment with the other sex

Some male trainers stress the impossibility to escape from “feeling love” with mistreated women and to feel overwhelmed and humiliated with anger against the aggressors.

These trainers also express the difficulty to always have to show empathy and respect especially in gender violence cases. It is difficult for them to be obliged to listen in silence and to respect the existing and real suffering of a perpetrator of gender violence.

- Impossibility to address the conflict at a meta level because the participants are too dependent on their cultural group so they can’t step out of this to question it.

### ***The disparity of methodologies – strategies – reactions to handle difficult situations***

There is a wide range of strategies to handle conflictive situations corresponding to the diversity of gender trainers interviewed. A clear tendency can not be outlined. Related to their professional background and target groups, some trainers prefer to talk about methodological elements. Others focus more on special skills they need.

1. To keep a distance, to not be involved

The majority of the trainers want to and try to remain detached from any emotional involvement as it would prevent them from being objective and from being professionally efficient. For most of them, to react at a personal and emotional level makes them feel discontent.

Strategies for them are then to:

- avoid personal aspects of the conflict to replace it in a social or symbolic aspect (to avoid all type of emotions: negative or positive ones, confrontation, to use common examples, statistics, sociological survey, etc...)
- contain, to give "space" to not foment the conflict, being really careful to not turn it up into a personal attack
- give responsibility to the learner to refuse to participate to any exercise they don't feel comfortable with.

2. To be personally and emotionally involved

At the contrary another tendency for trainers is to be personally involved and to use themselves as a reference for concretion and to reduce generalisation.

Here, trainers use their personal "transparency" to create a safe context. If used with critical analyse, the personal experience can, for them, be a good training strategy which generates empathy within the group and makes participants feel closer and safer.

In situations of conflict, trainers can also choose to share their own emotions with the group and invite the participants to do so.

3. To look for /to use the resistance, the critical situation or the difficulty

In this case, trainers make the conflictive situation an integral part of the training process and training methodology. Conflictive situations and inner conflicts are constructively acknowledged as a starting point of the transformative process.

Resistances or conflicts mean something which the learner has to explore; they are symbols for confrontation and potential for change. Fear can also be constructive and inspiring.

On the contrary, other trainers regard this approach as questionable and think it can be damaging to aim at confrontation without specific preparation of the trainee (taking into account that trainer only stay for a limited time and then the learner has to handle the situation on his or her own or/and with their colleagues).

4. Gender Reflection

- Facilitating reflection on what has happened to help trainees to explore themselves and their own beliefs
- Breaking the gender stereotypes using dynamics that interchange male and female roles between the participants.

5. To develop special skills

- Understanding: to try to understand the opinions and to detect personal needs.
- Showing respect for different beliefs and not to be judgemental

- Confidence: Being confident in the beliefs and values that they want to transmit. This confidence for some trainers makes the difference between training and trying to convince
  - Reactive: to address any conflict at the very beginning, spontaneously
  - Flexibility: to orient debates and discussions to address the issues
  - Positive attitude, sense of humour, capacity to break the ice
  - Self control in case of crisis
  - Empathetic with the different arguments
6. To integrate specific methodological elements in training
- Training with a trainer from the opposite sex. For many trainers, a mixed gender trainer team most of the time guarantees a positive regulation in gender training.
  - Going from simple (daily situations etc...) to the global and meta level. Addressing the meta levels of exercises and dynamics attracts the participant's attention, gives them a sense of satisfaction and helps to decrease their resistance.
  - To choose to resolve the conflict individually rather than involving the whole group or on the contrary to chose to talk openly in the group of any conflict
  - To de-construct with the group the meaning and the objective of the game/dynamic.
  - To know the exercises or dynamics very well – and to have experienced them beforehand personally as a participant.
  - To keep an attitude that the participant is never guilty and has the right to resist
  - To use Neuro Lingusitic Programing or Transactional analysis (to help to look for different ways of dealing with of variety of behaviours and emotions
7. Decreasing trainer professional expectation
- Some trainer said that they have to reduce their expectations, which often are not coherent to the participant's reality, and so to begin with very small and simple issues.
8. To escape and avoid the problem
- A few trainers confess having felt insecure at the beginning of their career, because of their lack of experience. This insecurity made them choose to not address conflictive situations.

***Personal or emotional responses in trainers:***

- Discouragement – A lot of trainers speak about situations they have to face “again and again”, and describe their work like “fighting against wind mills”.
- Defensive attitudes (for example in the case west/east Germany).
- Lack of tolerance, impatience, anger or/and aggression
- Discontent
- Embarrassment or shame for feeling these emotions and/or for not being able to handle the conflict
- Insecurity – which can be related to obvious resistance from learners

- Impulses to escape, avoidance if there is a threat of violent behaviour
- Fear to give any personal response: the trainer places him or herself as a third party, without any emotional involvement – feels danger in any emotional involvement

Compared with this, few trainers experience opposite kind of personal responses:

- Serenity, openness, calm
- Total capacity to treat the conflict

**Conflicts result from diverse causes:**

The different causes of conflictive situations established by trainers are:

1. Cultural and religious background

- The dominant culture that maintains and reinforces the acceptance of pre-established social gender roles
- Religion is a serious cause of conflictive gender situations.
- Some German trainers face difficulties with participants from eastern Germany, especially when being from the opposite sex. Many tensions come from existing judgements that put the western trainer into a position of knowing “more and best” but also from the fact that, according to some trainers, the demarcation line between east and West Germany still exists with regard to gender socialization.
- Some difficult situations result as well from working with communities with strong cultural identity, such as the Romany community for example.
- Some trainers mentioned the level of education and the financial situation as sources of conflicts (resistance from more “bourgeois” groups).
- The geographic situation of living of the participants
- Age is also often mentioned: Some trainers experience difficulties to work with elderly people who often are resistant regarding gender issues and in participating in group dynamics. Regarding the particular case of Germany, the criteria of age accentuates the demarcation line between East and West Germany.

2. Participants motivation

- Some trainers articulate difficulties to work with participants who do not really want to attend the training or even mentally refuse to do. This often happens when it the organization obliges its employees to participate.

3. Personal emotional dimension of the theme

Addressing gender issues implicitly questions one’s own life and praxis, with difficulties.

Difficulties can emerge from one’s own emotional disharmony: for example unconscious conflict with sexual identity.

***Influence of personal experience regarding these emotional and conflictive situations on attitude or performance***

Only three trainers have answered negatively. For them the personal experience does not influence their way of training.

The rest of trainers interviewed outlined clearly the existence of an influence on their attitude and trainings performance. For them, personal experience:

- Helps trainers to be more alert and better prepared. Personal experience is always fruitful
- Helps them to know their limits
- Give force, more self confidence, calmness and openness
- Gives them some structural apprenticeship (process design, strategy, etc..)
- Gives them some methodological apprenticeship (dynamic, exercises, etc...)
- Gives them some existential apprenticeship (feelings, values, life)

***Recent emotional state of the trainers when facing these difficulties:***

When being asked about this, the majority of trainer's answers are:

- motivated and animated
- capacity control of situation
- feeling of improvement and personal development
- centred and calm

But in some cases it can also be:

- Discouragement, often when the trainer experiences too many situations where she/he feels that she/he is in a position of convincing and that the content of the discourse is more "listened" than "assimilated". It can also be boring and tiring for trainers to experience always the same argumentations, stereotypes and pictures.
- Weakness, impulse to escape,

***Kind of supportive professional structure used to handle these situations:***

It is seem to be important for trainers to have a space of discussion where they can freely talk about their fears, frustrations, resentments and emotions experienced during their training activities.

All of them use various types of support from informal exchanges with work colleagues to formal therapy.

- Group support
  - Informal support with work colleagues, feed back meetings
  - conferences, European seminars and exchanges with peer colleagues, networking
  - workshops

- Professional support
  - Individual therapy
  - supervision
  - coaching

***Kind of additional training likely to help:***

In general, trainers look more for didactical and structural support and resources to solve conflicts. They often prefer short format workshop than longer trainings (mainly because, as some trainers have underlined it, there is little offer of further development training for gender trainers). Against this background their training preferences lay in the fields of:

- workshops on personal empowerment, leadership, creativity, conflict resolution
- psychological oriented trainings
- art therapy (to help to be conscious of reality in relation with others)
- development of trainer mental and physical resources (through body exercises, work on rhythm, etc..)
- personal development workshops
- socio political trainings

***A great interest in integrating personal development in train-the trainer concept***

Very few trainers consider the integration of personal development aspect in train-the trainer concept as irrelevant. In contrary to this, the majority of trainers interviewed is of the opinion, that personal development is an added value, even vital element for their professional development. This is mainly because gender represents a theme which unquestioningly is highly connected with the personal situation and the process of personal transformation.

Personal development is seen as likely to help:

- to develop the capacity to act in conflictive situations during the training
- to provide new tool and resources
- to explore and discover new fields
- to increase awareness and to make richer personal and professional contact
- to sharpen consciousness and comprehension
- trainers who have a more academic and theoretical background to understand the more personal and emotional aspects

## Conclusion and recommendations

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This survey clearly outlines the reality of the diversity within gender trainers regarding backgrounds and experiences, approaches and methodologies. It reveals the diversity of conflictive situations in trainings and the variability of trainer's styles and skills to deal with them. This situation makes this training field really complex. A further more extensive analysis would be necessary to explore more deeply the differences in gender awareness skills and needs, e.g. training in different policy fields. This is important especially where trainers are confronted with the diverse gender biased backgrounds of policy fields, organisational cultures and different stages of Gender Mainstreaming processes in institutions and organisations. The different gendered ideologies, motivations and attitudes found in the target group seems to suggest a need for a further exploration of gender trainers orientation and use of personal development aspects in gender awareness and sensitisation training and other Gender Mainstreaming methods.

The different strategies used by trainers when facing conflictive situations may underline the different levels of personal and emotional development of the trainers themselves. They also show the diversity of training realities in different thematic fields, structural and organisational circumstances as well as various target groups trainers are confronted within their work. This is especially mentioned by trainers who are already very conscious about their role as subject and object for projection at the same time.

The emotional implication of the trainer is an important source of divergence between trainers. The fact that gender training touches a subjective part of the trainer is not always admitted.

Obviously, the diversity of conflictive situations in training put a high demand on trainers to act in different situations with different methods. This challenge indicates a general support of personal and gender awareness for trainers, who are not yet very familiar with gender awareness issues as well as for trainers, who are already experienced in this field.

In summary, the survey points out that:

- a real need for trainers exist for empowerment in conflictive situations within training
- an interest of trainers exists for personal development training as a valuable support for personal as well as professional development.

### Final conclusions after designing and running the training

The diversity of conflicts, approaches, skills and responses of trainers when facing conflictive gender situations found in this Needs Analysis was born out in our experience throughout the project. Both ourselves as course designers and the participants we worked with moved in the tension fields of :

- sometimes finding our and themselves aggressive, stressed, out of their depth, with emotional buttons pushed, wanting to escape, resorting to defensive strategies and so on
- and at other times, deeply appreciated and benefited from supportive, respectful spaces for reflection and sharing of the difficult emotional aspects of this work.

## Annex : Questionnaire

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1. What are the objectives of the gender trainings you perform?
2. What experience do you have of difficult emotional and conflictive situations with your clients and course participants and how do you deal with them?
3. What kinds of situations with your clients cause these difficult emotional and conflictive situations (gender different cultures, ages, economic differences, north – south, east – west, your own emotional or ‘political’ position, etc...)?

Please specify:

4. What kind of **personal responses** do you experience in these difficult emotional and conflictive situations with your clients (avoidance, impulses to escape, embarrassment, fighting impulses etc...)? and how do these emotions and thoughts help / hinder you?

Please specify:

5. What are your recent strategies to deal with those situations?

Please specify:

6. Does the personal experience of those difficult emotional and conflictive situations influence your attitude or performance in further training?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify:

7. Based upon these experiences what is your recent emotional state as a trainer when facing these difficult situations (burn-out, motivated, skilled, empowered, fear, helplessness, weakness...)?

Please specify in a short expression:

8. What kinds of supportive professional structures do you already have as positive resources to handle these situations (colleagues, supervision, therapy...) and, do you already use them?

9. Beyond this, what kind of additional training support may be able to help you (structural, mental, psychological, didactical etc...)?

Please specify:

10. Do you think that addressing and integrating the aspect of personal development into a train-the-trainer concept, in general, would increase the effectiveness of gender training?

Yes

No

Please specify in short expression what benefits or not:

11. Is there anything beyond the discussed topics that you would like to add?

Yes

No