

The European Employment Strategy and national employment policies. Addressing the employment and gender challenges of the Knowledge Based Society.

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1. Introduction

Karen Sjørup

This report is the final report of work-package two of the Wellknow project. The project is funded by the fifth framework programme (5FP) of the European Union as a part of the thematic programme Improving the human research potential and the socio-economic knowledge base.

The main objective of the project is to provide comparative and multidisciplinary analyses of the transition towards the Knowledge Based Society, KBS, from employment and gender perspectives. The project will seek answers to the question whether knowfare policies that promote investment in individuals and social cohesion reflect the main characteristics of divergent welfare models (e.g. Continental and Nordic) or impose a convergence around a European approach towards the KBS. The empirical results of the project will be used to outline a European approach that promotes employment and social cohesion, especially, gender equality. Moreover, indicators, ranks and benchmarks will be developed that capture policy goals of the European Employment Strategy, EES, and the progress towards the KBS from a gender perspective. Finally, the project will provide insights into and policy options of how to facilitate transition towards a competitive KBS with more and better jobs as well as greater gender equality.

Work-package two investigates at a cross-national level the implementation and political implications of the European Employment Strategy (EES) primarily concerning the implications of the Knowledge Based Society (KBS) and the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. Five EU member states are represented in the research: Finland, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain. One new member state, Hungary, is presented in the study, although this country hasn't been obliged to follow the general procedures of the EES until the year 2004. The last country represented in the research, Iceland, as an EEA country aligns with the EES to some extends but does not follow the general procedures.

At the national level the general procedure of the EES is the annual National Action Plans for Employment (NAP) that each country submits to the Commission. This NAP should be produced in accordance with overall targets set by the European Treaty, the Council of Ministers at the annual summits, the four pillars until 2003 the fundament of the EES, and the guidelines set by the Commission.

In this work-package the annual NAPs produced in the years 1998-2003 are the point of the departure for the cross- national analysis. The analysis has been carried out through three different paths of investigation:

Firstly the overall principles of the EES as a political strategy especially concerning KBS and GM policies are analysed. Especially the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) being the methodological framework of the EES as a policy process is discussed and investigated primarily through the research work already carried through on the subject. Moreover the 2002 evaluation of the EES initiated by the Commission and carried out by a number of researchers in the member states is used of a point of departure for the analysis. This analysis is presented in chapter 2 in this report. Lilja Mósesdóttir and Birna Thorbergsdóttir, Bifrost Business School in Iceland carried out this chapter.

Secondly the NAPs 1998, 2000 and 2003 in the participating member states are analysed through a set of indicators decided by the partners. This set of indicators primarily deals with the overall questions of the Wellknow study: How is the knowledge based society (KBS) strategy identified at the Lisbon Summit in 2000 reflected in the NAPs. And how are the aims of gender mainstreaming integrated into the NAPs. The methods in this chapter are quantitative methods by means of the programme Adobe Distiller systematising the inputs from each of the many NAPs (18 in all) included in the study. Seppo Roivas supported by Pertti Koistinen carried out this chapter,

Thirdly the NAPS and the national implications of the EES are investigated through national reports carried out by the participating partners in the Wellknow study, both the member state representatives and the partners from the two hitherto non-member states. The national reports focussed on the political process behind the NAPs: Openness and democracy in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, the integrating of social partners, NGOs, Women's Councils and other partners in the process. Moreover the process of integrating the two above mentioned overall questions of the Wellknow study: Integration of the KBS strategy and of the Gender Mainstreaming strategy (GM). In chapter 4 of this report the overall analysis of these national reports are presented. This overall analysis is a qualitative analysis based on the overall indicators decided by the partners. Karen Sjørup, supported by Kenneth Reinicke,, carried out this chapter.

The individual national reports are presented as separate entities as annexes to this report. The Finnish national report was carried out by Seppo Roivas. The Austrian national report was carried out by Margit Leuthold and Ute Behning, the Danish national report was carried out by Kenneth Reinicke and Karen Sjørup, the Dutch national report was carried out by Chantal Remedy and Joop Schippers, the Hungarian national report was carried out by Teréz Laky and Laszlo Neumann, and the Icelandic report was carried out by Lilja Mósesdóttir.

1.1. The EES as a policy process

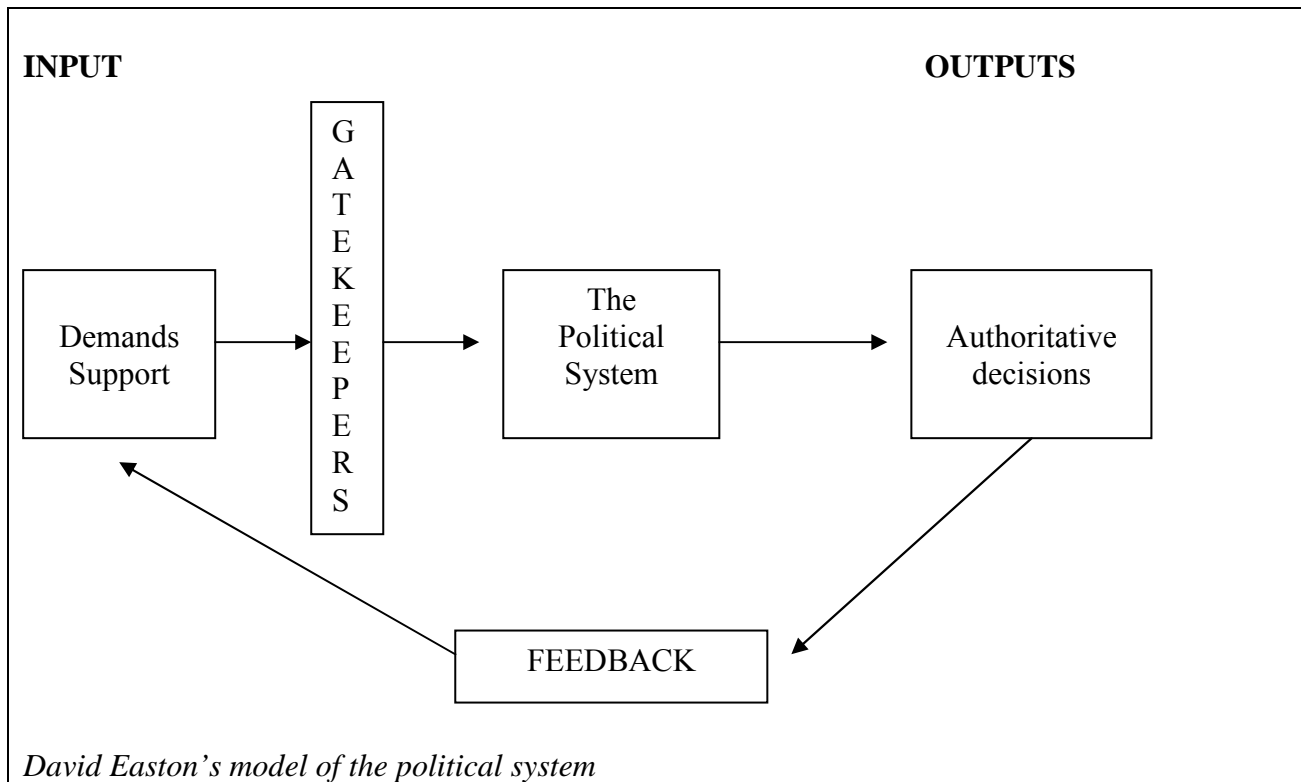
The EES is one of the very first attempts to carry out global or at least trans-national policy processes in the sense of creating a joint policy strategy in a large number of national states. The policy is named 'soft policy' as it is at one time intending to set joint targets for each country and leaving space open for national processes and decision.

Each country must respond to targets, guidelines and recommendations but is free to enforce them in their national traditions and co-operation patterns. In accordance with this the question is asked in chapter 3 whether the EES and the NAPs are rather a rhetorical exercise than a policy strategy closely connected to and creating social facts.

It is certain from an overall perspective that the national states face huge difficulties in aligning to this new policy processes. Each country built up a political system and a bureaucratic organisation to deal with policies as a response to national problems following national patterns political discourse with fixed roles played by a number of different parties. This strategy in many respects differs from a 'normal' policy process as it is carried out in the representative democracy of a nation state.

David Easton (Østerud 1995) illustrated the political system as a box with inputs of demands and support and outputs of decisions and actions. The results of decisions are in turn influencing

demand and support, through mechanisms of feedback. This model influenced a generation of political scientists in Europe and is still the point of departure for the basic structuring in the field.



In the policy process of a 'normal' policy preparing and enforcing procedure the demands will typically be the demands from a political party, social partners or civic society, who will seek support to start a political process to solve a complex of political or social problems as unemployment. The political system of the box will typical prepare documents and a proposal for law, the parliamentary organs will make a number of readings of the proposal and will eventually come out with a decision and rules and regulations in order to enforce the act.

In the EU the democratic process of preparing new strategies, guidelines and directives takes place in much more closed fora with the Council of the European Union representing the national governments in annual summits deciding on overall strategies, the European Commission preparing guidelines and directives to be decided in the European Parliament elected by the citizens of EU states. The institutional building of the EU has caused continuous debate, fights and battles on competencies. The relationship between the Commission and the Council of Ministers reflect the relations between supra-national and national competence. A relationship in which the national parliamentary bodies play only a secondary role. The policies enforced by the EU can be divided into hard policy, the directives, and 'soft' policies as the EES and other overall strategies decided by the Council and acted out by the Commission.

These differences between EU policy processes and well-established national processes creates a distance between the political actors active at national levels and professionals that might be

shortened as the national processes adjust to the EU policies and strategies. There is however also a danger that the EU 'soft law' measures will just be regarded as empty rhetoric that is not sensitive to the national problems and measures to deal with these problems. In this report we examine the European Employment Strategy in order to investigate whether this strategy is actually at a national level working as a joint strategy accepted and acknowledged by national actors or whether it is unknown, neglected or rejected.

2. European Policies facilitating and managing Change towards the Knowledge Based Society and Gender Equality

Lilja Mósesdóttir and Birna Thorbergsdóttir¹

2.1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, the EU has extended its co-ordination role by setting common social and economic, employment and social objectives (e.g. concerning employment) and by providing the member states² with a methodology to achieve these objectives. The common methodology promoted by the EU is the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) involving policy co-ordination, targets, evaluations and non-binding recommendations. Moreover, the EU has sought to strengthen the effectiveness of its co-ordination role by linking together the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPGs), the European Employment Strategy (EES) and the Social Inclusion Process in order to achieve its ten-year strategic goal set at Lisbon (2000) to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and social cohesion. There are clear indications that the transition, in the member states, towards the Knowledge Based Society increases the risk of skill gaps and social exclusion while gender gaps remain substantial. The EU urges the member states to tackle these risks and gaps by modernising the Europe Social Model. However, several social models exist in the member states and these have facilitated various balances of employment, job quality and social equality. The reference to one social model (ESM) when many models are actually present within the community signals a growing interest of the EU to pressure the member states towards convergence not only in the economic sphere but also in the social one.

In the following, we will evaluate how the transition towards the Knowledge Based Society and gender equality is being shaped by political choices made at the supranational level (see discussion in Serrano Pascual and Mósesdóttir (eds) 2003) by studying the EES (European Employment Strategy) and its links with economic and social policies. The first three sections of this chapter contain state-of-the-art descriptions of the EES, based on reports and documents produced at the request of the EU. The focus of our discussion will be on how the strategy tackles gender (in)equalities and the move towards the Knowledge Based Society. In the first section, we will describe the structure and content of the EES from its introduction in 1997. A review of EU's impact evaluation of the first five years of the strategy will be given in section two. This evaluation generated important changes in the content of the EES in 2003 which should increase its effectiveness and coherence with other policy areas. In section three, these changes will be examined and explained. In the following sections, the role of the EES in shaping the transition

¹ Birna Thorbergsdóttir assisted with the writing of sections 1, 2 and 3. We would like to thank the members of the WELLKNOW group for their helpful discussions and comments on drafts distributed to them in November 2003 and again in early February 2004.

² In this paper, the term "member states" refers only to EU15 as the analysis focuses on the period before May 2004 when 10 new member states joined the EU.

towards the Knowledge Based Society and gender equality will be analysed in the light of several evaluation studies made by non-governmental expert groups such as Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE) and groups formed by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) as well as other relevant academic research.

2.2. The EES – Structure and Contents

The EU implemented the EES at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit (November 1997) following the introduction of a new title on employment by the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). According to the Amsterdam Treaty, the role of the EES was not to achieve harmonisation of policies, as has been the case with monetary policy, but to facilitate convergence of employment objectives through Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) or what has been termed as the Luxembourg process. The OMC involves establishing common guidelines for policy (Employment Guidelines, EGs), regular reporting by the member states on implementation (National Action Plans, NAPs), peer group reviews and assessments, leading to specific recommendations, and, consequently, to the refining of the common guidelines (see Behning, Foden and Serrano 2001:9-10; Caprile, Cachon and Montagut 2002:4). According to the Commission, the OMC is a soft-law-based approach based on a five key principles: subsidiarity³, convergence, management by objectives, country surveillance and an integrated approach (labour market policies extended to social, educational, tax, enterprise and regional policies). The OMC is designed to help member states develop their own policies progressively, spread best practice and to achieve greater convergence towards the main EU goals. This method of regulation requires the involvement of many policy makers, experts and actors at both the EU level and the national level (the NAPs). Moreover, recommendations are made by the European Council based on the peer-review of the NAPs made by expert groups (see webpage on the EES http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/index_en.htm 1).

The annual EGs set common priorities for member states' employment policies. Until 2003, the employment priorities of the EGs were structured into the four pillars:

1) *improving employability*

- active labour market policy, preventing long-term unemployment, tax-benefit systems, active ageing, lifelong learning, inclusive labour market

2) *developing entrepreneurship and job creation*

- business environment, service sector, taxation on labour

3) *encouraging adaptability of business and their employees*

- modernise organisation of work, investment in human resources, balance between flexibility and security

4) *strengthening equal opportunities for women and men*

- gender mainstreaming in all policies, gender gaps, reconciliation of work and family life

³ The EU is to act only when its aims can be better achieved at European rather than at national level (Kleinman 2002:90).

Since 1998, every member state has been asked to describe how the EGs are put into practice nationally by drawing up an annual NAP. The NAPs include both reporting and planning documents since they present annual progress and measures planned for the coming year. Expert groups at EU level evaluate the NAPs (through so-called “peer-reviews”) and report to the European Council that uses the evaluation reports to make recommendations to each country. The European Council adopted the first set of recommendations in February 2000. The recommendations are not sanctions but give member states guidance on how to improve their employment performance in line with the EGs. The member states have to respond to the recommendations in their NAPs. In the short period since the adoption of the recommendations, there have not been any significant changes. Annually, the Council and the Commission publish the Joint Employment Report, which describes the employment situation in the Community, the implementation of the guidelines based on the peer-review analyses of the NAPs and the main policy messages for the next annual guidelines. This structure of the EES therefore delivers a rolling programme of yearly planning, monitoring, examination and re-adjustment (see information provided by the Commission at the web-site:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/index_en.htm,

2.2.1. Equal opportunities

The objective of equal opportunities has been centrally positioned in the EGs as one of the four pillars. In 1998, the commitment to gender mainstreaming (GM) of all policies under the four pillars was added to the guidelines to improve the design of policies and measures to promote equal opportunities and women’s employment. This change in the EGs implies that the EU had adopted a two-track strategy involving, on the one hand, special measures to improve the position of women and, on the other hand, integration of the gender perspective into all policies and measures implemented to improve the employment situation within the EU (gender mainstreaming). Moreover, specific targets have been set to promote gender equality. The female employment rate in the EU is to reach 60% by the year 2010 (Lisbon Council 2000) and by the same year (Barcelona Council 2002) the member states are to provide child care for at least 90% of all children between the age of three and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age.

2.2.2. Knowledge Based Society

The Lisbon European Council (2000) added further impetus to the EES by linking the strategy to the broader economic and social agenda of the EU (Kok 2003:13). The Council set a ten-year strategy to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. In addition, the Nice Council (2000) introduced the issue of quality of work as the guiding thread of the Social Policy Agenda, and in particular quality of work as an important objective of the EES (European Commission 2002a:6). As a means to achieve the ten-year strategy, the Lisbon Council recommended new or strengthened priorities on, for example, skill development and occupational and geographical mobility which were reflected in the EGs for 2001 (Kok 2003:13). According to the EGs for 2001 and 2002, the key challenges facing the EU concerned the promotion of the transition to a knowledge-based economy, the reaping of the benefits of the information and communication technologies, and the modernising of the European Social Model by investing in people and combating social exclusion and promoting equal opportunities.

2.3. Five years of EES - Evaluation

An impact evaluation of the first five years of the EES was undertaken in 2002. The evaluation was a joint project carried out by the Commission and the member states. The member states completed national studies which followed a common framework of themes. The Commission added a macroeconomic analysis and an overall analysis of national reports, summarised in the synthesis report “Impact Evaluation of the European Employment Strategy” which was based on technical background papers. In addition, the Commission set out in its communication “Taking stock of the five years of the European Employment Strategy” the historical context of the EES and the political conclusions which the Commission draws from the impact evaluation exercise.

2.3.1. Shortcomings

In its evaluation report, the Commission recognises the following difficulties of measuring the full impact of the EES. Firstly, the period under consideration is short or only 5 years compared to the long-term nature of structural reforms. Secondly, the issues tackled by the EES are complex and there is a lack of exhaustive national evaluation material (European Commission 2002b:3). Thirdly, the first five years of the EES have also been characterized by structural employment improvements or by strong economic growth, intense job creation and substantial decline in unemployment. In the five-year period, the total number of jobs increased by slightly more than 10 million of which 6 million were taken by women and unemployment declined by more than 4 million. At the same time, the main objectives of the EES were to raise the employment rate, reduce unemployment and increase labour market adaptability (European Commission 2002b:14). Hence, it is difficult to assess precisely how much of this result is directly related to the implementation of EES on the one hand or to favourable economic conditions on the other hand.

2.3.2. Overall impact

In the evaluation report, the Commission contends that the policy impact of the EES resulted in the following effects: (1) a stronger priority for employment at the national level; (2) a clear convergence towards successful employment strategies; (3) more policies than traditional labour market policies were affected by the EES; (4) a new framework for policy making (European Commission 2002b:11-14). In its Communication, the Commission claims “...there have been significant changes in national employment policies, with a clear convergence towards the common EU objectives set out in the EES policy guidelines” (p.2). This process of convergence towards successful employment strategies was supported by the recommendations. At the start of EES, labour market policies were most numerous under the “employment” pillar. The EES has also been influenced by other related policies such as the social inclusion and lifelong learning and education policies. The EES has also influenced national policies on equal opportunities either through the setting up of institutions or through spreading of practices (e.g. gender impact assessment) (p.13). The Commission concludes in its evaluation that the EES has over the years shifted its objective from focussing on long term unemployment towards a long term approach of access to employment and employment creation (European Commission 2002b:11-12). Moreover, the political message given by the Commission in its Communication is that there is a need for better governance or to improve the integration of the EES with national, regional and local labour market policy in the member states in order to improve the delivery of the employment strategy (European Commission 2003a:16-17).

2.3.3. The four pillars

Measures undertaken by the member states under EGs' four pillars were also evaluated. The Commission argued that there was a clear convergence towards key principles of activation and prevention, albeit the member states were moving at different speeds (European Commission 2002a:9). At the start of the EES, the member states regarded employability as the main cure for the unemployed. This concept was progressively widened to cover the whole life cycle. The member states have succeeded in reducing long-term unemployment, but a search for greater effectiveness of measures appears necessary. The tax and the benefit systems in the member states have undergone reforms (the former more than the latter but disincentives remain and the promotion of active ageing requires increased emphasis. Although the EES has boosted lifelong learning policies, the Commission has stated that a risk of increasing gaps in education and training still exists. Greater efforts are, therefore, needed to improve access by disadvantaged people (people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, immigrants) to the labour market. In the EES, entrepreneurship is regarded as the key to job creation. The Commission argued in its Communication that there were indications of positive employment effects, of a better business environment and that the employment effect of taxation measures can still be increased. The main policy developments in the area of adaptability were related to more flexible types of employment relationships (e.g. part-time work), and more flexible working time arrangements to reduce the need for overtime (annual reference periods of working time). The broader scope of work organisation did not receive sufficient attention and the member states need to achieve a better balance between flexibility and security (European Commission 2002a:10-14).

2.3.4. Equal opportunities

The EGs advocated a gender mainstreaming approach, the tackling of gender gaps and the reconciliation of work and family life. The Commission states in its evaluation report that all member states increased their efforts on gender mainstreaming, although the degree of implementation varied. When the EES was launched, a group of countries was already at the stage of implementation (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands) and the remaining countries included the principle in their policy mix. Efforts to reduce gender gaps in the labour market had different focuses in the member states. Most member states concentrated on tackling gender segregation (Denmark, Spain, France, Sweden and the UK) and/or the gender pay gap (Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and the UK). Only a few focussed on increasing women's employment rate. Reconciliation of work and family life became a policy priority in the member states inducing many of them to increase the availability of childcare provisions. The Commission is critical of the fact that too many governments tend to rely on economic growth and improved framework conditions for women's participation in the labour market to reduce gender gap in employment and unemployment. The Commission states that the gender gaps remain at unacceptable levels and it urges the member states to improve their working methods on monitoring and encourages them to evaluate the impact more systematically in order to gain better understanding of cause and consequence of the EES for gender equality (European Commission 2002a:14-15). Moreover, measures to reduce long working hours and a male-based work ethic, gender gaps in hours of work, and pay, and the uneven representation of women and men across sectors and occupations have, so far, been scarce (see e.g. Council of the European Union 2001:35-39).

2.3.5. Knowledge-Based Society

In the EES, emphasis has been put on measures to promote lifelong learning to meet the challenges of the Knowledge Based Society. In its evaluation report, the Commission claims "...if the EU is to meet its goal of becoming the most dynamic knowledge-based society in the world, more emphasis should be put on investment in human capital" (p.24). In the five-year period, the member states placed greater emphasis on employability aspects of lifelong learning than on adaptability to, for example, the Information Society. Moreover, the member states reported growing skill bottlenecks and skill mismatches, in spite of a trend towards general upskilling. The Commission interpreted this as a sign that there was a need for more flexibility in education and training systems. There were also evidences of a growing gap between those with higher skills and those with low skill and several member states expressed concerns about the impact of this trend on social inclusion. Finally, the average rate of early school leavers have persistently remained over 19% with higher levels among males than females on average (European Commission 2002b:22-23 and 2002a:11-12).

2.4. The New EES

The EGs were altered in 2003 in order to simplify and make them more result-orientated. The structure of the EES or what has been termed as the OMC (EGs, NAPs, peer review, recommendations) remains unchanged, as the method had in the words of the Commission "proven its worth". In its communication on the future of the EES (COM (2003) 6 final), the Commission argues that the changes made to the EES should enable the strategy to better tackle remaining structural deficiencies characterising the EU labour market on the one hand and new employment challenges facing the EU on the other hand. The remaining structural deficiencies are low employment and participation levels, high unemployment among young people, older workers and women with specific disadvantage. At the same time, bottlenecks have occurred in certain sectors and regions of the EU. Moreover, gender gaps in terms of employment, unemployment, pay and sectorial and occupation segregation remain considerable. According to the Commission, the new employment challenges are: (1) demographic trends such as an ageing working force; (2) globalisation and the move towards a Knowledge Based Society, which are accelerating the pace of economic restructuring, bearing the risk of skill erosion and social exclusion; (3) more irregular working patterns and transitions between private life, education/training and work (European Commission 2003a: 4-5).

2.4.1. Overarching objectives

The EGs for 2003 were adapted to the general framework of the Lisbon strategy (2000) of more and better jobs and social inclusion and the three overarching objectives became: (1) full employment; (2) the promotion of quality and productivity at work; (3) the fostering of cohesion and inclusive labour markets by reducing social and regional disparities in relation to employment (see EGs for 2003 and Rodrigues 2003:136). The guidelines cover the period 2003-2010 and should remain unchanged until mid-term review in 2006. The new EES is seen as complementary with other policy areas such as fiscal and social policy tackling diverse but interrelated welfare and labour market issues such as social protection, taxation, education, equal opportunities, labour law, enterprise policies and the organisation of work. Also, the role of the European Social Fund in providing EU financial resources to implement the EES and the involvement of social actors and civil society is to be strengthened (see e.g. European Commission 2003a: 18). The Commission

claims that the NAPs are too often perceived as the property of ministerial departments and are not coherently integrated in the overall national policy framework, partly as a result of a lack of parliamentary involvement (European Commission 2003a: 18).

According to the Commission, it is crucial for economic growth in the EU and for the sustainability of social protection systems to achieve the objective of full employment by raising employment rates towards the Lisbon and Stockholm targets (overall employment rate of 70% in 2010, 60% for women and 50% for older workers). Moreover, this objective calls for a broad policy mix including both demand and supply side measures. The old EES had been criticised for placing too much emphasis on the supply side (see e.g. Foden and Magnusson (eds.) 2003). The second objective of improving quality and productivity at work is seen as a part of the strategy to move the EU towards a knowledge-based economy. Moreover, studies show that that quality is strongly correlated with productivity. Hence, the member states are encouraged to invest in human capital, technology and work organisation in order to improve quality and productivity at work. The third overall objective of the EES is to strengthen social cohesion and develop an inclusive labour market. Major factors promoting social inclusion are: (1) access to a job; (2) education and training opportunities to acquire the necessary skills to stay in the labour market (especially because of the wide use of ICT and the move to the Knowledge Based Society); (3) the possibility of progression in terms of pay and qualifications (European Commission 2003b:8-10).

The EGs for the year 2003 state that improved quality at work is interlinked with the move towards a competitive and knowledge-based economy (p.17). Greater quality of jobs and productivity will be achieved by measures addressing the skill gaps while wages need to reflect productivity and regional unemployment to facilitate social and regional mobility (see European Commission 2003a and b). The main explanation for the central position of productivity in the new EES as compared with the previous EES is that productivity growth declined after 1995 in the EU but accelerated in the US. The better performance of the US economy has been explained by greater diffusion of new technologies throughout the economy. Moreover, insufficient skills and sectorial mobility across labour markets in Europe have been identified as factors constraining growth in productivity. Skill requirements of jobs are not always matched by existing labour supply in the European labour markets. The Commission recommends the use of a lifelong learning strategy as a tool to achieve skill mobility or upskilling and to facilitate the creation of more and better jobs (European Commission 2003a and b). The primary motive behind the objective to enhance social cohesion and inclusion is to streamline the EES with other EU policies such as social policy. Moreover, the EU rejects arguments stating that social inclusion reduces economic growth and leads to less employment by giving these concepts equal weight in the new EES (Hermans 2003).

2.4.2. Priorities for action

The Commission identified the following 10 key priorities for action to support the three overarching objectives:

- 1. Active and preventative measures for the unemployed and inactive*
Measures to enhance employability and on-going job search assistance
- 2. Job creation and entrepreneurship*
Simplify and reduce administrative and regulatory burdens

3. Address change and promote adaptability and mobility in the labour market

Diversity of contractual and working arrangements to enable career progression, a better balance between work and private life and between flexibility and security,

Access of workers to training

4. Promote development of human capital and lifelong learning

Implement lifelong learning strategies to achieve the national priorities of: 85% of 22 year old completed upper secondary education and 12.5% of the adult working age population (25-64) engaged in lifelong learning

5. Increase labour supply and promote active ageing

Make work pay, raise skills and support system enabling people to stay longer employed

6. Gender equality

Gender mainstreaming of other employment policy areas is to be strengthened.

Reduction of the gender pay gap should be a priority until 2010.

Address underlying factors of the gender pay gap, including sectoral and occupational segregation, education and training, job classifications and pay systems, awareness raising and transparency. Encourage the sharing of family and professional responsibilities and facilitating return to work after a period of absence. Child care target: 90% of those between 3 and the mandatory school age in childcare and 33% of those younger.

7. Promote integration of the disadvantaged into the labour market and combat discrimination in the labour market

Reduce number of early school leavers, reduce unemployment among the disadvantaged

8. Make work pay through incentives and enhance work attractiveness

Reform tax and benefit systems, provide adequate social protection, reduce tax burden on low paid workers

9. Transform undeclared work into regular employment

Simplify the business environment and provide appropriate incentives in the tax and benefits system

10. Address regional employment disparities

Private sector activity encouraged and as well as investment in human and knowledge capital

The proposal by the European Commission for new targets to eliminate the gender gap in unemployment rates by 2010 and to halve the gender pay gap was not passed by the Council. As indicated above, the new EGs include instead a commitment to *substantial* reductions in gender gaps in employment rates, unemployment rates and pay by 2010 (Rubery 2003).

2.5. Shaping the European Social Model

So far, we have studied the structure and the content of the EES as well as how the strategy addresses gender equality and the transition to the Knowledge Based Society. The member states have relied on economic growth and general employment measures to reduce gender gaps in the labour market and on investment in human capital or lifelong learning to promote a favourable transition to the Knowledge Based Society. The gender gaps have, however, remained unchanged since the implementation of the EES at the same time as the member states report in the NAPs a growing need to tackle skill gaps (people without sufficient levels of skills) and skill mismatches

(people with skills but not the right ones)⁴. In other words, the transition towards the Knowledge Based Society involves a greater risk of skill gaps and social exclusion. The Lisbon Strategy (2000) urges the member states to modernise the European Social Model and tackle these risks as well as to promote equal opportunities for women and men. The renewed European Social Model should increase investment in people, activate social policies and strengthen action against old and new forms of social exclusion (see also Rodrigues 2003:17). Before we can analyse this modernisation project or the political choices being made as concerns the transition to the Knowledge Based Society, we need to discuss what is meant by the European Social Model.

Jepsen and Serrano Pascual (2003) were unable in their review of the academic literature on the European Social Model to identify a common understanding of the term. Moreover, academic discussions of the European Social Model have, so far, mainly focused on different policy interventions without a clear definition of the concept. This is also true for documents and reports produced by the EU on the EES, stressing the need to modernise the European Social Model by investing in people and combating social exclusion. According to Jepsen and Serrano Pascual (2003), the European Social Model is a project to develop European identities based on identification of common problems and common solutions. In the following, we will apply this definition of the European Social Model in order to analyse how the EU has used the EES to facilitate gender equality. The focus of our discussion will be on how the EU defines gender problems (context) and promotes certain solutions (method) to solve them. The outcomes of the EU's efforts to eliminate gender inequalities will also be considered. We have argued elsewhere that the gender mainstreaming approach of the EU has three dimensions: context or the unequal position of men and women; method or the integration of the gender perspective into all policy processes at all levels; outcome or gender equality (Serrano Pascual and Mósesdóttir (eds.) 2003:90). We will then discuss how the EES and the Social Inclusion Process have been used to modernise the European Social Model in order to deal with employment challenges associated with the move towards the Knowledge Based Society. In our view, the main policy intervention of the European Social Model is the EES (1997) and the Social Inclusion Process (2000).

2.5.1. Gender problems

A peer review of the first five years of the EES confirms the EU's conclusion that the inclusion of the goal of equal opportunities has had a significant impact on member states' policies in this area (Rubery 2003; Rubery et al. 2001:116). So far, the EES has facilitated awareness of gender issues, promoted women's activation, reinforced the role played by women's departments and improved statistical tools (see Magnusson, Mósesdóttir and Serrano 2003). The political agenda of the EES changed in 2003 from an emphasis on equal opportunities (the context in which men and women act) to an emphasis on gender equality (outcomes of efforts to change the context). This shift in the gender agenda is in line with more result-orientated EGs. Moreover, gender issues have been moved from being one of the four pillars of the EES to priority six of ten main priorities for action. This change is likely to be interpreted by the member states as a downgrading of the gender agenda in the new EES. The new overarching objectives of full employment, improvement of job quality, increase in productivity and promotion of social inclusion address the different realities facing women across the member states (Rubery 2003). In Sweden, young women face a lack of

⁴ See also Seppo Roivas' analysis of the NAPs of Finland, Austria, Denmark, Netherlands and Spain in report 2 written as a part of the WELLKNOW project.

employment opportunities⁵ when entering the labour market while female employment in Europe has in some instances grown because women are more likely to accept lower quality jobs and in particular part-time jobs (see also discussion in Rubery, et al. 2001:114).

When highlighting common gender problems, EU officials compare the situation prevailing in EU15 with that of the US where the employment rate of women has on average been higher (see e.g. recent issues of *Employment in Europe*). Moreover, common gender gaps across the EU15 are identified and addressed by the EES without proper recognition of variations in the size of these gaps across the member states. In its Communication on the future of the EES, the Commission states, for example, that gender gaps in terms of employment, unemployment, pay and sectorial and occupational segregation remain considerable (p.4). Since the implementation of the EES in 1997, the average employment rates across the member states have moved closer together but a sharp North-South division prevails. Women's employment is much closer to that of men in the North while large gender differences exist in the South of Europe (see Mósesdóttir 2003a and b). Moreover, the EGGE group and other experts have criticised the EES for not sufficiently tackling men's and employers' behaviour (see e.g. Rubery 2003; Behning and Serrano Pascual (eds.) 2001). Men's lack of engagement in paid and unpaid care work is a significant hindrance to gender equality. In addition, many employers are reluctant to promote gender equality at the enterprise level as it may increase costs and reduce efficiency. Governments tend also to regard discrimination at the workplace to be outside the scope of the NAPs (Mósesdóttir 2001 and 2003a; Rubery et al. 2001:50 and 115). Hence, insufficient efforts have been made to extend the EES from the supranational and the national levels to the local or workplace level. To conclude, the EES treats gender problems as a technical problem or in terms of economic efficiency rather than in terms of social justice and gender conflicts.

2.5.2. Common solutions

The EES has not only encouraged the member states to make gender equality a political priority: It has also provided them with methodological and statistical tools to achieve this goal. The common methodology promoted by the EU to solve "gender problems" is the OMC involving policy coordination, targets, evaluations and non-binding recommendations. The member states are encouraged to adopt a two-track strategy of gender mainstreaming and specific gender policy measures in the framework of the OMC. The main advantage of the gender mainstreaming strategy is that it pressures the EU and the member states to take a holistic view of gender (in)equalities involving different actors, institutional levels and measures. Special gender targets have been set as concerns women's employment and childcare coverage. Indicators, gender impact assessments and peer-reviews have been applied to assess policy results and to identify policy recommendations and best practices. For the year 2002, the Council made a number of non-binding recommendations to the individual member states concerning equal opportunities. Greece, Spain and Italy were, for example, asked to improve the gender gap in employment and unemployment; Belgium and Luxembourg were asked to increase the female employment rate; Finland, Sweden and the UK were requested to find ways to reduce occupational and sectorial segregation; Austria, Germany, Finland and the UK needed to reduce the gender pay gap; Germany was requested to address the impact of the tax and benefit system on women's employment.

⁵ In 2002, youth female unemployment rate (% of labour force 15-24) was 11.6% in Sweden while this rate was only 6.9% for the EU15 (European Commission 2003b:statistical annex)

EU's methodology to solve gender problems has been criticised on several grounds. The OMC and gender mainstreaming strategies are a soft-law approach without any sanctions to punish those countries that do not comply. Moreover, the encompassing concept of gender mainstreaming is vague and open to different interpretations. Hence, the methodology to solve gender problems relies on the political will of different actors who may understand the concept differently, have insufficient resources to pursue it and may be unwilling to apply it (see Behning and Serrano (eds.) 2001; Mósesdóttir 2003a; Rubery 2003). Moreover, the strict segmentation of responsibilities and the traditional institutional boundaries between policy domains at the member state level has made it difficult to implement gender mainstreaming as a tool to achieve gender equality (Magnusson, Mósesdóttir and Serrano 2003; Mósesdóttir 2003a). These shortcomings may explain why the member states do not appear to be equally as committed to gender equality as the EU.

Gender targets set as a part of the OMC can be criticised for not addressing the most important gender problems in all the member states. There are, for example, no specific targets to be achieved on the gender pay gap and gender segregation which the EU considers to be the most pressing gender problems in the Nordic countries. When recommendations on equal opportunities, issued for 2000, 2001 and 2002, are compared, it appears that the focus has shifted from women's employment to the gender pay gap. According to Rubery (2003), member states actions under the Equal Opportunities pillar were greatest in the area of care provision, followed by leave entitlements with relatively modest steps to address issues of segregation and unequal pay. Moreover, evaluation of gender results is difficult to conduct as they often involve qualitative changes (e.g. attitudes, stereo-types etc.) and best practices are difficult to transfer between different national contexts (Serrano Pascual 2002). The EES does not define the preferred outcomes of efforts to promote equal opportunities making it difficult to measure the results of the EES (Rubery 2003; Rubery et al. 2001:113).

2.5.3. Gender outcomes

Above, we discussed how the EU defines gender problems (context) and its methodology (OMC and gender mainstreaming) to solve these problems. Our focus will now be on the outcomes of these efforts. Rubery (2003) claims that the lack of a common definition of what constitutes gender equality (outcome) gives the member states freedom to present any policy as promoting gender equality. The UK has, for example, promoted part-time work to enable women to combine wage and domestic work (half-earner model) and long care leave has been taken up in Spain to enable women to continue with their care responsibilities (male breadwinner model). Moreover, most initiatives undertaken by the member states involve facilitating reintegration of inactive women and to a lesser extent unemployed women (see also Rubery et al. 2001:4). We have argued that the EU has used EES to push member states towards the Dual Breadwinner model involving greater participation of women in paid work (Mósesdóttir 2003a). However, the development towards the dual breadwinner model is path-dependent or influenced by the political and institutional conditions in the member states. Hence, EES does not lead to a full convergence around the dual breadwinner model but reduces the distance between the different developmental paths of the member states. The dual breadwinner model only includes dual labour force participation and not dual care and dual earner models. Until 2003, limited efforts were undertaken as a part of the EES to tackle unequal division of care work among men and women on the one hand and the gender pay gap on the other hand. In our view, incremental expansion of EU regulation in the member states will continue to take place and the effects of this expansion will eventually accumulate and lead to a radical change in the attitudes of member states concerning the male breadwinner model.

2.6. Modernising the European Social Model

So far, we have demonstrated our understanding of the European Social Model by analysing how the EU identifies common gender problems and promotes common gender solutions through the EES. We will now turn to what the EU calls modernisation of the European Social Model to address risks of skill gaps, skill mismatches and gender gaps. Across the member states, different “European social models” exist that have facilitated various balances of employment, job quality and social equality (Caprile, Cachon and Montagut 2002:8 and 15). So far, the EU has used EES and Social Inclusion Process as policy intervention to develop and modernise the European Social Model. We will argue that this modernisation project involves at least 5 goals or to (1) achieve policy coherence across different policy areas, (2) attain convergence in terms of employment and social policy objectives, (3) create positive learning process to improve the efficiency of employment and social policies, (4) reach full employment level in order to reduce pressures on the social security system and to lower unemployment, (5) resolve underlying market mismatches arising from technical and socio-demographic changes. Moreover, the effectiveness of the EES in achieving these goals differs among the member states due to diverse labour market conditions, welfare state models and socio-political situations. In the following, we will discuss in more details these 5 goals and conclude by analysing the gender implications of the modernisation of the European Social Model.

2.6.1. Policy coherence

An important reason for implementing the EES in 1997 was to achieve policy coherence across economic, fiscal and employment policy in the EU member states. Monetary policy has been the responsibility of the European Central Bank since the Maastricht Treaty (1993) while economic, budgetary and employment policies have remained a national responsibility. The Maastricht Treaty (1993) introduced the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPGs) as a tool for better macroeconomic coordination and the Amsterdam Treaty introduced the Stability and Growth Pact as a means to reinforce budgetary discipline in the member states (Goetschy 2003:76). Moreover, the Amsterdam Treaty gave a fresh impetus to European social policy as it incorporated the Social Protocol. The fight against social exclusion was the main priority of the Social Protocol. The Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, the Stability and Growth Pact, the EES and the Social Protocol acknowledge the principle of subsidiarity or multi-tier governance which implies a close co-operation and coordination in the field of economic, budgetary, employment and social policies between Community and member state level – including regional and local as well as between the social partners and public authorities at all levels (European Commission 2000:8). The Commission can only issue binding rules for the member states as a part of the Stability and Growth Pact.

According to Jacobsson and Schmid (2003:130), efforts have been made to integrate the local level of the EES by coordination with the European Social Fund. The ESF was established as early as the Treaty of Rome (1957) and aims at facilitating employment and labour mobility as well as promoting adaptation to industrial change. It gives support to local projects in the member states, which must be co-funded by relevant national authorities. The Commission regards the European Social Fund to be the main financial tool available at the European level for changing labour markets in line with the EES. For the new European Social Fund programme period (2000-2006), the Commission required coordination between the NAPs and the European Social Fund single programming documents. Jacobsson and Schmid (2003:131) claim that there has hardly been any

real integration of the European Social Fund project activities with the national labour market policy at large.

Since the introduction of the EES, greater emphasis has been put on monitoring outputs of the strategy and on achieving closer articulation with other policy fields. The Social Agenda agreed on at the Nice Summit (2000) stressed the need to enhance dynamic interaction between economic, employment and social policy in order to attain social inclusion. According to the Social Agenda, high quality education and training as well as employment were the means to promote social inclusion in the member states (European Commission 2000:6). The Lisbon Council (2000) recognised that building a more inclusive EU was an essential factor in achieving the ten-year strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Hence, the Lisbon Council agreed to adopt OMC or what has been termed the Social Inclusion Process in order to make a decisive impact on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion by 2010. In 2003, the Commission published for the first time the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the EGs at the same time in order to emphasise the need for coordination between the two. While the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines take a narrow economic approach to employment, the EES adopts a comprehensive approach or integrates employment and social issues when problems and solutions are proposed. The Social Inclusion Process concentrates on a few specific issues, particular those linked with economic integration and with the labour market (see Kleinman 2002:132). The EU now stresses the need to further enhance the coherence between Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, EES and the Social Inclusion Process if the EU is to achieve its ten-year strategic goal set at Lisbon (2000) to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and social cohesion.

The EU adopted the Social Inclusion Process in order to achieve policy coherence in fields such as social protection, employment, health, housing and education (Council of the European Union 2001:6). Common social objectives were set in 2000, which formed the bases for the first two-yearly NAPs on inclusion. The objectives of the Social Inclusion Process were slightly rephrased in 2002 for a new round of two-yearly NAPs on inclusion due in July 2003. The objectives in 2002 were: (1) to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to the resources, rights, goods and services; (2) to prevent the risks of exclusion; (3) to help the most vulnerable; (4) to mobilise all relevant bodies. It was also stated that the member states "...will underline the importance of mainstreaming equality between men and women in all actions aimed at achieving those objectives by taking into account the gender perspective in the identification of challenges, design, implementation and assessment of policies and measures, the selection of indicators and targets and the involvement of stakeholder..."(Council of the European Union 2002:8). Behind this commitment to gender mainstreaming is the realisation that progress in the case of social inclusion will not be achieved without tackling gender problems as women are disproportionately represented among the poor in Europe (Rubery 2003). Moreover, the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the Social Inclusion Process increases coherence with the EES.

According to the Joint report on social inclusion, the member states have, so far, put the greatest emphasis on increasing participation of the disadvantaged in employment (Council of the European Union 2001:9). Also, the focus of their efforts in the first round of NAPs on inclusion was on greater coordination across policy areas and on improving policy measures rather than implementing new initiatives and approaches to fight social exclusion. Critics warn, however, that social inclusion based on increasing the labour supply may lower wages leading to more and not

less inequality and poverty (see Caprile, Cachon and Montagut 2002:18). As pointed out by Caprile, Cachon and Montagut (2002:14), close articulation of social, employment and economic policies is subject to tension as the economic advantages of social policy are predominantly in the long-term while the benefits of employment and economic policies are more short-term. Moreover, if short-term activation policy has priority over long-term human resource development, vulnerable social groups will alternate between unemployment and poor quality jobs.

Goetschy (2003:84) maintains that the member states have become increasingly aware of the benefits to be gained from integrating different policy fields at national and EU levels (macroeconomic, social protection, employment, educational and fiscal policies). Non-coordination across employment and educational policy areas increases the risk of, for example, skill bottlenecks, which in turn will hamper economic growth. Critics claim, however, that the EU suffers from a twofold imbalance, which has implications for employment. Firstly, the centralised monetary policy dominates other macroeconomic policies, such as fiscal policies, which remain national, although highly constrained by the Stability Pact. Secondly, the EU economic integration has, so far, dominated EU social integration. Hence, the EU runs the risk of attaining economic growth without any real reduction in unemployment and social exclusion (Goetschy 2003:76; Serrano Pascual 2003:156). In addition, the greatest weakness of the EES according to Jacobsson and Schmid (2003:117) is that it has *not* become a part of the national policy making structures and has been insufficiently implemented at the regional and local levels in the member states. The drafting of the NAPs has in most cases been a mere formal exercise of translating the EGs into previous employment measures and results. Hence, most of the NAPs have failed to take up an integrated approach and do not clarify concrete targets, the resources available for implementation nor the budget implications or the indicator to be used for evaluation (see discussion in Serrano Pascual 2002). This weakness reduces the effectiveness of both the EES and national employment policy in dealing with international competition, technological change and significant regional and local variations.

2.6.2. Achieve convergence

Until 1997, the EU used its limited legal capacity to achieve “harmonisation” of employment and social policy. It became, however, increasingly apparent that this approach was not politically viable in all the member states. Moreover, the successive enlargement process brought new barriers to harmonisation as it involved increased diversity of employment and social policies as well as more heterogeneous labour markets across the member countries. Hence, the EU implemented the Luxembourg process and later the Social Inclusion Process to pressure the member states towards convergence of employment and social objectives (see Caprile, Cachon and Montagut 2002:4; Jacobsson and Schmid 2003:119). These processes based on the OMC push the member states to focus on jointly defined problems such as lack of employability and on common indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of policy solutions. Hence, the EU plays an important role in shaping terminology (employability, adaptability, gender mainstreaming etc.) and the methodology (targets and statistical indicators) to be applied to social and employment policies in the member states (Serrano Pascual 2002). At the same time, national diversity is respected, as legal sanctions are not applied in the case of non-compliance.

Goetschy (2003:93) argues that by simultaneously promoting convergence and divergence, the EES has created tensions and left some member states with ambivalent feelings and behaviour. The Commission maintains, for example, that the use of indicators and targets has facilitated efforts

towards convergence around the best performance, while reporting, at the same time, that member states often refuse to set national targets (Jacobsson and Schmid 2003:123). It is, however, possible to identify a shift in the emphasis of the EES from a voluntary policy learning process to a convergence process based on common objectives, measures (reform of tax and benefit systems) and outcomes (targets) across supranational, national, regional and local levels. The extent to which the development of the national employment policy has coincided with the aims of the EES is influenced by the national institutional framework and the socio-political context.

2.6.3. Positive learning process

An important reason for the emergence of the EES was that the EU economic integration had changed the national employment policy context such that some traditional employment policy tools had become obsolete (currency devaluation and public deficit policies and adjustments of national interest rates). In addition, difficulties in the ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty disclosed the need for more “citizen-friendly” measures in the area of employment and social affairs (Goetschy 2003:70-71; Scharf 2002). The EES was implemented to improve the efficiency of employment policies in the member states through a learning process (OMC) involving common employment targets (employment policies linked directly with outcomes), comparable indicators (testing the results of employment policies), identification of best practices (benchmarking) and peer-reviews.

The main learning mechanism is based on the annual evaluation of the member states’ performances and on the transfer of “good” employment policy between member states. Moreover, the OMC promotes a learning process among different actors as it involves different social players and the interaction of different levels of power/intervention (authorities at the EU, national, regional and local levels) (see Serrano Pascual 2002). As compared with directives, the OMC is open to diversity of national labour market conditions and different welfare institutions in the member states while simultaneously promoting common objectives. The OMC is, thus, an attempt to find a new balance between convergence and respect for national diversity (Goetschy 2003:92-93). Moreover, this “new” method of regulation has made European cooperation possible in sensitive areas such as social inclusion, pension reform, education and research and immigration policies as it respects the full decision-making authority of the member states (see Jacobsson and Schmid 2003:113-114).

The main advantage of the EES is that it allows the EU and member states to tackle a policy field in a much more comprehensive manner via the OMC than directives, all the while acknowledging national diversity. The EES is, however, a soft law instrument meaning that member states are not obliged to implement the EU employment guidelines. Since 1999, the EU has used recommendations to put more pressure on the member states to meet the employment objectives. However, the same countries tend to receive approximately the same number of recommendations from the EU, often on the same subjects (Porte and Pochet 2003:27). There are also fears that the OMC may become the dominant mode of EU regulation and replace the EU legislative method which will in turn undermine the competences and importance of the EU (see Goetschy 2003:87-88). In addition, the OMC has been criticised for being a defensive response by member states to prevent the EU from gaining greater competence in social and employment policy and to hinder binding regulation in policy fields outside EU jurisdiction (Caprile, Cachon and Montagut 2002:21). Finally, Serrano Pascual (2002) claims that too much priority has been given to quantitative goals at the cost of qualitative ones and points to the difficulties of transferring “good” practices between different national contexts.

According to Porte and Pochet (2003:32), there appears to be an inherent paradox involved in the OMC. The principle of subsidiarity defines the level of power that is most appropriate for each sphere of action while the OMC underlines the need to proceed through an interactive process in which different actors articulate their strategy and actions in a multi-level logic. As discussed earlier, the design and the implementation of the EES depend on political interests of the ruling parties (e.g. social democratic or conservative blocks) at the EU and member states' levels, which may weaken its credibility and effectiveness in the long run. Porte and Pochet (2003:31) claim that political interests play a crucial role in the selection of indicators, even more so than scientific analyses. According to Jacobsson and Schmid (2003:117), there exists a passive resistance to the EES in the member countries, as national policy makers do not think external experts know better than them how the employment system operates and should be improved. In spite of the rather weak impact of the EES, there is a consensus among all actors concerned to improve the position of the EES from a bureaucratic technical document to a more political and strategic document (Porte and Pochet 2003:39).

2.6.4. Achieve full employment

Comparison of the employment rate in the EU with those of the US and Japan during the 1990s discloses a significantly lower overall employment rate in Europe. This "employment gap" is, however, not due to different employment patterns for prime-age men but to lower employment rates for women and older workers in the EU member states (see Behning, Foden and Serrano Pascual 2001:10; Social Agenda 2001:8-11). The EU implemented the EES in an effort to correct these employment deficiencies in the member states. In the new EES, there is a commitment to full employment but many European states had retreated from this principle during the 1980s and early 1990s (see also Kleinman 2002:16). Foden and Magnusson (2003:6) claim that the motivation behind this emphasis on activation was a concern about the financial viability of the Europe's social model, especially in terms of pensions and the need for a secure revenue base. Until 2003, the central thrust of the EES was to increase and improve labour supply as a part of the employability pillar. An appropriate development of aggregate demand was assumed to arise from the successful implementation of the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines in the framework of EMU (Foden and Magnusson 2003:7; Behning, Foden and Serrano 2001:10).

The EES signals a shift in the EU's policy approach from efforts aimed at managing unemployment to active measures facilitating employment or what have been termed activation. According to Serrano Pascual (2003:145-149), different models of activation exist due to national diversification as concerns welfare state models, modes of labour market regulation, employment patterns, etc. It is, however, possible to identify two main approaches to activation. The first approach, to which the Scandinavian countries approximately adhere to, focuses on stimulating activation by providing incentives such as training opportunities. The other approach, applied in the UK and the US, facilitates participation in paid work by penalising those out of work through limited welfare rights and low benefits. These activation approaches have shifted the orientation of the welfare state from supplying work to promote workers' employability and flexibility. Moreover, activation as a solution to unemployment and poverty has shifted the focus of employment policies from correcting inequalities produced by the market forces to providing individuals with opportunities or the right tools/incentives to participate in market work (Serrano Pascual 2003:156).

2.6.5. Resolve underlying market mismatches

The last goal of the modernisation of the European Social Model is to improve its ability to solve labour market mismatches. These mismatches are the skill gaps and long-term unemployment. Skill

gaps indicate that skill requirements in the EU are not matched by existing supply and the prevalence of long-term unemployment indicates that demand for labour does not match supply but half of those out of work during the late 1990s have been unemployed for more than a year (European Commission 2000:10). The EU warns that these labour market mismatches will become more pressing in the nearest future due to technology development (IT diffusion) and ageing of the workforce (see Foden and Magnusson 2003:7; European Commission 2000:8-11). In Lisbon (2000), the EU member states agreed to promote lifelong learning in order to ensure individual employability and develop a knowledge-based economy. Moreover, lifelong learning is seen as a part of quality of work. This emphasis on lifelong learning underlines the shift in the focus of employment and social policies from “protection against risks” to “ability to adapt to change” (Heidemann 2003:174). Lastly, the EU presents the labour market mismatches created by the knowledge-based economy as if it were an inevitable economic development, which needs to be technically managed rather than a source of social conflict (Serrano Pascual 2003:152).

2.6.6. Gender implications of the modernisation project

As a part of its efforts to achieve policy coherence, the EU has integrated the gender perspectives into the EES, the Social Inclusion Process, the Stability and Growth Pact and the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines. Member states are encouraged to gender mainstream their efforts to achieve high level of employment and social inclusions and to make their tax system more individualised so as to remove disincentives to participation. Moreover, the gender pay gap was included in 2002 as one of the structural indicators on employment under the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines. Other indicators are employment rate (total and by gender), employment rate of older workers, tax rate and low-wage earners, lifelong learning (adult participation in education and training) and accidents at work (quality of work) (Rodrigues 2003:24). This inclusion of the gender pay gap as one of the structural indicators in the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines forces policy-makers in Europe to focus on the issue of gender (in)-equality in their efforts to pursue economic policy goals.

Over the years, the EU has made incremental changes to the EES and the Social Inclusion Process. These changes have resulted in steady expansion in the scope, role and objectives of these policies. Hence, there has been a slow process of convergence towards a comprehensive gender equality strategy. This strategy can be criticised for not acknowledging tensions and contradictions between different policy objectives. One of the main priorities of the EES (2003) is to eliminate gender gaps in employment, unemployment and in pay. However, evidence shows that the gender pay gap is smaller in countries with a low female employment rate (e.g. Italy). Also, the gender gap in employment may become smaller due to a growth in bad or low paid jobs (e.g. Spain). Finally, gender segregation is higher in countries with a high female employment rate (e.g. Nordic countries).

The aim of the EES and the Social Inclusion Process has been to facilitate a policy learning process in the member states. The five years evaluation of the EES and peer reviews has shown that the inclusion of the equal opportunities dimension had significant effects. This policy learning process has resulted in greater awareness of gender issues, more ambitious and integrated equal opportunity agendas and policies, setting up of institutions (women’s departments) and spreading of practices (gender mainstreaming) and statistical tools (indicators). However, the member states cannot be punished for failing to implement policies and they have repeatedly been able to ignore recommendations made by the Council in relation to equal opportunities. Moreover, the policy learning process only functions if political actors, bureaucrats and the social partners co-operate.

The emphasis of the EES has almost exclusively been on supply side factors such as women's lack of skills, the benefit and tax systems, care arrangements instead of demand side factors such as lack of good jobs and employers' discriminatory practices (Mósesdóttir 2001, Rubery et al. 2001). The effectiveness of the EES in facilitating employment growth across labour markets in Europe is debated but women's employment has grown in recent years leading to a greater convergence in women's employment behaviour across the member states. These favourable trends have been attributed to favourable economic conditions, women's higher educational levels and to women's greater willingness to accept jobs of lower quality (see e.g. Rubery et al. 2001:114).

So far, there have been limited efforts to integrate the gender perspective into the lifelong learning strategy, although evidence shows that the access of men and women to skill development differ in some cases. In many cases, men and women choose and receive different training both in terms of content and costs and women's skills are often underutilized and/or undervalued. Rubery et al. (2001:76) claim that the NAPs for 2001 were gender blind when it came to the new guideline on job matching or skill bottlenecks. The skill shortages were treated as primarily concerned with IT shortages and other technical male dominated occupations. Shortages in female dominated areas such as care work and teaching were not mentioned. Hence, most member countries do not see any connection between improving women's position in the labour market and overcoming skill mismatches and skill bottlenecks or gaps.

2.7. Conclusion

The main focus of our discussion in this chapter has been on the political choices and policy interventions of the EU as concerns the transition to the Knowledge Based Society and gender equality. These political choices are full employment, job quality (skills, mobility and the right balance between flexibility and security) and social equality, particularly gender equality. The EU has steadily expanded the objectives and the scope of the EES in order to achieve policy convergence around these political choices across the member states. Moreover, the EU urges the member states to renew the Europe Social Model to ensure that they attain economic growth with more and better jobs as well as social cohesion. So far, social intervention at the European level has mainly been through two mechanisms of taxing/spending and regulation (Kleinman 2002:112). The child care targets set by the Barcelona Council (2002) signal a radical shift in the EU's social policy intervention as it involves direct provision of services. Hence, the OMC creates preconditions for gradual expansion of the EU's intervention in areas traditionally under the responsibility of the member states. This expansion will, however, be linked with economic integration as was the case with the childcare targets. These targets address the need to reduce hindrance to women's employment across Europe but women with children are far less likely to be employed than women without children (Rubery et al. 2001:22-23). The expansion of the EU's intervention will enable it to define in more details what should be the outcome of the transition to the Knowledge Based Society and gender equality but lack of definition has made it difficult to assess whether the member states are actively supporting the EU's vision of the future.

3. Towards better Employment and Equal Opportunities – NAPs as Political Pedagogy?

Seppo Roivas

3.1. Preface

In this chapter the National Action Plans of European Employment Strategy are analysed as a part of the Wellknow project and its Work Package 2. The NAPs of 1998, 2000 and 2003 of Austria, Denmark, Finland⁶, the Netherlands and Spain are read through once and then in a second reading coded according to the criteria agreed on between the Wellknow partners. These codes were recalled in the third report writing phase using the indexing possibilities of the Adobe Acrobat Distiller programme. Sometimes the codes are used in calculations of textual occurrences of NAP criteria. This indexing method guarantees the comprehension of reading. The interest is related to general employment policies, and more specifically, to issues dealing with Knowledge Based Society (KBS) and Gender Mainstreaming (GM). There is a total of 18 NAPs in this analysis.

In this paper we try to develop arguments on comparisons between the countries to be analysed. The paper is concerned with methodological remarks and tentative findings, but I will also raise some critical questions related to the general political situation and NAPs as a limited source of information.

3.2. Methodological Remarks and NAPs as a Data Source

The NAPs are very specific political documents. They are policy documents of governments and represent the national evaluation and political line of employment policies. At the same time these documents represent a beginning of global political guidance and control in employment policies. In this role they call into question the traditional forms of political guidance and control that were based on national and local governance. From another point of view the NAPs are specific political documents because of the procedure of their creation and development. The NAPs are shaped in a process of political discourse between global and national political actors, but the rules, ideas and values of the discourse are very much ruled by new political elites of governmental bodies, whose values, concepts and ethos are overwhelming in comparison to the knowledge and values of local actors. Despite the rhetoric according to which representatives of civil society are integrated into the NAP procedure and their interests are mentioned in the documents, there is reason to argue that the NAPs to a higher degree represent the values and interest of the political elite and the elite of civil servants, who have the main responsibility in writing and creating the documents as such. The values of civil society and local actors will come secondary.

⁶ In the case of Finland the NAPs of 1999, 2001 and 2002 are read too.

One specific quality of these documents is that, as regards their structure, language, concepts and argumentation, there are very similar ideological and theoretical concepts in all documents. In this sense we can even talk about a common understanding and shared values among the NAP experts and political elite. On the one hand, this might be helpful in analysing the documents, but on the other hand, it might make the analyses even more complicated if the interest is to find societal differences and specificities in employment and social policies.

Thirdly, it is worth mentioning that the NAPs as data and as a source of information are textual data. They do include some standardised and harmonised statistical and documentary information, but for the most part, they are written documents and therefore they fit well or better for methods of text analysis. Bearing in mind this double rooted quality of the NAPs - their quality as political documents and their textual quality - we can argue that these characteristics should be taken into consideration when deciding about the objectives, theories and methods of the NAP analysis. Given the textual predominance of these documents, we can argue in favour of several alternative theoretical approaches:

Following the Foucauldian tradition, we can use the NAP information to describe the model of political power and governance. If we use this line we ask: Who are seen as the main and responsible actors in the field, promoting the knowledge based society and the gender mainstreaming in it? What kind of power (expertise, money, coordination power, etc.) do the different actors have and how are the relations between global, national and local governance connected?

If using the NAP as a source of political discourse, we can follow the lines of dominating political discourse and rhetoric. Using the methods of rhetorical analysis (see Brown 1997, Rescher 1998, Muntigl et al. 2000), we can develop arguments concerning the hegemonic arguments and discourse and look if there are variations in the NAPs. From a more realistic point of view, we could also try to ask the following: What is the optional reality of politics? How far are the global politics and political discourses from the reality, the resources and social divisions of the societies under examination? What is the difference between rhetorical texts and social realities? The KBS and the GM could be good examples of mainstream politics under examination.

There are some examples of these kind of studies. Kivinen and Ahola (1999) have studied the rhetoric of human capital and the information society based on the idea of continuous progress. They argue that the politics of European governments rest on a simplified presumption that to produce more and higher educational credentials is the same as to produce more human capital. They have realised that the information society rhetoric is saying that the expanding of human capital serves societies, firms and individuals as a direct route to economic growth, because people are living and working in the conditions of increasingly knowledge-intensive production in a so called information society. But they are not sure if this is the right or only way to make policies. Haffner-Burton and Pollack (2002) ask whether the concept of Gender Mainstreaming is mainly used in a rhetorical way or whether there are more deeply rooted practises and organisational processes of Gender Mainstreaming in the European Union. Kyle (2001) has studied the rhetorical concept of "family" in giving reasons for public and social policies. The policy proposals, upon which the dominant culture's vision of a family rests, are typically met with fierce resistance. This might apply to the analysis of the concept of "reconciliation of work and family life" in the NAPs.

Muntigl (2000) has studied European Union discourses on employment and unemployment issues and notes that there are controversial ideologies behind this discussion. The usual “fighting” ideologies behind the discourses are the Keynesian welfare state and the Neo-liberal ideologies that embrace free markets. The dominant ideology of today is Neo-liberalism, which is supported by the rhetoric of globalisation. The globalisation rhetoric claims that the process of globalisation itself is independent of nation states, and economic prosperity can only occur in a global market. The globalisation process is argued to be a natural development, an actor of the economic progress, beneficiary for the consumers and inevitable. To support the progress of enterprises is a typical policy outcome of the globalisation rhetoric. Weiss and Wodak (2000) add to this the rhetoric of competition, used usually jointly with the rhetoric of globalisation. The rhetoric of globalisation and competitiveness produces textual claims and proposals which

- De-politicise socio-economic fields of activity and make the role of financial markets important
- Pass the nation state (which means a passing of the welfare state as well) in the face of new economic constraints.

The financial market makes a universal horizon for the whole of the economy and its “requirements” are explained as an inevitable destiny. It has also been depoliticised and it is no longer an area of political control. The role of the political action is to fulfil the requirements of the market framework by guaranteeing the conditions of competition and flexibility. The construction of economic constraints by the “global” financial markets leads directly to the second discourse, namely to the deconstruction of the nation state as an effective and responsible political entity. The nation state is said to be overburdened, or powerless, and supranational entities, such as the EU, must take its place. But it is not self-evident that there are such supranational entities that are effective in the area of social policy and welfare!

However, it could be interesting to study the KBS and GM discourses of the NAPs as a “pedagogical governmental technology” by following the Foucauldian way of argumentation. Prozorov (2004) developed the argument of “pedagogical governmental technology” for other purposes than analysing NAPs, but I employ it because the theoretical idea of political governance by means of political pedagogy and discursive power is valid and interesting. This argument may open a critical discussion on political guidance and conditioning by means of the open method of cooperation. It may even open critical discourses of political play and narration in the name of ideological and political guidance.

In this NAP study it may not be possible to go so deep into the theoretical and methodological discourse as it would be in the interest of the researchers because of the time limit targeted to the NAP analysis, but we cannot avoid pointing out the importance of the theoretical and conceptual approach.

It looks certain that the governments own the NAPs, and with help of NAPs, the governments signal that their policies are basically right and in congruence with the EES guidelines of the European Council and the policy recommendations made by European Commission. There is little room for criticism of the practiced policies or neglect of the Commission policy recommendation. But the NAPs demonstrate that the Council guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States are taken into account at least in the technical / textual structuring of NAPs. However,

without a statistical comparison and a deeper understanding of one country, it is difficult to say to what extent.

The NAPs give some statistical information of the economic and employment situation of one country. This information consists of general economic and employment related indicators but also performance indicators of public policy systems, such as a public employment system (PES), educational system or children's day care. The quantitative target indicators for the Council's employment guidelines are processed explicitly in the NAPs, and it looks that these numerical targets⁷ are also taken more seriously when the policies are implemented. Nonetheless, from the point of view of research, it is easier to use other specific statistical sources than the figures given in the NAPs because of their clarity and comparability.

The most difficult thing in analysing the NAPs is to disentangle the political rhetoric from the social facts. To be able to do this one needs a thorough understanding of one country and its history and state of the art situation in the field studied. There are countries with historical processes of building welfare states of the Nordic type with the contributions of the state (like Finland and Denmark), countries in which the welfare and employment policies are based more on entitlements related to crafts and family responses (Austria and Netherlands) and countries which are in a transitional phase, building their basic social and employment policies in the place of traditional communities and trying to reach the "requirements" of the EU (Spain). For example, many common and well-adjusted policy practices of the Nordic Countries are currently under construction in Spain (e.g. the tripartite system of employment contracts and universal basic level social policies targeted to all). Thus, when comparing countries, a researcher must be aware of these different development points of the policies in each studied country.

From the point of view of Wellknow and its research objectives, we must be especially aware of the different stages of development in the field of Knowledge Based Society and Gender Mainstreaming. The NAPs do not give an answer to how advanced the services (such as PES) of one country are in their use of ICT and provision of new types of services. They do not tell anything about penetrations and use of ICT equipment and services among their population. It is impossible to say after reading the NAPs on what level of development as a KBS each country is. And it is as difficult is to evaluate how Gender Mainstreaming has been implemented in each country, especially if it is not defined conceptually anywhere. There are several ways to understand GM or, as it is in most cases, "gender equality":

1. Sometimes it is understood as a natural 'gender neutral' consequence of universal social policies: universality also means that both sexes are treated similarly when implementing services and measures.

⁷ Numerical targets: a) An overall employment rate of 67 % in 2005 and 70 % in 2010, an employment rate for women of 57 % in 2005 and 60 % in 2010 and an employment rate of 50 % for older workers (55 to 64) in 2010. b) Every unemployed person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment in the case of young people and 12 months of unemployment in the case of adults in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job, or other employability measure, combined where appropriate with ongoing job search assistance. c) By 2010, 25 % of the long-term unemployed participate in an active measure in the form of training, retraining, work practice, or other employability measure. d) By 2010 at least 85 % of 22-year olds in the European Union should have completed upper secondary education and the European Union average level of participation in life-long learning should be at least 12,5 % among the adult working-age population (25 to 64 age group). e) To provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90 % of children between three years of age and the mandatory school age, and to at least 33 % of children under three years of age.

2. There is specific legislation and statutes related to gender equality, and it is not always clear whether these statutes have any effect on real social life.
3. One easy way to tackle gender issues is to start pilot projects and programmes (usually with ESF funding) that try to find new ways and innovations to answer the challenges of EES and its Employment Guidelines.
4. Gender Mainstreaming can be understood as a good practice of enlightened administration in gender issues and policy implementation.

Also, it is said that specific statistics related to gender equality issues are an inseparable part of GM; without the proper statistics it is impossible to implement gender-mainstreamed policies. Even the NAPs typically include highlighted statistical indicators of pay gap, reconciliation of work and family life and basic employment indicators (such as unemployment) subdivided by sex.

A good example of the rhetorical and textual character of NAPs is the Spanish way of thinking about the role of GM in societal life, evident in this explanation of “The current situation of Guideline 6: GENDER EQUALITY”: “Gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination for reasons of sex has been incorporated into all phases of political decision-making, as well as in the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions resulting from those decisions.” (Spanish NAP 2003, 25) Finland too points out the following: “In line with the mainstreaming principle, all decision-making processes with an impact on the labour market must start scrutinizing impacts on men’s and women’s job-creation, working conditions, professional gender segregation, promotion of the equal pay principle, and career advancement.” (Finnish NAP 1999, 50-51) In some cases one can read these rhetorical claims as a serious will enter into issue, but in some cases they are just political false statements without concrete content and putting to practise.

The NAPs are probably passable documents for analysing political ideologies of the ruling elites and groups around them. In this sense they bring out how social conceptions and problems are understood within the elites and how they are politicized. We are interested in how the KBS and the GM is defined (if defined at all!) and what kind of employment and public policies are thought to be influential when trying to develop these areas. Also, one must note that The European Employment Guidelines of the Council as one kind of political outcome have affected strongly the NAPs and their policy argumentation. So we need a methodology and scientific perspective with which it is possible to observe rhetorical policy documents and make a difference between rhetorical statements and social facts both on the EU and country level. Although social facts are usually socially constructed, at least in an international comparison of countries, we need some kind of factual (usually positivistic) base to make this comparison possible. Therefore the statistical part of Wellknow in Work Package 3 is very important.

3.3. General employment policy line in the NAPs

3.3.1 Finland

Economic background

During the NAP period of 1998-2003 Finnish economy rose strongly, mainly due to the success of the electronics industry, metal industry and private services. Especially the strong export based GDP growth of the late 90's solved many problems, such as the mass unemployment, originating in the circumstances of 'great depression' of the early 1990's. The unemployment rate has fallen from its post-recession peak of 16.6% in 1994 to 9.1% in 2002. The economic recovery also gave an opportunity to keep the public sector employment stable. Also the IT services sector grew strongly in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Between 2001 and 2002 there was a decline in the GDP growth from which the country is now coming off and reaching a GDP growth of 2-3 %. There are still problems with the export, and the economic growth is to a high degree based on private domestic consumption.

Problems

There are some relevant and long-lasting employment problems in the Finnish employment policy. The Finnish NAP 1998 mentioned the long-term unemployment of ageing people to be the most difficult one. Typical for these unemployed people is that they do not have vocational education relevant in the labour market. This problem has survived to the later NAPs. The central problems of the Finnish labour market are listed in the Finnish NAP of 1998 (p. 12) and they are usually mentioned in the later NAPs too:

- Low demand for labour
- Increasing structural problems of unemployment and the threat of exclusion from the labour market
- Ageing of the work force
- Labour bottlenecks
- Increasing regional differences in the labour markets and employment
- Difficulties in remaining permanently in the labour market
- Low proportion of active compared with passive measures

Besides the fore mentioned problems (p.1), the Finnish NAP of 1999 pointed out that there are problems in equality between different population groups, different regions of the country, and between the sexes. The NAP also underlines the need to fight poverty and social exclusion. The Finnish NAP 2000 (p.1) pointed out that there is a need for preventive measures to combat long-term structural unemployment, involving both tailored employment services and training. Simultaneously there is a need for adequate supply of skilled labour. Besides the fore mentioned problems, the Finnish NAP 2001 (p.2) raised the issue of regional differentiation of labour markets. The 2002 Finnish NAP (p. 4) brought out a lack of skilled labour force and a need to develop structures of life-long learning. Both of these are also connected with young people's transition

from comprehensive school to further education, as well as from training to working life. Besides the long term structural unemployment, the 2003 Finnish NAP (p.4) emphasises the changing demographic structure of the working-age population and the age groups retiring from the labour market, which will in the future be larger than the new generations replacing them.

Policies

When describing the main employment policies and their target areas in addition to the EEG goals (which Finland has fulfilled in many cases and nearly fulfilled in the case of employment rate), the Finnish 1998 NAP (p.8) stated: *“The competitive environment deriving from deregulated trade and new information technology has effected a critical change in the operating conditions of business and industry. This increasingly competitive environment demands greater skills and innovativeness.”* At the same time the remark is made that the taxation of labour must be lowered in the long term and that incentives to make low paid work profitable should be developed. Regarding the ageing workers, revisions in the labour and pension legislation should be made. The aim of these changes is to help ageing workers remain in work, return to work and improve their employability. (Finnish NAP 1998, p.11, 38) Furthermore, the 1998 NAP said that the ensuring of economic growth and especially the growth of the fast-growing intensive know-how production and technology-intensive services is crucial also from the point of view of employment policy (Finnish NAP 1998, p.36).

Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen’s second “rainbow coalition”⁸ government stated, perhaps rhetorically, in its first NAP of 1999 (p.1) that: *“The Government’s social policy is based on the principle of preserving the model of the Nordic welfare state, a factor which is also of importance for women’s employment. The aim is to create a society which makes it possible for everyone to participate actively and be in charge of their own life. Increasing the number of people in work is the best way to ensure sufficient funding for welfare services and social security.”* The target of employment rate was set according to the EEG objectives to 70%. To achieve this, the government said it was necessary to have a competitive wage trend, low inflation rate and a steady growth in wage earners’ purchasing power. The taxation solutions would support a moderate wage agreement between social partners. A disciplined fiscal policy would reduce the public debt. (Finnish NAP 1999, p.2)

In the Finnish NAP 2000 (p.1) it is noted that *“the current Action Plan is specifically designed to improve the employment rate, the supply of labour and the functioning of the labour market by raising the level of skills and expertise.”* There is a need to improve the supply of labour by increasing the efficiency of the public employment services⁹ and by giving both the unemployed and new graduates skills which match the needs of the labour market. Also the need to support entrepreneurship is brought out. (p. 24) In this Finnish NAP (p.17) there is a mention of the three Council recommendations given on February 2000 according to which Finland must give special attention to the following factors in its Action Plan for 2000:

⁸ The “Rainbow coalition” means that the main parties in the government are social democrats and conservatives. Also left-wing and greens were included. The centrist regionally oriented “Keskusta” was excluded.

⁹ Although the Finnish PES was reformed in 1998 and 1999 with adjustments in unemployment benefits and individual job seeking plans.

- Raising the average retirement age
- Reducing taxation on work
- Reducing the segregation of the labour market into men and women's occupations

In the 2001 Finnish NAP (p.i) there are some additional employment policy goal areas in addition to the ones mentioned in NAP 1999 (see the list above). One of these is to support especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their personnel in rising up their level of expertise and developing their work communities. The method of life-long learning will be used too. Another addition is the reinforcing of information society: all the population groups must have the necessary skills and provisions for contents, education and training. The use of ICT in companies will be promoted and their favourable operational environment must be secured. The Finnish NAP 2001 (p.ii) outlines a comprehensive and unified life-long learning strategy. According to its rhetoric “*all citizens should possess the basic knowledge and skills needed to function at work and in society at large, and they should also possess the ability to further increase their skills and knowledge*”

The Finnish 2002 NAP (p. 4) emphasised the functioning of labour markets and the availability of labour. In the booming economy of 2001 there was a growing demand of skilled labour especially in the IT-services, electronics industry and private services. The functioning of labour markets could be achieved by raising the skills and mobility of labour and by keeping job seekers active. Also, there is a need for national, regional and local cooperation to ensure the functioning. This is also in line with the EEG target of 70% employment rate. To achieve this rate in the future the labour market reserves must be activated with help of incentives to avoid early retirement. Preparations for immigration of foreign labour must be started too.

The Finnish NAP of 2003 is the first NAP of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen’s centrist - social democratic government. The political expectation is that there will be more regional policy investments, because the centrist “Keskusta” has traditionally advocated rural and sparsely populated areas of Finland. The government declares (NAP 2003, p.3): “*The main economic policy goal of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen’s Government is to raise employment by 100,000 by the end of the electoral period 2003-2007. Strong growth in employment is essential if a 75 per cent employment rate is to be achieved by the end of the following period, which will end in 2011. The Government’s aim is to reduce unemployment and raise employment in all regions of Finland.*” The methods of this government in supporting employment look similar to those in the previous NAPs. A remarkable change will be in PES services: The employment services will be reformed through the founding of new ‘labour force service centres’ to cater for unemployed people with particular difficulties in finding work. Also, there is a stronger emphasis on supporting entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the government states clearly that people must stay longer in work and that there is a need for immigration of labour force. Although the employment rate of women is high in Finland, there is still clear gender segregation in occupations, labour market sectors and in salaries. The Government will set up a national action programme for equality for the period of 2004-2007. (Finnish NAP 2003, p. 3-4) The need to change the passive “labour market support”¹⁰ benefit to be more activating is stated more clearly than before. A concrete proposal is to add a tax-free and non-

¹⁰ The Labour Market Support is a money allowance including a work training element without extra pay. It is reserved for those who do not belong to insurance based unemployment support systems.

need assessed maintenance allowance component to the support and to encourage people to take part in active programmes. Furthermore, for those receiving labour market support, an 'activity precondition' would be added after a specific period of unemployment, making participation in an active programme a precondition for continued reception of the support. (NAP 2003, p.13)

3.3.2 Austria

Economic background

Austria states in its first NAP 1998 (p. iv) that the economic situation is exceptionally good despite the previous year's modest deterioration. Unemployment rate (4.4%) is among the lowest and employment rate among the highest (65%) in the European Community. But there are structural changes, which are causing job losses in certain sectors. It is indicated that the textile and clothing industries, the food, drink and tobacco sector, the raw materials production and the construction industry are losing jobs. (Austrian NAP 1998, p. 17) The 2000 Austrian NAP (p.1) mentions that the economic growth was 2.2% in 1999 and it was mainly caused by domestic demand, but there were signs of improving export and the industrial situation. The economic growth resulted in an increase in employment and it was mostly (2/3) women who benefited from this rise. A growing sector was services, but there was a high share of part-time jobs. For the first time since 1994, there was a decline in unemployment in 1999. The unemployment rate of women declined more than that of men in 1999, but was still higher (6.9%) than that of men (6.5%). The Austrian NAP 2003 (p.2) says that the world economy is slow to recover from the economic downturn of 2001. The economic situation will not improve significantly in 2003. The economy is expected to grow by 0.6% in the first half of 2003 and by around 1.4% in 2004. The unemployment rate is expected to increase slightly to 4.4% in 2004. The percentage of long-term unemployed is one of the lowest in the EU countries in Austria (Austrian NAP 2003, p. 6).

Problems

The Austrian NAP 1998 (p. 1-4, 14, 17) outlines some employment related problems. One of these is that the employment rate among older workers is well below the EU average, and there is a growing unemployment rate in the age cohorts preceding the retirement age. Also the long-term unemployment is rising slightly. The labour costs are considered too high and there is a need for a tax reform to make the taxes and duties more employment friendly. Furthermore, there is an intension to reduce seasonal unemployment, especially in the tourist industry and to prevent youth unemployment with active measures. The forecasted structural change will cause large job losses in certain sectors and there is a need to create new jobs especially in the fields of welfare and business services.

The Austrian NAP 2000 (p.1-2) lists the following as employment problems: 1) the declining employment in the secondary sector (lost 7,300 jobs); 2) the labour market situation of people in the mid and later years of active life (unemployment rate of over 50-year olds was 10.4% in 1999); 4) the long-term unemployment (although the proportion of the long-term unemployed was far below

the EU average (29.2% vs. 49.4%); 5) the youth unemployment and 6) the significant employment gender gap. Due to the last mentioned problem, there is a strong need of measures facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life (Austrian NAP 2000, p. 31).

The Austrian NAP 2003 (p.3) mentions that the major challenge for the Austrian labour market is to raise older workers' employment. Therefore the Austrian Parliament has adopted a pension reform package and measures to increase older workers' employment rates. Also, it quotes (p.4) the 2nd National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2003-2005, listing the high-risk groups: women, lone parents, multi-child families, long-term unemployed, low-skilled workers, people with disabilities, over 65-year olds, non-EU citizens and people living in rural areas.

Policies

The Austrian Government sets its employment policy goals in NAP 1998 (p.2) as follows:

- To create extra new opportunities for gainful activity
- To cut the level of unemployment
- To help promote equal opportunities for men and women
- To make the proven training and employment system flexible, innovative and permeable in the interests of dynamic structural adjustment
- To promote a new culture of self-reliance.

The raising up of employment rate is necessary for safeguarding the social security system in the long term. For this reason it is important to guarantee equal rights for both women and men. A more concrete employment policy goal is that further and initial training be improved. Suitable qualifications can reduce the risk of unemployment. A continuous improvement of the whole educational system is closely connected with the labour market performance. The improvement of the "dual system" of training and life-long learning possibilities for less-qualified workers are among the Government's main concerns. Investment in the human capital of labour force is a major strategic consideration in a modern policy, so as to promote employment and attract investment. Technical infrastructure (transport, technology, information technologies, etc.) is also essential in improving long-term supply-side conditions and stabilising demand trends. This is closely connected with technology, research, innovation and environmental policies. In addition to an expansion of existing businesses, new start-up enterprises and self-employment should be encouraged and supported. To stimulate the demand for labour, labour costs must be reduced with the aim of an employment friendly tax reform. Also, it is said that labour-market policy must be switched from passive income substitution measures to a more active approach to encourage those who actively seek jobs. This also means a more active and counselling role for the PES. (Austrian NAP 1998, p. iv, 3)

There is also the regional perspective of supporting economically weak regions and deprived urban areas. With the Regional Structural Pacts it is possible to get financial support from the Federal Government to build up social and infrastructure projects on the provincial and municipal level (Austrian NAP 1998, p.16). Special outplacement foundations (Arbeitsstiftungen) were building up for those workers affected by the structural change of certain industries. In these each individual is offered a tailored package of career guidance, training and specialisation, assistance in job search or starting an independent business. (Austrian NAP 1998, 17, 33)

In the Austrian NAP 2000 (p.2-3) the key areas of Austria's employment policy in 1999 and 2000 were listed as follows:

- **Fighting youth unemployment** includes the safety net (*Auffangnetz*) for apprenticeship-seekers, new apprenticeship initiatives and additional tax incentives for employers to train apprentices. Future-oriented vocational training and the development of the dual training system are essential too. In school education a special focus will be IT and communications technology training.
- Extended **active labour market policies** resulted in more than 48,300 people participating in measures in the course of 1999 (the 1998 average was 38,400 people). In addition to new skills training measures in information and communication technology, the upgraded "ComeBack 99" action created new impulses for long-term unemployed and disadvantaged persons. The project "**Integra**" is being developed to help integrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market by providing job openings in the public and semi-public sector
- As to improving **women's labour market situation**, Austria fulfilled the target quotas for women by improving women's labour market opportunities through skills training. Measures were taken to extend institutional childcare or to introduce new parental leave regulations. The gender mainstreaming approach was further improved and strengthened by the NAP 1999. A significant characteristic of women's employment situation is a strong growth in part-time jobs.
- The difficult situation for **older workers** in the labour market was the reason for introducing the "policy package for older workers" (regarding working hours, partial pensions, efficient use of the early warning system and a wider assessment basis for older jobless)
- The **tax reform of 2000** introduced a number of policies designed to foster employment and investment in human resources.
- **Developing entrepreneurship** is done by easing access conditions and administrative procedures (unified plant law, one-stop-shop, electronic application procedure for business start-ups), and by strengthening the equity position of entrepreneurs (venture capital, tax concessions). Reducing non-wage labour costs is another central component of the Austrian government's policy drive.

In addition to measures mentioned in the previous NAPs, the 2003 Austrian NAP (p.9-11, 14, 17) report that there is a need to modernise labour market institutions. This means that the public employment service AMS must be "streamlined" and reorganised and the unemployment spells reduced to a maximum of 90 days. It is necessary too to increase the R&D spending. The tax reforms are progressing, comprising the following targets: a reduction of costs related to labour, a major simplification of the tax system and reduced taxation of profits of individually owned firms. Moreover, there are proposals related to the reconciliation of work and family life, which gives new entitlements to parents who have children under school age. A comprehensive life-long learning strategy is presented as a part of the Austrian Government Programme.

3.3.3 Denmark

Economic background

The economic situation in Denmark was good according to the Danish NAP 1998 (p. 2, 7). The past 5 years there was a stable economic growth and an economic optimism. It was the time of reforming the Danish welfare society of fair distribution of prosperity. There was a marked increase in the number of persons in employment (170,000 persons, 6 ½%) mainly in the private sector. Unemployment was reduced from 13 to a little over 7%. The long-term unemployment fell by 50%

and youth unemployment was under 5%. The 2000 Danish NAP (p.1-2) stated that Denmark continued its stability-oriented economic policy with an aim to ensure a continuing high level of employment and high-standard welfare society. The high level of employment is needed to ensure the financing of the welfare society. The economic policy underpins structural reforms in the fields of taxation and labour market policy. The fall in unemployment continued down to 4%, the overall fall since mid-1990s being 50%. The growth in employment slowed down in 1999 and was 0.7 per cent in 1999, compared with just above 2 per cent both in 1998 and in 1997. The employment rates in Denmark are clearly much higher than the future targets set for the European Union; Denmark is already meeting the common targets. The Danish NAP 2003 (p. 4-5) describes that in March 2002 unemployment was about 140,000 persons, corresponding to 4.9 per cent of the labour force. This was the lowest level in over 25 years. Since then unemployment has increased by over 30,000 persons. This development reflects the economic recession but also a significant fall in activation measures for the unemployed.

Problems

It is difficult to find any employment related problems in the Danish NAP 1998, but upgrading of skills and training of the labour force were mentioned to be essential instruments for the creation of more and better jobs and for responding to the future challenges. Training must also be provided to persons without formal qualifications to perform in modern jobs. It is also a great challenge to create opportunities for those groups which have not benefited from the economic prosperity. More intensified measures shall be taken to help people who have e.g. health problems and increasing risk to become long-term unemployed. People who have already fallen into the social services system and who are facing a life on passive support shall be given better possibilities for participating in working life by the creation of more flexi-jobs. (Danish NAP 1998, p. 8, 10) The 2000 Danish NAP (p. 2-3) saw the ageing of people in the future as the main economic challenge. The Danish economy is facing shifts in the demographic structure, creating pressures for public financing and pension schemes. This is repeated in the 2003 Danish NAP (p.5-6), which states: *“The main elements of the Government’s medium-term economic strategy are the tax freeze and the continuation of the reduction of public debts so that the fiscal policy will be robust and the Danish economy thus prepared for the expected ageing of the population. This is estimated to require a surplus on public finances of between 1.5 and 2.5 per cent of GDP on average from 2003 to 2010.”*

Policies

In Danish employment policies the active line in the labour market policy was to be strengthened in the NAP 1998 (p.3, 9-11, 41). All unemployed persons will be offered of a job or a training position within 12 months of unemployment. All young persons will be offered one within 6 months of unemployment. Efforts that help create a broader and more flexible labour market will be prioritised. There are many initiatives against youth unemployment and in many of them the idea is to give youth proper vocational education and skills instead of giving them benefits. The idea of life-long learning is adopted and the aim is to guarantee a possibility for life-long education for all. The background for the life-long learning is the dynamic change of job requirements resulting from the technological development. The establishment of a larger number of student places has strengthened training and continuing education activities. The aim is also to increase the share of young persons in youth education, to reduce the dropout rate and to improve the quality of

educational and training programmes. Families with small children should be given better possibilities to reconcile family and working life. The tax policy must ensure that it will always pay to work and that entrepreneurship is payable too. The tax system must be employment friendly. There is also a job rotation scheme in Denmark. The aim of this scheme is to allow staff members of enterprises to take up further training or education, while unemployed persons replace them during their absence.

The Danish NAP 2000 (p.3-4) pointed out again that *“One of the important long-term challenges which the Danish economy is facing are the shifts in the demographic structure which will entail a need for consolidation of public finances and efforts to turn the trend towards early retirement from the labour market. In addition, there are requirements for a modernisation of and development of new management instruments in the public sector.”* The most important targets for the economic and employment development up to year 2005 were:

- **The growth of public sector employment is to be moderated** compared with recent years.
- **The labour force is to be increased** significantly. The increase is presumed to be about 80,000 persons from 1998 to 2005.
- **Unemployment is to be stabilised at a level of about 5 per cent** of the labour force (national definition) and at the same time the development in wages should be moderated.
- **The tax burden must be reduced.**
- The reforms of the labour market, the **early retirement scheme** and the tax system must be phased in as planned.
- Labour market measures are to be strengthened, among other things by **improving the quality and effectiveness of activation measures, education/training programmes and the PES**, as well as continued modernisation of the labour market systems.
- It has been decided to **change the system of adult vocational training and continued training**. The system will be simplified and - to a higher degree - targeted to the needs of the labour market, thus ensuring that the formal competences among those with the lowest level of skills and qualifications be built up.
- The development of the inclusive labour market should be continued.
- Preventive measures should be strengthened with the purpose of **limiting the number of persons going on disability pension.**

In the 2003 Danish NAP of the new Government of Rasmussen (p.4, 6) it is noted that Denmark already satisfies the Lisbon criteria of employment. The objective is to obtain a further employment growth of 60,000 persons from 2003 to 2010. This will be achieved partly through higher participation rates of specific groups, including gender, age and ethnic origin (ethnic Danes, immigrants and descendants) and partly through lower unemployment. Again it is stated that concrete measures have been taken to reduce taxes on earned income with the purpose of increasing the incentive to work. The Danish NAP 2003 (p. 6) presents the Government's national economy objectives up to 2010 as follows:

- **Solid surpluses on the public finances**, which will ensure the robustness of the fiscal policy and a significant reduction of public debts as percentage of GDP from 2000 to 2010.
- **Good framework conditions for private savings**, which – together with surpluses on the public finances – will lead to a gradual reduction of foreign debts.
- **Low and stable inflation** of less than 2 per cent per year.
- **Tax freezes.**
- **Reduction of taxes on earned income** in the form of an employment allowance and a higher threshold for middle-bracket taxation.
- **Real growth in public consumption** of 0.7 per cent in 2004 and 0.5 per cent from 2005 to 2010.
- **Efficiency promoting measures in the public sector.**
- **Increase in employment** through higher labour market participation and lower unemployment.

Interesting specialty in relation with the other countries is the Danish Government's need to reduce sickness absence. This is connected with a higher degree of job satisfaction and improved job content. The aim is to reduce the number of industrial accidents and to promote a better working environment by focusing on safety and health at work. The Government has submitted a paper on sickness absence and presents a broad range of measures which may contribute to reducing absence due sickness. (Danish NAP 2003, p. 10)

3.3.4 The Netherlands

Economic background

The Dutch labour market developed relatively favourably between the years 1994 and 1997. Employment grew by 2 percent per annum. The growth was much more rapid in the Netherlands than in the neighbouring countries. The trend was expected to continue in 1998. Unemployment figures fell by 2 percentage points to 6.5% of the working population. (Dutch NAP 1998, p. 2) This favourable trend continued and in 1999 and the economy grew by 3.6%. This meant an increase in employment and labour market participation and a decrease in inactivity. Unemployment continued its downward trend and was 4% of the labour force in 1999. (Dutch NAP 2000, p. 4) In the Dutch NAP 2003 (p. 2, 4) the situation has changed and the growth in the Dutch economy has slowed down considerably, partly as a result of the downturn in the world economy. The economy is not expected to grow over the course of 2003 as a whole. This follows the recorded growth rate of 0.2% in 2002. A recovery is predicted for 2004, with a growth for that year forecast at 1%. The impact of the downturn on the labour market is not felt immediately, although the unemployment rate is expected to rise from 3.9% in 2002 to 6³/₄% in 2004, which means that 238,000 more people will be jobless. Employment will fall by 1¹/₄% in 2003 and by three quarters of a percent in 2004. As a result the ratio of inactive to active people (I/A ratio) will increase from 66.3% in 2002 to 72.5% in 2004.

Problems

One of the employment related problems mentioned in the Dutch NAP 1998 (p. 4) is long-term unemployment, which accounted for half of the unemployment pool. Unemployment was largely concentrated towards the lower skilled and immigrant groups. Especially the unemployment rate amongst the immigrant groups is two to four times higher than amongst the indigenous population. 44% of the unemployed population does not possess a basic qualification. At the same time there are imminent labour shortages in some parts of the market, particularly amongst the higher-qualified groups. The employment rate of women (47%) is considerably lower than the employment rate of men (74%). The employment rate of older groups (between 55 and 65 years of age) is low in the Netherlands too, with only one in four of this age category still in active employment. Many older persons have left the labour market either through early retirement, disablement or unemployment schemes.

The 2000 Dutch NAP (p. 5, 9-10) saw that, in addition to an increasing demand for labour, there was at the same time a large unexploited supply of labour. The exceptionally low labour participation rates of older people are also repeated in this NAP. Although the level of employment among women increased from 39% in 1990 to over 51% in 1999, it is still low compared with the level of employment among men (76% in 1999). The 2003 Dutch NAP (p. 4) argued that, in addition to the economic downturn, there were problems in the country's competitiveness, which was connected to a rise in unit labour costs, which were about 10% higher than those of competitors in the Euro Zone. Unemployment among young people rose to 8.7% in 2002 and the number of business start-ups has been falling since 2000. The European Council recommended the Netherlands that it ought to work in close cooperation with its social partners to build up life-long learning policies in order to tackle inactivity and to prevent low skilled workers from drifting out of the labour market. Furthermore, the Council recommended that there was a need to improve the transparency of the benefit system both nationally and locally. Tax-based measures should be used instead of subsidies, and disability schemes must activate those who already receive benefits. (Dutch NAP 2003, p. 16-17)

Policies

In Dutch employment policies (Dutch NAP 1998, p. 5) it was seen necessary to keep the working population in employment and simultaneously take advantage of the unused potential by increasing the outflow from social security schemes and participation of women and older people. This means e.g. the removing of all existing barriers of female participation, such as difficulties in combining work and care responsibilities. A move away from long-term benefit dependency is also necessary. The participation of lower skilled and immigrant groups requires particular attention. These persons must be reintegrated into the employment process, both by means of major organisational modernisation and through a pro-active labour market and social security policy. There was also a need to ease up the tax burden on labour, concentrating in particular on the lower wage scales. (Dutch NAP 1998, p. 6) Vocational training of the unemployed, particularly the young unemployed, is emphasised. Attention is being focused on how to combine and coordinate training or vocational education, workshops and work experience. (Dutch NAP 1998, p. 7, 9)

In the 2000 Dutch NAP (p. 7) the main policy tasks for the Netherlands for the period ahead were:

- To take advantage of the favourable economic outlook and the high number of vacancies to bring about a **structural reduction in the number of people dependent on benefits** (especially among the long-term unemployed).
- **To promote labour participation among older workers, women and ethnic minorities.**
- **To enhance the quality of labour.**

The tax system is being reformed and this will substantially reduce the tax burden on labour. The supply of labour must be stimulated by individually tailored measures and policies targeted especially to the long-term unemployed, older groups and ethnic minorities. To increase the labour participation of women, it is necessary to make it easier to combine work and family responsibilities. Work must be made financially more attractive and the transition from benefits to jobs must be simplified, the poverty trap issue must be tackled. The outflow of older workers and invalids from the labour force must be brought down. The quality of labour must be enhanced, because in the next few years it is expected that the demand of highly qualified personnel will

increase. Life-long learning is also important for keeping skills up to scratch and further improving them throughout a person's working life, and for adapting the skills to changing economic, social and technological circumstances. It is also important to train low-skilled people without basic qualifications. (Dutch NAP 2000, p.8) Large city development programmes and territorial employment pacts were started (Dutch NAP 2000, p.17). The Government's business development programme aimed at following entrepreneurship policy measures (Dutch NAP 2000, p. 16):

- **To offer general business skills** with requirements regarding technology management skills and technical skills.
- **To develop risk capital markets.**
- **To help young people in educational programmes learn how to run a business.**
- **To support attempts to break into foreign markets.**
- **To start a networking and coaching programme** and various projects **for new techno-businesses** at the local and regional level.
- **To support entrepreneurship among women and ethnic minorities.**

The Dutch NAP 2003 (p.5) mentions again the policies related to the employment rate of older people, ethnic minorities and work-disabled people. There must be a drastic reform of the invalidity insurance system. The unemployment benefit scheme must also be more activating. The qualifying requirements for receiving unemployment benefit are to be tightened up and the period of entitlement to benefit is to be reduced. Everyone who is of the right age and who is able to work must actively participate in the labour market. One objective of the Government is to increase the number of women in employment to 65% by 2010. The Government is again seeking ways of making it easier for employees, both female and male, to combine work and family responsibilities. Youth unemployment too is one of the main concerns of the Government. By 2006 the government also wishes to see a 30% reduction in the number of young people with no basic qualifications, compared with the situation in 1999. The intention is that every unemployed young person should be in work and/or studying within six months of unemployment.

A new aspect of the policy aimed at higher labour force participation is reintegration policy. It can prevent people becoming dependent on benefits in the long term. This policy is aimed at everyone who has difficulties in finding work without help. In the reintegration market, reintegration agencies help economically inactive people find a permanent job. The Government also plans to introduce a new Work and Social Assistance Act with a purpose of continuing the deregulation and decentralisation of reintegration budgets, subsidised work and social assistance. The new legislation will give municipalities full policymaking and financial responsibility for reintegration of people on social assistance. "Anyone who can participate, must participate" is the motto mentioned in the NAP. (Dutch NAP 2003, p. 6) The Government also wants to raise labour productivity by enhancing the economy's capacity for innovation, by strengthening human capital and by fostering economic dynamism. The latter is done by promoting entrepreneurship and improving the functioning of the market. More money is also put also education. The Innovation Platform will help the government and leading authorities in the business and academic communities to discuss ways of increasing innovation in the Netherlands. (Dutch NAP 2003, p.8)

3.3.5. Spain

Economic background

There is no economic analysis in the Spanish NAP 1998, it only says that the Spanish labour market is intensely dynamic (Spanish NAP 1998, p. 7). The 2000 Spanish NAP (p. 3-5) stated that, over the course of 1999, the Spanish economy maintained a high rate of growth and created significant employment without generating economic imbalances. The GDP growth reached 3.7% as an annual average, as a result of the steadily increasing domestic demand and a high rate of gross formation of fixed capital. Inflation continued on a downward trend. The GDP growth estimate for the year 2000 was 3.7%, and an average of 3.3% for the period of 2001-2003. For the first time ever, the number of employed was over 14 million, and the number of unemployed was 2,562,000 (an unemployment rate of 15.4%, the lowest since 1981). The female employment rate increased by 1.2 points to 49.9% (48.0% in 1997) and the male rate increased by 0.7 points to 77.4% (76.0% in 1997). The rate of unemployment fell by nearly 3 points to 15.9% (20.8% in 1997), although the female rate, at 23.1% (28.3% in 1997), is still double the male rate. The increase in employment varied greatly according to the region. The rates of employment present significant regional differences: while in the Balearic Islands it is over 50%, in Asturias it is under 35%. The number of people paying to the social security system increased by 762,032 (5.52%) and this is a new all-time high of 14,578,326.

The Spanish NAP 2003 (p. 3-4) informs that in 2002 the Spanish economy grew at the rate of 2%, against the figure of 2.7% for 2001. Despite this slowdown, the pace of growth was superior to that of the Euro Zone as a whole. The lower rate of growth in 2002 was mainly due to a slowdown in domestic demand, together with a slightly more negative contribution from foreign trade. Employment indicators reflected an upward trend in 2002, although unemployment is slowly rising. Figures for the Spanish economy in the first six months of 2003 give cause for reasonable optimism for the economy in 2003 and the growth is expected to reach 2.3% in 2003 and 3% in 2004.

Problems

The Spanish NAP 1998 (p.8, 13) saw two employment related problems in Spain. One was that there were so many long-term unemployed that there were problems in focusing measures to the medium-term unemployed. Lack of appropriate vocational qualifications was seen as one of the major obstacles for those seeking work. The unemployment rate is markedly higher among those with no training or with unsuitable or insufficient training. More than 70% of the registered unemployed have not studied beyond the basic education level. The Spanish NAP 2000 (p. 5-6) saw that the approval of the Employment Strategy in Luxembourg represented a greater challenge for Spain than for the other countries, because Spain had to achieve the same objectives in terms of employment, but started from higher rates of unemployment. Moreover, the low rates of activity compared with the European Union average were seen as employment problems, and so were the differences in the rates of employment between men and women and between the autonomous regions. The low activity and employment rates, the high level of unemployment and the high level of temporary employment were considered to fundamentally affect women. There is a need to improve the access of women to the labour market, to start actions relative to eliminating

discrimination at work and to make working and family life compatible. (Spanish NAP 2000, p.58)
The 2003 Spanish NAP does not explicitly announce employment related problems.

Policies

The Spanish NAP 1998 (p. 10) presented the need to coordinate the employment policies ran by the Central Government, Autonomous Communities and other public institutions. For this purpose a new management model was introduced, based on the following principles:

- a) **Adoption of the groups indicated in this National Action Plan as the priority groups for attention;**
- b) Application of **uniform criteria for selecting, managing and monitoring the employability measures received by beneficiaries;**
- c) Use of **a centralised register of job-seekers** containing information on the individuals assisted and the measures they receive, thus permitting personalised monitoring of job-seekers who have received employability measures.

The need to develop and renew the Spanish PES system is mentioned in the NAP. Before participation in further employability measures is offered, each unemployed jobseeker will be interviewed in depth to find the circumstances that have prevented him/her from finding a job. Specific measures were planned for under-25s, over-25s and persons with disabilities. The focus was on increasing the number of dual training places provided by Special Employment Centres, on supporting self-employment and on offering participation in training courses. Also, incentives were planned that would encourage employers to recruit on permanent contracts groups faced with special difficulties in integrating into the labour market. These incentives would be reductions in employers' social security contributions and structural transitions from passive to active policies.

The Spanish NAP 1998 (p. 14) introduced some reforms for the combat against youth and long-term unemployment:

- **New Employment Workshops Programme** (“*Talleres de Empleo*”). This combines work and training measures for the unemployed over-25s in new sources of work promoted either by public or private non-profit-making bodies. Participants will receive training while at the same time performing work of value to society.
- **Craft School Workshops** (“*Escuelas-Taller*”) is a vocational training and ‘work of social value programme’. It has a strong emphasis on women and people with disabilities and it promotes employability activities that fit in with the new sources of employment.
- **Decentralisation of the Public Employment Services** is a process that transfers the management of active employment policies from Central Government to the Autonomous Communities. The new model is designed to ensure better personal information and awareness of the needs of the unemployed and of the labour market.

Employment policy will also be developed by help of measures connected with the social economy (Spanish NAP 1998, p. 27-28). This means a promulgation of a new Cooperatives Act, changes in the payment systems of the unemployment benefit, funding and regulating of businesses of the social economy and promoting the creation of “*Cooperativas de Iniciativa Social*” (social initiative cooperatives) in order to foster the recruitment of unemployed workers in caring for dependants. The Spanish NAP 1998 (p.30) also mentioned changes in taxation to foster employment. Among these are the reduction in the rate of corporation tax, relief on inheritance and donations tax, changes to the personal income tax regime and a general reform of personal income tax, so as to reduce the “tax wedge”. This tax reform, which will particularly affect the lowest wages, will especially help unskilled workers, part-time workers and second earners. The Inter-Confederation Agreement on Collective Bargaining was signed on 28 April 1997. This agreement laid down

general criteria for the form and content of collective bargaining and is a contribution to the modernisation of work organisation. (Spanish NAP 1998, p.32) Special measures were also planned for people with disabilities (Spanish NAP 1998, p. 42-43).

Planned employment related policies in the 2000 Spanish NAP were almost identical with the 1998 NAP. An addition was (p.11) a plan to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Measures concentrated on their financing and the reduction of red tape (bureaucracy).

The following policies in the NAP 2003 (p. 6-7) are additions in comparison with earlier NAPs:

- Measures for **the reform of social protection**, such as the extension of unemployment protection to some groups who did not enjoy this up until last year. An example of this is in the agricultural sector where 30,000 workers are now eligible to receive unemployment benefit.
- **Reform of continuous training**, making it available to workers in all companies, especially SMEs.
- **Development of the Vocational Training Act**, to ensure a more skilled active population.
- **Encouragement for the social partners to independently reach agreements**, which contribute to modernising the labour market.
- **Reform of the Risks at Work Act** to reduce the number of workplace accidents, following an agreement reached with the social partners.
- **Support measures for working women who wish to have children**, by offering tax allowances to employers and financial assistance to childcare.¹¹
- **Support measures for the employment of people with disabilities.**

Initiatives are also needed to keep older workers in work. These initiatives could be e.g. part-time work solutions, employer costs reductions and welfare benefit-pay consolidations. Immigration of labour force will be made easier in the future to guarantee an adequate number of labour force. (Spanish NAP 2003, p. 24)

3.3.6 Country comparisons in the field of employment policy

To compare the countries I have prepared some tables according to the commonly agreed NAP criteria. It was not possible to follow the criteria verbatim, but I have tried to involve all the data of interest.

¹¹ This means tax allowances for employers for contracting women returnees after a period spent in childcare after birth giving and a tax exemption of up 1200 €/year for women working with children 0-3.

Table 1: Main target groups in the NAPs	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	-Ageing long-term unemployed -Young unemployed	-Young unemployed in risk of long-term unemployment -Adult unemployed in risk of long-term unemployment -Women -Low-qualified workers of structural change -Youth in education	-Young unemployed -Long-term unemployed -Unemployed without skills -Unemployment benefit claimants	-Women and older people of low participation -Immigrants -Benefit claimants -Low-qualified -Long-term unemployed -Disabled -Young unemployed	-Long-term unemployed -Disabled -Young low-skilled -Low-skilled -Women
NAP 2003	-Young entering the labour market -Older people staying in the labour market -Women	-Unemployed youth and youth without training -Long-term unemployed -Women -Older workers	-Groups of low participation (women, ethnic groups, ageing, disabled) -People having sickness absences	-All fit for work but without work -Groups of low participation (women, ethnic minorities) -Young unemployed -Young low-qualified -Low-skilled workers	-People without unemployment benefits -Low-skilled workers -Women -Disabled -Older workers staying in work

Table 1 presents the main target groups of employment related policies of each country in 1998 and 2003. In 1998 every country aimed policies to against youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. They also sought to make the situation of low-skilled workers and low-skilled unemployed better. Austria and Spain were additionally interested in the women's weaker situation in the labour market. The disabled groups were one of the main target groups in the Netherlands and Spain. Austria's extra interest was youth in the educational system outside the formal labour market. Finland was also interested in the ageing part of its long-term unemployed. The unemployment benefit claimants were seen problematic in Denmark and the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Netherlands had an interest in activating its women, older people, disabled and immigrants to participate more actively in the labour market.

The most remarkable change between 1998 and 2003 has been the ageing of population: Finland, Austria and Spain have started to prepare for keeping older workers in work. Finland is raising up the gender issue and women's situation, the Netherlands has an interest in low-qualified young people and Spain is developing its employability measures for people at a risk of social exclusion. Denmark has changed its direction totally away from the traditional welfare state policies and is directing its 'activating' policies for all groups of low labour market participation. Remarkable is too that in 2003 all countries have women as an important target group while only 2 mentioned this in 1998. This might be a consequence of EEG and it's Pillar IV of Gender Mainstreaming.

Table 2: Future employment growth sectors mentioned in the NAPs	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	-ICT -Metal and engineering -Construction service	-Social and health services -Environment jobs -Business services -ICT -Biotechnology			-Social economy
NAP 2000	-ICT	-Social and health services -Culture, sports and entertainment	-ICT	-Business services -New businesses (ICT, life science)	-ICT -Social economy
NAP 2003	-Business services -Building -Public services	-Environmental sector -Health and social sector		-“New businesses” (ICT, life science)	-Social economy -ICT

Table 2 shows the employment growth sectors mentioned in the NAPs. The interesting observation is that the NAPs seldom manage with concrete branches and industries when arguing their policy contents. Increasingly, the NAPs use terminology of better management, networking, cooperation and competition without concrete definitions. Still the ICT is seen as the growth sector in all countries at least in one year. Spain is relying on social economy and ICT, the Netherlands on ‘new businesses’ with ICT connection and Austria on social and health care services and environmental sector. Finland has traditionally seen the ICT sector growing, but now the trust has moved to more traditional sectors of building and business services. Denmark has not expressed its growing sectors, except for ICT in the 2000 NAP. In the context of growing employment sectors the gender is mentioned only when the ICT sector has expanded and there has been a labour shortage.

Table 3: Changes in employment policies	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998 as a starting point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creating a competitive environment for industries -Skills development policies -R&D policies -Lower labour taxation -Poverty trap measures -Making ageing workers remain in work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promoting equal opportunities for women and men -Skills development policies -Development of whole training and educational system -Development of technical infrastructure -R&D policies -Environmental policies -Supporting of entrepreneurship -Lower labour taxation -From passive to active measures -Regional employment measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Skills development policies -Flexibilisation of labour market -From passive to active measures -Reducing the number of school drop-outs -Reconciliation of work and family life -Poverty trap measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From passive to active measures -Increasing participation of women and older people -Reconciliation of work and family life -Lower labour taxation -Skills development policies -Poverty trap measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Coordination of employment policies -PES development -‘Special employment centres’ -Skills development policies -Economic incentives for employers to employ special groups -From passive to active measures -Social economy -Lower labour taxation -Development of collective bargaining -Supporting entrepreneurship -Supporting stable employment
NAP 2000 most important additions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES development -Supporting entrepreneurship -Reducing gender segregation of labour markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extending institutional childcare -Making ageing workers remain in work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Making ageing workers remain in work -PES development -Development of training system -Disability pension restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increasing participation of ethnic minorities -Individually tailored measures -City development programmes -Supporting entrepreneurship 	
NAP 2003 most important additions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regional employment measures -‘Labour force service centres’ -Supporting labour force immigration -Gender pay gap policies -From passive to active measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES development -Reconciliation of work and family life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lower income taxation -Sickness absence restrictions -Industrial safety measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increasing participation of disabled and young -Unemployment benefit restrictions -Reintegration policy of inactive people -R&D policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extension of unemployment protection -Reducing work accidents -Supporting women with children -Supporting disabled -Making ageing workers remain in work -Supporting labour force immigration

If we analyse the changes in existing labour market policies using **Table 3**, there seem to be 5 background structures behind the policy changes:

1. The fiscal pressures of the welfare state related to the global competition in networked capitalism.
2. The ageing of population and the imagined future lack of labour force leading to the need to keep the employment rate high.
3. The slow ideological continuum from welfare state ideologies to neo-liberal economic argumentation and policies.
4. The need of organisational modernisation of labour market structures in relation with EU policies and global competition.
5. The European Employment Strategy and its guidelines

Finland is all the time developing its PES, trying to make it more market oriented. Enhanced gender policies, in addition to traditional welfare state family policies, are new in Finland too. Finland has also started to support entrepreneurship, regional employment and labour force immigration. Ideologically Finland is moving from ‘passive measures to active measures’. *Austria* is extending its childcare establishments to better respond to the challenges of reconciliation of work and family life. Also the PES is under development and the policies are planned to keep ageing labour force in work. *Denmark* has first expanded its policies, so as to keep the ageing population in work and to develop its training and PES system. The disability pensions are restricted. Later Denmark has concentrated on lowering income taxation and, unexpectedly, on restricting sickness absences and on promoting industrial safety measures – a total turnaround. *The Netherlands* has developed its policies seeking to increase the labour force participation (in addition to women) of ethnic minorities, the disabled and young people. Also, labour market policies are developed so as to provide more individually tailored services, city development programmes are implemented and entrepreneurship is fostered. Later, in addition to R&D policies, there are plans for unemployment benefit restrictions and ‘reintegration’ policies of inactive people. *Spain* is extending its unemployment protection system, as well as supporting women with children and the disabled to a higher degree. Furthermore, Spain seeks to keep the ageing population in work and - like Denmark – tries to reduce work accidents.

3.4. Knowledge Based Society in the NAPs

The NAPs do not explicitly mention KBS as a theoretical background of policies or as a basic concept to argue policy options. Instead, the current society is understood as a global competition society, where the progress requires a highly skilled labour force, low taxation and fluid markets. The KBS aspect becomes evident mainly through a strong emphasis on education on all levels of society. The rhetorical concept for this line of thinking is “life-long learning”. It is argued that, with the training policies mentioned in the NAPs, it is possible to create a society in which every willing person is able to maintain or develop his or hers labour market skills anytime during their labour market career. Also, the basic education, secondary education and higher-level education should be at the highest level in this concept. This goal is supported in many policy ways in the NAP countries, but it is impossible to say how efficient or extensive the policies have been. It is difficult too to compare the quality and quantity of education between each country and between the different educational measures. Also, the idea of life-long learning is very challenging and a great

deal of work is required in the future, so as to create flexible and labour market sensitive educational forms, in which people can participate despite the limitations of workplaces and social benefit systems.

3.4.1 KBS in the Finnish NAPs

The concept

The concept of KBS in the 1998 Finnish NAP (p. 8, 11) was not expressed explicitly, but IT is seen as an actor in the change of operation environment of businesses and industries. The increasingly competitive environment demands greater skills and innovativeness. (p.36). The Finnish NAP of 1999 (p.1) again saw the supposed KBS as an internationally competitive operating environment for capital investments and company operations. Finland is offering a high level of education, technological expertise, sound infrastructure and stable social conditions. Information technology is seen to be applicable in developing health care and social services, and the emphasis in the national information society strategy is mentioned to be in content production. (Finnish NAP 1999, p.5) From the point of view of employment policy it is necessary to offer provisions for life-long learning.

In the Finnish NAP 2000 (p.3) KBS - here mentioned as Information Society - was given a greater emphasis and broader definition, and it was one of the government's central initiatives to add it in the NAP. It was a time of IT boom and hype. The NAP underlines that the Government "*will further reinforce the information society so that all population groups possess the necessary skills and that the provision and content of education and training take the information society into account.*" This is an interesting exception because the specific KBS policies, related to people's IT skills, IT access and equal opportunities in a KBS are not usually expressed in the employment programmes, although these are necessary preconditions for getting by in the labour market. At the end of the citation there is the familiar credo of competitiveness and innovativeness supported by R&D policies.

The Finnish NAP 2002 (p.9, 14) went back to the tradition and showed that the IT boom and hype was over. The credo was again the globalisation of the economy, the competitiveness, innovativeness and functioning of the labour market. In this sense there are strong demands for structural adaptation in industrialised countries. In a small national economy such as Finland, competitive advantages can be created through high-quality expertise and development of innovation systems. Improving the functioning and quality of workplace organisations can support these targets. Life-long learning structures must be built, based on the needs arising from the changes in the population's age structure and competing industries. Life-long learning can affect the functioning of the labour market, the availability of skilled labour and the decreasing of unemployment.

The KBS of the Finnish NAP 2003 is a "training society" with a connection to competitiveness, innovativeness and labour market flexibility. It (e.g. p.9) recognises rapid technological advances in the work content and rapidly changing requirements for training and qualifications. These changes,

along with the emergence of the Information Society, may lead to a polarisation of the workforce. It is important to offer advanced training for all demographic groups, as well as supporting top expertise and high technology. There must be a clear link between successful training, specific skills, life-long learning and occupational development. All occupational groups and people on all educational levels must be ensured job continuity and a guard against employment problems.

The concept of KBS in the Finnish NAPs is understood quite narrowly through training and skills development for the labour markets and its qualifications requirements. The labour markets face global competition of generating products and production innovations, and this competition requires the labour market's functioning as well as skilled labour force. The broader definition of KBS in the Government Programme as well as in domestic information society strategies¹² comprises questions of computer literacy, IT technology access and penetrations, IT infrastructure development and citizenship rights in the KBS. The broader understanding was written in the NAPs of 2000 and 2001 but this "awakening" did not continue later on.

Policies

It looks like the Finnish employment policy's approach in responding to the challenges of KBS is mainly based on labour force training and, rhetorically, on life-long learning. It does not answer the question whether there are real possibilities for most of the population to flexibly choose to go to training or education during their careers in different regional locations. This is the case in the Finnish NAP 1998 (p.11), where vocational training and apprenticeship training is aimed for the young unemployed but also for the needs of the information industry. Also, education must be extended to working life and workplaces (p.13, 28). Teleworking is mentioned as a development target of ESF projects (p.41). A national life-long learning strategy was drafted at the end of 1997.

In the Finnish NAP 1999 (p.5) IT was planned to be used in the expansion of a welfare cluster and in the creation of welfare and health care services. Again, life-long learning was mentioned to be essential for the further development of employment and labour markets (p.21). The IT sector was booming and, in this 1999 Finnish NAP (p.29), it was mentioned that an additional expert training programme for the IT industry would be started, so as to rapidly alleviate the shortage of labour. The updating of Finland's National Information Society Strategy¹³ conducted by the national R&D fund SITRA was mentioned (p.40). The report argued: "*The opportunities of the information society should be exploited in a way that supports the competitiveness of Finnish businesses and the diversification of social services, while also creating new business opportunities.*"

The 2000 Finnish NAP (p.17) says that training in the information technology and media sector has become fourfold in ten years. Information technology and data communications have been the most

¹² E.g. see Suomen itsenäisyyden juhlarahasto (1998): ELÄMÄNLAATU, OSAAMINEN JA KILPAILUKYKY. Tietoyhteiskunnan strategisen kehittämisen lähtökohdat ja päämäärät. Sitra 206. Helsinki 1998 and Tietoyhteiskunta-asian neuvottelukunta (2000): Suomi tietoyhteiskuntana. Tietoyhteiskunta-asia neuvottelukunnan raportti hallitukselle 14.6.2000. Oy Edita Ab. Helsinki. (National KBS strategies)

¹³ Suomen itsenäisyyden juhlarahasto (1998): ELÄMÄNLAATU, OSAAMINEN JA KILPAILUKYKY. Tietoyhteiskunnan strategisen kehittämisen lähtökohdat ja päämäärät. Sitra 206. Helsinki.

popular subject in further training. (p.22) The Finnish NAP 2000 (p.23) also included section “2.4 Reinforcing the information society” in Guideline 8, and it listed several measures to promote IS both in the fields of education and business. The 2001 Finnish NAP (p. 19) also mentioned deregulation of the ICT service market. Finland has been a forerunner in the deregulation of markets related to ICT infrastructure and services, so as to create competition, new entrepreneurship and service delivery. This has also meant that Finland has adopted a market oriented approach in order to create physical ICT access and to increase service penetrations. On retrospect, it looks like this choice had been a failure at least in the short run and in some fields of ICT penetration. Therefore Finland has dropped to a European middle ranking level in the international ICT statistics.

In the Finnish NAP (p.36) 2002, the KBS issues were almost forgotten and left outside of the skills training and labour market functioning. But regional measures were referred to for first time. Thirty-four regions in different parts of Finland were included in the Programme for Regional Centres. The aim of the programme is to support a balanced regional structure by boosting the strengths of urban areas. Another Centre of Expertise Programme started in 1999, allowing for 14 regional and two networked centres of expertise to be founded. Resources were targeted to the development of internationally competitive sectors.

The 2003 Finnish NAP expresses strong commitment to measures extending and developing training in all areas: life-long learning, learning by doing, adult education, workplace training and apprenticeship training. It also mentions workplace development and telecommuting. The regional policies are clearly expressed in this NAP (p.37). They will strengthen regional competitiveness, competence and strengths, and by means of these policies, regional centres, expertise, innovation policy and sub-regional cooperation will be promoted. The effects of the current Regional Centre Programme are planned to be effective also in sub-areas around them.

*Finland has introduced a very **economic approach** towards KBS: to survive in the global competition, the operational environment of the industries must be flexible and innovative. To guarantee this, the labour force must be highly skilled and the training system flexible. Special labour force training measures are aimed for the growing ICT sector. The life-long learning rhetoric lies behind the development policies of adult and vocational training. The R&D policies are trying to guarantee that there are innovative products to be sold in the world market. Besides the competition-training approach, there are some social views in the development of KBS, such as the aim to develop an ICT supported social services and healthcare sector with seamless service chains, and the approaches of ICT access and citizen support at the turn of the millennium. An exception from the mainstream policies is the regional approach of latest NAPs.*

3.4.2 KBS in the Austrian NAPs

The concept

In its first NAP 1998 (p.14, 17, 20, 22) Austria understood KBS (again implicitly) as training and education. The aim of initial and further training was to make persons more employable and to overcome skills shortages. Life-long learning and continuing training are essential both for personal development and for economic growth. In devising and implementing all such action, schools, universities and training institutions should cooperate closely with workers and employers. The level attained in compulsory schooling must be adequate, both in cognitive terms and in terms of key skills, to provide a basis for life-long learning and to link schooling and working life. The Austrian NAP 1998 (p.31-32) also stated that jobs should be created in the new technologies. This will be done by accelerating the liberalisation of the telecom sector, by public IT access arrangements and by increasing the business use of the Internet. Biotechnology, genetic engineering and environmental technology are seen as future possibilities for Austria. One of the Austria's problems is that production is not particularly geared to high-value technological products, and there are obvious shortcomings in the national innovation system. The stress must be placed more on the competitive strengths of knowledge-based companies. The best future prospects lie with highly qualified, know-how-oriented jobs in addition to R&D spending. (Austrian NAP 1998, p. 44)

The 2000 Austrian NAP (p.5-6) mentioned some projects, one of which provides basic IT know-how and knowledge for beginners. Another project educates the unemployed in such areas as telecommunications, software development and multimedia/Internet. Schooling in information technology has been enhanced in recent years. The measures include appropriately redesigned curricula, additional training in technical computer applications, business-related computer applications, media technology, etc. Special schools for data processing, post-matriculation IT courses and commercial schools with an IT focus was build up. (Austrian NAP 2000, p.10) R&D spending was raised in order to create new jobs and innovations. (Austrian NAP 2000, p.15, 21)

The Austrian NAP 2003 (p.16-17) says, "*The advanced skill level of Austrian labour is one of the major reasons mentioned by foreign companies for having chosen Austria as a business location. Austria's good performance, however, is mainly due to initial education and training.*" Therefore the development of life-long learning and its structures is essential. The Austrian Government is implementing a comprehensive life-long learning strategy. E-learning models, new tax incentives and quality assurance systems will be introduced.

Policies

The KBS related policies in the 1998 Austrian NAP (p.15, 17, 22-23) were mainly in the fields of education and training. There were special measures in youth education, such as enhanced apprenticeship training. School system must be broadened according to the principles of life-long learning, and the continuum from school to vocational education and work must be made as flexible as possible. The development of schools requires suitable training of the teaching staff, obligatory high-quality training and careers guidance at an early stage of studies and quality management in schools. The NAP also mentioned (The Austrian NAP 1998, p.31-32) a need to create jobs in the field of new technologies, which would be helped by:

- **Accelerating telecom liberalisation** (networks to be opened up to new service providers)
- Facilitating **computerised systems in libraries, museums, for university theses**, etc.
- Encouraging the development of **hi-tech telecommunication networks in rural areas**, particularly in areas with low population density
- Creating more legal certainty regarding **the economic utilisation of the Internet**
- Authorising **private television stations**
- Recruiting opportunities offered by **biotechnology and genetic engineering**
- Starting “**Multimedia Business Austria**” programme to underpin the growth of the Austrian multimedia industry
- Creating jobs in **environmental technologies** and by way of environment-oriented innovations.

Another emphasis in the Austrian KBS related policies (Austrian NAP 1998, p.44-45) was the development of knowledge intensive firms and their competitive strengths. This means that there must be highly qualified know-how oriented jobs in Austria. One excellent way of securing and creating jobs is therefore to address the question of knowledge transfer to firms and to create the requisite staffing and material resources and the necessary infrastructure. This can be achieved by a variety of means:

- Creation of a **fund for “skill centres, pump-priming programmes and government initiatives”**.
- Creation of a **patents valorisation agency**: provision of advice and intermediary services with the purpose of commercially exploiting existing patents.
- Greater stress on **technology transfer**: continuation and extension of the “technology transfer” focused programme.
- **Coordination of national resources in certain technology fields**: creation of a programme for building up skill centres to encourage cooperation between science and business in the field of research.
- Greater **research and transfer capacity on the part of colleges of higher education**.
- Facilitation of knowledge transfer in firms by encouraging individual mobility under the “**post-docs-bursary programme**” run by the fund for the promotion of scientific research.
- **Extending the capital base of technology-oriented small and medium-sized businesses** by the provision of special loan conditions in conjunction with equity capital input.
- **Networking of technology centres**.
- **Marketing and technology promotion** by the Association of Austrian Technology Centres (VTÖ).
- More **cluster funding**.
- **Easier access for small and medium-sized businesses to R&D results** at the national and international level.

The Austrian 2000 NAP (p.6, 9-10, 33) again pointed out skills training measures, whose volume is increasing steadily in Austria. In the future people may take educational leaves for three to twelve months, the minimum period having been introduced to foster shorter education or training programmes. The concept of distance teaching and learning at universities, schools (for persons in work) and adult education institutions has been upgraded. Schools are being used as regional learning and knowledge centres, and updated and extended schemes have been developed for adult education. The schooling in information technology is enhanced in schools.

In this NAP (p. 9, 15-16) too the R&D and technology development were considered important for the development of employment. Research allowance is increased, competence centres are established and a R&D subsidy programme for SMEs is planned. An innovation and technology fund has supported the development of ICT technologies, and participation of employees in innovation projects is supported. (Austrian NAP 2000, p.19, 21) The digitising of public services and social insurance institutions is progressing together with private e-business solutions (Austrian NAP 2000, p.33).

The Austrian 2003 NAP (p. 16-18) is again emphasising training issues. The objective of the ‘Pact for youth employment and training’ is to keep at least 40% of the annual class in the dual system and to use various measures to enrol every young person either in apprenticeship, traineeship or in extended education. Skills enhancement of the unemployed people is important, but in this NAP the skills enhancement of employed people is becoming important too. Because of the development of knowledge-based society, a special focus will be on women and older workers in 2003. The Government still tries to develop life-long learning with a comprehensive strategy. New e-learning models, new tax incentives and quality assurance systems will be introduced time and again. Special emphasis will be placed on options to take school leaving exams later in one’s life.

The enhancing of R&D activities is important again in this Austrian 2003 NAP (p. 10-11, 18). The gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP rose from 1.84% in 2000 to 1.95% in 2002. The federal government intends to increase the overall economic expenditure on R&D to 2.5% of GDP by 2006. A national R&D foundation will be established to provide even more money for R&D. Universities will get additional funding for this purpose. The development of e-government initiatives is continuing in the sense of simplifying administrative procedures and reducing regulatory burdens.

In its KBS concept, Austria relies on education and training to make people more employable, to overcome skills shortages and to guarantee economic growth. Besides the adult and vocational education institutions, the ordinary schools are also developed and made work together with vocational education institutions. Austria places a great deal of stress on the development of new, often ICT related, businesses and their support services. Biotechnology and environmental technologies are mentioned too. Related with the businesses, e-business and e-government services are under development. The R&D policies are also emphasised and some regional policies are implemented. Austria has selected a **socio-economic approach**, which focuses more on the skills of individuals and on the development of businesses than it does on the business content and global competitiveness and flexibility. In understanding the KBS there are no significant differences in the different periods, except for the e-business and e-services thinking of the 2000 NAP.

3.4.3 KBS in the Danish NAPs

The concept

The first Danish NAP 1998 (p.42) concluded that it is important to make the concept of life-long learning a realistic opportunity for the majority of the employed labour force. The most important principles for this initiative are: 1) free intake; 2) appropriations to training schools on the basis of demand; 3) participation charges to be lowest for early school leavers and PES clients and 4) generally qualifying education and training programmes. The modernising of the work organisation was important in this NAP (p.58, 60). Well-trained employees are a precondition for an enterprise to be flexible and competitive. Enterprises can draw on the experience of the public employment service system in the field of planning of training activities. Training leaves, combined with job rotation projects, are also appropriate measures for enterprises when upgrading the skills of their employees. Furthermore, new technologies should be introduced, so as to develop corporate

flexibility, and technological information centres and regional advisory units should provide support framework conditions for innovative entrepreneurs.

The 2000 Danish NAP (p.10, 15) saw that: *“Changes in the demand for goods and services, the globalisation, technological progress – with new ways of organising the work in the enterprises - mean that the labour market is constantly changing. Upgrading of skills and qualifications is a necessary pre-condition for the labour force being equipped to meet these challenges. At the same time, this development means heavy demands to the educational and labour market systems, which are to supply the labour needed by the enterprises. This is why education/training is one of the most used activation instruments.”* This means a strengthened active labour market and industrial policy, which produces a better-qualified supply of labour to respond to the increasing demands for qualifications by the enterprises. The opportunities of the labour force will be made better by life-long learning in the form of improvements in the system of adult vocational training and continued training. Development in the field of information technology (IT) is of significant importance for the continued training system for adults. A growing number of work functions include the use of IT, and the lack of IT skills may reduce the possibilities for active participation in the public debate. (Danish NAP 2000, p.28) To ensure a bigger supply of labour, a more flexible organisation of the working hours is needed. To guarantee this, it is important to ensure a better combination of family life and working life and to have access to child care facilities outside normal opening hours. (Danish NAP 2000, p.18)

The 2003 Danish NAP (p.4) says, *“The overall objectives of the employment strategy are full employment, job quality and productivity at work as well as social cohesion and inclusion on the labour market. These objectives should be seen in the light of the Lisbon strategic goal to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.”* According to the Government (p.12) a better matching between job profile and employee profile and better skills and education may contribute substantially to increased productivity at the workplaces. The Government’s action plan on “Better Education and Training” aims at improving the quality of education and training and ensuring a higher degree of flexibility in the education and training system. The emphasis is on guaranteeing all people the possibility of life-long learning and the development of reliable and accepted methods for assessment of individual persons’ actual competences. It should be ensured that all persons have equal opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and other resources, which are necessary in order to cope with working life in a knowledge-based economy. Finally the aim of the “Growth Fund” (VækstFonden) is to stimulate the development of the venture market through investments in venture funds and in enterprises (Danish NAP 2003, p.20).

Policies

When describing the KBS related employment policies in the NAPs, the Danish NAP 1998 (p.34-35, 42-44) is full of detailed descriptions of training schemes and measures, such as:

- For **the youth: ordinary training or specifically arranged training** or other publicly funded, guidance and vocational programmes
- For **the youth: a trainee wage, allowance or a subsidy** 50 per cent of the maximum unemployment benefit, dependent on the type of training.
- **Adult vocational training system (AMU)**, during the training period a training allowance is paid equivalent to the maximum daily cash benefit as well as transport costs to the place of education.

- **Adult and youth apprenticeship systems**
- **Training leaves** with maximum daily cash benefit
- **“Training for all” programme** is to give all young persons (drop outs) the possibility of completing a youth education programme, which corresponds to their needs.

The idea of life-long learning is said to have been (Danish NAP 1998, p.41, 47) a key policy field of action for a number of years in Denmark. To support the development of life-long learning, there has been – besides the large-scaled active labour market training programmes – many initiatives to make higher and further education better. This has meant new building investments and investments in research facilities. The basic research funds for the universities are planned to be increased by 20 per cent over a 5-year period. New initiatives will be taken, so as to strengthen the quality of the Danish education system. These new initiatives include the following:

- Independent quality evaluation of training and subjects
- The establishment of a quality monitoring system
- Enhanced further training of teachers, notably within IT

A job rotation scheme is directly linked to the ordinary placement activities of the public employment service and its activation measures. The enterprise and the public employment service agree on the rotation scheme. Staff members of enterprise go to further training and unemployed persons will form the substitute labour force in the enterprises. (Danish NAP 1998, p.41) In order to modernise work organisations, the Government has created a special fund to promote this goal and enterprises can draw on the experience and knowledge that the public employment service system has in the field of planning of training activities. Training leaves, combined with job rotation projects, will also be appropriate measures for the enterprises when upgrading the skills of their employees. The social partners have agreed to create appropriate settings for distance working and tele-work. (Danish NAP 1998, p.58-59) The Government has proposed a target that at least 50 per cent of all enterprises will have a flexible organisation in five years, compared with today’s 20 per cent. A flexible organisation is characterised by short decision-making channels, autonomous groups, multi-disciplinary environment, management based on values rather than control and monitoring, and stringent strategies for the development of human resources. (Danish NAP 1998, p.60-61) These initiatives fall into five categories, i.e.:

- Access to quality consultancy services
- Access to relevant supplementary training and education
- Interaction between enterprises and higher education institutions
- Research on management and organisation
- Regional co-operation projects on changes.

In addition to the previous NAPs’ traditional large-scale education and training policies including enterprise flexibility and life-long learning, the 2000 Danish NAP (p.7, 11) brought out IT issues. IT has become a compulsory element of all vocational training programmes. The two existing IT schools have started the development of new IT education programmes at different levels (diploma, bachelor and master). The intake on IT educational programmes is to be increased by 1000 students over the next 3-4 years and efforts will be made to increase the share of women. IT has become a compulsory subject in all vocational training programmes. A reform (VEU-reform) of adult and continued vocational training was introduced. The starting point is that the public authorities have the overall responsibility for ensuring relevant continued training possibilities of high quality for all

- irrespective of age, gender and educational background. The reform also sets up a new framework for a vocational training system (AMU-system), with the establishment of a management system for AMU training programmes. Some existing AMU programmes will be changed into training programmes that will be paid by the users. Enterprises will be given a bigger responsibility for the financing of these measures. The increased use of IT in the AMU training programmes will be linked to the technical-occupational elements, which are already the core activity of the AMU system. The reform action plan identifies the following benchmark fields:

- **All training programmes shall be IT updated** on a current basis so as to ensure the necessary technological innovation in line with the innovation and development in the enterprises.
- Initiatives shall be taken to make the development in **the needs for qualifications visible** in relation to education/training institutions.
- **IT should form part of the training as an ordinary instrument** - especially as a training instrument, which may help persons with literacy problems and persons with low-skills. The focus should be on the needs of the low skilled for IT competences.
- The Ministry of Education has taken an initiative seeking to develop supply of special offers of **training in IT competences for teachers**.

(Danish NAP 2000, p.27-29)

In the 2003 NAP (p.25-27) the Government wants mainly to reform the education and training system. ICT issues are not mentioned any more. In its action plan the Government is interested in following themes: promotion of the quality of education/training programmes, recognition of informal and non-formal learning, improvement of interaction between training and practical learning, improvement of educational and vocational guidance and increased focus on short competence development programmes. In 2003 the Danish Parliament adopted a reform of vocational education programmes to ensure a higher degree of flexibility and an increase in competences, as well as seeking to higher degree target the different job profiles on the labour market. A personal training plan is drawn up on the basis of an individual assessment of competences. In 2003 the Danish Parliament also adopted a reform of the adult vocational training system that aimed at ensuring a better cohesion in job-oriented adult and continued training activities. The Government's action plan "Better Education and Training" from 2002 includes the themes described below:

- *Higher professional standards*: The aim is to ensure a high quality in professional standards at all levels of education/training.
- *Flexibility*: Flexibility in connection with a higher degree of recognition of actual skills. This applies to both non-formal and informal learning.
- *Innovation and entrepreneurship*: The educational/training sector should ensure the efficient transfer of new knowledge to Danish enterprises.
- *Management of results and outputs*: The educational and training institutions should be given more freedom and broader powers for increasing the quality of their offers. This freedom should be followed up by a management principle, which includes quality development on the basis of evaluations.
- *Strengthening of cross-sector guidance*: The vocational guidance to young persons who are about to make a choice about their education and occupation should be more coherent and independent of sector and institutional interests.

In addition, the Government intends to reform the public business services system of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises. This will be implemented by a merger of a number of public bodies offering support in this field, a reduction of the number of centres and by including local and regional business centres in the new structure. A net of private counsellors who will offer entrepreneurs free or low-cost counselling and sparring will be set up in co-operation with private consultants, banks, law firms and other business people. (Danish NAP 2000, p.27-29)

The Danish KBS policy written in the NAPs is basically two-fold. Firstly, it is training and education of all citizens in all educational levels. Development and flexibilisation procedures are directed to schools, vocational education and higher education. Secondly, Denmark wants to modernise its enterprises and their work organisations. This means skilling of workers, opening of work organisation for education and initiatives fostering innovativeness. The 2000 NAP also expressed the need of developing peoples' IT skills both within individuals and in educational organisations. Denmark's narrow way of thinking the KBS issues is a **social approach**, because of its support for individuals and its aims to develop work organisations, but there is also economical thinking related to the domestic markets.

3.4.4 KBS in the Dutch NAPs

The concept

The Dutch Government agreed on a national Life-long Learning Action Programme in January 1998. The Dutch NAP 1998 (p.12) said that it involves a coherent policy programme focused on training and vocational education after basic secondary education and has several policy options. ESF resources will be injected for the funding of training programmes. The aim of this ESF scheme is to prevent lower-skilled workers from being made redundant as a result of lack of knowledge and skills necessary in the era of new technological developments. Also, it was mentioned in this NAP that, in recent decades, the urban economies have developed a number of problems. The phasing-out of low-tech industries and the rise of high-tech services have led to an imbalance in demand and supply on the labour market. (Dutch NAP 1998, p.21, 26)

The 2000 Dutch NAP (p.8, 11) stated that the demand for highly qualified personnel is expected to increase in the next few years and therefore it is important to give employees further training or retraining. The social partners have an important part to play here. Life-long learning is also important for keeping the skills up to scratch and further improving them throughout a person's working life. It is also essential to have the skills to adapt to the changing economic, social and technological circumstances. Special attention needs to be devoted to the training of low-skilled people (workers and jobseekers) without basic qualifications. Additional training measures are vital in reducing bottlenecks in the labour market. The NAP also stated (p.17) that there is a need for investment funds and knowledge networks of more experienced businessmen (twinning facilities) for the new businesses and their start-ups. An interesting and unexceptional note was the following: *"Traditional equal opportunities policies will be supplemented with a policy relating to the 'daily work routine' (employees with family responsibilities have different needs compared to*

breadwinners, for example as regards commuting) and a policy in the field of information and communications technology.” (Dutch NAP 2000, p.21, 26)

The 2003 NAP (p.6) sees that there is a need for lowering the labour unit costs, as compared with international competitors. This can only be achieved through a moderate development of labour costs, as well as through productivity growth. The government is seeking to boost labour productivity by enhancing the economy’s capacity for innovation, by strengthening human capital and by fostering economic dynamism. The Innovation Platform will allow the government to get together with leading authorities in the business and academic communities to discuss ways of increasing innovation in the Netherlands. The government can use the insights that emerge from this forum to devise and implement its policy on developing and exploiting knowledge. Again the education is at the core of understanding KBS. It is important to increase the level of education of the labour force both at the lower and upper skills level. It is important to increase the number of people taking part in education and training and to increase participation in life-long learning. Education and training allows individuals to acquire new knowledge and skills during their working life and to maintain the knowledge and skills they already possess. The vocational education system needs innovativeness too, and it can be achieved by a close cooperation with the business sector. (Dutch NAP 2003, p.15-16)

Policies

The KBS related employment policies in the Netherlands are highly concentrated around education and training policies. The Dutch NAP 1998 (p.9-10, 19) noted that the reintegration and training programmes need to be reorganised. A training component will be added to the reintegration programmes. This means that, during a reintegration programme, a jobseeker is offered the most effective combination of training or vocational education, job application workshops and/or work experience. Also, there is a need for transparency and better coordination of centres of secondary vocational training. The reintegration programmes must contribute to the acquisition of proper skills of jobseekers without a basic education. The main policy targets are:

- **Extra training provision.**
- **More programmes for phase 2 and 3 jobseekers aimed at participation in training or vocational education.**
- **Training for benefit recipients with young children** to prepare them for a return to the labour market.
- **Courses to improve the Dutch-language skills of immigrants** who do not have access to existing programmes.

A tax concession system will be introduced to stimulate industrial training. This regulation also includes a tax incentive for older employees. The ESF plays a role in the co-funding of a programme for jobseekers in phase 2 and 3 and in training of those in work, especially in training lower skilled workers in small and medium-sized companies. ESF objective 4 aims at preventing unemployment by training lower skilled workers in cooperation with businesses and industries. This will help prevent the outflow of this group. In January 1998 the government agreed on a national “Life-long Learning” action programme. The action programme incorporated the following policy options (Dutch NAP 1998, p.12, too 21):

- **Requesting social partners** to consider options offered by the "Life-long Learning" concept in order to produce definite programmes.

- **Measures to combat early school leaving.** The central issue here is to produce satisfactory registration numbers of students and school-leavers, linked to intensive career guidance for (potential) early school-leavers under the direction of local authorities.
- **Encouraging the combining of work and learning** for both employed and unemployed persons, and encouraging school-leavers to gain basic qualifications.
- Injection of **extra funding for participation in training or vocational education** for jobseekers.
- **Research into the possibility** for public-sector employers to introduce training incentives.
- **Expansion of tax incentives for participation in training programmes** by those in work and improving the provision of relevant information and advice.
- **Widespread introduction of open learning centres**, an organisational concept in which the emphasis is on acquiring individual knowledge and skills under the guidance of a tutor.
- **Increasing and maintaining employability of teachers** through post-training programmes.
- **The setting up of independent assessment centres** and the recognition of proficiencies acquired elsewhere as an instrument **in gaining formal qualifications** (primarily for the benefit of lower skilled workers).
- **Collectivisation of training resources**, the costs for which are borne (in)directly by the government, with the aim of improving transparency, accessibility and efficiency.

As new policies, the Dutch NAP 1998 (p.24) introduced apprenticeship schemes and the consolidation of dual-track programmes and apprenticeship schemes. This will contribute significantly to the social integration of disadvantaged groups and to economic growth. Also, there was a policy to stimulate the creation of clusters of high-tech facilities (high-tech centres), in which both the business community and technical vocational centres participate. Three participating agencies for high-tech start-ups were founded in 1996, and this work was further initiated by another project for ICT start-ups called “Twinning network”. The Government proposal for legislation on Flexibility and Security is aimed at creating balanced, durable and flexible working relationships (Dutch NAP 1998, p.29).

The Dutch 2000 NAP (p.11-12) still emphasised training, and the focus was on the training of people not in work. More opportunities were planned for them in joint programmes, combining training and employment. A plan of 2000 was the experiment to liberalise the regulations regarding training without loss of benefits. The scope of the scheme involving training without loss of benefits for people claiming social assistance was also being extended. The prevention of young people dropping out of the school system early is central in the Dutch policies. These policies include:

- **A better system for registering early school-leavers** so that individual counselling can be provided.
- **City covenants** between the government and the 25 largest local authorities **in an attempt to tackle early leaving.**
- **Measures to improve the quality of education.** Over the next few years special attention will be devoted to:
 - Reducing the size of classes
 - Reform of secondary and secondary vocational education. Efforts are focused on non-formal education, active participation of pupils in education, and learning to deal with the differences between pupils.
 - Shortage of teachers: to increase the number of people starting teacher training.
- **Measures designed to stimulate dual courses combining training and employment** within all sectors of education.
- The framework agreement entitled 'Learning on the job creates opportunities', **promoting the quality of practical training places in the workplace** and specifying the role of training establishments in supervising the trainees.
- **The provisions of the Student Finance Act (WSF)**, relating to students in higher education on dual training courses, have been broadened. They have now the same rights as full-time students.

The focus on ICT skills/computers in schools was a new element in the guidelines for 2000. The government and the social partners will stimulate the development of ICT skills in schools, the sectorised development of distance learning and the use of digital teaching material. In its policy document *Education on-line* (April 1999), the government presented its policy plans to promote the integration of ICT into education. Concrete measures in this area include (Dutch NAP 2000, p.12-13):

- **All Dutch schools** are planned to be connected to the **Internet** by 2001.
- All educational establishments and teacher-training institutions will be linked to the **'knowledge network'**. This network offers access to the Internet and also provides a safe digital space where information and services can be found that are geared to the education sector (www.kennisnet.nl).
- **All schools and institutions received funds to supplement their ICT budget**, for the purpose of ensuring that computers, peripheral equipment and software would be more widely available.
- The Furbie project **offers schools** and other educational institutions **good second-hand computer equipment** at cost price.
- Various projects have been launched to **promote the use of ICT in education and enhance the ICT skills of pupils and teachers**.

In the 2003 NAP (p.15) the new government wants to increase the level of education of the labour force, both at the lower end (to basic qualification level) and at the upper end (increase in number of people with higher qualifications). More generally, the government wants to increase the number of people taking part in education and training. It is important to increase participation in life-long learning to respond to the constantly changing demand for labour. Education and training allows individuals to acquire new knowledge and skills during their working life and to maintain the knowledge and skills they already possess. This Government published its Life-long Learning Policy Agenda in April 2002. Measures that have already been initiated include (Dutch NAP 2003, p.16-17):

- **Boost for vocational education.** The principal aims are to improve career planning, careers guidance and programme compatibility, to develop a new educational theory and teaching methods, and to strengthen the exchange of knowledge between the vocational education sector and the business community.
- **Innovation scheme.** The aim of the innovation scheme is to enhance innovation in vocational education by stimulating *joint* regional or sectorised projects in the education and business sectors.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning.** The aim of RPL is to give credit for knowledge and experience gained in the workplace. A special RPL centre, *Kenniscentrum EVC*, was launched in 2001.
- **Dual system combining training and employment.** Courses combining training and employment are of particular importance to people who need training to ensure they find work, and stay in work, such as ethnic minorities, early school leavers and women wishing to return to work.
- **Individual learning account.** To increase both the range of training available and the responsibility of individual workers for their own employability, eight individual learning account experiments were launched in 2001.

The Government has agreed on the target of the EU education ministers to increase the number of science and technology graduates by at least 15% by 2010. At the same time the ratio of male to female graduates will have to be evened up.

The KBS related issues in the Dutch NAPs are narrowly concentrated around education and training under the rhetoric of life-long learning and combining work and training. The aim is to prevent low-skilled workers to become unemployed in the conditions of phasing out of low-tech industries and the rising of high-tech services. The school dropouts too are considered an important target group of

the policies. In this new context, there must be investment funds and knowledge networks to start up new innovative high-tech service businesses. In the global economic competition the Dutch labour force is too expensive. Financial measures are necessary to make it more competitive. The exceptions from the broad lines are the following: daily routines (such as commuting) of families must be supported with the help of ICT (NAP 1998) and schools must be equipped with proper ICT facilities (NAP 2000). The Dutch **approach is very economic** when trying to educate its people to become better labour force for the more competitive enterprises.

3.4.5 KBS in the Spanish NAPs

The concept

The Spanish NAP 1998 (p.17) said that “*the continuous and dramatic economic, technological and organisational changes in firms caused by globalisation and the liberalisation of economies where unemployment is high mean that life-long learning is an essential tool in the fight against unemployment. In view of this, the new National Vocational Training Programme mentioned above includes a wide range of measures to develop life-long learning, in accordance with the approach unanimously endorsed by the European Union.*” Lack of appropriate vocational qualifications is seen as one of the major obstacles to those seeking work. The unemployment rate is markedly higher among those with no training or with unsuitable or insufficient training. More than 70% of the registered unemployed have not studied beyond the basic education level. The provision of training is a key factor in combating and preventing unemployment and in helping firms to be more competitive and viable. (Spanish NAP 1998 p.13) A greater adaptability will be achieved by simplification and rationalisation of labour structures – occupations, wages, the working day, overtime, career breaks – and there are new formulas, such as tele-working, for special circumstances (Spanish NAP 1998 p.31). The spread of new communication technologies has led to an increase in the type of employer-worker relationships called tele-work. In tele-work the worker’s presence at a traditional workplace is not required. This new type of employment relationship may need specific regulations in some aspects, like working hours, safety and health in work. (Spanish NAP 1998 p.35-36)

The 2000 Spanish NAP (p.6, 12) understood the KBS much broader than the 1998 NAP. In addition to training, it mentions the INFOXXI initiative for the development of the Information Society (IS) and the National Research, Development and Innovation Plan (I+D+I) to help develop the entrepreneurial spirit. The government’s strategic initiative for the development of the information society is designed to encourage the adoption and development of information technology throughout the whole of society. There is a particular stress on the intensive use of new technologies in education and training as basic tools to prevent “info-marginalisation”, or exclusion from the information society, and to help people achieve more suitable qualifications, which lead to work in the new economy. The competitiveness of SMEs in the KBS is supported by quality development, process innovations and the design and use of e-commerce. Also, the venture capital markets and private investments in R&D are essential in the KBS. (Spanish NAP 2000, p.26)

The 2003 Spanish NAP has strong emphasis on training issues, but improving quality and productivity in work is also mentioned as one of the core objectives. The concept of quality in work means training and prevention of risks in the workplace. Stable employment and women's access to such employment are important as well. (Spanish NAP 2003 p.4) Furthermore, it is important to analyse the impact of new technologies (Internet, e-mail, etc.) on labour relations, including the definition of the conditions of tele-working. Also, there is a need to promote the establishment of national industrial monitoring centres or observatories to anticipate and manage the changes involved in the development. (Spanish NAP 2003 p.18)

Policies

The policies around KBS were concentrated on training issues in the first Spanish NAP of 1998. It (p.13) said: *“Consequently, the provision of training – an eminently active measure – is a key factor in combating and preventing unemployment and in helping firms to be more competitive and viable.”* The new National Vocational Training Programme was adopted by Spain's Council of Ministers on March 1998. The emphasis is given to youth employment and to an active role played by employers. The main objectives of the new National Vocational Training Programme were as follows (Spanish NAP 1998, p.16-17):

- **Building up an integrated system of vocational training** to rationalize and coordinate the various parts of the national vocational training system throughout Spain.
- **Boosting vocational training** as an effective tool against unemployment and as a means of maintaining stable employment.
- Supporting a high-quality training system that effectively delivers **vocational skills to young people** and makes it easier for them to find work.
- Providing **special training** so that **adults finding it difficult to join the labour market** can obtain work.
- **Encouraging companies to act as skill-training organisations**, by extending their participation in trainee schemes for young people receiving occupational training or formal vocational education.

The new version of the “job training contract” of youth had the following main features (Spanish NAP 1998, p.16-17):

- The emphasis on skills learning is boosted, with **employers required to provide theoretical and practical training** and to ensure that at least 15% of the apprentice's working day is devoted to theoretical training.
- The encouragement of **employers to make more use of this type of contract**, through tax incentives and reductions in their social security contributions.
- The encouragement of **employers to convert the temporary contracts into permanent contracts**, through tax relieves and reductions in their social security contributions.
- For the first time, the new provisions address the question of **social protection cover for these young persons**, extending the range of contingencies and situations against which they are protected and including provision for the payment of benefit in the event of temporary incapacity for work resulting from common risks.

The long list of development of employment training measures continues (Spanish NAP 1998, p.18-19). There are also many measures to improve the quality of the school systems (p.20). Especially there is a need to combine vocational and adult education schemes with the school system. It has also been planned that young people be given initial work experience combined with training in the classroom.

The picture of policies related to KBS was broader in the 2000 Spanish NAP. The Second National Professional Training Plan was introduced in it for the first time. It had been developed with the intention of improving professional training and extending it to those groups which are most in need of improved skills. The Plan will eventually guarantee life-long training. The programme involves the following initiatives (Spanish NAP 2000, p.9-10, see too 21-22):

- The **Institute of Qualifications** was created in 1999, the following measures are being prepared:
 - An integrated system of job information and counselling for students and the labour force in general.
 - A framework for the future National System of Qualifications as an instrument to integrate the different types of professional training.
 - Indicators to allow the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of professional training.
- A **programme of training** for the transition to life in the labour market has been designed **for young people with special educational needs**.
- Within the Leonardo Programme, the new pilot project “**ALBA**” **aims to improve the employability of women**.
- Incorporating a **job counselling and information module** into all the formative stages of initial professional training has boosted vocational counselling and information.
- **The training of teaching staff** has been boosted, with 7,873 professionally trained teachers taking part in refresher courses.
- **Disadvantaged groups**, such as women, the elderly and unqualified workers, **are given priority for in-company continuous training programmes**.
- A new project in the experimental phase aims to **adapt the National Vocational Training Centres to the European Model of Quality Management**, based on self-evaluation of objectives and management requirements.

The government’s strategic initiative for the development of the information society was called “*INFOXXI – The Information Society for all*”. It is a package of programmes and measures designed to encourage the adoption and development of information technology throughout the whole of society. The initiative “*lays particular stress on the intensive use of new technologies in education and training as basic tools to prevent “info-marginalisation”, or exclusion from the information society, and to help people achieve more suitable qualifications, which lead to work in the new economy.*” INFOXXI is functioning along seven main lines: 1) *an emphasis on education and training*; 2) *job creation*; 3) *an increase in innovation*; 4) *an increase in the efficiency of the public administrations and of companies*; 5) *social cohesion*; 6) *an improvement in people’s quality of life*; and 7) *the influence of Spain abroad*. The key aspects for the creation of employment in the information society are the following (Spanish NAP 2000, p.12, see too 26):

- Beginning at school, future generations will be **given the skills to face the challenges of the rapid development of information and communication technologies**; workers will be given **continuous training to take advantage of the employment opportunities** offered by these new technologies; and measures will be taken to tap the potential of the information society as an engine of innovation.
- The Electronic Data Transfer System (RED) has been set up to improve **the digital connection between the administrations and the administered**.
- **A number of R&D projects** in the areas of technologies and applications for the information society have been approved, as well as in the exploding information industries.
- **A Plan for developing information technology** in the hotel, catering and tourism sector and support for SMEs has been developed.

The National Plan for Scientific Research and Development and Innovation Technology (I+D+I) defines a general strategy, which includes all public measures in the area of R&D. It proposes the financing of measures in five areas: 1) *the strengthening of human resources*; 2) *R&D projects*; 3) *technological innovation*; 4) *the provision of scientific and technical equipment and special*

measures in the area of international scientific cooperation; and 5) scientific and technological promotion in society at large. (Spanish NAP 2000, p.26)

In the Spanish NAP 2003 (p.15) there is a new package of measures of promotion of the Information Society called España.es 2004-2005. Its budget is 1.03 million euros, compared with INFOXXI's 2524 million euros. All government ministries are involved in this plan, which is structured into the following three main areas: 1) *the development of a digital public administration*, 2) *education and* 3) *SMEs*. These are complemented by horizontal measures promoting Internet access for all citizens, along with the creation of content and information campaigns for España.es. Again there is a long list of development projects and policies in the field of education and training, e.g. to encourage young people to remain in education, to give priority in training to women, unskilled workers over 45 years of age, and to include new technologies in training. The Telecommunications Training Programme (FORINTEL) strives to improve workers' skills and qualifications and their ability to adapt to changes produced by information technology in industry. At the user level, it offers training in computer skills and the Internet, and their use in business. At the professional level, it trains workers in the telecommunications sector (Spanish NAP 2003, p.18, 20-22, 30)

*Conceptually Spain has a broad **social and political approach** towards the KBS. The development of vocational education institutions and schools is essential again. The training of low-skilled labour force is the main policy in the fight against unemployment. Also, the labour market structures and institutions must be developed and modernised. This means the development and modernising of work organisations. The competitiveness of SMEs is supported with help of innovation measures and e-commerce. Tele-work is emphasised as a modern solution to create more flexible work organisations. The large programme INFOXXI supports the adoption of ICT on the level of whole society (incl. public administration) and the prevention of a digital divide. The separate I+D+I plan supports the development of innovations and technologies and public and private organisations in the R&D field. But these large programmes were not working any more after 2002.*

3.4.6 Country comparisons in the field of KBS related policies

The next Table 4 lists the stakeholders and targeted groups of policies of NAPs, which can be defined as related with the KBS development:

Table 4: Stakeholders and targeted groups of the KBS related policies identified	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Young and young unemployed without skills -Information industry (research and training) -Long-term unemployed -Employees without skills -Teachers and trainers without skills -Atypical workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training institutions of social partners -Women returning to work -Further education institutions cooperating -Skill centres of technology transfer -Young to complete education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Job rotators -Skilled and unskilled labour force to be trained -Enterprises to be innovative and to have flexible organisation -Young and young unemployed to be trained -Unemployed to be trained -Enterprises offering apprenticeship places -Adult and further education to be "harmonised" -School drop outs -Labour market returnees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jobless to be reintegrated by training -Lower skilled workers of SMEs to be trained -Early school leavers -Young and adult unemployed to be skilled -Benefit claimants to be trained and employed -Immigrants learning the Dutch language -Vocational education teachers having adequate skills -Enterprises creating apprenticeship places -Enterprises and vocational trainers communicating in clusters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Employers and enterprises to organise training -Young trainers to be supported by insurance -Employed and unemployed to be trained -Schools of better quality -Vocational system to be rationalised -Young people to have high level vocational skills -Low-skilled adults to be trained -Women over 35 returning to labour market -Older people to be trained -Women's training generally supported
NAP 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All population groups using IT as citizens -All young in life-long learning -Unemployed and employed to be trained -Workers in to be trained -Companies having information systems -Entrepreneurs to be supported with technology -Welfare cluster using IT -All educational institutions using and teaching IT -Information industry with conversation programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -IT use beginners -Unemployed to be skilled in ICT professions -Low-skilled workers -Distance learners -Schools with IT facilities -Employees creating innovations -School drop outs -Girls/women to select technical education -Companies to make R&D -Women returning to work -Public and social security institutions to be digitised -E-government services for citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student drop-outs -Weak students to be supported -Educational system using IT -Skilled and unskilled labour force to be trained -Society, enterprises and individuals benefited from training -Enterprises as financier of their training -All people to be trained -Low-skilled people to be IT trained -Teachers with IT competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -People with no qualifications to be trained -Unemployed and employed to be trained -School drop outs -Schools with IT facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizens as IT users -Teaching staff to be trained -Employed and unemployed to be trained -All people to prevent exclusion from IS -Future generations and workers to be capable to exploit IT -SMEs as IT users and to be competitive -Modern companies using R&D -Distance workers -Elderly as computer users -Telematic services of dependent, disabled, elderly and immigrants -Lone parent women to be trained -Women's training generally supported

NAP 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Workers and entrepreneurs to be skills trained -SMEs using IT -Families telecommuting -Fixed-term employed to be trained -Workplaces to be developed -Youth unemployed to be trained -Young to be transited to labour markets earlier, incl. drop outs -Immigrants to be trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Industry as R&D financier -Youth to be trained -Citizens as life-long learners -Older people accessing the Internet -E-government for citizens and companies -Unemployed and employed to be skilled -Women and older workers to be skilled -School leavers to finalise education -Parents of small children to be trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Education and training system to be more flexible -Young to complete education -Adults to participate in life-long learning -Older unemployed to be skilled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vocational education to be "boosted" -Crediting people with work experience -Ethnic minorities and women to be skilled by combining work and education -Immigrants learning Dutch language -Everyone's qualifications to be increased -School drop-outs -Young people without basic qualifications -Low-skilled to be trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizens as IT users -E-government -SMEs as IT users -Workers to be trained (also for the telecom sector) -Regions to build up ICT industries -Tele-workers -Citizens having access to IT and e-services -Women, workers over 45 and unskilled having priority in training -School drop outs -Women's training generally supported
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In 1998 the emphasis was on the groups defined as not having the appropriate skills for labour markets. Such groups were the unemployed, employees without skills, atypical workers, young people and old people. Austria was more focused on the development of training institutions instead of specific groups (except the young in schools) than the others, concentrating on the development of vocational training and adult education institutions, teacher training and training-enterprise cooperation. *Finland* was interested in supporting the information industry by R&D actions. Besides the skills centres of technology transfer, *Austria* underlined mothers' special skills updating needs when returning back to the labour markets. *Denmark* mentioned the need for job rotators, school dropouts and labour market returnees to be trained. *The Netherlands* mentioned early school leavers (like Denmark) and the need for immigrants to learn the Dutch language. In *Spain* there was a need to offer young trainers insurances and to encourage women over 35 to return to the labour market.

The 2000 NAPs too were targeted to groups without the appropriate skills, as well as the development of training institutions. The IT boom was present in these NAPs and Finland and Spain expressed their wish to make all their citizens IT users and thus safeguard them against exclusion from the Information Society. All the countries, except Spain, were facilitating their educational institutions with up to date IT equipments and teacher training. IT training was directed to IT use beginners and the unemployed (Austria), low-skilled workers (Denmark) and workers and the elderly (Spain). Finland and Spain supported enterprises with ICT facilities. Company R&D was supported in Austria and Spain. E-services were developed in the context of a 'welfare cluster'¹⁴ in Finland. Austria developed e-government services for all citizens and digitised its public and social security institutions. Spain intends to develop telematic services for the dependent, disabled, elderly and immigrants and maintained the possibility to do telework.

The 2003 NAPs are to a higher degree than the 2000 NAPs focused on low-skilled groups and their training and the development of the training institutions. ICT is no longer the magic word. It looks as if there was some kind of "ICT hangover" after a strong commitment to ICT based policies. Still Finland and Spain emphasise the benefits of IT for SMEs, as well as the option of telecommuting for families. Austria offers access to the Internet for older people and e-government services for companies. Spain believes on the potential of ICT and wants citizens and SMEs to have access to

¹⁴ 'Welfare cluster' is a national idea related to R&D policies to develop and commercialise the social and health care sector with the help of ICT.

ICT and e-government services. A new idea in Spain is the regional efforts to build up ICT industries.

Table 5: Gender aspects noticed in KBS context	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998		-Women's career returning programmes -Special women support in training -Women fostered to technical and high level professions		-Supporting families in their daily routines with ICT	
NAP 2000	-Job sharing models used mainly by women -A campaign to foster women study IT-professions	-Women's career returning programmes	-Women's intake in IT educational programmes increased -IT schools attracting more women		-A greater proportion of women will benefit from training measures -Women promoted the training of new technologies
NAP 2003	- Telecommunications in supporting family life -More women than men taking part in adult education	-E-learning possibilities for parents of small children		-The ratio of male to female graduates must be evened up among science and technology graduates	-Women's access to quality workplaces

According to **Table 5**, in *Finland* the gender in KBS is visible in women's commitment to IT training and adult education. In addition, it is mentioned that Finnish job sharing models favour women and give them a possibility to update their skills. The idea to support family life with telecommunications is realised too. *Austria* presents its AMS Women's career returning programme, giving mothers a possibility to update their labour market skills. Women are seen needing special support in taking part in training and they are encouraged to enter technological and high level education. A new idea is to offer e-learning possibilities to the parents of small children. As regards *Denmark*, it only has a reference to an interest to recruit more women to IT education in its 2000 NAP. *The Netherlands* wants to support families in their everyday life with ICT, and recently, it also wishes to increase women's share in science and technology education. *Spain* is interested in increasing women's share in general training and technology training. Also, it is important to ease women's access to positions with higher skills requirements.

Table 6: Risks identified in the development of KBS	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	-Global competition	-Risks of use of biotechnology -Shortcomings of national innovation system -Women's skills shortages when returning back to the labour market -Skills shortcomings of labour force	-Skills shortcomings of labour force -Old-fashioned enterprises	-Skills shortcomings of labour force -Decline of low-tech industries	-Risks (e.g. unemployment) of globalised and liberalised economies -Skills shortcomings of labour force -Complex labour structures
NAP 2000	-IT access failures -Shortage of labour in IT field -Skills shortcomings of labour force -Labour supply bottlenecks -Competitiveness of industries	-Access to adult education in disadvantaged regions -Women's skills shortages when returning back to the labour market -Lack of basic IT skills	-Skills shortcomings of labour force -Lack of basic IT skills	-Skills shortcomings of labour force -Reconciliation of work and family life	-Exclusion from the Information Society -Skills shortcomings of labour force -Competitiveness of SMEs
NAP 2003	-Regional differences -Polarisation of workforce in skills competition	-Skills shortcomings of labour force	-Skills shortcomings of labour force -Inflexible work organisations	-High labour costs in global competition -Lack of innovations	-Quality and productivity of work

The NAPs mention some risks related to the today's social development. **Table 6** shows these. It seems that the main risk realised in every country is the skills shortcomings of the labour force. Finland considers the possible lack of competitiveness of industries as one of the risks related to globalisation. The Netherlands thinks that its labour costs are too high for global competition and Spain accentuates the risk of unemployment in globalised and liberalised economies. The lack of basic IT skills is seen as a risk in Finland, Austria and Denmark. In Spain this is understood broader as a risk of becoming socially excluded from the Information Society. Lack of innovations and the problems with the low-tech industries are seen as a threat in Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands. Regional risks are seen in Finland and Austria. National specialities are Finland's fear of the labour supply bottlenecks in certain growth industries (especially in the ICT field), Austria's fear of the risks of the biotechnology and Denmark's fear of the inflexible work organisations. The failure to succeed in the reconciliation of work and family life is seen as the risk in the Netherlands. Spain is considering the competitiveness of its SMEs risky and also wants to spotlight the quality and productivity of work.

Even though all countries are focused on skills gaps and education and training, one can still find two different kinds of orientation towards KBS in the NAPs. Finland, Austria and Spain are trying to adopt information technology on a much broader basis than Denmark and the Netherlands when

noticing ICT access, e-services and e-business more explicitly. In this respect they are more innovative and adaptive, while Denmark and the Netherlands are more conservative when contenting themselves with the adaptation of traditional labour market policies.

3.5. Gender Mainstreaming and gender related policies in the NAPs

3.5.1 Gender issues in the Finnish NAPs

The concept

When evaluating how the idea of Gender Mainstreaming has understood in the Finnish NAPs, we will find that there is no clear and explicit definition of the Gender Mainstreaming concept. If we dismiss the ‘gender neutral’ large scale public policies typical to the Nordic welfare states¹⁵, “Gender Mainstreaming” was seen as a project of the State administration in the Finnish NAP 1998 (p.47). In other words, it is the State administration that develops new models, which allow gender equality to be incorporated into the drafting of government proposals, budget control and information planning.

In the Finnish NAP 1999 (p.48), in Pillar IV “Strengthening equal opportunities policies for women and men”, it is mentioned that the Finnish welfare model provides jobs for women also by allowing both parents to go out to work. Public day care, care for old people and school meals all mean that both parents can be out at work daily. The law guarantees all children under school age a day care place subsidised by the society. The Finnish NAP 1999 (p.55) attempted to be “Gender Mainstreamed”: “Equality mainstreaming has been carried out under Pillars I, II and III jointly by the civil servants in charge of work on the various Guidelines and the officer responsible for mainstreaming throughout the Action Plan. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health’s equality unit has also been actively involved.” The mainstreaming project was continuing in 1999 in five ministries under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. But the budget of this GM project was only 212,000 FIM (36,000 €) for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and 50,000 FIM (8,500 €) for Statistics Finland. The Finnish NAP of 1999 (p.50-51) clarified the rhetorical idea how gender issues are understood in the Finnish policy: “Finland has a great need to reduce gender-based segregation. This means constant and effective work in schools, other institutes of education and the labour administration. In line with the mainstreaming principle, all decision-making processes with an impact on the labour market must start scrutinizing impacts on men’s and women’s job-creation, working conditions, professional gender segregation, promotion of the equal pay principle, and career advancement.”

¹⁵ E.g., the subjective right to public day care to all children in Finland

In the Finnish NAP 2000 (p.16) it was noticed that the mainstreaming process was being implemented and most important administrative sectors were taking equal opportunities into account in the planning and implementation of their operations. The Employment Contracts Act of the year 2000 will be assessed for its gender impact. The equality barometer was introduced and published in 1999. A target of alleviating segregation was introduced as part of labour administration's result management and each Employment and Economic Development Centre drew up a programme for alleviating segregation. A more equal wage system was being developed by the Government and its social partners in collaboration. The equal workplace development programme of social partners started. In the NAP 2001 (p.30) the GM was understood as a gender impact assessment of legislative proposals of the Government Programme. The gender impact of Employment Contracts was also evaluated by a pilot study. A monitoring framework project was created for the systematic monitoring and analysis of the gender pay gap. The equality barometer was again carried out after 1999.

The Finnish NAP 2002 (p.5) declared that: *“All aspects of the NAP will take into account the mainstreaming of equal opportunities policy and the development of the labour force and working life in accordance with the needs of the information society.”* But the NAP does not give an answer to how to do this. Again the progressiveness of the welfare state was quoted in Pillar IV by saying that Finnish women's high educational level improves their position in the labour market. The educational level of working-age women is higher than that of men. In 2000 half of all vocational students were women, 55% of polytechnics students and 53% of university students. However, the choices of subjects were still strongly based on gender divisions. (p.40)

The new Government of Matti Vanhanen outlines its policies to increase gender equality in the Finnish NAP 2003 (p.30). The government's main goals are 1) to improve the reconciliation of work and family life, 2) to narrow the gender pay gap, 3) to reduce the number of fixed-term public sector relationships, 4) to increase the number of women involved in decision making and the economy, and 5) to increase women's entrepreneurship. The national equality action plan will be implemented between 2004 and 2007.

In retrospect it seems that the impact of 1999 mainstreaming project as part of the NAP process was effective at the time of the NAPs of 1999 and 2000. After this the idea of GM disappeared at least quantitatively from the NAP texts, the general idea of GM was no longer topical.

Policies

The Finnish NAPs are difficult to read from a gender perspective, because most of the policies are universal and meant for all citizens, who have subjective right to benefits or support measures. The gender is seldom connected to a specific measure, but with a careful reading, there are some policies to be understood as gender specific. One example is in the Finnish NAP 1998, in its pillar IV (p.15), which highlights concrete measures to support women's entrepreneurship and the implementation of same-pay-same-work principle. A proposal for Parliament to increase the flexibility of the rights related to parental leaves and temporary absence from work was under preparation by the tripartite Government. The expenses and shares of payment incurred by employees because of the various leaves related to childbirth and care will be investigated. Pillar IV (p.48) includes a proposal for the labour administration to encourage women in career guidance and training to select professions not typical to their sex. In wage negotiations, the social partners

agreed on a special pay supplement for women. The extra pay for years 1998-1999 is based on the number of women of all workers in an occupational sector. The Ministry of Labour and the social partners started a project titled 'equal work community' to promote e.g. equality at workplaces.

The Finnish NAP 1998 (p.49-50) said that the reconciliation of work and family life is a vital part of the Finnish equality policy. Both parents are entitled to a 'baby leave' (maternity/paternity and parental leave) and most collective agreements grant at least part (2-3 months) of the maternity leave on full pay. Furthermore, the mother and father can alternately take time off from work to care for the child until s/he reaches the age of three (care leave). After this the parents are entitled to work shorter hours (part-time work) until the child starts comprehensive at the age of 7 (partial care leave). If a child under 10 falls sick, the mother or father can stay off work for up to four days to care for, or arrange for care of, the child. The Finnish law guarantees both the mother and the father the right to return to their previous or a comparable job after any kind of parental leave. The law also guarantees that the employer may not give the worker a notice because of pregnancy. Although these rights are applicable equally to men and women, it is mainly women who use them. The NAP 1998 (p.49) also expressed that the law guarantees every child under school age (7) the right to publicly funded day-care. If parents need a day-care place because of a job, studies or training, one must be provided within two weeks.

The Finnish NAP 1999, beefed up by a Gender Mainstreaming Project (p.50), argued that in Finland professional and occupational segregation by gender is among the most rigid, as the EU statistics indicate. Women are employed to do the kind of nursing and caring jobs that are done at home free of charge in many other EU countries. Women and men also tend to study different subjects and take part in different training programmes. In addition, the 1999 Finnish NAP (p.52) expressed that there must be a fairer sharing of family care duties and leaves between men and women on a voluntary basis. It must be researched whether it would be possible to set up a system that would guarantee fathers a right to their own one-month parental leave. The need to increase women's participation in training in information technology and related sectors was expressed too in the NAP 1999 (p.5).

The central gender theme in the NAP 2000 was mentioned in connection with the lack of qualified workforce in the ICT sector. In this respect the Government's (Finnish NAP 2000, p.3, 27) aim was to encourage men and women to non-traditional occupations. An extensive strategic project titled 'equal labour market' was launched in this area (2000-2003). This four-year project tried to influence the mechanisms of placement of men and women to different professions in such a way that men and women would be more equally distributed in different fields. A cooperation programme between companies and schools was launched in order to encourage boys and girls to seek employment in fields traditionally dominated by the opposite gender. Besides the strong investment in extra IT training, a special campaign "Tietonaisia" (InfoWomen) was started, so as to increase women's share in IT sector studies and conversion training (p.12).

In the 2002 Finnish NAP, the problem of gender segregation of the labour force was repeated. It also included the Council Recommendation (p.18) as a reminder of the importance of gender issues, which should not to be neglected: "Finland should therefore take appropriate action, in the context of a gender mainstreaming approach, to close the gender pay gap and continue taking action to improve the balance in representation between men and women across both occupations and sectors." The acting projects "Good and Equality-Conscious Workplaces" and "National Equality Barometer" were mentioned (p.40). As a new measure in 2002 there was a proposal for

amendments to the Act on Equality Between Men and Women. The amendment proposals were targeted to prevent pay discrimination. The NAP also mentions the plans for a two-week extension to the paternity leave and a campaign to encourage men to take the leave. Sexual harassment and abuse issues were brought out in this NAP. (p. 41-42).

The NAP 2003, the first one of the new Government of Matti Vanhanen, has a strong gender emphasis. It is a NAP of "Reconciliation of Work and Family Life". In this NAP it is said that gender segregation in the labour market is slow to change and no significant overall changes have taken place. But the percentage of women among students of information technology and media has increased significantly. The number of women students in this sector has more than tripled, while over the same period the number of male students has doubled. (p. 19)

The Council has recommended again (NAP 2003, p. 30-31) that Finland should strengthen efforts, in the context of gender mainstreaming, to address the factors underlying the gender pay gap and gender segregation. The extraordinary policy of reconciliation of work and family life was presented again as a reply and it will even be extended. The government's main goals are to "improve the reconciliation of work and family life, to narrow the gender pay gap, to reduce the number of fixed-term public sector employment relationships, to increase the number of women involved in decision making and the economy, and to increase women's entrepreneurship. Equality will be promoted in various parts of society, such as working life, education and family life." The "bombardment" of Government operations continues:

- **Mainstreaming gender equality throughout the central administration.**
- **Methods for assessing gender effects** will be developed.
- **Gender effect assessment** will be taken into account **in the preparation of legislation and the central government budget.**
- **Assessing equality issues also from the viewpoint of men.**
- Together with the social partners, the Government will aim to **enable working hours arrangements that allow better for the needs of families and children.**
- **Dismantling segregation and narrowing the gender pay gap**
- Together with the labour market organisations, the Government will promote **equal pay and workplace equality** through a long-term programme. The goal is to **eliminate unjustified differences in pay** between women and men.
- The Government will **reform the Act on Equality between Women and Men** and ensure its enforcement.
- **The number of women involved in political and economic decision-making will be increased.**
- ESF programmes include an allocation of about EUR 70 million for **implementing equality-promoting projects in training and working life** in 2003-2006.

The present government promises a lot and it is interesting to speculate why it has taken on such a socially demanding role in promoting gender issues. Especially so, considering that the targets look historically unachievable and sound very rhetorical without a concrete social basis. I think this is a basic problem of the whole NAP analysis, in other words, the difficulty to separate the rhetorical policy propagation from the concrete realistic policy outcomes.

Finland uses the term Gender Mainstreaming very rhetorically when expressing the measures and policy outcomes in the field of gender equality. The 1999 NAP exemplifies this. In it the idea of GM is said to be crosscutting the whole NAP and its Pillars - without any concretisations. To find something concrete, a project has been launched within the state administration, seeking to incorporate the **undefined** concept of GM into the drafting of government proposals, budget control and information planning. The GM is thus understood as a noticing of gender issues in the

processes of central administration. It is not said how and according to what principles this noticing will happen. But this will be studied and monitored in the Finnish case! To study and monitor is a rhetorical strategy too: if there are any concrete measures or principles behind the rhetorical claims, there will always be an imaginary possibility to find them later on by monitoring. As a Nordic welfare state Finland can, together with Denmark, always introduce its advanced family policies and educated workingwomen when answering the questions regarding GM and the reconciliation of work and family life.

In its gender policies Finland has concentrated on minor modifications of the present policies of the welfare state. This welfare state model also produces a very gender segregated labour market and the policy requirements related to this. These policy modifications are happening mostly in the field of family leaves and day-care. The gender pay gap is constantly under discussion and the problem is forwarded to social partners and left to be “monitored and studied”. The specific gender policies are targeted at supporting female entrepreneurship and encouraging women to select professions not typical to their sex. Especially in the era of ICT boom and lack of labour force, women were needed in technological education, later this need was not mentioned, only the tripled number of women in ICT education.

3.5.2 Gender issues in Austrian NAPs

The concept

In the Austrian NAP 1998 (p.4) it is said that equal opportunities in the labour market cannot be reached by piecemeal action, they can only be achieved if the “mainstreaming” approach is applied in all relevant areas. It is not said what this “mainstreaming” is, but when it comes to the concrete level, the equality between sexes is said to be realised by trying to set gender-specific quotas in the employment programmes to make women’s position better (Austrian NAP 1998, p.14, 16). Also, Pillar IV mentions the following national indicators:

- Marked increase nationwide, in relative terms, in ESF funding for training schemes for women and girls
- Marked increase, in relative terms, in funding for apprenticeship training for girls in companies and in training establishments
- Greater proportion of women in active labour-market policy measures, e.g. by setting gender-specific quotas

The 2000 Austrian NAP (p. 23) has in its pillar IV a guideline 18 “Adopting a gender mainstreaming approach”, in which it is said: *“To achieve sustainable gender-mainstreaming and equal opportunities in all areas of the employment strategy, we need the willingness of policy-makers and social partners and a longer-term concept. ... The creation of suitable instruments and methods for gender-related data collection systems and procedures is under way in some areas (such as AMS (PES S.R) and school statistics), whereas other bodies (such as the federal computing centre, the social insurance carriers or the public work accident insurance institution) still require more fine-tuning.”* Some examples are mentioned as to how the gender-mainstreaming approach has already been implemented in Austria:

- The Austrian **public employment service (AMS)** launched a major gender mainstreaming initiative. It conducted research into the meaning, framework, necessary steps, methods and tools of gender mainstreaming. Part of the employment service's regulations, objectives, plans, guidelines, subsidy measures, reports, examination and evaluation specifications already involve equal opportunities considerations and gender mainstreaming.
- Within the **ESF** the Austrian ESF bodies have involved the Ministry for Women's Affairs from the very beginning. Special seminars for decision-makers provided information on the proper development of instruments, methods and indicators. An evaluation of how Austria implemented the equal opportunities objective of the European Social Fund was published and an international meeting on this issue was held. The gender mainstreaming is now a horizontal objective, which is supplemented by a special women-specific priority area.
- In the former **Federal Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs** an inter-departmental working group on gender mainstreaming was established. Among other positive action measures, the ministry conducted a mentoring project.
- The former **Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs** pursued gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities measures in teaching contents, but also in teacher training, in-service training, information and PR.
- The former **Federal Ministry of Science and Research** introduced measures to raise the proportion of women in official bodies, commissions and executive positions and measures to encourage research by, for and on women.

There is a plan to later establish special co-ordination offices for equal opportunities and gender issues in every ministry (Austrian NAP 2003, p.32). In the 2003 Austrian NAP (p.17) it is declared that the gender mainstreaming approach must be adopted throughout the entire education and training system. Connected with this idea are special measures targeted to parents of small children (e-learning).

Policies

In the policy field there many women specific initiatives in the Austrian employment policy. In the 1998 Austrian NAP (p.18, 40) the AMS (PES) career break returnees' programme is described. It is aimed to help women returning to labour market after a career break and faced with re-entry problems. Usually motherhood has caused these re-entry problems. The programme includes skilling and targeted placement, along with assistance in childcare during training or re-entry. A gender gap is detected in continuing education. Therefore it is important to promote equal opportunities in life-long learning. In-service training with particular emphasis on women and measures to promote training during maternity leave is needed. In addition, there must be innovative regional training arrangements specifically for women. (p.21) School standards must also be improved from the point of view of women: there are targeted efforts to recruit girls and women to EU education programmes. There are even greater efforts to encourage women to attend higher technical colleges and colleges of higher education. This means general strengthening of careers guidance for girls/women and particular efforts in higher-level schools, academies and universities to encourage women to take up non-traditional occupations. (p.24)

The situation in transition from training to work is worse for women. About 40% of women leavers from medium-level vocational training colleges were in sectors where they often did not obtain employment appropriate to their qualifications. The measures to prevent this outcome are the following:

- Bring the **apprenticeship rate for women** closer to the average
- Broaden the **range of training places for women** in forward-looking, non-traditional sectors

- Establish **new occupational profiles** flexibly and quickly
- **Develop key skills**, especially in foreign languages
- Ensure **high standards of** practical instruction in the **dual system**
- Qualification module to **prepare female applicants for training places**

(Austrian NAP 1998, p.24-25)

Since 1994 the employment rate among women has been falling slowly and was 61.4% in 1996. Over the same period, the male employment rate fell by 0.5 percentage points to 76.2%. This trend can be closely associated with later school-leaving and earlier retirement. The unemployment rate among women has for years been higher than for men (1996: 7.3% women, 6.9% men). The approach to increase the rate of employment in Austria is primarily to boost employment for women. One of the central elements in achieving this aim will be to make it easier to reconcile work and family responsibilities. National aims and indicators to increase female employment are (Austrian NAP 1998, p.38):

- **Marked increase nationwide**, in relative terms, **in ESF funding for training schemes for women and girls.**
- **Marked increase**, in relative terms, **in funding for apprenticeship training for girls** in companies and in training establishments.
- **Greater proportion of women in active labour-market policy measures**, e.g. by setting gender-specific quotas.
- **More training opportunities** for unemployed women and female job seekers.
- **Extension of the regional “women’s foundations” system.**
- **Broader eligibility for unemployment/training benefits in conjunction with** minimum quality standards for **childcare establishments**, e.g. opening hours, carer standards, affordability.
- **Gender-neutral night-work law** with the necessary protective measures by 2001 at the latest (within the meaning of the EU directive).
- Stronger element of obligation to **produce special plans for female workers** under the amendments to the Workers’ Insurance Act and the Equal Treatment Act.

Austria was at the time of the 1998 NAP (p.39-40) short of 139 500 childcare places. Existing facilities were inflexible in terms of opening hours and costs were often too high. Some of the childminders are still trapped in a grey area between regular employment and neighbourly help. Even where childminders are organised in childminding clubs, there are striking discrepancies between employment relationships, and training provision. This acts as a disincentive to people wishing to take up employment, especially part-time employment. The policy options in this field are:

- **More institutional childcare establishments:** creation of a further 18 000 childcare places by way of further national subsidies in 1999.
- **Childminders: better quality and more jobs** through reform of the training system and funding for establishments with labour-law and social-law provision. Providing properly covered employment for childminders who are currently not subject to mandatory insurance.
- **Funding for company crèches and flexible childcare facilities for students in employment**
- **Improved childcare allowance arrangements**

The 2000 Austrian NAP (p. 23-24, 31) wanted again to increase the employment rate of women. The measures were skills training, employability measures, assisting women in business start-ups and promoting women on the plant level. The AMS has set up a target to achieve at least a 50% participation rate of women in skills training measures. The AMS also took a number of measures to foster the employment of women in non-traditional areas. This included girls in apprenticed

trades with a low female share, the publication and dissemination of folders and leaflets, and the support of projects targeted to (young) women. Training centres and women's foundations were promoted under the territorial employment pacts. The general policy focus of these pacts was on women and older unemployed and labour foundations, as well as on measures implemented by non-profit temporary work agencies. In addition, there were projects which sought to create incentives for employers to promote women within their companies or to contribute towards a better reconciliation of work and family life for both women and men. The lacking childcare facilities were mentioned again and thus the need of measures improving the reconciliation of work and family life. The measures mentioned are 1) *employment service childcare benefits*; 2) *AMS subsidy for childcare facilities*; 3) *kindergarten billions to create additional childcare options* and 4) *more flexible parental leave scheme*. (Austrian NAP 2000, p.25-26) The AMS + project scheme of easing the return to working life for female re-entrants was described again (p.27). The reduction of the pay gap will be done by offering counselling to employers to promote in-house skills training of women and gender equality within companies and by launching an information campaign on the issue of pay gaps between women and men (p.32).

The Austrian NAP 2003 lacks (the pdf-version on the Commission homepage) the pages from 21 to end! According to the contents list, these missing pages include the gender policies. I realised the fact that pages were missing too late during the final writing process and code recall. The only thing said in this NAP is that a more flexible organisation of work is needed for parents with children under 7 or school enrolment. This reduction in work arrangement should contain entitlements to return to full-time employment. This policy is also intended to help parents to better reconcile work and family life. (Austrian NAP 2003, p.14)

Austria has understood the idea of GM (in addition to the rhetorical claim of “adopting mainstreaming in all relevant areas”) as setting gender specific quotas in employment policy programmes. To fulfil this quota specific idea of GM, the national indicators are set up and monitored. Like in the PES services, the idea of GM must first be studied, and after that, the regulations and principles should be changed. Some ministries have practised awareness-raising in this field and have again stated that the possibilities and possible principles of GM must be studied. Austrian rhetorical strategy is thus “adopting the undefined GM in all relevant areas > setting gender specific quotas in employment policies > studying and monitoring what GM means”.

In its gender related policies Austria has concentrated on women returning to labour markets and the special training stressed scheme of women returnees of PES is mentioned emphatically in the NAPs. The crucial area of the policies is to open and fluidise the training and active labour market policy system to receive women both quantitatively and qualitatively. This is done by means of proper level training and labour market orientation. The transition of women from school to vocational education must be made more fluid and labour market oriented. The school system itself must be developed in the direction which guarantees women equal opportunities to attain higher and technological education. The special problem appears to be a backwardness of the childcare system both in its ability to receive children quantitatively and its inflexibility to cater for working families' needs and paying capacity. Also, there are smaller scale policy measures to support women in workplaces (awareness raising, consulting, flexible organisation), to support women's entrepreneurship and to foster women to select non-traditional occupations. The pay gap is addressed with an information campaign.

3.5.3 Gender issues in Danish NAPs

The concept

In the 1998 Danish NAP there were no explications of GM or gender issues. The Danish NAP 2000 (p.20) said that *“the general objective of Pillar IV is to strengthen equal opportunities for women and men, including a gender-mainstreaming approach in all policies, to offer better possibilities for reconciling work and family life and to facilitate reintegration into the labour market. The principle of the equal opportunities for women and men (the mainstreaming approach) has been integrated in the Danish legislation in the fields of labour market policy and taxation as this legislation is based on the individual person.”* Also, it is said that the high degree of coverage in the field of child care services is one of the reasons why the activity rates and employment rates of both men and women continue to be among the highest in an international context. The gender mainstreaming was said to mean that the principle of equal opportunities for women and men is integrated into all the employment guidelines. The legislation in the field of taxation and labour market policy is based on individuals and thus puts men and women on an equal footing. In order to make the equality work more effective and to strengthen the mainstreaming activities in the public employment service, three regional employment services have recently started a project, which aims at improving the placement activities by taking gender aspects into account. *“It is the overall objective of the project to streamline placement activities by changing attitudes and by developing and testing instruments in connection with the handling of job orders/ placement activities which may lead to a higher degree of gender awareness in the employment services and thus increase the staff’s abilities to be gender neutral in their activities. By focusing on the gender aspect in the daily routines the project aims at increasing placements of both men and women in selected sectors where they have so far been underrepresented in relation to the opposite sex.”* The Government has proposed the implementation of the mainstreaming principle as one of the key elements for a new Act on Equal Opportunities for both men and women. *“This means that all public authorities are supposed to integrate the gender aspect in their planning and administration. It is still premature to say anything concrete about the effect of this Act, but it certainly means that this field is being given a higher priority in Denmark.”*(p.25)

The 2003 Danish NAP (p.11) says, *“The so-called mainstreaming strategy is used as an instrument of this policy in relation to all relevant government policy fields and through dialogue with other actors, not least the social partners.”* In this field the government’s efforts are concentrated on the dismantling of the gender segregated labour market, on the promotion of reconciliation of work and family life and on the reduction of gender wage gaps. *“Gender mainstreaming is the general principle used in this connection.”* A pilot development project has been launched to introduce gender mainstreaming in all of the core activities of the PES system. The aim of this activity is to promote a flexible and efficient labour market by enhancing job opportunities across the gender segregated labour market. This means a special focus on the attitudes of the PES staff in their daily work, development of instruments, different forms of organisations and testing and measuring of the principles. (Danish NAP 2003, p.32-33)

Policies

In the policy field, the Danish 1998 NAP (p.61-62) cited the Equal Treatment Act. As regards employment and the maternal leave, all employers have to treat men and women equally for example in connection with work, employment and promotion. The Equal Remuneration (Men and Women) Act further provides that there must be no wage discrimination in contravention of the law. There is also a need for continued initiatives for further development of gender distribution on different economic sectors. In the social fields women are overrepresented for example in day-care centres for children. About 50 per cent of the employed women have jobs in the public sector, notably in social, educational and health-care areas. Since 1994 the public employment service has geared its equal opportunity efforts to four key fields:

- **The public employment service** contributes, in co-operation with public and private enterprises, to a more flexible labour market by **dismantling barriers to appointments according to sex.**
- **The public employment service** will endeavour **to reduce the higher rate of long-term unemployment among women.**
- **The public employment service** will promote the opportunities for students and unemployed persons for establishing links to the labour market by **providing offers geared to men's as well as women's needs.**
- **The public employment service will monitor the regional labour market** for the purpose of collecting and communicating data on men and women's employment and the consequences **in terms of equal opportunities of labour market policy measures.**

As regards reconciliation of work and family life, the Danish NAP 1998 (p.65) mentioned the parental leave scheme and the high coverage of day-care for children. The Danish day care system is of a high standard and makes an improved coupling of work and family life possible for families with small children.

The Danish 2000 NAP (p.7, 20, 31) outlined its gender policies by saying that the intake into IT educational programmes is to be increased by 1000 students over the next 3-4 years and efforts will be made to increase women's share. The gender-mainstreaming approach is included in all policies to offer better possibilities for reconciling work and family life and to facilitate reintegration into the labour market. The social partners in the private labour market have initiated a monitoring project concerning equal opportunities. The waiting list is estimated to be reduced for childcare facilities or school clubs for children under 10. The Industrial Policy Report for 1998 focused on female entrepreneurs' special potentials, conditions and barriers. The women accounted for only 30 per cent of the entrepreneurs although they constitute 45 per cent of the labour force. There are barriers, which are in many cases based on the choice of education, family patterns and traditional sex roles. The industrial policy objective is to increase the share of female entrepreneurs. Two studies are dealing with such matters as women's conditions, barriers, motivation, management values, needs for counselling and financing. On the basis of the mainstreaming principle these analyses are to improve the framework conditions for female entrepreneurs.

The 2003 Danish NAP (p.11) says, "*The equality policy in the labour employment field is based on women's already high participation rates in Denmark. The initiatives of the Government are thus concentrated on breaking down the gender-segregated labour market and creating a better harmony between working and family life in order to reduce the wage gap between men and women.*" The availability of childcare provision contributes to promoting labour market participation, for both men and women, and also to promoting reconciliation of work and private life. The degree of coverage of childcare provision broken down to age groups up to 17 years is

extensive (p.31). The Gender Mainstreaming project within the PES is mentioned again (p.32). A new development scheme titled “Female managers” is presented. Its focus is on promoting the share of female managers on all levels of management. Female managers in the state sector are offered the opportunity of participating in a network concerning women and management and management policy issues. In the private sector the scheme’s aim is to increase the share of women in management jobs and activities. (p.33) A project of the social partners is carried out in the municipal sector concerning the implementation of the kind of wage policies which will not have gender bias. Another project deals with job evaluation systems from an equal pay perspective, and a third project, concerned with gender pay gaps between the private sector and the county/municipal sector, will be started. (p.34)

Denmark’s rhetorical opening to the concept of GM states that in all policies there must be a GM approach, strengthening equal opportunities for men and women. The GM itself is **the general principle of equal opportunities for women and men** and it is used in a dialogue between “all relevant actors”. This GM principle is integrated in the Danish legislation in the fields of labour market policy and taxation, because this legislation is based on individual persons and places thus men and women on an equal footing! The integration of the GM in the new Act on Equal Opportunities means that all public authorities are supposed to integrate the gender aspect in their planning and administration. GM also means that the principle of equal opportunities for women and men is integrated into all employment guidelines! The success of the GM approach in Denmark is related to the high coverage of childcare services, allowing women to take part in the working life. A concrete case of GM approach can be found in the developments of the Danish PES service, where the placement service personnel are ‘awareness raised’ and gender neutral and where the placements to a sexually non-traditional sector is expectable. Testing and measuring the principle of gender mainstreaming is common in Denmark too.

Danish gender related policies are based on the high quality and extent of the welfare state, for example, in the field of day care and family leaves. This has led to a very gender segregated labour market, where policies and statutes to correct the situation are necessary. The PES system has been a target of many development initiatives, designed to prevent a segregated labour market and to make placement traditions more women friendly. Although Rasmussen’s Government’s general policy line in NAP 2003 is very neo-liberal (and somewhat ‘strange’ in relation with the other NAPs) and control oriented towards welfare beneficiaries and ethnic minorities, one cannot, on the basis of the NAP text, conclude in what way the long historical line of Danish equality policies has changed in the era of Rasmussen.

3.5.4 Gender issues in Dutch NAPs

The concept

Gender mainstreaming issues are not very explicit in the Dutch NAPs. The 2000 Dutch NAP (p.20) included a guideline for a “gender-mainstreaming approach and for tackling gender gaps” in Pillar IV. The pillar states that the differences in degree of participation between men and women (sex segregation) are still an important factor in the functioning of the labour market. A cross-sector approach to existing obstacles was announced in the long-range policy document on Emancipation Policy. According to it “*Traditional equal opportunities policies will be supplemented with policy relating to the ‘daily work routine’ (employees with family responsibilities have different needs compared to breadwinners, for example as regards commuting) and policy in the field of information and communications technology.*” Also the Government said (p.21): “*The government attaches great importance to promoting the economic self-sufficiency of women. To achieve this, women need to be encouraged to participate in the labour market and men need to be encouraged to take on more family responsibilities. The government wants to give women and men more options to combine work with family life, and it also wants to eliminate the barriers that limit these options. Combining work and family life is the joint responsibility of government, social partners and individual citizens.*” A study on the promotion of equal pay for work of equal value began in 1999. Its aim was to develop a practical instrument for detecting sex discrimination in job evaluation systems. On the basis of the results of this study and of regular two-yearly surveys, a policy plan containing concrete proposals on promoting equal pay was presented to the Parliament. The Government said (Dutch 2000 NAP, p.25) that the promotion of labour participation among women is the priority. This means policies of increasing the number of childcare places, working hours adjustments, tax reforms and changes in the social security, which still includes elements of the breadwinner model.

Policies

In its policies, the government (Dutch NAP 1998, p.13) had especially attempted to remove the barriers to female participation in the labour market and to widen opportunities for combining work and care responsibilities. These policies have involved childcare facilities by the following means: 1) more childcare facilities for single parents who are in training or get a job; 2) tax relieves; 3) more childcare jobs e.g. for the long-term unemployed and 4) a creation 26,000 extra places for after-school childcare. There are plans to create an adequate childcare system by 2010 and to introduce elements in keeping with market mechanisms. An investigation of the existing leave provisions will be made (parental and maternity leave, care leave, financing of career interruption, flexible annual leave). The possibility of broadening the take-up of part-time employment will also be investigated. In addition to the problems of inadequate childcare, a high marginal wedge and the transferability of the tax allowance from the non-working partner to the breadwinner hinder the increase in female participation. Also, there is a need for flexibilisation of the leave payment and a need for expanding the possibilities of other persons, like relatives, to take care of the children. (Dutch NAP 1998, p.31-33)

The 2000 Dutch NAP (p.20-22) said in its Pillar IV that the differences in the degree of participation between men and women (sex segregation) is still an important factor when it comes to improving the functioning of the labour market. Thus traditional equal opportunities policies must be supplemented with policies related to the daily work routines, including commuting and policy in the field of information and communications technology! An equal rights monitor will be published and it will provide information about various gender aspects in different policy areas. The monitor will provide standard information that has not previously been available, particularly with regard to ethnic origin. The government has prepared a Work and Care Bill, which will combine various leave schemes and incorporates the following elements:

- A scheme for **entitlement to maternity leave** and entitlement to three weeks' paid adoption leave for both adoptive parents.
- **Entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave** for partners and entitlement to short-term (up to ten days a year) paid career leave.
- **A number of existing leave schemes will be transferred to the Work and Care Act**, such as the scheme for parental leave, emergency leave and other short periods of leave, time off for public duties and career break funding.
- **A Leave-Saving Bill** was submitted to the Parliament in 1999 which will allow employees to set aside up to 10% of their gross annual income and/or the equivalent number of working hours to finance a period of leave.
- **The Working Hours (Adjustment) Act** will come into force on 1 July 2000.
- **Expanding childcare facilities** is high on the policy agenda. Some progress has been made in this area:
- A scheme for **expanding childcare facilities**, including out-of-school care was set up in 1999. This scheme aims to create 71,000 new childcare places for children in the 0-12 age group by the end of 2002, on top of the existing 89,000 places (1997 figures).
- A structural sum, rising to EUR 68 million in 2002, is available to **give parents and employers more fiscal options**.
- **The tax relief for employer's childcare costs** was increased from 20% to 30%.

Subsidised labour is used in the childcare sector. The conditions for introducing inflow/transfer jobs in this sector have been improved. New initiatives will be started to help those trying to combine work and family responsibilities. The areas targeted include 1) promotion of working hours tailored to personal circumstances; 2) urban and regional planning and mobility; 3) relaxation of restrictions on trading hours and better coordination of working hours and trading hours; 4) personal services and 5) coordination of leisure, educational and childcare facilities.

The 2003 Dutch NAP (p.13) introduces a life-cycle savings scheme. One of the aims of this scheme is to make it financially possible for people to combine work and family responsibilities throughout their working life. The existing fiscal leave-saving scheme is to be extended and made more attractive. The government proposes that a life-course savings scheme would no longer be left to the discretion of the employer, but would become the employee's right. Employees would be free to open a life-course savings account at a bank or take advantage of a life-cycle product offered by insurance companies. Up to 12% of the gross annual salary could be set aside annually (tax-free) in a life-course savings scheme. This would give employees the chance to save for up to 18 months' unpaid leave. The Dutch 2003 NAP (p.19-21) discovers that the employment rate among women has increased substantially in the past few years. The Government policy in this area focuses on pay differentials, mobility to more senior positions, childcare and options for combining work and family. The main employment policy options in relation with the gender issues mentioned in the Employment Guidelines are the following:

- **22.5% of children under the age of two are looked after** in a day nursery or by a childminder.

- **About 250,000 children aged between two and four attend a playgroup.** 22.5% of this age group go to a day nursery or childminder. **This means that over 80% of children between the ages of two and four go to a day nursery, childminder or playgroup.**
- The Netherlands is actively working to combat unfair pay differentials. **Equal Treatment Commission is identifying pay differentials in individual companies and employers are provided with a system to assess their own pay systems.**
- The government has set itself the task of **increasing the number of childcare places by 72,000** between 1998 and 2002, and by a further 10,000 places in 2003.
- The government hopes to introduce the **Basic Childcare Provision Act.** This **Act regulates the funding of childcare and guarantees basic standards of childcare nationwide.** The principles of the Act are freedom of choice for parents, more scope for market forces, and tripartite funding, whereby the government, employers and parents will share the cost of childcare.
- **An employer cannot terminate a female employee's contract of employment while she is on maternity leave.** In the case of parental leave, the employer cannot terminate the contract because the employee is invoking a statutory right.
- The government presented **a plan of placing 50,000 women returnees in paid jobs.** Voluntary agreements have been made involving regional parties – municipalities, Centres for Work and Income (CWI), professional associations and employers – who are to help women returnees find work.

The Netherlands does not exhibit an explicit attempt to understand the concept of Gender Mainstreaming. It is only noted that there are certain problems (e.g. childcare) in the participation of women in the labour market and certain policies are needed to prevent these unfavourable developments. The idea of women's working is under construction after a history of breadwinner model, and the structures of reconciliation of work and family life must be developed. The equal pay issues are under study and evaluation. Gender related issues must be studied and monitored here too.

Dutch gender related policies are mostly concentrated around the problem of low participation of women in the labour markets. It seems that the Dutch childcare system is not up to date and satisfactory to allow a great increase in the women's employment rate. Many policy efforts have been made to increase childcare facilities. Other measures - like the use of ICT, a mobility support and working hours arrangements - are mentioned in connection with the attempt to support families in their combining of work and family life. Family leaves are being developed, but their coverage is much less than in the Nordic countries. The newest additions to the field are the savings scheme of the work leave and the rights and policies which allow women to return back to work after a break.

3.5.5 Gender issues in the Spanish NAPs

The concept

In its background statements, the Spanish 1998 NAP (p.34) pointed out that the employment activity among women had increased in recent years, amounting to 48% now, which was still below the EU average. Unemployment in Spain affected women in particular. It was therefore necessary to correct the shortcomings with regard to their situation in the labour market: low rates of activity and employment, high level of unemployment, wage discrimination, job segregation and poor access to jobs with high responsibility. The NAP also expressed an interest in bringing the Spanish labour legislation and community guidelines closer to one another in the areas of equal pay and discrimination. The awareness of the employment services will be raised in connection with equality and equal opportunities issues. (p.38)

The 2000 Spanish NAP (p.17) stated that: *“The NAP 2000 has as a priority, to a greater extent than previous plans, the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women. This recognises the existing imbalance in the labour market, in which women suffer discrimination in the form of a higher rate of unemployment, lower rate of employment and lower wages. Equality of opportunity goes across the board in the NAP 2000, particularly with reference to the application of the Law Reconciling Family and Working Life, the boosting of training in new technologies, and the support for business projects developed by women.”* The 2000 Spanish NAP (p.29) pointed out that the aim of the measures of Pillar IV is to guarantee that the equal opportunities policy is applied across the whole NAP 2000 and specific actions are designed to offer women access to the labour market on an equal basis with men. This measure is said to be adopted in all public administrations, such as today’s professional armed forces, where the proportion of women is greater than before. Particular attention will be paid to aspects related to the reconciling of family and working life and the establishment of positive training measures in the workplaces for people returning to the labour market. It is interesting to note that the only women institute of all NAPs is mentioned here, the Institute for Women, taking part of the NAP process!

The Spanish 2003 NAP (p.25) states declamatorily that: *“Gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination for reasons of sex has been incorporated into all phases of political decision-making, as well as into the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions resulting from those decisions.”* The NAP also says that, through the 2003 Inter-con-federal Agreement for Collective Bargaining, a set of general standards for gender equality is established. These are to serve as guidelines for negotiators on questions such as the following: 1) *adopting anti-discriminatory clauses;* 2) *adjusting the content of collective agreements to the legislation in force;* 3) *including positive action clauses to favour the employment of women in sectors in which they are under-represented;* 4) *using technical, neutral and objective criteria for recruitment, categorization, promotion and training systems;* 5) *applying correctly the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value;* 6) *adopting measures related to the working day, holidays and the planning of training in order to reconcile production demands with personal or family needs;* 7) *and monitoring the application of agreements from the point of view of equal opportunities.* (Spanish NAP 2003, p.27) The positive PES actions favouring women and the collaborative efforts of the Institute for Women’s Affairs and autonomous regions are mentioned again. (p.25)

Policies

The 1998 Spanish NAP (p.38-39) said that increasing the rate of employment of women, reducing their unemployment and increasing their presence in under-represented occupations were central policy goals. This means among other things that priority to training actions will be given to women, so as to equip them for under-represented occupations. In addition, there was a need to provide economic incentives for employing women on open-ended contracts in under-represented occupations and jobs. The employers who hire substitute workers during maternity or adoption leaves are exempted from employer's social security contributions. The training programmes "Escuelas Taller" and "Casas de Oficio" favour female employment and women's increased participation in the labour force. Women's training actions are being increased in professions of new technology, as well as in professions providing new sources of employment. The NAP also mentioned support for women setting up businesses and the reinforcement of the existing financial assistance for them. The Institute for Women has a total budget of PTA 1,340 million (8.05 M€) for developing the above-mentioned measures.

Guideline 17 "Reconciling work and family life" mentioned plans for nurseries and other actions related to local services. The guideline also mentions a promotion of a system of social services and home care services, aimed particularly at the elderly, the sick and the disabled. Amendments are planned to labour legislation, involving parental leaves so as to promote reconciliation of family and occupational responsibilities. (Spanish NAP 1998, p.40) Guideline 18 "Return to working life" tries to provide women with technical assistance, counselling and training in new technologies, as well as training and retraining through the employment services, so as to encourage them back into the labour market. The measures include (p.41):

- **Information and counselling for unemployed women** to promote their return to the labour market.
- **Vocational training for women** to the same end.
- **Facilitating access to continuing training** for female workers taking leave of absence to care for young children.
- **Encouraging programmes to support the setting up of businesses by women and promoting** development of a network of women entrepreneurs.

The 2000 Spanish NAP (p.14-15) said that the most important reform was the approval of the Law of Reconciling Family and Professional Life for working people in 1999. It extended the length of time and circumstances of the maternity and care leave. A contribution-based benefit called "Risk During Pregnancy" was introduced to apply to work deemed to present a risk to pregnant women. The "Zero cost" programme, concerning workers on paternity or maternity leave and exempting employers from social security payments of the leaves, is extended. The 2000 Programme for Employment Promotion made one of its priorities the recruitment of women on permanent contracts with the help of employment subsidies. The supporting of female entrepreneurship through financial assistance, counselling and training continues, as does the training in new technologies to aid the professional diversification of women. Measures supporting women in entering the labour markets are mentioned again (Spanish NAP 2000, p.30):

- The application and development of the Law Reconciling Family and Working Life, with **particular attention being paid to parental leave** and the enforcement of the law.
- **A plan for crèches using public funds** will be promoted with the cooperation of local corporations and the autonomous regions.

- **The creation of support services for families and workers with elderly dependents** will be assisted (home help, day centres, night centres). This will be done in partnership with local corporations and will be financed with public funds.

The training of women was supported again. The receiving of training is possible e.g. for workers who are on career breaks or parental leave and for women with lone parent responsibilities. In addition, the goal is to design and develop personalised job-finding schedules for women who are victims of domestic violence, are long-term unemployed or have special difficulties. (Spanish NAP 2000, p.30)

The 2003 Spanish NAP (p.25) is arguing that: *“Despite the positive changes in female employment, which has increased by 40% since 1997, there is still a major imbalance in terms of women’s participation in the labour market compared to men’s. The rate of unemployed women is twice that of men and women represent only 30% of the self-employed. Because of this, it is essential to continue measures specifically targeted at those sections of the female population facing the greatest difficulties in entering the labour market.”* The following are the most significant measures taken in this regard since the last NAP (p.25):

- Act 33/2002 modified the Workers’ Statute and broadened the principle of equality between men and women. It **extended the principle of equal remuneration to non-wage payments**, considering that discrimination can arise from direct or indirect remuneration for work.
- The “Report on collective bargaining as a mechanism to promote equal opportunities between men and women in access to and maintenance of employment, 1998-2002”, drawn up by the Economic and Social Council, highlights **the progress made during this period in legislation and agreements, as reflected in collective bargaining.**
- **Gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination for reasons of sex has been incorporated into all phases of political decision-making, as well as in the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions resulting from those decisions.**
- The “General Subsidy” (Subvención Global) was given **a boost to finance projects linked to local services and infant care centres.**
- **Positive discrimination in favour of women for PES actions** improving employability has been maintained together with the promotion of specific active job-search measures in a collaborative effort between the Institute for Women’s Affairs and the autonomous regions. **Employers recruiting women receive reductions in social security payments.**
- **Training programmes and support for company creation and development** have been introduced in partnership with a variety of institutions. They offer guidance and training in various business activities, including individual tutoring for female entrepreneurs and businesswomen via the Internet and online services such as the C-TEST project and “Online Teleservice Centre”.

As a means of promoting the reactivation of women after periods of maternity leave, the scope of reductions in social security benefits has been extended to include the indefinite-term employment and the renewal of indefinite-term or temporary contracts. The work must begin within 24 months of giving birth. Although much of the power has been devolved to the autonomous regions in the fields of social welfare and education, central government continues to offer significant support for improving the care services for early infancy (0-3 years). A tax credit was introduced for women who have a job and who have registered in the social security system or friendly society. The maximum annual amount is 1,200 euros for each child under the age of 3. (Spanish NAP 2003, p.25)

The concept of Gender Mainstreaming is understood in Spain again rhetorically without concrete definition and contents. Gender Mainstreaming and non-discrimination for reasons of sex is claimed

to be incorporated in all phases of political decision-making and administration. The gender equality related outcomes of these decisions are monitored. In the collective bargaining process the gender issues are taken into account systemically and monitored. Awareness raising in gender issues is practised in the PES system. Generally the gender related shortcomings are noticed in the Spanish NAPs - and after this, the NAPs mention the need for policies to repair the situation. Pillar IV as such is said to solve many of these problems by making the NAP extraordinary in gender issues when spreading the ‘tidings of joy’.

In its gender related policies, Spain has concentrated on women’s poor situation in the labour market due to their low skills, inflexible work organisations and family and care responsibilities. The priority is in training actions for women: making training more possible and fluid, helping mothers return to labour markets and guiding women to professions atypical for their sex. “New sources of employment” (again undefined) and technology education are mentioned as the training focus. Measures are also targeted to make women’s work contracts more stable and work organisations more flexible, allowing the reconciliation of work and family life. The tax reductions of employers are the main instruments in developing the work organisations, allowing women to take maternity leaves (substitute workforce) and making their permanent employment possible. The development of childcare services is as essential as it is in the Netherlands and Austria, but the starting level is much lower. A Spanish speciality is the creation of care services for the elderly and other dependants to substitute the domestic care responsibilities of women after they enter employment (as an indicator of low level of elderly services?). The maternity and care leaves are extended (without mentioning their original and final scale). Female entrepreneurship is supported – as it is in the other countries. An attempt is made to imprint the idea of gender equality into the emergent collective bargaining system.

3.5.5 Country comparisons in the field of gender related policies

The next tables compare the countries in their orientation in gender related policies. However, the reader must keep in mind that they are expressions in the NAPs, not necessarily the real state of the art situations in each country.

Table 7: Women specific measures and positive actions mentioned?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Women entrepreneurship supported -The government and ministries equality programme -The state administration GM programme -Extended fathers child care leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES career break returnee's qualification programme -Special training opportunities for women during family leaves -Targeted recruitment of women in EU educational programmes, technical education and non-traditional occupations -Women entrepreneurship supported -Unemployment benefit and childcare adjustments -Extra funding for childcare establishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES consulted to take equality issues as a normal part of the actions -The continuing development of parental leave 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promoting training of women in new technologies
NAP 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A campaign to increase women's share in ICT jobs -Equality barometer -A programme to oppose professional segregation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES childcare benefits -Women entrepreneurship supported -Training centres and women's foundations under the territorial employment pact -Incentives for employers to promote women in workplaces -PES career break returnee's qualification programme -Counselling and training women to non-traditional occupations -Information campaign of pay gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High utilisation of maternity leave -PES actions against occupational segregation -Women entrepreneurship supported -Women's share in IT training and education wanted to be higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Women entrepreneurship supported -Extra funding for childcare facilities -Extra funding for initiatives of reconciliation of work and family life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A Leonardo project helping employability of women -A programme reducing social cost to employ women in permanent contracts -More educational programmes with care flexibilities -Women entrepreneurship supported -Women training in new technologies -Women given priorities in training
NAP 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pay gap measures of social partners -A national equality action plan -Planned extensions of family leaves -A reform of the Act on Equality between Women and Men (e.g. pay gap) -Through teacher training school children encouraged to select atypical professions for their gender -Unemployment benefit changes favourable for women 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More flexible maternity leave scheme -Childcare across municipal borders -The enforcement of the ban against discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An ESF-Equal project launched to prevent occupational segregation -A right to return to work after maternity leave -A scheme to help female work returnees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Incentives for female employment contracts -Women given a priority in training -Subsidies for employees to allow women have maternity and care leave -Women entrepreneurship supported -PES actions to favour women

Table 7 describes women specific measures and positive actions for women in the NAPs. The idea of supporting women's entrepreneurship is very popular; it is mentioned by all countries. Women's training in different kind of life situations is expressed by Finland, Austria and Spain. In addition to these countries, Denmark too has been interested in fostering women to take part in ICT or technical education. Developments of income transfers and subsidies related to the reconciliation of work and family life are practised in all countries. Their scale and financial extent naturally varies

considerably. Women are helped to reach permanent work contracts especially in Spain, but also the Netherlands and Austria put efforts to help women return back to work after maternity leave. In addition to education, occupational segregation is addressed through PES actions in Denmark, and by means of a development programme in Finland. Childcare is under development in Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark and Spain. Different kinds of plans, programmes and projects to support women are expressed in Finland, the Netherlands and Spain. Pay gap measures are topical in Finland and Austria, and Austria is also approaching gender issues regionally. The two-track strategy in line with EU's policy on gender equality¹⁶ involving ad hoc special measures to improve the position of women and, on the other hand, integration of gender perspective into all policies is at least some way included in Finnish policies of 1998.

Table 8: Reconciliation of work and family life mentioned - how and to what extent?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planned extensions for parental leaves -Finnish broad family policy system described incl. leaves, day care and right to return to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES women's career break returnee's qualification programme -Measures to make part-time work more attractive and possible -Extension of the childcare establishments -Easing the taking of unpaid leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -"Advanced" day care system mentioned -"Broad" parental leave scheme mentioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Part-time work encouraged -Creating more childcare facilities -The need for extended leave schemes investigated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Plan for nurseries -To amend labour legislation on parental leave -Support for women work returnee's
NAP 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Finnish broad family policy system described incl. leaves, day care and right to return to work -Extended paternity leave planned -Pre-school teaching for all 6-year- olds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES childcare subsidies -Extension of the childcare facilities -Extended parental leave scheme -PES women's career break returnee's qualification programme with special counselling and training -Measures to make part-time work more attractive and possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to childcare facilities outside the normal hours -Working time flexibilisation -"Advanced" day care system mentioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Entitlement to maternity leave -Entitlement to two days paternity leave -Leave-Saving Bill -Creating more childcare facilities -Tax relief for employers childcare costs -A scheme to provide childcare facilities for lone parents on welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Laws for the Reconciling of Family and Working life -Parental leave extensions -Plan for new crèches -Support services for families with elderly dependants -Support for women work re- turnee's
NAP 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Finnish broad family policy system described incl. leaves, day care and right to return to work -Planned extensions to parental leaves -Awareness raising of the idea of reconciliation of work and family life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policies to make part-time work and more flexible work organisation possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More flexible maternity leave scheme -Childcare across municipal borders -A right to enter part-time work -Extended childcare provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Life-cycle savings scheme -Creating more childcare facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support for women work re- turnee's

¹⁶ See Mosesdottir's chapter on EES in this publication.

Table 8 shows that the idea of reconciliation of work and family life is addressed in nearly every NAP. *Finland and Denmark* can present their large and advanced family policy, family leave and childcare systems, extraordinary in relation with the other countries and aimed nowadays also for men. *Austria* has the PES related women's career break returnee's programme, qualifying mothers back to the labour markets. Furthermore, Austria keeps increasing its childcare places and relies on part-time work to achieve family flexibilities. *The Netherlands* and *Spain* are also increasing their childcare facilities all the time and extending their family leave schemes. But generally these measures of reconciliation of work and family life do not tackle the unequal division of care work between men and women. The focus is almost exclusively on women and on service provisions with the exception of paternity leaves of Nordic countries.

Table 9: GM impact assessment policies, monitoring, statutory bodies or mandatory instructions present?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	-Social partners developing methods to assess pay differences -An assessment study of equal leave costs of employers		-PES labour market monitoring system incl. equality issues		-The Institute of Women offering counselling and information services
NAP 2000	-National equality barometer -A project to analyse research findings and best practises to eliminate gendered division of labour -A study on statistics and monitoring of gender based pay differentials -The gender mainstreaming process of ministries	-ESF implementation evaluation of equality issues -GM working group of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs	-A proposal to set up Knowledge Centre and Debate Forum of equality issues -An examination of pay differences in the state sector (Ministry of Finance) -A job assessment project identifying the factors determining wage differentials (Ministry of Labour) -A social partners proposal to monitor equality issues	-A study of same pay principles in job evaluation -Equal rights monitor -A study of the possibilities of paid long-term leave	-Statistical development in monitoring of women's work
NAP 2003	-The Government idea to include "assessing methods" in central administration		-Social partners planning a system of analysing pay differentials	-Equal Treatment Commission of pay differentials -Employers pay system assessment tool -Gender neutrality in job evaluations assessment tool	-A project of wage differences and job evaluation

Table 9 shows that all countries are to some degree monitoring and assessing the gender impacts of their policies. Usually the politically difficult and unsolvable matters are left under study. Gender policy related bodies have been the following: 1) the GM project of the Finnish central administration, 2) the GM working group of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs in Austria, 3) the proposal to set up a knowledge centre and debate forum on gender issues in Denmark, 4) the Equal Treatment Commission of Pay Differentials in the Netherlands and 5) the Institute of Women in Spain with counselling and information services.

Table 10: Occupational segregation and women's position as minority of managerial and professional staff addressed?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES counselling actions to guide to non-typical occupations e.g. IT training for women -Entrance criteria of teacher training to favour men -Administrative measures to attract more women in mathematics and natural sciences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developments in the career guidance to encourage women to enter higher technical education and non-typical professions -More training places of non-typical professions for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES actions to guide to non-typical occupations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Giving priority to training actions for women in professions of under-representation -Increasing training actions for women in the fields of new technologies and new sources of employment
NAP 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Equal Labour Market project to prevent occupational segregation (monitoring, awareness raising) -A campaign to increase women's share in ICT conversion training -A study of how to encourage boys and girls to select non-typical professions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vocational guidance and work practices of girls directed to non-typical professions -Women in Technology project guiding female pupils to non-typical university training -PES actions to guide to non-typical occupations -The special noticing of female applicants of public sector jobs in professions of under-representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PES actions to guide to non-typical occupations -PES development projects to handle occupational segregation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promoting training of women in new technologies
NAP 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The government idea to increase women's share in political and economic decisions making -The tripled number of women in ICT and media training noticed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Initiatives to support female managers (networks, awareness raising, positive actions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ESF project to support women entering senior posts -'Male-female professions' partnership to cut across horizontal segregation 	

Table 10 shows that occupational segregation is typically addressed in all countries (except for the Netherlands) by guiding and counselling women to professions not typical to their sex and by supporting their entry to higher and technological education. This can be done by PES actions, by

awareness raising projects, by training counselling, by administrative changes and by studying the phenomena. It is interesting to note, that the men are not counselled to atypical professions, except in Finland, where they are needed to become class teachers. In addition, the *Finnish* government has clearly expressed its wish to increase women's share in political and economic decision making. *Austria* has a special regulation to notice female applicants of public sector jobs in professions and spheres of actions of female under-presentation. *Denmark* supports female managers by facilitating networks and by 'raising positive actions'. In *the Netherlands*, an ESF project supporting women entering senior posts is mentioned.

Table 11: The idea of GM permeated down to different kinds of organisations and institutions?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	-Educational authorities trying to make gender equality one result indicator of the training		-The mainstreaming process of PES incl. public and private sector employers -Government discussions with social partners and campaigns for corporations on the issues of reconciliation of work and family life		
NAP 2000	-The mainstreaming project of the state administration -A project of social partners together with schools and companies to avoid occupational segregation -The gender dimension adopted in the result management system of the Labour Administration	-The special courses of teachers and trainers in 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender sensitivity' -Gender awareness raising of teaching contents by Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs	-The mainstreaming process of PES incl. public and private sector employers		
NAP 2003	-The government will to gender mainstream the whole central administration		-The freedom of choice of childcare across municipal borders -The mainstreaming process of PES incl. public and private sector employers -Extended interest of social partners on equality issues	-The government wants to make an agreement with municipalities on cooperation between schools, childcare and leisure facilities	-Gender issues noticed in the process of collective bargaining -PES actions to favour women

According to **Table 11** *Spain* is in its last NAP interested in the rooting of gender aspects to the process of collective bargaining. The PES services recognising women's special needs also is brought fore. *The Netherlands* only expresses the Government's idea of cooperation with municipalities in the issues of reconciliation of work and family life. This might only mean moving of responsibilities from the state to local level. *Denmark* has practised Gender Mainstreaming in its PES administration by rooting the idea to its services and practises. The labour administration has

also had discussions with its local social partners about how to better notice the gender issues. *Austria* has organised special courses for teachers and trainers to better perceive the ideas of GM in their educational institutions, and the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs has simultaneously developed teaching contents. *Finland* has been the most active one in this field by having started its GM project of the central administration. In addition, the government has actively discussed gender issues with the social partners. Gender equality is also one of the result indicators of vocational training and labour administration.

Gender Mainstreaming is understood in many ways in the NAPs. We cannot find scientifically smart conceptions of GM in the NAPs, but outside the rhetoric of all inclusiveness, we can find something between large-scale policies affecting both sexes (universal social policies of the welfare state, like in Finland and Denmark) and small pilot projects usually aimed at supporting women (used in all countries). Another question is then how effective and large scaled these programmes and policies are in tackling the issue. The all-inclusive GM rhetoric is used when there are unsolvable political problems and difficulties in gender issues. The rhetoric, together with a ‘monitoring approach’, is one way of forgetting the problems or prolonging the solution. There was only one women’s institution – The Institute of Women of Spain – mentioned in the NAPs. Thus it is difficult to say whether there is any outside imposition to deepen the idea of GM in the process or whether there is any women’s influence from other institutions. The concrete Gender Mainstreaming processes and practises have been remote and thus ineffective. There is a great deal of work left in developing the idea of GM and its policy implementation methods.

The content of gender policies in the NAPs is usually based on the statistical or political observation that women are usually lagging behind men in wages and career development. There is also a statistically observed gendered division of labour and occupational segregation in many branches. It is pointed out more or less explicitly that, during motherhood, women’s job skills are lagging behind the standards of the labour markets. The structures behind the differences of men and women in the labour markets are not analysed or mentioned, and motherhood is raised up as the most common factor causing the difference. The measures that seek to reduce the care duty gap between men and women are bundled under the concept of reconciliation of work and family life. The intention of many political measures too, at least implicitly, is that men should take more responsibility of childcare and domestic work.

The concept of reconciliation of work and family life is in this sense illustrative. The structures that are intended to support families in their working lives, as well as in other phases of their lives, are well established and extensive (despite certain problems) in the Nordic countries of Finland and Denmark. On the basis of the NAPs, it seems that there are more problems in this field in Austria, the Netherlands and Spain; for example, a great deal of effort has been put to the basic development of day care services and the ordinary school system – something that is not under discussion in Finland and Denmark. Instead of simply resorting to the Nordic public system, Finland and Denmark have tried to find alternatives from the private and NGO sector. Family allowances are also under construction and development. In Spain the process of reconciliation of work and family life is just at the beginning.

Comparing the countries, we find that **Finland and Denmark** have large scaled gender related policies as Nordic welfare states. We can say that these countries have an **integrated approach to equality**. But when it comes to these two countries, Finland expresses its gender policies more actively than Denmark and seems to be more innovative on the level of NAPs. Moreover, the last

Danish NAP is very different and was not very equality oriented. **Austria** seems to have an **intermediate approach** in gender issues as it has many innovative actions but also a great deal of structural development in the field of gender issues. **The Netherlands and Spain** have a **narrow approach** in gender issues when having lots of structural reforms under construction and still having lots of care responsibilities left to households. The Netherlands could also belong together with Austria, but due to its very passive presentation of gender issues in the NAPs, I put it together with Spain.

3.6. Combination of KBS and GM in the NAPs.

To analyse how the KBS and GM (say gender issues) are combined in the NAPs, one must remember that the view may be very narrow and not innovative in relation with the ideas of the Wellknow WP 1 report. The NAPs do not explicitly bring out KBS and GM as such, so there is room for the researcher's imagination too. Typically the issues in this field are mentioned in connection with women's training to occupations not typical for them.

Finland

The Finnish 1998 NAP (p. 51) outlined the general worry for mothers' weak position in the fast changing labour market: *"If the mother has been out of working life for a long time because of successive pregnancies, however, the skills required in her job may have changed and thus returning to work can be difficult."* The need to increase women's participation in information technology and related sectors training was expressed in the NAP 1999 (p.5). The NAP 2000 (p.3, 27) brought out the booming ICT sector in Finland and the need to supply it with high skilled labour. In this situation, women were seen as a suitable reserve to be educated to ICT professions. This was also fostered in the strategic 'equal labour market' project that sought to educate and train women to professions not typical to their sex and change the prevailing structures of the gender segregated labour market. Furthermore, there was a joint project of schools and companies, encouraging boys and girls to seek employment in fields traditionally dominated by the opposite gender. A special campaign, "Tietonaisia" (InfoWomen), was started with the purpose of increasing women's share in ICT studies and conversion training (p.12). In its 2003 NAP (p.24) Finland observes that 21.4% of women and 16.5% of men of the Finnish population participated in adult education and training in 2002. This tells about the wideness of the system and about its favouring of women.

Austria

In Austria the high textual emphasis is on the AMS (PES) career break returnee's programme. It is aimed to help women returning to the labour market after a career break and facing re-entry problems usually caused by motherhood. The programme includes skilling and targeted placement, along with assistance in childcare during training or re-entry. (Austrian 1998 NAP, p.18, 40) Austria also mentions the innovative regional training arrangements planned specifically for women. These include training centres and women's foundations under the territorial employment

pacts (Austrian 1998 NAP, p.21). School standards must also be improved from the point of view of women: there are targeted efforts to recruit girls and women to EU education programmes. There are even greater efforts to encourage women to attend higher technical colleges and colleges of higher education. This means general strengthening of careers guidance for girls/women and particular efforts in higher-level schools, academies and universities to encourage women to take up non-traditional occupations. (Austrian 1998 NAP, p.24)

In the 2000 NAP Austria stated again that technologically oriented adult training is also meant for women. Several seminars for teachers are organised on this topic. A project fostering women find their way to technical schools was launched, and another project for those seeking their way to university courses atypical to one's sex. ICT is included in the new apprenticed trades targeted especially to girls.

Denmark

The 1998 Danish NAP (p.58-59) described a job rotation project, which is favourable especially for women because it offers a possibility to upgrade one's skills during the work contract. The 2000 Danish NAP (p.7, 11) brought out IT issues and said that the intake to IT educational programmes is to be increased by 1000 students over the next 3-4 years and efforts will be made to increase women's share. In addition, IT has become a compulsory subject in all vocational training programmes. The equality aspect is that the public authorities have the overall responsibility for ensuring relevant continued training possibilities of high quality for all - irrespective of age, gender and educational background.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands pointed out in its 2000 NAP (p.21-26) that, besides the traditional equal opportunities policies, there is a need to support the daily routines (such as commuting) of workers with families. Information and communications technology is a good tool to do this. It is also necessary to develop the dual training system, the combination of training and employment, from the point of view of women work returnees. (p. 16-17)

Spain

Spain (NAP 1998, p.40) too fostered the idea of training women work returnees, in this case by also offering training in new technologies. In its 2000 NAP (p.9-10) Spain wanted to prioritise the training for disadvantaged groups – such as women – in in-company continuous training programmes. The Government's INFOXX initiative (p.12) for the development of information society is very innovative as to its content and, with its all-inclusive civic rights rhetoric, it also reflects an intention towards a more equal society from the point of view of gender. It also highlights the idea of equal access to ICT training for all people. The continuation project España.es also brings out the idea of all-inclusive civil rights in a KBS and the right to training for all disadvantaged groups, including women (Spanish NAP 2003, p.15).

Table 12: ICT policies, programmes and education for both women and men mentioned?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Women preferred in adult IT training -Women preferred as teachers of mathematics and natural sciences -Men preferred as class teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Encouraging women to attend higher technical colleges and higher colleges with technological bias 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training of new technologies for women work returnees
NAP 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A campaign to attract women to ICT conversion training -Equal Labour market project to prevent gender segregation in the labour markets -A project affecting schools and companies in selecting occupations atypical to one's sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technologically oriented adult skills training measures for women - Several seminars (for teachers) and workshops for pupils arranged on the issue of "girls/women in technology". -MiT action to encourage girls to attend technical schools - New apprenticed trades in information and communication technology targeted especially to girls. -F.I.T. information event attracting female students to atypical university courses (e.g. technology, ICT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A wish for the women's share in IT training and education to be higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work and family life supported with ICT policies too 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Women promoted training in new technologies to avoid occupational segregation -INFOXXI – Information Society for All Programme
NAP 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The percentage of women in ICT and media training tripled -High percentage of women in adult education and training 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Internet on-line services for women entrepreneurs offered - España.es 2004-2005 programme

Table 13: Programmes guaranteeing full citizenship in KBS and connecting family, civil society and ICT?	Finland	Austria	Denmark	Netherlands	Spain
NAP 1998		-Training possibilities during maternity leave -Public ICT access stressed			
NAP 2000	-The renewed Finland's Information Society Strategy with Government policy measures related to it, e.g. all basic ICT skills to whole population	-IT-Basics programme for beginners -Tele-Soft programme teaching ICT skills to the unemployed		-Work and family life supported with ICT policies too	-INFOXXI – Information Society Programme for all: digital illiteracy, digital divide, social cohesion, adequate training etc.
NAP 2003	-Telecommuting seen involved in work, family life, traffic, environment and regional policy -Training for all principle of the Government	-E-learning possibilities for parents of small children			-Espana.es 2004-2005 Programme: Internet access, training, public services etc.

Regarding the combining of KBS and GM (see **Tables 12 and 13**), there are not so many innovative ideas mentioned in the NAPs. Typically this combination is understood as the training and education of women in ICT or the technical field (natural sciences, technical sciences), as is done in every country except in the Netherlands. The Netherlands (together with Finland in the 2003 NAP) is to a higher extent highlighting the idea of supporting working families with the use of ICT in their daily routines, such as commuting. Spain is also offering Internet based counselling services for women entrepreneurs. Spain has been very innovative with its INFOXX and España.es programmes, which are designed to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens in the central fields related to KBS development. The comparable Finnish renewed Information Strategy with measures related to it is much more business oriented. Austria also mentions the aspect of IT access and training of IT basic skills, but it approaches these matters by means of smaller scale projects. When comparing the countries with respect to their quantity to express KBS-GM combined issues, it seems that Denmark and the Netherlands have been passive. However, when it comes to methodology and sources of this study, we must keep in mind that this passiveness does not necessarily mirror the real policy situation of the country.

As regards the combination of KBS and GM in NAPs, no country is expressing an **integrative approach**, where KBS and GM are intertwined closely. This is a challenge for the EU to tackle in future guidelines. I find that Finland, Austria and Spain are the countries that have an **intermediate approach**, with some kind of connection between the KBS and GM issues. Denmark and the Netherlands represent a **differentiate approach**, as they have no explicit connection between the KBS and GM issues – at least not on the NAP level.

3.7. Conclusions

When analysing the NAPs we must be aware of their rhetorical and textual character. They are political and policy documents which also represents the values of the elite in power. The central ideological discourse in the NAPs is the Neo-liberal argumentation of free markets, globalisation and competition, like Muntigl (2000) and Weiss and Wodak (2000) have found from other texts. Many of the concepts, like the GM and the life-long learning, are used rhetorically without concrete definitions. In some cases this might also mean without concrete implementation of policies presented in the texts. Furthermore, NAPs are documents whose task is to convince the EU that the policies commonly approved at high-level meetings are implemented or at least taken seriously.

Due to their rhetorical character, it is not always possible to analyse on the basis of NAPs how effective these policies have been, to what extent they have been implemented and how extensive they are from the point of view of the target groups. It also seems that the open coordination method based on the European Employment Guidelines as the social planning procedure creates a great deal of similarities in texts of the NAPs. It is an entirely different matter, though, how these textual similarities are in relation with the social realities of each country. To overcome the problems related to the rhetorical character of the NAPs, we need proper statistical comparisons of the countries studied. In addition, we need a deeper insider understanding and knowledge of the developments and policies of each country. Among the problems we must overcome with a better understanding are the different starting levels of the studied countries in many policy fields and in advancing as a KBS and in GM. A better understanding is also needed when evaluating the effectiveness of large scale policies, legislation, statutes, institutions, projects and programmes, remembering their different scales, costs and time scale. From the point of view of effectiveness and country comparison, the mosaic of actions and the rhetorical eloquence of the NAPs make the NAP analysis very difficult.

The NAPs present a very limited viewpoint of Knowledge Based Society and Gender Mainstreaming when compared with the conclusions of Wellknow Project Report One. The intertwined character of these concepts is understood weakly. The NAPs are connected to the traditional employment and social policies, they are not innovative in the sense KBS and GM are understood by our project. In this sense they present more the tradition of active labour market policy (with emphasis on training and support measures for the unemployed) than the European Union openings and strategies the fields of KBS (like People First 1996) and GM.

We argued in Wellknow Project Report One (2003) that KBS was in some cases followed by risks of widening gender, skills and job quality gaps. But I found that in the NAPs KBS is seen implicitly, mostly through the educational policies affecting labour skills and through the concept of

global competition affecting taxation and public services. Explicitly it is sometimes noticed through development programmes and strategies, which point out conventional aspects of the Information Society development, such as citizens' access to ICT equipments and services and computer literacy. The NAPs also mention some ICT based service development projects in the public sector, trying to make the support of enterprises more effective and some services more available to citizens.

The Wellknow Project Report One (2003, 87-88) argues that the gender mainstreaming approach of the EU has three dimensions: context or the unequal position of men and women; method of the integration of the gender perspective into all policy process at all levels and outcome of gender equality. In the NAPs Gender Mainstreaming is used as a rhetorical concept to communicate that gender equality issues are taken seriously. Under the concept of GM, there are several policy measures which are related to gender issues. These policies are like mature non-sex labelled universal social policies of the Nordic countries, developing policies of reconciliation of work and family life and special ad hoc development programmes of gender equality. But still it looks that GM as a concrete method of policy integration is not practised long-span and there must be stronger efforts to adopt this activity permanently.

The crucial question of the Wellknow is to study the synergies between KBS and GM in actual policies of the studied countries and in the NAPs. But it seems that this combination is not profoundly thought out or conceptualised among the policy makers. In the Wellknow Project Report One (2003), it was presumed that there will be some outcomes or expectations when combining the KBS and gender relations:

- The labour markets of KBS are becoming increasingly divided by skill, security and pay, or polarised between the skilled and the unskilled.
- Years of schooling have a positive effect on women's wages and career development and thereby it is important to guarantee equal opportunities and access to education especially for women.
- Few women are employed in knowledge-intensive industries such as computer and software industries. Thus women are more likely than men to be under-valued and under-represented in skilled jobs and their actual and potential skills may be under-exploited.
- The barrier-less and timeless world created by the ICTs may break down the traditional division of work within families, as it gives men and women greater opportunities of reconciling work and family life. It is important to recognise the use of the ICTs in organising everyday structures of individuals and family life, as well as in enhancing communication and cohesion in local communities.
- Differences in the diffusion and use of ICT may create new kinds of social divides and accentuate existing old divides as regards income, education, age, family type and sub-national regions.

An explicit aspect of this intermediate zone, combining KBS and gender relations in the NAPs, has been the attempt to make women participate more in ICT education and other education not typical to women. The public employment systems (PES) are also expected to guide and transmit workforce to branches not typical to the client's sex. There are also single projects and development programmes which combine ICT and gender issues; for example, in Austria there are projects which teach up to date ICT skills to mothers re-entering the labour markets. But generally the aspects related to the combination of KBS and GM are not explicitly present in the NAPs. There are

no large structurally effective policies which would cater for both sides of intertwined KBS and GM. Instead, there are policies which work separately, not recognising the other side of the issue. Thus the measures of reconciliation of work and family life do not recognise the possibilities of ICT, and the educational policies do not recognise the specific problems of women entering highly skilled KBS professions, even if there are some single projects as exceptions. The few programmes aimed at preventing a digital divide do not recognise labour market issues, and the labour market policies do not recognise ICT access and literacy issues. The intermediate zone combining KBS, GM and employment policies is missing from the NAPs. The custom is to consider things separately, not as intertwined processes or totalities.

4. Policy processes and NAP content, synthesis of the National Reports

Karen Sjørup & Kenneth Reinicke¹⁷

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the process of the NAP comparatively in the 5 member states in the study (Finland, The Netherlands, Spain, Austria and Denmark), and the influence of the EES in the EEA country Iceland that is not supposed to adapt to the NAP procedure, and the new member state Hungary that is in the year 2004 adapting to the process.

Each responsible team of experts from the participating countries carried out a national report based on the reading of the NAPs 1998-2003. Other policy documents relevant for the national strategy of preparing the labour markets for the Knowledge Based Society in a gender mainstreaming perspective were taken into consideration in the analysis. Finally 4-5 expert interviews were conducted (except for Finland) with experts involved in the NAP process either as a ministerial civil servant, a social partner representative or a gender equality expert either the member of the EGGE group or a NGO representative.

Iceland and Hungary being outside of the EES and the NAP procedure present in their reports similar employment policy documents and conducted interviews with the same categories of experts as the other country reports.

Each national report is organised according to the overall questions:

1. What is the impact of the EES on national level? Are the NAPs relevant for the transition to the knowledge-based society and for the gender implications?
2. To what extent are the NAPs reflecting the main challenges of the transition to the KBS – skill gaps, inequality gaps.
 - a. To what extent are the gender gap criteria identified in the EEGs inadequate?
3. How are the national synergies between KBS policies and gender mainstreaming policies – complementarity, contradictory or no links?
4. Which actors are involved/excluded from the making of NAP's, policies on KBS and GM in particular?

¹⁷ This chapter is based on the national reports carried out by the partners in the Wellknow project. All these reports are presented as annexes to this report. Writers are: Finland: Seppo Roivas, Austria: Ute Behning & Margit Leuthold. Denmark: Kenneth Reinicke & Karen Sjørup. The Netherlands: Chantal Remery & Joop Schippers. Spain: Maria Caprile. Hungary: Teréz Laky & Laszlo Neumann.

5. To what extent have power relationships among social groups in civil society been transformed by the EES?
- a. Empowering institutional and organisational agencies like trade unions, women's organisations.
 - b. Enhancing gender awareness as policy priority and in public debate?

In this chapter the EES as a framework for national policy planning is analysed as a joint policy programme in the sense that the European Union is in charge of policies in the field of employment, although this is not altogether recognized by the member states.

4.1.1. Methods

In this chapter the national reports are analysed comparatively through a qualitative comparative methods sensitive to the discourse on the NAP used in each country. A number of quotes from the national reports have been chosen in order to illustrate both similarities and differences in the way the NAP is dealt with and talked about in the national context. Both quotes from the experts interviewed and from the text of the national researcher are utilised in the analytical process.

This on one hand makes it possible to enlighten some of the ways the EES is spoken of in the national context and also the ways this is reproduced in the text of the researcher. It is on the other hand evident that this method has some risks of being biased in the sense that individual assessments or even prejudice might inflict the text in unforeseen ways.

In this chapter the sub-themes of the NAPs are presented in chapters and headlines focussing on the conclusions and analysis rather than by the initial order and table of contents put into the national report.

As the main issue is the introduction of the EES in relation to KBS and gender mainstreaming the national practices of Iceland and Hungary are in some questions less relevant. This means that those countries are less visible in some parts of this chapter.

The chapter is organised in three major parts additionally to this first introductory part. Part 2 concerns the political process of the NAP in the member countries, the role of different actors and the 'success' of the strategy in the countries. Part 3 concerns the weight laid on the measures related to the KBS (lifelong learning, ICT skills, advanced education and flexibility) and the weight put on gender equality (gender mainstreaming, mobilising women to the labour market, child care and the involvement of fathers in parenting and paternity leave). Part 4 presents the conclusions of the chapter in relation to the overall purposes of the OMC-methods (Policy coordination, openness, democracy, governance) and the specific purposes of the Wellknow study relating to the plans for the Knowledge Based Society and gender mainstreaming as an overall target of the EES.

4.2. The Paradoxical Support for the EES in the Countries in the Wellknow Study

The modes of relating to the EES in the member states seem in many aspects paradoxical. The EES seems to be regarded on one hand important and even necessary in order for the community to deal efficiently with joint employment problems in a harmonised labour market, but on the other hand the member states most in favour of the EES (the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and Finland) at a general level don't really acknowledge that they need it themselves.

You could say that in these countries there is an overall hesitation or even resistance to accept the global modes of policy making implied in the OMC and the EES at the moment the most advanced example of this global or trans-national political scope. Spain is probably the only member state in the study fully supporting the EES.

The majority of the member states represented in the study (the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and Finland) argues that they don't think that particularly their country has a need for the EES and accordingly for the recommendations, measures and targets set by the EES. At the same time this does not imply that they find the EES redundant. Is it rather regarded an exception in the particular country that they can manage without. This is probably due to the fact that employment improved dramatically in most of the countries during the years of the EES and this improvement is generally not ascribed to the EES.

Perhaps it should be better to describe, first, how the EES has been acknowledged in Spain
One example of a total convergence between national law and the EES is Spain. In the first years of the EES Spain faced the lowest employment rates in Europe and the highest unemployment rates. The political debate in Spain gave rise to a discussion of whether the convergence with the EES was only 'nominal' or 'real' convergence in terms of employment and social cohesion. Moreover Spain received contributions from the structural funds to initiate active labour market policies. In Spain a new employment law was passed in December 2003. This law regulates PES services by decentralisation to the regions and to EES. This law establishes the connection between the EES and employment policy, and confirms that the NAP is one of the main political instruments.

The Finnish state on the contrary is actually working with employment policies in a national context primarily linked to economic and financial policies. Finland shows a lot more hesitation to join the EES wholeheartedly, as it is argued that employment policies are parts of broader economic policy, and that the different nation states are too different to rely totally on a trans-national strategy. (Finnish National Report p. 4-5)

So it could be argued that Spain and Finland take on opposite positions, when Spain is adopting the EES procedures and structures in national law whereas Finland argues that this is not possible due to the national policy coordination. Maybe this is more formal than real. As explained in the national report, the EES in Spain has not had so much impact at political-content level)

The Austrian National Report also reports that national economic policies are the basis for the national employment policies rather than the EES. This is similarly the Finnish policy regarded as connected closely to national economic strategies rather than to the community employment strategies. The 'Viennese Strategy' was launched as a national strategy with considerable emphasis on macro-economic components in a employment strategy including economic policy coordination,

tax policy, monetary policy, international finance and infra-structural elements. Even if this might seem in coherence with the EES, after the conservative-liberal change of government in 2000, the higher ministerial levels are now attaching less importance to the NAPs. (Aus. Nat. Rep. P. 6)

It is pointed out that as economic policy is a case of national interest and confinement, employment policy must also be a matter of primarily national concern. But monetary policy in the member states is a matter of the European Central Bank, and fiscal policies are coordinated by the EU. This is a fact that questions the argumentation of some governments and government officials. It nevertheless seems that the national concern for policy coordination is an obstacle for these countries to engage in European coordination. The reason might be that those countries firmly anchor employment policies in tripartite negotiations and that the scopes of these negotiations are often of a regional and national character.

Even though the Netherlands has been a devoted promoter of the EES, the Dutch national report also argues that the Netherlands doesn't really have a need for this kind of cross national coordination and peer reviewing itself after the first years of strong support and enthusiasm:

'The Netherlands has been one of the strong supporters of a European employment policy. In 1997, under the Dutch Presidency, the Employment title was included in the Amsterdam Treaty. Later that year, at the Luxembourg Jobs summit, the EU member states agreed on a European Employment Strategy. According to a Dutch evaluation study of the first five years, the EES receives broad political support in the Netherlands and is taken seriously (Zijl et al., 2002). (Dutch report p. 3)

The national states tend to regard employment problems to be of a specific national nature, and that they accordingly should be able to deal with it themselves. Most of the countries developed national action plans consisting of both employment policies, economic policies, tax policies and financial policies, but at a national level seeing the nation state as a unit of its own. Employment is thereby bound to, what are regarded to be national booms and recessions and national general policies, to address those problems and the national states do not want to be confined to EES targets. This highlight the fact that even if the countries think that they act nationally they are in fact enrolled into a community dealing with the same problems of global competition and a labour force with layers not able to cope with the qualification requirements of the KBS society. Spain in some sense expresses more precisely the tension between the national and the EU priorities in discussing the difference between the formal or real acknowledgement of EES. It might be that this formal acknowledgement is slowly and softly leading to real convergence.

As the employment problems occur more or less at the same time and in more or less the same character, and as most of the countries - even the Nordic countries – seem gradually to adjust to a neo-liberalist 'Workfare'¹⁸ strategy, that is equal to the EES strategy of strengthening the markets, employability and reducing taxes on work. It is characteristic that the countries tend to choose the same tools and targets to reduce unemployment and further employment after all, and the same tools and targets recommended in the EES.

¹⁸ Torfing (2000) refers to this strategy as a neo-Shumpeterian Workfare strategy in Europe primarily setting human capital before work and in the US setting work before human capital.

In all the above mentioned countries the aims are: 1) the active labour market policy to reduce long term unemployment problems, 2) to reduce the labour market consequences of the ageing society and 3) to deal with the qualification deficits of the labour force through life long learning and increasing the ITC skills of the labour force.

Anyway it seems that the NAP process in the above-mentioned countries takes place alongside with national policy processes in all the countries accustomed to the tripartite negotiations of state and social partners.

The only 'old' EU member state diverging from this overall picture in the study is Spain. In Spain left wing parties and trade unions show optimism towards the gain from 'real' convergence with other European countries on employment policies. This could be connected to the situation that Spain at the time when the EES was initiated was the country in the community with the lowest employment rates and highest rates of unemployment. While the conservative government implemented austere macroeconomic policies and were accused of only giving priority to 'nominal' convergence trade unions and left parties would have given priority to public investment and social policies in order to attain higher rates of employment and welfare.

One reason why Spain has a considerably more positive assessment of the EES is probably both that Spain had only few developed active employment initiatives before the NAP process was instigated and at the same time Spain received large contributions from the structural funds to initiate employment measures.

The two countries not being part of the EES strategy Hungary and Iceland reflect employment problems in somewhat different ways. Iceland being a very strong but also geographically more isolated economy faced throughout the period 1998-2003 a labour force deficit problem. Nevertheless Iceland seems to be a strong believer in the EES, merely grounding in the overall systematic policy approach inherent in the EES.

Hungary on the opposite faced a number of problems adjusting to the market economy and the re-alignment of the labour force to the KBS economy with less need of the qualifications of the elder part of the labour force being made redundant from agriculture and industrial manufacturing and to some extent to brain drain as young educated persons have a strong attraction to go west. Hungary over the last years made a joint assessment report on Employment policies that is aligned with the EES pillars and objectives. This has been a part of the accession negotiations and in that sense Hungary didn't show any hesitation to comply with the EES. Still unemployment problems due to the economic transition in Hungary have in some aspects more severe character than in the previous EU member states.

4.2.2. The NAP Process as a Reporting Procedure rather than a Planning Process

The Netherlands, Austria and Spain report about a very positive view of the EES in its very first years. Some of the countries (The Netherlands and Austria) claim that over the years from the first enthusiasm till today, the NAP process changed into a reporting practice rather than a planning procedure. In this reporting practice the initiatives already brought into practice are reported – rather than the opposite way around. The Danish report argues the same case. As the expert from

the Danish Ministry of Employment puts it: 'It is very important for us that we do not just set up plans that might or might not be realised. We learnt to report only on measures that have already been brought into practice'. In Spain the EES is reported to play 'an organising role, secondary but relevant, in the selection of actions' in the sense that the different measures are compiled into one document. This means that in Spain the EES breaks the tradition in Spain of dispersed initiatives. The Spanish report mentioned three factors in the NAP dynamics: Introducing a certain routine, a greater level of coordination between ministries and some amplification of consultation processes.

The NAP is no longer to the expected extent a matter of either public control or political interest. The processes of setting new targets were already carried out and the political battles that might have implied were already set. It might be that the processes mentioned by Spain already was established by means of the EES in some of the countries but that they tend to forget this role of the EES.

In 1998 when the NAP procedure started, the NAP attracted particular interest in some of the countries (Austria, The Netherlands, Spain). This was probably connected to the fact that the EU countries faced severe unemployment in the previous years, although the economic context was quite positive in most EU countries in 1998 and unemployment was decreasing. And the EES presented adequate responses to the problems faced in most of the EU countries. The debate on employment policies shows that this is not a shared statement- maybe you want to say that this was the opinion of most governments at that time? In Austria today with a conservative government and a much better employment situation the process is of much less interest.

The Netherlands consider itself the father/mother of the EES, as the NAP-procedure was established when the Netherlands had the EU presidency. Still it seems that the NAP is of minor interest and importance in the Netherlands. Now The Dutch national report reports that the NAP procedure is rather a summary of existing policy measures:

'The policy adviser responsible for the Dutch NAP stressed the fact that in the Netherlands the NAP is primarily a summary of existing policy measures. The NAP is not meant to develop new policy measures. That is why the NAP does not need explicit approval by the Dutch parliament. The topics that are being included in the NAP are always part of earlier and broader policy discussions' (Dutch National Report p.

Austria reported almost the same when claiming that already in 1998 activities reported under the different guidelines tended to be existing activities that were re-named, continued or in some cases expanded:

This practice, i.e. taking up existing activities and defining them as NAP measures, can be found in all NAPs. In practice, the intended development of macro-economic strategies is guided by measures carried out at the meso- and often micro-economic levels. Austrian National Report p. 5)

Even Spain being probably in practice the most EES friendly country of the EU members in the study realizes that the procedure is more a procedure of administrative nature than a political process.

Nevertheless and, to a certain extent, paradoxically, evaluations of the EES in Spain are most notable for their impact in procedural rather than political terms (Spain Nat.Rep. p.4)

The question, which role some of these countries delegate to the NAP process is yet to be answered. Why do they put so much emphasis on the process, if they do not need it themselves? Is it because there is a common understanding that some of the other countries need it more than your own country? Or is it because each country after all finds that it could gain a more systematic access to employment policies through the OMC or is it rather just a bureaucratic way of administering the EU membership?

One of the very experienced civil servants in the Danish Ministry of Employment explains the role of the EES like this:

‘ The European Employment Strategy has had a bigger political influence in the South European countries compared to the Nordic countries. It has had an impact on the attitudes dominating in Denmark towards the EES that Denmark already did meet the Lisbon targets and that there is a narrow gender gap with regard to employment (Interviewed civil servant. Danish Report p.?)’

In this case the civil servant is using a bit of both the two above quoted explanation: The others need it more, but we also learn something from the process. Or maybe it rather means: We don't have this problem, but we have to make the exercise anyway.

Iceland on the other hand as an EEA country is not obliged to follow the EES. But at the same time the government officials and the social partners are enthusiastic about the methodology of the EES and the OMC as it encourages the engagement of all relevant actors in the policy making process and ensures greater coordination across different policy areas in the national context and means of coordination between national partners and between countries implied in the strategy, particularly stressing the cooperation between the countries. A cooperation that Iceland is in fact not a part of:

“We who have been following the development of the EES find the methodology appealing and likely to be of use. By setting objectives and engaging all concerned parties, we could get everybody to work towards the same goal...The advantage of adopting the EES is that a better coordination of activities could be achieved... I see few disadvantages of implementing the EES. A greater workload is to be expected – that is what my colleagues in the member states complain about. This methodology may reduce private initiatives and the process could also lead to greater legal regulation of the labour market in Iceland” (Senior official at the Directorate of Labour. Translated by the author (LM) Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 4-5).

This might in effect mean that the whole idea of the OMC procedures is working in different paces. The countries with already established procedures are changing these, but considerably slower than the countries with less established labour market policy procedures.

In conclusion it could be argued that the NAPs seem to have taken another role in the national context in some of the member states as is ascribed to them from the community side. It seems that it might have changed to a certain extent the policy procedures but – at least not intentionally seen from the national perspective – the policy contents. In some ways it is a professional approach to policies that used to be initiated through means of collective bargaining. It might also mean that the OMC as a political technique is being gradually integrated into policy making without the actors directly acknowledging it. But at the same time it seems that the OMC process has not been able to

adjust to the situation that developed over the previous years of the EES. That is the situation, in which some countries already more than live up to the 2010 targets of employment almost before they were set, while other countries with severe employment problems will need to develop a number of social infra-structural changes in order to have a chance of living up to them. It could be argued that the EES is a political instrument in those countries that have not attained the goals and targets of the EES and an administrative procedure in other countries.

4.2.3. *Who owns the NAP?*

As is concluded in chapter 3 in most of the countries the ‘ownership’ to the NAP is referred to the Ministry of Employment (or Labour), in most cases in a procedure of gathering inputs from other ministries and social partners. It is – at least in some of the countries - not any longer regarded a political matter in the sense that no politicians or the governments seem to take an interest in the process. In most cases it tends to have become a procedure of little interest to other parties such as politicians or social partners. In Spain, social partners are claiming for higher levels of consultation in NAPs and employment policies in general. This is probably true for most of the other countries as well, but most negotiations tend to take place outside of the NAP process. In only very rare cases gender equality agencies or NGOs are invited into the process.

Finland illustrates the anchoring of responsibilities in relation to the NAP:

In Finland the NAP process is concentrated around the Ministry of Labour, although in the actual NAP reports the Finnish Government is represented as the owner of NAPs. In the 2003 process the Ministry of Labour appointed a project team to prepare the annual NAP. The project team was consisted of members of Ministries of Labour (9 persons), Finance (1), Education (1), Trade and Industry (2) and Social Affairs and Health (2). In the project team there was 6 men and 8 women. A social partner’s forum the Committee on Labour Policy (Työpolitiikan neuvottelukunta) appointed a fixed-term NAP section to participate in the NAP preparation process. The project team prepared a first draft of NAP and it was discussed in the NAP section in two meetings. Finally the Committee on Labour Policy accepted the NAP. Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 3

In Finland, accordingly, the procedure is carried out by an inter-ministerial group apparently with other ministries equally responsible for the process. It seems that Finland actually does attach some enthusiasm to the process when engaging a large number of ministries and social partners in the process. In Denmark the Ministry of Employment is in charge of the process but it receives input from a number of parties:

The leading and co-ordinating partner of the NAP in Denmark is the Ministry of Employment. But also the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economic and Commerce, the Ministry of Social affairs and Gender Equality, and the Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration play a vital role. (Da.Nat.Rep. p.3.)

In Denmark the same could be argued in relation to the importance of the process that a high number of ministries are actually included and that this imply some policy coordination initiated by the EES. In Denmark additionally the ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration is included in the process reflecting the fact that the recommendations from the EU on the Danish Nap urge the

country to deal with low employment rates for refugees and immigrants. It is however a question whether this would not have been done without the recommendations, as there is a national concern for the same question, but still not realised improvements in the field.

The Dutch report also underline the overall public and administrative nature of the process of writing the NAP. The Minister of Social Affairs and Employment is responsible and the NAP is written by civil servants in the Department. Other departments are involved more indirectly (Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 4)

In conclusion it could be argued that it seems that the ownership of the EES in most of the countries is regarded a bureaucratic and professional matter, receiving only little interest from the politicians. In the sense that it has become a professionalised process the social partners or NGO will accordingly seem a bit unprofessional in arguing for a more politicised process and they might respond to this with resistance to the process as such. In Spain, however, this is not true – social partners do stress the need for a more politicised process, for EES but also at other levels of the European process of integration.

4.2.4. The Position of the NAP in the Collective Bargaining Procedures

In most of the countries employment policies are connected to the process of collective bargaining and tripartite negotiations. This means that in some of the countries few employment regulations are enforced by law but rather by agreement between the partners. Iceland refers to the model recognised also in the other Nordic countries with a high degree of tripartite negotiations:

Basic principles concerning the rights and duties of workers are laid down by law but a complete legislation or regulation covering labour and social affairs in Iceland does not exist. Regulation of the labour market beyond this minimum law is left to the social partners to negotiate in collective bargaining. In most cases Icelandic firms respect the rights and duties negotiated between the social partners (Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 4)

In several of the countries the tradition of tripartite negotiations are mentioned as a specific national hindrance to the use of EES measures rather than national ones. It is remarkable that actually the same barriers are mentioned to be specific national conditions in the country in question. At the same time this doesn't mean that the argument is not relevant. In the NAP procedures the social partners are primarily invited in when the NAPs are formulated and not when the targets or guidelines are decided on.

'According to the partners a major part of the topics of NAP belong to the sphere of collective bargaining and it was unrealistic to expect to have negotiations leading to real solutions or compromises during the short NAP process. The social partners also argue that the NAP relies heavily on government employment programme and the government policies are decided elsewhere, like in the ministries and state committees' (Finnish report p. 3)

Finland mentions specifically mentions the ILO convention to be another transnational agreement that has already established international negotiation procedures and that the EES is not adding any new elements to this. It could be argued that on the contrary the new elements are that the social partners are left out of the policy preparation phase, which is probably the phase in which they have

a word to say in making the ILO conventions. Their role is delimited to the phase of filling in already determined targets or recommendations:

*Since the 1970s, Finland has had wide-ranging system of cooperation and consultation with the social partners on all aspects of employment policy through various standing and ad hoc committees and groups, with no changes seen as being required in the light of the European employment strategy. This is based on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) tripartite principle (in line with Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 122 on employment policy). The NAP reflects mainly the short- and medium-term plans of the relevant ministries
Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 3)*

Denmark argues almost the same but relates it solely to the national context. At the same time it is argued in the Danish national report that this tripartite system is active both at a national and a regional level. The regional level is exactly the level that the EES fails to address (Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 3).

Finland stresses that the Government launches its own programme for employment, and that this programme is more widely discussed than the NAP. It could accordingly be questioned whether there is a clash between conflicting discourses on employment or whether the national programmes are rather transforming the NAP discourse into its own national context but still reproducing and following the guidelines and recommendations given by the EU.

In the Netherlands the social partners are also involved in the design of socio-economic policy. In addition a number of expert committees are involved. This also includes the work with the NAP:

--the Special Expert Committee (Commissie van Economische Deskundigen) or some ad hoc committee of the council reports occasionally on particular issues (like work-family arrangements or life course policies). So, all the issues that are included in the NAPs have been discussed at some stage with the social partners. (Dutch Nat.Rep.p. 5)

In Denmark it seems however that the NAP process actually does take in the views of social partners and that it is including those into the plans, and apparently continuously more so over the 5 years included in our study:

---The Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (LO), Danish Employers Confederation (DA), the National Association of Municipal Authorities (KL) etc are participating to the NAP in Denmark. In the introduction to the NAP 2002 it is emphasised that, "the contributions submitted by the social partners have – to the widest possible extent- been incorporated into the plan." In the NAP 1999 the findings, observations and analyses from the social partners did contribute directly to pillars concerning Improving employability, Encouraging adaptability of businesses and their employees and Strengthening equal opportunities for women and men. In the NAP 2003 the contribution of the social partners has both been incorporated into the guidelines and in the Annex of the NAP.(Dan.Nat.Rep. p.4)

In conclusion it seems that the problem is not that social partners are not invited in during the NAP process but rather the relations between the EES and the national processes of writing the NAP. The national partners are only able to influence the way in which the nation responds to the policies decided on elsewhere, not in the formation process itself.

4.2.5. The Contributions of the Social Partners to the NAPs

The views of the social partners on the NAP are expressed differently in the member states. In Denmark the social partners in 2002 focussed on the labour market participations of ethnic minorities. This could be seen in the light that there was a discussion going on at the time on the very high unemployment rates among the growing ethnic minority group in the country:

In the NAP 2002 the contribution of the social partners was very much orientated towards an agreement between the social partners regarding integration of refugees and immigrants in the Danish labour market. In the 2003 NAP it is mentioned by the social partners in the private labour market that it is a “significant challenge for Denmark to maintain and increase the participation rates, and especially to raise the participation rates for refugees and immigrants”. (Dan. Nat.Rep. p.5)

In the same year in Finland the employers focussed on the skills and mobility of the labour force:

According the EIRO Survey 2002 the social partners are presenting different views in relation to policy contents of the NAPs. The PT (service employer’s organisation) is quite satisfied with the content of the NAP and they do not see any significant disagreements. The TT (industrial employer’s organisation) sees that there will be problems in exporting of products of certain industries and there is a need for better functioning of labour markets by enhancing the skills and mobility of labour force. These views of the TT were included in the NAP 2002 as compromise formulations. Also the TT sees that active labour market policies should not be increased and effectiveness of these measures should be enhanced through better individual tailoring and cooperation with companies. Employment subsidies should not be given to enterprises without training obligations. According to TT the NAP 2002 lacks focus as a strategy: it has too many targets and objectives. Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 3

In Spain the social partners, especially the trade unions, have been critical to the NAPs at procedural level. However, they ‘admit that over the years there has been some improvement on a procedural level’. The employers' organisations and trade unions both point to the bureaucratic nature of the NAP. The employers’ organisations state that ‘the successive NAPs still consist of an accumulation of actions by different bodies rather than a general planned and coordinated strategy’. The trade unions state that NAPs are the sum of measures and programmes that were already being carried out within the assigned budget, with no specific increase in the budget. Both agree that the consultation with and participation of social agents is formal and that implementation of the NAPs has not created a stable framework for consultation and following employment policies between the government and the social agents. (Spain Nat.Rep. p. 4)

The Dutch report states that the social partners did in fact influence the NAPs in the responses to a number of guidelines but not in the entire NAP:

The different NAPs give evidence of the involvement of the social partners. For example, the NAP of 1999 mentions that the social partners have been involved in drawing up the NAP, and have especially been consulted on guidelines 5, 6, 17 and 21. In addition, the entire NAP was submitted for comments to the social partners united in the Labour Foundation. However, their comments are not discussed upon in the NAPs. It is also unclear to what extent the social partners have commented on gender equality issues. One exception is the NAP of 2000, which mentions that the

social partners have commented upon family friendly policies. However, the content of the comments are unclear. (Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 5-6)

It could be argued that employment policies more than any other policy area are linked to economic policies and to the tripartite negotiations with the social partners. It is probably accordingly fair to say that employment policies are more than any other policy areas connected with national traditions and co-operation and thereby also of a national character, even if the results might pretty similar.

Still there is evidence that the political constellation in the government also might influence the extent to which certain partners are listened to and invited into the NAP process. Social-democratic governments will typically listed to the employee-side of the social partners and conservative governments to the employers' side, this also implies the differences in which part is listed to with the greater seriousness. Austria points to the case that the present government was only sensitive to the response to the NAP from the employers' side when they presented the NAP 2003.

-- During the last few years this has clearly resulted in the somewhat unequal treatment of employers' and employees' statements, which is among other things also due to various disputes in other political problem areas (key words: restructuring of the Social Security Association, pension reform, privatization of the Austrian Railways), in which the neo-liberal-conservative government does not treat the employees' representatives the same way as the former socio-democratic-conservative government coalition. Aus.Net.Rep. p.?)

In conclusion it seems that the social partners are consulted when writing the NAPs. In some countries the success of the single social partner is linked to the political views of the governments. Still it seems that the NAP procedures have not reached a level of prestige putting the NAPs into the centre of the labour market bargaining processes. It seems that the NAPs are not controversial in a way of making them important political processes. This is probably also due to the low level of sanctions connected to the NAPs. Even if the NAPs are the targets of peer reviewing and recommendations, this is only influencing the employment policies in each country in a 'soft' way. This is probably in the long run influencing the preparatory work of the public administrations but it is still a question whether it is influencing the contributions of the social partners to employment policies.

4.2.6. The involvement of NGOs in the NAP processes

The involvement of the NGOs in the NAP procedures is of a more casual nature in most of the countries in the study. It is often delimited to consultations on specific subjects and often the NGOs present no comments to the papers presented to them. Often this is explained by the very tight time schedules in the writing of the NAPs. But it is probably just as much an expression of the need for a professional administration in answering the very technical and complicated matters inherent in the NAPs. Most NGOs do not possess such administrative and professional capacity. In the Danish report it is argued that the NGOs are consulted before the NAP process begins. But they are not involved in drawing the NAP (*Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 4*).

In the Dutch report it is argued that the external gender experts are not consulted as a fixed practice, only on certain issues and other they are not able to contribute substantially:

In 1999, when gender mainstreaming was added as a guideline, E-quality was asked for comments, but it subsequently appeared to be the only time. In 2000, the women's bureau of the trade unions has been sent a draft version of the NAP, but they could not make any substantial amendments (Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 7)

In most of the countries the governments' own programmes, taking a point of departure in the national political and labour market relations and realities, are much more widely discussed than the NAPs. In the Finnish report it is argued that the government's programme is much more widely discussed than the NAPs. It is primarily in the involved institutions that the NAPs are discussed:

-- but interestingly it is also discussed by the National Association of Unemployed People^{19[1]} in its seminar supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. It looks clear that the NAPs have only secondary role in the Finnish employment policy discussion as such. Therefore it is obvious that the NGOs or Women's Institutions are not interested in the NAPs or more truthfully there have not been any possibilities to participate the NAP process. (Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 5)

Concerning the gender equality bodies, which have been consulted in the process of the NAP, it has mostly been the gender expertise in the governmental bodies who has contributed to the NAP. (Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 4)

All ministries are responsible for the integration of emancipation in their policy field (gender mainstreaming) (SZW, 2000). The minister of Social Affairs and Employment is responsible for co-ordination of the emancipation policy and has to support and stimulate the ministries in this respect. The ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has a special section called Department for the co-ordination of emancipation policy (Directie Coördinatie Emancipatiebeleid, DCE) that is occupied with these tasks. DCE is always asked to comment on the draft of the NAP, but they do not contribute to the NAP on a structural basis. For example, DCE commented in 2000, but not in 2003(Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 6)

In particular in gender equality questions it seems that the NGOs have only been invited in in the Netherlands. Even then the contributions of the NGOs and gender experts have been limited and casual.

In conclusion it could be argued that the social partners in most countries already for a number of years before the EES were consulted on the NAPs, and they are today also to some extent actively contributing to the writing of the text. But gender experts and NGOs are not in such a position and this means that they are only invited in, when there are special issues on which their opinion might be requested. At the same time the complex and integrated NAP process makes it difficult for 'amateurs' to intervene in and thereby even when gender experts or NGOs are invited in, their contributions are limited.

4.3. Main positions in the NAPs concerning Employment, KBS and Gender Mainstreaming

4.3.1. The Un-Employment Problems of the Countries

When the Luxemburg-process was first launched in 1993-94 the EU-countries all faced severe unemployment problems. At the same time the majority of the countries had not yet developed strategies to efficiently deal with these problems. This meant that there was at the time a joint interest in fighting unemployment, and there was probably also in some countries a sense of not being able to develop policies that would efficiently deal with the growing problem of unemployment. So if the community would be able to do so in a joint effort this might also prove the relevance and efficiency of the Union to reluctant citizens.

The EES was launched in connection with the Amsterdam treaty and in that sense it became the first major field of policies to be harmonised in the Union. Seen from a Danish perspective this was also probably a means of making the Union a more politically acceptable in a country, in which the majority in 1992 had rejected the Maastricht treaty.

Already in 1994-95 the economy started to boom in some of the countries (Denmark, Great Britain), and it could be argued that the EES process was initiated at a time when it was not needed by a number of the member states any more. In Denmark the active labour market policy was launched in 1994-95 when a coherent active labour market plan was enhanced. Among other issues it stated that unemployed persons should have an offer of education, training or a job within 6 month after the unemployment period started:

When Denmark submitted the first NAP in 1998, Denmark had already for five years pursued a stabile economic growth and a growing employment. This means that it is difficult to assess the direct impact of the EES in the Danish context. Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 2

In the same years Spain formed the other pole of the employment situation in the EU with high unemployment rates and generally low employment rates:

In 1998, the employment rate in Spain was 51% (compared with 61% in the EU15) and unemployment stood at 15% (9% in the EU15) (European Commission, 2003a)^{20[2]}. The NAPs have emphasised the low rate of employment in Spain compared with the rest of the European countries as a fundamental problem and their political focus has been coherent with the conservative economic orientation of the government: 1) in order to stimulate economic growth and create employment, the priority is to maintain macro-economic stability, i.e. to achieve and maintain "zero deficit"; 2) in order to achieve this objective and to promote more intensive economic growth, it is necessary to extend structural reforms that allow the continuation of wage moderation and the increasing flexibility of the labour market. (Spain.Nat.Rep. p. 5)

² Harmonised data from Eurostat. Employment rate refers to the age group 15-64.

In Denmark the present liberal/conservative government introduced a new employment policy document shortly after it came into office in 2001-2002. This is based on neo-liberal principles in many ways similar to the recommendations of the EES, but at the same time the aim was nationally to set up an economic policy and a new political profile of the new government. One of the aims was to create 80.000 new work places even though Denmark already more than fulfilled the Lisbon targets of a 70 % employment rate and a rate of 60 % for women.

Concurrently the Danish government launched a new maternity leave arrangement that is in practice working in the opposite direction. The maternity leave was prolonged from 6 months to a full year. In principle the mother and father can share a number of weeks. But only two weeks after birth-giving is reserved for the father. This means that women's employment rate is in fact going down and that the demands for the female workforce in child-bearing ages is likely to decrease especially in a situation with growing unemployment.

Iceland is in a different situation with low unemployment rates all through the EES period, which means that the country only recently adopted active employment measures:

As unemployment in Iceland has traditionally been at relative low level, the labour market policy has primarily involved inactive measures or the payment of unemployment benefits. The low rate of unemployment in Iceland can be attributed to several factors. The most important being low replacement rates of unemployment benefits, the flexible nominal pay and the Nordic labour market. Icelanders have, to date, been free to seek employment in any of the Nordic countries during recessions. Unemployment benefits are flat rate and close to the value of the minimum wage negotiated by the trade unions. The social security system has also been actively used to stimulate active ageing, especially in the private sector. Although the official pension age is 67, retirement can be postponed until the person turns 70 with a corresponding increase in pension payments. Early retirement schemes are not available and workers are entitled to unemployment benefits until they reach the age of 70 (Mósesdóttir 2001). Quoted from Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 5-6

In Finland the late 1990s was a prosperous period of economic growth and growth in the demand for labour due to the success of the microelectronic industry:

During the NAP period 1998-2003 Finnish economic growth was strong mainly due to a success of electronics industry, metal industry and private services. Especially the strong export based GDP growth of late 90's was expected to solve many problems like the mass unemployment born in circumstances of 'great depression' of early 1990's. The growth of the ICT sector was a crucial factor behind the macroeconomic growth and the increasing labour demand but still the labour demand was not enough to decrease unemployment to a tolerable level. (Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 8)

In conclusion it could be argued that the countries in the time of harmonising the employment policies drifted somewhat apart in the problems that the EES was set out to address. This difference is made even more visible by the Lisbon targets as the Nordic countries and Austria already met the targets of a 70% employment and 60% for women. In the case of the Nordic countries already before they were formulated. At the same time the South European countries face a number of problems living up to the same targets, particularly when addressing the targets for women's participation.

4.3.2. *The Active Labour Market Policy*

In a number of the countries in the study active labour market policy was introduced a few years before the NAP procedure started. These countries probably inspired the EU to take on this strategy as a joint effort. In that case the active labour market policy obviously could not be attributed to the EES but rather to national processes and the related tripartite negotiations. In Denmark active labour market policies were introduced in 1994-95, that is 3 years before the NAP process started. Denmark and a number of the other countries in the study reacted nationally to the unemployment situation at the same time as the first planning of the EES started. In that sense waiting for the NAP procedures to start would have been a delay of national measures.

A main reason for the early reaction was that unemployment was a question that the countries had dealt with since the early 1970s and had gradually developed measures for. In the first decades the measures were primarily inactive in the sense that unemployed persons were accommodated with unemployment benefits and training offers often with a high degree of delay and resentment.

In 1998 Spain on the other hand was still in a situation of a lack of a coherent labour market strategy, as there was a tradition of dealing with employment in rather dispersed ways (Span.Nat.Rep. p.6). The extensive size of this country probably also was a reason for the lack of coherence in employment activities and thereby the EES offered a welcome methodology of coordination.

Most of the other EU members experienced a period of growing employment in the late 1990s and attained a situation close to full employment in 2001 or at least do not consider that they have serious employment problems.

As written in the Austrian national report:

In spite of being worse than in previous decades, the employment situation in Austria was still "exceptionally good" in comparison with other European countries (NAP 1998, p. 4). Low unemployment rates (4,4 % in 1996), high employment rates (about 65 % in 1996, cf. EUROSTAT 1997), small proportions of long-term and youth unemployment are taken as an indicator for a positive employment situation

And further for the present situation: In Austria, there has also just been a marginal improvement of the labour market situation: the comparably low unemployment rate of 1997 (7,1 %) could hardly be decreased any further by 2002 (6,9 %).

Although Iceland is not obliged to follow the EES and did not have overall employment problems, the active labour market policy was enforced by law in 1997:

Objectives and implementation structures of the active labour market policy are set out in the Act on labour market measures (no.13/1997). According to the law, the aim of active labour market policy is to ensure equilibrium between supply and demand for labour in Iceland. The main means to achieve this objective is for the Directorate of labour to provide public employment services across the country. Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 6

It could be argued that the active labour market policy in Iceland was merely a question of making a coherent structure of national policies and regional offices:

The Director of labour (1997) has the responsibility of implementing the active labour market policy, monitoring the regional employment offices, supplying the regional employment offices with professional assistance, collecting information from the regional employment offices on the employment situation, unemployment and employment trend. The tasks of the eight regional employment offices are on the hand to assist those in search of work and on the other hand to register those unemployed at local registration offices and to administrate the unemployment benefits on the other hand (Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 6)

In the Danish NAP 1998 the active labour market policy was combined with ambitious plans to improve employment even though the Danish employment rates were at the top level in Europe:

The target for the employment in the NAP 1998 was that the employment should increase by 200,000 persons from 1998 to 2005. The unemployment should gradually be reduced to 5 per cent in 2005. The improved employability should be realised through activation, upgrading of qualifications, and skills development for both young and adult unemployed persons together with stricter rules on availability. (Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 5)

In fact the goal of less than 5 % unemployment was already met in 2001, but since then unemployment started to grow again especially among ICT specialists and young university graduates.

Finland also made very ambitious goals for increasing employment to a level much higher than the Lisbon targets:

The main target of economic and employment policy (2003) was to increase employment with at least 100 000 persons by the end of election period (2007).

But the Finnish National Report also underlines to efficiency goals of active labour market policies.:

- *To decrease the structural unemployment and reduce a social exclusion^{21[3]}*
- *To guarantee the availability of skilled workforce and to make provision for the scarcity of labour force due to ageing*
- *To keep workers active in labour markets more time*
- *To increase the productivity of labour and to improve the management of work and a meaningfulness of work (Fin. Nat.Rep. P. 6)*

In conclusion it could be argued that the introduction of active labour market policies was taken in a number of countries before the EES initiated it. This means that the aims of the EES of more structured and efficient measures towards unemployment were actually not in the forefront in Europe.

It could be argued that some of the advanced countries actually used the EES to induce their own example on the community and that they failed to acknowledge that this would lead to a situation in which the EES targets were not ambitious enough for their own country.

4.3.3. KBS

The Lisbon targets from 2000 set very ambitious targets for the development of the European labour markets in order for them to meet the requirements of the Knowledge Based Society. The Lisbon targets claim that Europe by 2010 should become the leading knowledge economy in the world.

But what is the KBS and what does the coming of this society mean for the work force and the European economy? It is the overall impression that the NAPs deal very little with the KBS and its requirements. Spain is representative to most of the reports when it is stated that: 'The concept of KBS appears on only few occasions in the Spanish NAPs. References to the KBS can be traced to two basic types of action. The first specific actions to promoting ITC... and in second place.... implicitly in the various measures for promoting human capital and lifelong learning' (Span. Nat.Rep. p. 21)

Castells defines the KBS as a network society:

'Networks are appropriate instruments for a capitalist economy based on innovation, globalisation, and decentralised concentration; for work, workers, and firms based on flexibility and adaptability; for a culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction; for a polity geared toward the instant processing of new values and public moods; and for a social organization aiming at the supersession of space and the annihilation of time'. (Castells 2000 p. 502)

In the opinion of Castells this means that the labour force will be met with the demand of being able to cope with a globalised economy, a high degree of flexibility in time and space and an overall readiness to handle with new information and new knowledge.

In the Lisbon targets Europe is regarded 'one' economy with shared ambitions and a methodology to deal with these ambitions in a co-ordinated way. And it is undoubtedly true that in the vision of Castells the national states are outdated as economic entities and the site of individual fiscal policies. It is however a question whether the EU countries represent a relevant union to deal with common problems, when the questions are the formation of global capital clusters and global trafficking in labour, and whether it would actually be possible to develop targets that could work dynamically on all the different labour markets in the EU countries, making EU a more joint market and a joint knowledge economy. This question is evidently even more relevant when facing the situation of the European Union being enlarged to 25 national states.

Although the Lisbon targets were set in the middle of the six years of NAP processes, it is notable that the NAPs only to a minor extent reflect this ambitious strategy. It is probably the case that the KBS strategy in some countries is not linked to employment policies but rather to Research & Development policies, university policies and business strategies. When the NAPs do deal with the KBS, they seem to agree in between them that the knowledge-based economy is primarily dependant on ICT skills and the general access to Internet and computers in order for citizens to be

able to use e-commerce, access to public authorities and learning programmes. Women only to a lesser extent sign in for ICT education and training but rather relate to ICT as users and take on advanced education in other fields.

Nevertheless it is not generally recognised that ICT only represents a limited part of the multidimensional skills that are requested in the KBS. . The KBS is a society mainly demanding services both personal services, business services and public services. In analysing knowledge based economies Castells underlines the need for some of the skills that women seek::

'Agricultural jobs are being phased out. Manufacturing employment will continue to decline, although at a lower pace, being reduced to a hard core of the craft and engineering workforce. Most of the employment impact of manufacturing production will be transferred to services for manufacturing; producer services, as well as health and education, lead employment growth in terms of rate, also becoming increasingly important in terms of absolute numbers, retail jobs and service jobs continue to swell the ranks of low skilled activities of the new economy.' (Castells 1996/2000 p. 239)

In the option of Castells service jobs in business services, public services and personal services are the jobs that are in demand in the KBS. In that sense ICT skills, as professional skills, could only be regarded one out of a number of different skills.

Moreover the demands for lifelong developing skills and the labour force to adjust to these changes also means that the EU member states depend on a rapid improvement of skills in society as such and a structure to re-skill the work force continuously through life time. That is also to make sure that the single individual is maintaining a readiness to take on new skills, new education and continuous training.

4.3.3.1. The Level of General Education in the Countries

In general the countries in the study report on and plan an improvement of general education, or the general 'production' of human capital. Especially it is pointed out in most of the countries that the educational level of young women exceeds that of men.

Hungary however reports on a generally low degree of advanced education:

One of the several missing conditions is extensive knowledge required for economic modernisation. According to the population census of 2001, within the Hungarian adult population (ages 15-64), the majority (60%) has either incomplete (4%) or complete (56%) 8-year primary education OR THREE YEARS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING. Some 28% of those remaining in education after primary school finish their 9-12-year study period by acquiring GCSE, and the rate of degree holders is only 12%. (Hun.Nat.Rep.p. 5)

These data refer to the whole population, naturally the record is better for the employed and worse for the unemployed.

This is connected to the specific situation that Hungary before the political transformation in 1989 had a high number of manufacturing workers and agricultural workers with few formal and

theoretical skills. This situation is changing rapidly in the younger generation, whereas the elder generation is suffering from insufficient skills, unemployment and few means of travelling for jobs.

In Iceland there is a split between the general high education level, mainly women, and the case that a number of young men tend to leave the education system early in order to work in the manufacturing industry:

According to a survey conducted in 1999, around 50 per cent of those born in 1975 had completed at least upper secondary education at the age of 22 years (see figure 2). This ratio is much lower than the target set by the EU in its new EES that 85 per cent of 22 year old should complete upper secondary education. However, the rate of those finishing upper secondary education in Iceland rose from 45 per cent for those born in 1969 to 50 per cent for those born in 1975. If we compare men born in 1969 and in 1975, the drop-out rate of men from upper secondary education has increased (Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 29)

It seems that Iceland tend to prioritise jobs over education in dealing with unemployment problems, even when dealing with the young.

It is characteristic that the situation in which the NAPs seem to have acquired a fixed form and contents in the sense that they seem to have transformed into a reporting practice rather than a planning practice, this practice seems not to be able to rethink radically the labour market according to the demands of the knowledge society:

Austria: The NAPs of 1998 and 1999 don't explicitly deal with the transformation from working society into knowledge-based society and/or with the challenges of such social changes. Neither does the NAP 2003 directly refer to the KBS in this connection. Yet by promoting human capital and life-long learning the requirements of KBS are still taken into consideration as two of the basic aspects of European Economic Policy. Both of them are addressed in all guidelines.

In general the countries prioritise measures improve education, to prevent young people of dropping out of the school system (Iceland, The Netherlands) and to improve the quality of education and training.

4.3.3.2. R & D policies

In most of the countries research and development policies are not developed in the context of the NAP processes. This means that the relations between research and development are probably often very weak. It seems that employment policies often takes their point of departure in the actual unemployment situation and the r & d policies deal with future developments in the high skilled part of the labour force.

Spain realized in the 1980s after the fall of the Franco dictatorship that the country was lagging behind in the development in science and research. This accomplished a number of r & d plans beginning in 1996.

The arrival to power of the conservative Partido Popular in 1996 led to new changes in scientific policy with the creation of the Ministry of Science and Technology (Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología, MCYT) and the design of the ambitious fourth National Plan for 2000-2003. The aim of this plan was to define a more global strategy that also included actions in the area of

technological innovation and to pay more attention to creating a favourable climate for innovation and exploitation of scientific and technological advances in firms (Span.Nat.Rep. p. 21)

In the Finnish report it is stated that the governments KBS programme is wider and includes technical infrastructure, citizens access, social services and market liberalisation issues instead of the narrow training R & D and labour market functionality outlook of the NAP 2003 (Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 6). The Dutch national report argues that the concept of KBS has never been related to the NAP explicitly.

As a whole it seems that the countries do not see R & D policies in relation to the NAP, even if they do take them seriously at a national level.

4.3.3.3. The importance of ICT skills

In the NAPs, as mentioned above, the countries tend to identify the KBS with the need of ICT skills. This might have to do with the fact that in most countries R & D qualifications are not related to the NAP. As the NAPs are primarily carried out by the ministries of labour or employment the ministries dealing with education or science and research often do not play an important part. When they focus on ICT skills this is primarily connected to the overall enhancement of ICT skills and the ability to use electronic and telecommunication in all society. Never the less there seems to be some paradox in the employment expectations in the field of ICT and the decline in the ICT sector worldwide for the last 3 years. In Austria like in many of the other countries ICT courses are primarily taught to unemployed persons and at the same time e learning is prioritised:

In terms of knowledge technology, the NAP mainly focuses on the following aspects of information technology:

- *IT courses (especially for unemployed people)*
- *E-learning*
- *E-governance (Aus.Nat.Rep.p.25)*

Finland, probably more than the other countries in the study seems to have an extended strategy for the KBS but also primarily as an ICT strategy. This is inspired by the microelectronic adventure of the 1990s, which was a driving force of the Finnish economy in a number of years. Thereby the emphasis is on qualifications to deal with microelectronics:

Specific development programmes included in the Government KBS Programme are:

- *The telecommunications connections and digital TV broadcasting*
- *The KBS preparedness of citizens and intensifying the use of IT based services*
- *The education, working life, research and design (incl. R&D, life long learning, skilled workforce, good quality education, learning on jobs, computer aided learning facilities)*
- *The interactive e-services of public administration*
- *The social and health care (incl. seamless service chains of services and treatment, independent living)*
- *The e-business, digital contents and services (incl. business services, cultural industry)*
- *The development of state IT administration*
- *The legislative measures*

(Fin.Nat.rep. p. 7)

Hungary on the contrary suffering from low employment typically in the rural districts and from a scarce spread of computers and Internet connections choose the tele-cottage strategy to deal with both those questions:

It is a matter of importance that, under the so-called School-net (Suli-net) programme launched in the mid-1990s, the state provided every secondary school with computers and thanks to the national IT training programme, generations of secondary-school students have acquired sound user-level IT skills. Computers installed at community houses at small settlements through state subsidies under the simultaneous “telecottage programme” are also typically used by students. (Hun.Nat.Rep. p. 6)

The question is whether the ‘telecottage’ programme is primarily planned as an educational programme or whether it is creating new work places as distant work places. This last question should imply that companies in the growth areas actually use this kind of community centres to lie out certain parts of the advanced processing of information.

In Denmark two IT-schools at university level were established few years ago to enhance the ICT contents of university education:

Effort is therefore done in NAP 1999 to discuss the importance of upgrading people with IT skills. In the NAP 2000 it is mentioned that the action plan mentioned in the NAP 1999 is nearly fully implemented and IT has become a compulsory element of all vocational training programmes. An example of an synergy between the KBS and the gender mainstreaming strategy is to be found in the NAP 1999 where it is mentioned that the two existing IT schools are having education programmes at different levels and an effort is being made to increase the entrance of female students. (Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 6)

In Spain the INFO XXI plan was made up of over 300 specific actions in three strategic areas:

- – *Telecommunications and ICT, with special emphasis on the processes of freeing up markets and promoting competition;*
- – *Development of the e-administration, in particular that related to improving infrastructures;*
- – *Promotion of ICT throughout society, guaranteeing the universal access of citizens, companies and other organisations. (Span.Nat.Rep. p. 26)*

–
In the Spanish national report this plan is described as a failure: The outcome was poor, it was centred on public administration without seeking consensus with the private sector, it created almost no dialogue across regions and especially the ‘emblematic’ initiative of ‘Internet for everyone’ have been a complete failure.

Iceland too made ambitious plans to spread the access to ICT:

1. *Icelanders shall have convenient access to the IS.*
2. *Complete equality shall be ensured between the public and private sectors in the fields of information technology and the information industry.*

3. *Information and telecommunications technologies (ICTs) shall be mobilised to improve the competitiveness of the Icelandic economy and to increase productivity and the possibilities of exporting Icelandic know-how.*
4. *The educational system shall adapt to changing social dynamics, with general education and continuing education focussing on the advantages of the IS, while at the same time safeguarding Icelandic language and culture*
5. *Legislation, rules and procedures shall be reviewed concerning information technology in order to stimulate technological progress and protect the rights of individuals and companies.(Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 20)*

In the Danish National Report it is stated that ICT skills should be regarded skills for each individual to attain new knowledge and go on being motivated for education in a life long perspective:

In the NAP 2001 it is written that the information society and the increasing use of technology make heavy demands on the individual persons' capability to acquire new knowledge as an ongoing process during the whole working life. Therefore the most important task of the primary school is to make it possible for the students to acquire basic knowledge and skills and to motivate the students to continue the his/her education the whole life. (Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 6)

In the Netherlands, as in most of the other countries, a special focus is put on the gender differences in ICT education:

The long-range policy document Emancipation (SZW, 2000b) and the document on emancipation policy of 2002 (TK, 2001-2002) each have a separate chapter on 'the knowledge society'. The basic assumption is that men and women should be able to participate in the knowledge society in a balanced manner. An important part is focused at gender differences in ICT education. Another focus is on the ICT branch. Given the low participation rate of women in the ICT branch, the government has formulated a target of 30 percent women in this branch in 2010. (Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 23)

In conclusion it can be underlined that all the countries in the study emphasise ICT in the way they address the KBS in the NAPs. It might sometimes appear to be a too optimistic role to hand over to the microelectronic revolution is the sense of its ability to create jobs. It is however evident that the lack of sufficient ICT skills on the other hand might be a barrier for the single person to overcome the situation of being unemployed. Even if ICT skills might not be directly needed in a certain job ICT skills symbolise the ability of the individual to adjust to 'modern times', to be ready to adapt to overall changes in working life.

In some of the countries the general access to ICT (Iceland, Finland) as a right for citizens to relate to the information society is underlined. In other countries ambitious plans seem to fail, as the financial means for these ambitious plans are not provided.

4.3.3.4. *Women's skills for the KBS*

Austria in the national report acknowledges that the knowledge society needs more and broader qualifications than ICT-skills and particularly skills that women represent more than men:

“Other types of knowledge, as for instance empirical knowledge ('Erfahrungswissen') that may be interesting from a gender perspective, are disregarded by this KBS concept. Information technologies are taken to be problem solvers (technical fix), and therefore access to information technologies is seen as a fundamental element to the solution of the problem. Nothing is said here about the quality of knowledge and about quality standards. But they are still taken into consideration based on our understanding of the EU as an economic area, which means that quality is again mainly evaluated from an economic point of view.” (Interview: researcher, transl. by the author. Aus.Nat.rep. p.)

It is significant in all countries that women tend to be more active in education than men, but still they are considered a problem, as they tend not to educate themselves in ICT. In the Danish report it is underlined that measures are being taken to motivate women to educate themselves in ICT, particularly through arranging specific computer-science courses for women. In reality that kind of courses are often not sought by women.

In Hungary like in the rest of Europe women take part in university education, at least at the levels before PhD level:

The distribution of women by educational attainment differs in some respect from that of men: more women than men have primary education only (33 and 24%, respectively). Among those at Level 3, the rate of skilled-worker men is twice that of women (39 and 19%, respectively), while 28% of women and only 18% of men have GCSE. Persons with higher education qualification (ISCED Levels 5 and 6) include a somewhat higher proportion of women than of men (14.6% vs. 13.8%), but two-third of the approximately 6500 persons having PhD or DLA are men.

The relevant EU guidelines stress one gender dimension in education, namely to improve the share of female students in universities of natural sciences and technology (most notably in high-tech branches, like computer sciences), but the Ministry has no means to implement such a policy. While it is widely known that in Hungary women's enrolment has traditionally been extremely low in these faculties, officers in higher education seem to be completely ignorant of this fact. (Hun.Nap.Rep. p. 23)

As a whole the countries in the study devote much attention to the fact that women do not engage in ICT studies in the same extend as men, and this is regarded a problem, as it is seen as a default on the side of women to cope with the skills for the information society. It is less recognised that women often engage in education providing better skills for adjusting to new skills requirements and for a globalised economy: Language, law, humanities, medicine and social sciences.

4.3.3.5. Lifelong learning

As is also stated in chapter 3 life long learning is closely connected to the adjusting of the labour force to the KBS as the ability to continuously acquire new skills is probably the most important overall skill for the KBS. Nevertheless there seems not to be specific KBS targets in the way lifelong learning is addressed in the NAPs. Often the aims are rather to train the unemployed (Hungary, Austria) and almost always a concern women's training, especially in ICT.

Denmark claims that lifelong learning is a means of establishing more jobs and jobs of better quality for a broader part of the labour force:

Lifelong learning is given a high priority both at the private and public labour market in all the NAP's from 1998-2003. The "Danish strategy for lifelong learning" is based on the need for continued education/training among adults. The upgrading of skills and training of the labour force are essential instruments, not only for the creation of more jobs but also better jobs. It is often stated that the objective is not employment growth at any price. The crucial point to reach the knowledge based society is to make the society better equipped for future challenges by giving priority to good working conditions for the enterprises in connection with long term investments in education and training (Dan.Nat.Rep. p.6)

Austria take a more functionalist approach to life long learning in stating that life long learning is a specific measure for women's re-entry into the labour market after maternity leave:

Life-long learning has also been a priority of the NAPs, especially from 1999 on. Counselling and incentives to companies were and still are taken to be suitable measures for all employment groups. Among other things, this includes the possibility to take an educational leave, the promotion of educational and training cooperations within a professional field or industry, the establishment of tele-learning centres (interactive learning programs), home study courses, different training modules, etc. Women are explicitly named as an important target group, whose re-entry into the labour market should be facilitated by means of training programs during maternity leave and special women's courses (Aus. Nat. Rep. p. 18-19)

As a whole it seems that the general life long qualification for the entire labour force as a means of adjusting continuously to the KBS is not yet working in any of the countries. It rather seems to have been turned into a specific measure for especially vulnerable groups at the labour market. It seems to be a huge challenge for the future also to deal with continuous training of high-qualified labour force that will have to become extremely adaptable to new knowledge in the near future.

4.3.3.6. *The Regional perspective*

The KBS is changing the geography of economic growth. An important phenomenon is that new centres of knowledge grow up without reflecting a national perspective. Knowledge workers tend to become more internationalised as a work force working cross-country and establishing international clusters of cooperation (cf. First Wellknow report). This on the other hand leaves the less developed regions in each country behind in a situation in which the distance to the knowledge centres grow and jobs disappear.

Jacobsson and Schmid (2003) raised the problem that the EES lacks a perspective on regions. Both the new emerging economic growth centres that do not define themselves to a national identity and the marginal regions with still less economic activity. This criticism might as well be addressed to the NAPs as only few of the countries in the study deal with this. Only Finland, Spain and Iceland seem to be continuously conscious of the regional perspective.

The effects of the current Regional Centre Programme are planned to be effective also in sub-areas around them. Another Centre of Expertise Programme "*is a tool of national and regional*

innovation policy. It focuses on the development of welfare services and competitive top expertise in industry and other business sectors. The programme concentrates on internationally strong cutting-edge sectors and internationalization. It supports the distribution and use of top expertise beyond the centres of expertise themselves. Also, the potential of all areas to benefit from technology and expertise financing and the resulting growth is upheld. The regional impact of universities, polytechnics and research institutions is increased through cooperation with companies, technology centres, research units, educational institutions, and local and regional government." (Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 17)

In the Finnish National Report the regional perspective is stressed both in the sense that ICT tends to generate employment only in the centres and in the sense that the population should have an easy access to Internet, computers and mobile phones. In the Hungarian report the 'tele-cottage' strategy is a way to deal with the problem of regional unemployment. The question still is whether this is actually creating jobs or it is rather a 'community service' available for all citizens.

4.3.4. Formal Gender Equal Opportunities or Gender Mainstreaming

The EES has been the guinea pig of the OMC as it was the first policy field to be systematically the target of the OMC methods of soft policy. In the same way gender mainstreaming to be argued to be a guinea pig of using the OMC methods of mainstreaming in a specific field, namely in creating equality between women and men. Nevertheless gender mainstreaming is often confused with traditional gender equality work and the different scopes of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming are often not acknowledged.

In the EES guidelines the different scopes are recognised in the sense that there was (until 2003) a specific pillar dealing with gender equality and a general target of gender mainstreaming in all activities and measures.

As it is mentioned in the Danish National Report:

In the NAP 2000 there is still confusion about formal and genuine gender equality. It is written in the NAP 2000 under the gender equality pillar that: "the principle of equal opportunities for women and men (the mainstreaming approach) has been integrated in the Danish legislation in the fields of labour market policy and taxation as this legislation is based on the individual person". (NAP: 2000: 20) This phrase indicates that there is not a sophisticated comprehension of the content and the method of the gender mainstreaming approach..(Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 14-15)

In 2001 it was mentioned that the new Equal Opportunities Act was adopted according "to which all public authorities will in the future have to introduce the mainstreaming principle in planning and administration. This will increase the focus on gender and equality perspectives in the Danish employment policy"(NAP: 2001: 4).(Dan.Nat.Rep. p. 15)

4.3.4.1. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming as a priority changed position in the EES several times during the 6 first years of the NAP process. In 1999 gender equality became the central focus of pillar 4 in the EES

and thereby gained a high priority position, whereas gender should be mainstreamed throughout all four pillars. In 2003 guidelines this was changed. Gender mainstreaming now was granted a position of the sixth out of ten priorities. It was argued by the Danish civil servant that one of the reasons of the change of position was that a position as a specific pillar didn't lead to a mainstreamed effort for gender equality.

At the same time the perspective of mobilising women to the labour market became even more a top priority after the 2000 Lisbon Summit and the setting of the 70 pct. Employment targets (60 % for women). Particularly the targets dealt with older women and mothers with small children. Mainstreaming should be strengthened in other policy areas to adopt a comprehensive approach through gender impact assessment of new policy and developing institutional mechanisms and monitoring. Quality of work policies, the focus on gender segregation and gender gaps, to promote favourable conditions for women and men to enter or re-enter the labour market; access and quality of care services for children and other dependants; equal share of care and household responsibilities; take-up of parental and other leave schemes by men, flexible work arrangements for women and men. „^{22[4]}

Regarding Gender Mainstreaming the general picture in the NAPs seem rather disappointing. None of the countries seem to reflect on this aspect in the expected way by making gender equality an integrated theme in all activities. In the Netherlands and Denmark there is a general impression that 'gender blindness' is generally confused with gender mainstreaming. In Spain gender mainstreaming is understood in a very bureaucratic way. In the sense that the support to traditional gender roles, gender blindness and the persistence of gender-biases in policies do not seem contradictory with gender mainstreaming. But gender mainstreaming is not confused with gender blindness.

In the Dutch NAPs some of the contributing ministries seem just to forget to put in gender mainstreaming issues as the contributions from the ministry of Education, Culture and Science and from the ministry of Economic Affairs do not include explicit attention for gender mainstreaming issues. GM is included in the NAP along the lines of the EES, but there is no check on the actual inclusion of GM in real life and policies. (Dutch Nat.Rep.p.6)

In the Danish National Report it is argued that the general impression of the NAPs 1998-2003 is that gender mainstreaming is not at very visible target outside of pillar 4. The Naps are 'rather gender blind' in the implementation of employment guidelines. (Dan.Nat.Rep.)

The Dutch report mentions almost the same:

When analysing the attention paid to gender issues in the first three pillars, the conclusion is that this attention is very limited (Plantenga, 2001; Plantenga & Remery, 2003). For example, figures are often not broken down by gender, whereas the issues addressed, such as unemployment and training, often have a clear gender aspect. The NAP 1999 seems to be an exception (SZW, 1999). In

^{22[4]} COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
Brussels, 14.1.2003 COM(2003) 6 final
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND
THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

this NAP, the description of each pillar ends with a box in which the gender perspective of the pillar is taken into account. However, the status of these boxes and the relation with the main text is not clear (Plantenga, 2001).

The Finnish report shows that there is often disagreement or even hostility towards gender mainstreaming as a general tool. On one occasion a social partner stated that equality can not be enforced by forced measures and sanctions:

In 2002 a Finnish Equality Commission examining a reform of the Equality Act submitted its proposals and recommended numbers of measures to strengthen gender equality and combat against discrimination. The workers unions were largely in favour of these proposals while employers unions were not. The principal employers unions disagreed strongly on the proposed amendments: according to the employers unions equality in working life is important but “true equality cannot be imposed through the forced measures and sanctions ... included in the commission’s proposals.”

Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 4.

Even if gender mainstreaming has had some success in some cases and particularly in the years 1999 and 2000 it seems that this picture has become somewhat scattered and that gender blindness, forgetfulness and disagreement is often the hindrance to enforcing this goal.

4.3.4.2. Gender Mainstreaming is not an Issue for Fire Souls or Amateurs

Gender equality for some decades was an issue fought by the women’s movement and through special measures to equalise the position of women with that of men. Gender mainstreaming marks a new era in which gender equality is one out of other issues to be mainstreamed into other policy fields, and to be enforced by the traditional bureaucratic and political organs. This could on one hand be considered an achievement of the fight for gender equality. On the other hand it is also to some degree kill the engagement of ‘fire souls’ former activists of the women’s movements especially at a local level, who used to take a front role in gender policies.

The EU points out that the gender equality strategy should be both a strategy of gender mainstreaming and a strategy of positive action for the least favoured gender, being usually women. In some cases this last perspective tends to be forgotten. An expert interviewed in the Icelandic national report states that she/he find it old-fashioned to make specific measures for women, and that this often lead to a reinforcement of gender gaps:

“My impression of the fund (Women’s Collateral Fund to enhance women’s entrepreneurship and job creation. Founded in 1997, KS) is that it is old-fashioned method of giving grants to projects that reinforce gender gaps. Many grants have gone to souvenirs production, which in my opinion equals creation of low paying jobs. The amount of each grant is also very low and the fund is not a part of any comprehensive strategy(...) The gender perspective is hardly ever mentioned in discussions about employment policy and measures (a senior official at the ASÍ, transl. by author.Ice.Nat.Rep.p.9).

In the Finnish national report it is stated that gender mainstreaming is a project of state administration to be incorporated into all government activities:

When evaluating how the Gender Mainstreaming idea is understood in the NAPs, we will find that there is no clear and explicit definition of the Gender Mainstreaming concept. If we forget ‘gender blind’ large scale public policies typical to Nordic welfare states^{23[5]}, in the NAP 1998 (p.47) “Gender Mainstreaming” is seen as a project of State administration by which new models are formulated allowing gender equality to be incorporated into the drafting of government proposals, budget control and information planning.(Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 1118)

An expert interviewed in the Danish National Report states that gender mainstreaming is a professional matter that you do not just come in from the streets to practice. This expert expresses just the dilemma that the EES is faced with: That the bureaucracy insists on creating professional tools to deal with problems that were previously a matter of social and political movements and civic society:

“Gender mainstreaming is not something “you just come from the street and start to practice”. Gender mainstreaming must be performed based upon a broad knowledge about perspectives and obstacles dealing with gender questions. It was emphasized that many attitudes towards gender mainstreaming were based upon myth and prejudices.

It was also emphasized that if the gender mainstreaming approach shall be able to change established relationships between the sexes the gender mainstreaming goals must be very clear also for persons not working with gender mainstreaming in their everyday life. It is clear that working with gender and gender mainstreaming has some specific challenges and obstacles. The same civil servant, having herself a background in the 1970s women’s movement, shows great optimism towards the ability of ‘gender sensitive civil servants to put GM into practice. It is however not our experience that there is so much reality in this optimism:

“The gender mainstreaming strategy is mostly put into practice by gender sensitive civil servants. Therefore if you want to convince people that it is useful to work with the gender dimension you must present some extremely evident cases where the gender dimension is really presenting some new angles creating long lasting changes for the good of the whole society”. (Civil servant, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality)(Dan.Nat.Rep. p.16)

In conclusion it might be stated that gender mainstreaming in the assessments of the Wellknow researchers is not an overall issue in the NAPs. In some countries the issue seems to fade over the years and this is sometimes due to the neglect of the issue from either ministries or social partners. An exception from this picture is Iceland. Although Iceland is not obliged to follow the EES it seems that the gender mainstreaming process is proceeding:

The main conclusion of the committee was that the gender perspective is increasingly adopted in public policy-making processes, although examples of non-inclusion can be found. Knowledge of gender issues and gender mainstreaming is insufficient at the policy-making level and must be improved. Ministries have appointed a Gender equality coordinator as suggested by the new equality act. However, few ministries have defined the content of their work and how many hours

^{23[5]} Like the subjective right to public day care to all children in Finland

should be spent on gender equality tasks but most coordinators have also other work obligations. (Ice.Nat.Rep. p. 15)

Gender mainstreaming is argued to be a professional and bureaucratic project not accessible to ordinary people. By that it faces the threat of losing its links to politically engaged social groups and movements as the women's movement by insisting on the exclusiveness of the strategy. It also might threaten the engagement of professionals on related fields who are supposed to work with gender mainstreaming but who do not feel comfortable working with gender equality or simply do not realise the importance of working with the subject.

4.3.4.2. Promoting women's labour market participation through GM

One of the overall targets of the Lisbon agenda is to increase the participation of women in the labour to an average of 60 percent in all the member states. In the Barcelona targets this strategy is supported by setting a goal for 2010 of childcare of 33 percent for children under the age of 3 and 95 percent over the age of 3.

Tabel 1: The Progress towards the Lisbon and Stockholm targets in the EU member states in the Wellknow study

Member states Employment rates 2002	Total Employment rate 2002	Female Employment rate 2002	Older Workers Employment rate 2002
Austria	69.3	63.1	30.0
Denmark	75.9	71.7	57.8
Finland	68.1	66.2	47.8
Netherlands	74.4	66.2	42.3
Spain	58.4	44,1	39.7

Source: Employment in Europe 2003. Employment & Social Affairs. European Commission 2003.

As it can be seen from table 1 four out of five member states in the Wellknow study are registered as having more than fulfilled the Lisbon strategy of a 60 % female employment. Spain does however share this situation with Italy, Belgium, Germany and Greece. The same goes for the overall employment targets. They were fulfilled or almost fulfilled in four out of five countries in the Study. Nevertheless these figures are seductive as they are counting all employment of more than one hour per week.

Spain reports that the EES have been of importance for gender equality policies in Spain as they have gained prominence and visibility through the EES:

Thanks to the European Employment Strategy, gender equality policies have gained prominence and a horizontal application (i.e. gender mainstreaming approach), which they did not previously have in Spain. The mere existence of a pillar geared to gender equality has given major impetus to a more gender-sensitive employment policy, contributing to a reworking of directives and actions previously limited to the equality plans of the Institute of Women's Affairs. (Span.Nat.Rep. p. 13)

In Hungary still not participating in the EES women's employment is still low too:

Although the qualification level of women is traditionally higher than that of men, their rate of employment has remained low, and neither their promotion to higher positions. (Hun.Nat.Rep. p. 8)

At the time of the first NAPs the differences in employment rates for women were huge in the member states. Especially in the South women's participation in the labour market was low:

In 1998, when the first NAP was drawn up, the employment rate of women in Spain was the lowest in the European Union: just 36%, compared to an average of 51% in the EU15 (European Commission 2003a)^{24[6]}. The difference in employment between Spain and the EU15 was, above all, a difference in female employment and this led to greater attention being paid to the situation of women in employment policies. The NAPs have therefore given certain support to the process of incorporating women into employment increasingly more evident over the last 25 years. Since the start of democracy, and especially since the mid-80s, Spain has seen a rapid growth in female employment and the spread of the model of the dual-earner family among the young: in 2002, the female employment rate was 44% (European Commission, 2003a).(Span.Nat.Rep. p. 8)

The goal of increasing women's participation in the labour market is generally promoted in all the countries. But the point of departure is extremely different in the single countries: In the Austrian employment policy a specific target was made that female employment should also be raised to 65 % by 2005. In Denmark the national goal for women's participation is 70 % in 2010. But in the national report this accomplishment is not ascribed to the EES:

The main reason for the reduction in the gender employment gap was more a consequence of economic growth than the implementation of the EES. A reason why the EES was not giving huge priority is also due to the fact that Denmark already met the Lisbon employment target for 2010 of a 70% employment rate and a special employment rate of 60% for women. (Dan. Nat. Rep. P. 2)

Still it is a question whether the different countries are actually counting women's employment in the same way:

According to the NAP 2003, the Lisbon target is already realised when based on the European definition of employment rates, which includes all jobs from one hour per week. According to the Dutch definition of the labour force, which is also used in the Dutch NAP 2003 and which includes only persons working at least twelve hours per week, the labour force participation of women is 54% and thus lower than both the Lisbon and the national target. It should, however, been taken into account that these targets are set in headcounts, differences between men and women in working time are not taken into account. In the Netherlands, only 34% of the working women work at least 35 hours per week (men: 86%). (Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 10)

The Dutch case shows that it might be possible to claim to have lived up to the Lisbon target although only 34 % of the women work at least 35 hours per day.

Out of the 15 "measures" of the HEFOP only one is devoted exclusively to improve the labour market participation of women. Measure 1.3 titled "Promoting the return of women to the labour market" identifies the following objectives: to improve the employability of women; to promote

²⁴ Harmonised data from Eurostat. The employment rate refers to the age group 15-64.

their participation in the labour market: and the reconciliation of work and family life will be facilitated through providing child care services.(Hun.Nat.Rep. p. 18)

In Hungary after the transformation period a return to the housewife model gained support from many women:

Among women excluded from the labour market, the role of mother/housewife has appreciated in value. A significant part of mothers with small children is of the opinion that child rising and work in the household is more important than work for pay. Lots of women driven out of the labour market are deterred from job search by the prospect of fiascos. However, many would like to have a regular earning occupation, at least a part-time one, in the organised economy, even though they do nothing for that purpose. (Hun.Nat.Rep. p. 27)

In spite of the Lisbon targets it seems that there are still at least three strategies working in Europe towards women's employment: 1. The housewife, who might take part time work if it is compatible with house duties, 2. The part timer, who combine job and family. 3. The full time working women.

The Shift from the male breadwinner model to the dual earner family model has been discussed for a number of years (Mosesdottir 2001, Anttonen 2001). And it seems that the EU is overall supporting that model. But there is also evidence that some countries try to establish a model in which women maintain a role in between the role of the housewife and the role of an equal labour market participant. The Nordic welfare model has been named the 'female friendly welfare state'(Hernes 1984) to illustrate the fact that the Nordic welfare model supported a full participation of women through the establishing of public services mainly in care for children and other dependants.

4.3.4.3. Breaking down gender gaps

The breaking down of gender gaps in employment, pay, horizontal and vertical division of work and family responsibilities could be argued to be the main gender mainstreaming targets of the labour market.

It is in some of the reports stated that the gender segregation of labour tends to be most widespread in countries with a high employment rate for women. This is particularly connected to the high number of women engaged in the public service sector:

“Finland has a great need to reduce gender-based segregation. This means constant and effective work in schools, other institutes of education and the labour administration. In line with the mainstreaming principle, all decision-making processes with an impact on the labour market must start scrutinizing impacts on men's and women's job-creation, working conditions, professional gender segregation, promotion of the equal pay principle, and career advancement. Job creation for both genders will be supported, and the differential in unemployment rates kept small. The volume and quality of public services will be improved still further, affecting both women's employment and ways for women to get work outside the home. In implementation of the equal pay principle, work on systems for assessing job demands will continue in cooperation with the labour market organizations, and their introduction at the workplace encouraged.”(Quoted from Finnish NAP 1999. Fin. Nat.Rep. p. 17)

There seems to be some contradiction between the wish to expand the public service to improve the working possibilities of women and to break the gender segregation of work. The same kind of contradiction could be found in Denmark. At the same time very little is done to effectively deal with the overall gender segregation of work. The availability of childcare institutions is emphasised, but at the same time the state is cutting the funding of municipalities that is in charge of childcare provision.

The Government stresses how the availability of childcare provision are contributing to promote labour market participation for both men and women and to improve the reconciliation of work and family life. The childcare guarantee, which exists in 90% of Danish municipalities, is being underlined and it is emphasised that Denmark already meets the target for childcare provision, which the member states are recommended to meet by 2010. (Dan.Nat.Rep. p.19)

As the high degree of gender segregation in the labour market is linked to the Nordic welfare model and the expansion of public services, Iceland also is struggling with gender segregation in the labour market.

4.3.4.4. Flexibility and part time work

In 2002 18% of the workers in EU were in part time employment. But in the Netherlands this form of employment was held by 44 % and three quarters of the female workers. There seems to be a slight increase in part time work in the EU countries. Among the countries in this study only the Netherlands and Austria have higher part time rates than the average.(Employment in Europe 2003).

Some of the countries in the study dealt with the question of mobilising a larger part of the population for the labour force. One of these countries is Spain, which used flexibility of supply employers with easily accessible labour force through temporary work and low security jobs:

Essentially, the NAPs have continued the policy of labour market flexibility that has been the priority of employment policy since the middle of the eighties and partly explains, why Spain has by far the highest rate of temporary employment in Europe. Flexibility policies have been applied to modes of recruitment and access to employment (1984 reform) but also to working conditions (1994), dismissals (1994, 1997, 2001 and 2002) and collective bargaining (1994). In this period, flexibility policies were aimed at satisfying the demands of employers rather than achieving a better balance between the demands for flexibility and the security of both workers and employers. (Span.Nat.Rep. p.6)

In some of the countries part time for women is preferred in order to deal with the problems of reconciling work and family life and there seems to be little concern to share the burden of this reconciliation between the male and the female workforce.

The most recent figures on the distribution of housework for employed persons show that the great majority of active women still bear the main family responsibilities. Around 50% of employed women are solely responsible for tasks such as cooking, cleaning the house or washing and ironing

clothes, whereas just over 10% share these tasks with their partner and just under 10% have the support of paid help. (Span.Nat.Rep. p. 12)

In Hungary it is often regarded the individual choice of women to be less active in the labour market, especially in older age in which they are supposed to prefer to care for the grandchildren and fathers are not regarded an option when dealing with the reconciliation of work and family life:

A multitude of women, especially those with poor/no qualification, did not consider the option of withdrawal to the household at a relatively young age a disadvantage. Most envisaged to spend their time taking care of their grandchildren.. According to recent research findings, however, women with better qualifications would like to work on even after retirement age. (Hun.Nat.Rep. p. 9)

This is of course just one side of the coin. We should add to this evaluation that withdrawal was an escape route in course of transition recession, as usually many of the same generation used to have jobs earlier.

One way to reconcile employment and family life is to spread flexible employment options and improve child supervision facilities. The top priorities of the Government include the spread of part-time employment, for the purpose of the reconciliation of work and family life, and easier access to education and training options while at work. (Hun.Nat. Rep. P. 20)

In Spain women's part time work is rather regarded an issue of inequality:

The feminisation of part-time employment is another clear example of existing gender inequalities, even though part-time work continues to be far less widespread in Spain than in other European countries. In 2003, 17% of women wage-earners worked part-time, as compared with 2% of male wage-earners, and more than 80% of part-timers were women. Furthermore, part-time work in Spain tends to be unskilled and insecure. Very low-skilled occupations show by far the highest rate of part-time work (19%) and temporary contracts accounted for 56% of part-time work in 2003. (Span.Nat.rep. p. 11-12)

In Both Austria and the Netherlands the strategy of part time work for women is promoted. In the Netherlands there seems to be a disagreement between researchers on, whether this is actually furthering gender equality on the long run.

In Austria the strategy of relegating women to part time work has also been used by the conservative-liberal government to promote women's labour market integration:

In Austria, the conservative-liberal government mainly tries to "promote" women by means of flexible working time models and measures to improve the work-life balance. The significance of part-time jobs is an important factor in this connection (Work-life balance should be a gender-work-life balance, but I know quite well that it seldom is), but we also need to ask whether enough attention is in fact paid to the "quality of part-time work"¹. It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at this type of work(Austrian National Report p.+)

In a number of the countries (The Netherlands, Austria and Spain) women's part time work is made a public priority in order from the government's side to deal with the reconciliation of work and family life.

In Denmark the conservative-liberal government also passed a law to improve the possibilities of part time work. Still it seems that part time work in Denmark is only in growth among students of either sex, whereas the young and highly educated women seldom are offered part time jobs.

4.3.4.5. Reconciling work and family work – an issue for fathers?

Measures that are named 'reconciling work and family life' are often in reality measures to make women prefer part time (or long non-paid parental leaves, as in Spain). Except in Iceland there is in none of the countries a specific effort to engage men in the establishment of a good work-life balance. In Iceland a 3month parental leave is reserved for the father (and three month for the mother, in addition they share 3 month).

In The Netherlands they share the concern for fathers to take part in the care for children. Nevertheless this is only expressed on campaign level:

One of the targets in the emancipation policy of the Dutch government is to realise that men have a share in care of at least 40%. Even though this is an ambitious target, it does not get much attention in the NAPs, let alone policy measures to realise it. The main instruments used in this respect are information campaigns (Dutch Nat.Rep. p. 13).

In Finland fathers and mothers share the same rights for part of the parental leave, but no parts of the leave is reserved for the father:

The NAP 1998 (p.49-50) says that the reconciliation of work and family life is the vital part of Finnish equality policy. Both parents are entitled to 'baby leave' (maternity/paternity and parental leave) and most collective agreements give at least part (2-3 months) of the maternity leave on full pay. Furthermore, the mother and father can alternately take time off work to care for the child until s/he reaches the age of three (care leave). Thereafter the parents are entitled to work shorter hours (part-time work) till the comprehensive school at the age of 7 (partial care leave). If a child under 10 falls sick, the mother or father can stay off work for up to four days to care for, or arrange for care of, the child. (Fin.Nat.Rep. p. 20)

In the Spanish report it is stressed that flexibility is used for employers to strengthen their power over women's work:

It seems clear that flexibility policies are not neutral in gender terms since they entail a strengthening of employers' power and place women in a more vulnerable position on account of the persistence of sexism and the pressure to reconcile paid work and family life. As pointed out by Carrasco and Mayordomo (1999), employers' demands for flexible working hours come up against a labour supply consisting of women with family responsibilities, giving rise to serious problems in the face of irregular work schedules with repercussions on the quality of both life and work. (Span.Nat.Rep. p. 15)

4.3.4.6. Child care

In a number of the reports a certain reluctance to initiate welfare service to support women's balanced representation in the labour market can be traced. In these countries it seems that child care expenses are considered the matter for the parents and that means that for employees with low salaries it is not affordable.

It is notable that even if the Barcelona targets set targets for the coverage of child care institutions they do not interfere in the financing, whether parents are supposed to pay for all expenses themselves or a certain proportion is paid by the state. In Denmark parents pay 30 %, in Hungary public kindergartens are free of charge.

According to the Barcelona targets childcare options should be available for 33 % of children in the age below 3 and 95 % in the age over 3 to school age. Even then this seems not to have become an integrated part of the NAPs probably because child care planning in many countries didn't use to be connected to labour market policies.

Austrian National Report:

Another important reason for the increase in female employment is the availability of additional child-care options. The number of children in care facilities has risen by a little less than 3 %, from approximately 224.000 in 1997 to about 230.000 in the year 2000 (SYNTHESIS FORSCHUNG 2002d, p. 23)

But even more important than the mere availability of additional child-care facilities is the fact that part of the costs of putting children in the care of such facilities are now being reimbursed by the government

In the Netherlands child care provision is quite expensive to parents. This means that low paid parents are not able to afford it and the mothers in this group will prefer to stay at home. In Spain the lack of publicly funded care services is very important for gender inequality, but this is not recognised in the NAPs and employment policies.

It is quite clear that the Barcelona targets on childcare is not recognised by the countries. The question of motherhood and of whether mothers should care for the small children tends to be a very sensible question. The question of the father's role is less sensible, still only Iceland in the study made arrangement that efficiently made fathers take a considerable part in parenting.

4.4. Conclusion

De la Porte & Pochet²⁵ identified three key stakes in the OMC debate in relation to the EES process: Governance, democracy and convergence. In the following we will use this as an approach to conclusions.

4.4.1. OMC Coordinated policies on employment, KBS and Gender Mainstreaming

Although the overall aims of using the open method of coordination are policy coordination between different fields of policy in the single country and between the European countries, it seems that well-established traditions of leaving each policy task primarily to one ministry and the single nation still prevails. Or maybe rather that policy coordination at a national level is still a new and difficult task, only involving a number of related ministerial fields, making an efficient barrier for the same to happen at a supra-national level.

As it is noted in the Finnish National Report, the problem is not that Finland did not develop plans for employment, knowledge based society or gender equality, the problem is rather that there is little coordination between these fields of policy.

This might not cause surprise as the whole organisation of public bureaucracies has been built up around specific policy fields and the system of professional levels of bureaucracy to delimit the borders of political action²⁶. In some sense you could say that the very idea of policy coordination at an administrative level contradicts well-established relationships between politicians and bureaucrat, as the civil servant is now assumed to be able to deal with political tasks but at a rational and managerial²⁷ way.

4.4.2. Open and Democratic Policy Procedures

The EES was a new and unknown challenge to the European bureaucracies when it was launched in 1997. The new routines and procedures were new to politicians and bureaucrats used to and trained to make policies through the national formulation of new policies. This traditional formulation and enforcement of new legal regulation follow a certain routine based on the political formulation of a set of problems, preparation of proposals for acts to deal with the problem, the hearing of the public, reading usually twice in parliament and often yet another hearing before the second reading in parliament before decision is made by parliament in order for the government to carry out the law as an executive instrument.

During this generally acknowledged process as a process based on representative democratic traditions political parties, social partners, public institutions or private organisations have a possibility of considering the proposal and influencing the politicians or political parties, they consider their own.

²⁵ De la Porte & Pochet

²⁶ Weber, Max (1982): *Makt og Byråkrati*. Oslo: Gyldendal

²⁷ Torfing (2000) analyses this dilemma.

In the OMC procedures of the EES this process is turned around and particularly the rounds of negotiations in which the public has a possibility to interfere is abolished.

The change is very bluntly illustrated by the Danish Expert from the Ministry of Social affairs and Gender Equality, when she argued: That you cannot come in from the street and make gender mainstreaming policy. That is the case of experts and should not be left to ordinary people or to politicians.

It is evidently a complex matter to make policies at a supra-national level involving the citizens and national politicians. But seen from a Danish perspective this weakens the position of national politicians, social partners and civic societies. Particularly as there is not established a joint public eye to give legitimacy to the overall professional procedures going on in relation to EU strategies.

4.4.3. EES and the problem of governance

De la Porte and Pochet²⁸ quotes the five principles of improving governance quoted in the EU White Paper on governance:

The need to communicate more actively with the general public on European Issues

The possibility for interested actors to participate

The need to become more accountable

The need to enhance effectiveness

The imperative of policies to become coherent

The first two principles seem not to work very well in the countries as it seems that the general public is only on very rare occasions invited in to join the NAP process. Probably very few persons in each country even know that this procedure exists. Regarding interested actors it seems that only a few outside the formal social partnerships are invited in, and then only to comment on specific issues or to take part in the very first NAP discussions before the actual plan is written.

In a number of ways the two first principles are in controversy with the last three. In order to secure accountability, efficiency and coherency only a few experts are able to make the priorities and targets that could be easily measured and reviewed. Especially as this process goes on every year and often should be completed within a narrow time schedule, it is probably in practice impossible to take in the conflicting perspectives of oppositional parties.

The imperative of policies to become coherent In the OMC processes targets are developed by experts or politicians at a trans-national level representing problems that are regarded joint problems. But there is no national proofing of the targets or the measures taken to deal with those joint problems.

When dealing with the EES it is evident that the EU countries do not share the same problems, left alone the new member states in the former East European block. That meant that the Lisbon Summit sat targets that were already met in some member states and impossible to reach within the given timeframe in other member states.

²⁸ De la Porte & Pochet op.cit.

According to the principles of governance more emphasis should be put on regional PES in combination with NAP measures. This also seems to be realised in a number of the countries. Still, however the national perspective plays the absolute overarching role. This is probably due to the national political nature of labour market policies, being for many years a key issue between social-democratic traditions on one hand and conservative-liberal ideas on the other.

4.4.4. EES as a Discourse of Power, a Policy Practice or Empty Rhetoric

Torfinn²⁹ argues that a new form of a welfare discourse is emerging in Europe. This welfare discourse moves towards a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime. The goals of economic policy are now to secure a permanent socio-economic innovation through structural political measures on the demand side. In accordance with the American Workfare concept social policies are growingly subdued to economic demands of enhanced labour market flexibility. The rights to welfare benefits are connected to the duty to activation. At the same time the regulation becomes more post-national in so far the political power is displaced upwardly to supra-national institutions (EU), downwardly to local institutions (municipalities) and outwardly to trans-regional institutions

The problem then is when and how a certain idea or ideology could be established as an overall 'truth' a fact understood and accepted by agents in the field of policy.

In a Foucauldian³⁰ scope power is a productive and elementary form prior to human relations. It is working through discourses that include both knowledge and institutions. In modern time knowledge and discourses meet in the haunt of truth. In this truth human beings are both the objects and the subjects. In Foucault's own work there is no external position outside the discourse of power from which resistance can emerge. The power discourse is always relational as a strategic battle and the results of this battle are open and relations of power are changeable, moveable and reciprocal.³¹

In the theory of discourse analysis it is discussed what determines that a certain discourse attains a status as a hegemonic discourse. One aspect is the position of utterance that is in which position an agent is able to make a statement to change or influence the discourse. Another aspect is the question of what are the conditions that are opening space and power for a new discourse. Yet another aspect is what are the criteria to take in the position of a victorious discourse winning the fight between conflicting discourses.

When working with the EES you often get the impression that EES has not been able to take in the position of a hegemonic discourse in the EU member states, even if one might assume that this position is given beforehand to a this supra-national authority and historical 'necessity'. It is however notable that Iceland and Spain seems to be the only countries in the study assigning such position to the NAP process and to the OMC.

²⁹ Torfinn (2000) op.cit.

³⁰ Foucault, Michel: Politics and the Study of Discourse. In Burchell et. Al. (Eds.): The Foucault Effect. Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991.

³¹ Foucault, Michel (1976): Histoire de la Sexualité 1:

Anyway it seems that a national discourse survives – so far - in many of the EU countries based on a hundred years old tradition of tripartite negotiations. In most of the countries employment is probably one of the most important issues in the relationship between politics and economics. This places governments in a cross pressure of on one hand improving employment and on the other hand to do this without increasing public employment and spending.

4.4.4. How to establish convergent employment policies in divergent labour markets

The 5-years evaluation carried out by the European Commission in 2002 concluded that a high degree of convergence of national policies towards the targets and guidelines of EES was realised:

Public Employment Services (PES) has been redesigned; activation; taxes on employment more favourable to employment. Education and training more attention to the needs of the labour market; “flexible” labour contracts and a redefinition of working times; gender mainstreaming has become a distinctive trait of national policies, some measures to reconcile work and family life. The importance of life long learning and of the quality of labour to improve productivity was recognised, the local dimension of labour market policies and the involvement of social partners improved.

This conclusion could be questioned in at least two respects: First of all a lot of the activities here ascribed to the EES were already established in a number of the countries before the EES was brought into practice in 1998. It is however for good reasons not possible to disentangle the level of influence of the EES on the specific activities. Secondly some of the activities mentioned – like gender mainstreaming - appear to be mere rhetorical rather than a ‘distinctive fact’.

It is however true that all the countries are facing convergent problems in relation to the development of the labour markets in the years to come. One of these is the problem of an ageing population, making the population in working age shrink relatively. But even that is not totally so. In Iceland the fertility rate is above 2, meaning that the population is able to maintain its size, whereas Spain faces a fertility rate close to 1, causing serious problems in the years to come.

It is also true that the countries share employment problems as such. But still the employment problems rest on very different grounds with employment rates ranging from 40 % to 84 %, and with countries claiming to have almost no employment problems (Austria) to countries with serious employment problems (Spain).

And all the countries share gender in-equality and a number of gender gaps in the labour market in relation to pay, segregation of work both horizontally and vertically and fewer career opportunities for women than for men. Still the levels of these problems differ and especially the levels of ‘women friendliness’ of the welfare regimes differ.

4.4.5. How to reach the overall target of becoming the number 1 knowledge based economy in the world

The Globalisation and the move towards a knowledge-based society are the main challenges formulated by the Lisbon summit 2000 to the European economies. It is pointed out that this is bearing the risk of skills erosion and social exclusion. An answer to the challenge chosen by the EU

is investment in human capital in order to attain the Lisbon objective of becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010. The EU in the view of the Commission suffers from under-investment in human capital and from insufficient investment in ICT to raise productivity and quality at work³².

It is evident that the challenges of the KBS are taken seriously in the NAPs and that this issue is generally not regarded controversial. But at least the Spanish case shows that NAPs are not seriously dealing with KBS challenges, and that these challenges are very controversial. On the other hand most of the countries are inclined to the 'technical fix' as it is called in the Dutch report and through that putting a lot of effort on ICT skills. Although ICT skills are undoubtedly necessary and needed for all in modern society there are probably not alone the kind of flexibility skills that are important in the KBS, the ability to adjust to new jobs, new job functions, new relations to other persons and new knowledge.

Life long learning is generally believed to be the answer to the demand for flexibility in a life long scale, especially the demands for new knowledge and new skills. There is however a tendency in the countries that life long learning focus particularly on unemployed persons and that employed persons who might get exactly the same needs of renewing their skills are not accommodated with offers for new education and training.

4.4.5. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming could be argued to be the ultimate proof of the ability of the OMC to gain authority in the countries as a joint target. Gender issues are probably also often a controversial issue and probably particularly as a supra-national effort, as gender differences are often regarded a matter of personal choice and private interest. At the same time it is remarkable that the EES and the EU gender equality legislation as such has become the motor of gender equality even in countries generally viewed to be the most advanced on gender questions.

Women and especially mothers are in many countries regarded mothers and housewives firstly and working in the labour market secondly. This means that a lot of the countries do not take the Barcelona targets of child care provision seriously into account. Some countries prefer to reconcile work and family life in a way that makes women both able to deal with family obligations and working life, by exploiting women's unpaid work, as it is expressed in the Spanish report. At the same time women are regarded to be conservative in the sense of their ability to adjust to the ICT demands ascribed to the KBS

The aims of the Lisbon strategy of 60 % women in the labour market also shows the inability to make joint targets, as a number of countries achieved the target before it was set, whereas it is in other countries – highly dependent on women's unpaid work in care and in the family – have little chance of meeting it. In that sense the targets are of particular political interest, but it seems that it is not treated like that. Maybe because the soft law limitations of the EES are taken into account in before hand and that the targets might not even have been taken seriously.

³² Commission of the European Communities. Brussels. 14.1. COM(2003) 6 final
Communication from the Commission to the Council, the
European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

5. Overall Conclusion of the Report

Karen Sjørup

In this report the EES as a political strategy of the EU is examined from the angle of cross-examining the NAP processed in the national states. It is specifically examined concerning the role of different actors in the national political process in relation to the drawing up of the annual national action plans for employment, the impact of and targets for adopting to the Knowledge Based Society and the integration of a gender equality aspect, mainly through the strategy of gender mainstreaming.

The analysis in the three previous chapters took a point of departure in three different sources of information. The first mainly being a theoretical 'state of the art' approach dealing with previous literature and evaluations of the process, the second analysing the NAPs in the five member states in three years and the third analysing the policy processes from the national reports carried out by the Wellknow partners.

The Lisbon targets set out to develop the EU to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by the year 2010. It is interesting to note that the targets regard EU as 'one' economy. It is not the case in the majority of the member states in this study that they consider themselves regions in a joint economy with joint political strategies in vital policy fields such as employment policies and social inclusion.

The analysis enlightens on the contrary a widespread hesitation and barriers based on national policymaking and traditions that form efficient obstacles to prevent such unification. In the EU the concept of convergence is utilised to deal with the problematic exercise of aligning the national economies to a unified economy without violating the principles of subsidiarity. In most of the member states the existence of tripartite negotiations are stated to be the systematic way of dealing with democracy and regional concerns in the nation states.

It is also maintained that the European Social model should be modernised to tackle the risks and gaps and social exclusion increased by the KBS. It is though also a question whether it is possible to talk about one European Social model. Esping Andersen (1990) historically refers to at least two different social models, or welfare regimes, in Europe. The Nordic welfare model is based on universal public services and de-commodification of social rights.

This model was also named the social-democratic model promoting equality and guarantying workers full participation in the equality enjoyed by the better off. The other regime was the conservative and corporatist welfare states preserving status differentials with rights attached to class and status. And in which the church shaped the preservation of traditional familyhood. Social insurance typically excluded non-working wives and family benefits encourage motherhood. Esping Andersen mentions Austria, France, Germany and Italy as nations belonging to this regime.

The question is whether these two regimes do head in the same direction in order to be modernised for the KBS. Esping Andersen mentioned a third regime less present in Europe: The liberal welfare state, in which means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social-insurance plans predominate. The consequence is that this type of regime minimizes de-commodification-effects, effectively contains the realm of social rights, and erects an order of stratification that is a blend of a

relative equality of poverty among state welfare recipients, market-differentiated welfare among the majorities, and a class-political dualism between the two. Esping Andersens sees the US, Canada and Australia as archetypical examples of this model. (p. 27)

It is a question whether the European Social model in a modernised form is heading in the direction of this model. In that case it is rather a matter of a political orientation towards a liberal market directed global competition economy that is the reason for growing differences than it is the KBS. It is obvious from the analysis developed in chapter 3 that there is a development going on in this direction in the Nordic countries, particularly in Denmark.

In the EES the task was to facilitate convergence of employment objectives through the Open Method of Co-ordination. As it is pointed out in chapter 2, it is underlined that this convergence should not be regarded a harmonisation. Nevertheless there seem to be some contradictions between the principle of convergence and the principle of subsidiarity, since convergence in the sense of the EES means living up to targets and taken into consideration recommendations made from outside the national or regional democratic systems. There is also, here expressed by Spain considerable differences in the understanding of the concept of convergence from different political sides as the government in Spain is accused of only heading at a nominal convergence and not at real convergence that would in the view of trade unions better secure social inclusion and employment.

Chapter three mentioned three overall methodological questions related to the theoretical standpoint analysing the EES as a rhetoric or discursive strategy,

Firstly the question of the conflicting ideologies behind the discourse, the neo-liberalist idea of free markets and the Keynesian welfare state discourse. Secondly the presumption that to produce more and higher education credentials is the same as to produce more human capital, that expanding human capital is a direct route to economic growth. Thirdly the concept of gender mainstreaming whether this is also a matter of rhetorics or a more deeply rooted pattern of practices and organisational processes.

Another line of argumentation in chapter three is that of the discourse of the NAP as a pedagogical governmental strategy. Inspired by Prozorow (Prozorow 2004) it is argued that the theoretical idea of political pedagogy and discursive power is valid and interesting. This is an important path of argumentation in relation to chapter two in which the NAP is also discussed as a learning process. But still it could be asked: Who are the pupils and who are the teachers and which is the lesson to be learnt. In this connection to this the Foucauldian concept of power in connection to knowledge discourses should be kept in mind, as Foucault argues that there is power is not a strength going upside down but that power works in many different directions and that you can't escape the discourse. There is according to Foucault no meaning outside the discourse. And this means that you cannot establish – at least theoretically – a distinction between the discourse and social reality.

In Chapter four it is argued that even if the democratic element in the NAP process is underlined in the 2002 reviewing of the EES, that the NAPs should be rather a matter for politicians than for civil servants, it is in the EU member states in the study almost the opposite. So it is a question whether it is actually possible to involve and engage politicians in this learning process or whether it is rather a learning process that distance it self more and more from the politicians and NGOs.

In Chapter 3 it is concluded in relation to the comparison of employment policies that the NAPs seldom manage with concrete branches and industries. They use words as better management, networking co-operation and competition without concrete definitions. The only branch mentioned frequently is the ICT branch. This is however done in quite different ways in the different countries: Spain in connection with social economy, Austria with social and health care and environmental issues, the Netherlands with 'new businesses' Finland as a growth sector and Denmark is not except one year (2000) expressing its growth sectors.

5 background structures are discovered behind the policy changes that have taken place in employment policies in the countries:

- The fiscal pressure on the welfare states in connection with global competition
- The ageing population and future lack of labour force
- The slow ideological continuum from welfare state ideologies to neo-liberal economic argumentation and policies
- The need for organisational change in labour market structures
- The EES

This list shows that changes are going on in European Employment policies, but that the changes due to the EES are not recognisable in between the layers of modernisation, globalisation and an overall political shift towards neo-liberalist policies. There is some convergence to find in the changes going on in the different member states, but there are however also differences due to the different points of departure, the different problems to discover at the moment and the different business opportunities realised in each country. This last issue is also discovered in the unwillingness to interfere with the development in private businesses and then to include the different prospects in the NAPs.

In relation to the KBS chapter 3 concludes that the NAPs in all the years in the analysis focussed mainly on the low skilled groups, on unemployed persons, persons with atypical skills and building institutions for training

In dealing with the question of gender mainstreaming chapter three concludes that all the EU member states in the study initiated specific measures for women. Especially the idea of supporting women's entrepreneurship. In all the countries subsidies are made to reconcile work and family life,.. Help for women to return to the labour market after child birth is mentioned in a number of countries and so is the work to narrow the gender pay gap and dealing with the gender segregation of work is mentioned by all the member states.. All the countries also to some extent engage in gender mainstreaming measures in administrative practices ad setting up gender equality centres. It is however also concluded that there is no clear definition of gender mainstreaming, sometimes the concept is used for specific measures to support women and sometimes to support a better balance between the sexes.

Concerning the combination of KBS and GM chapter three argues that not many innovative ideas are mentioned in the NAPs. It is often understood as training and education of women in the field of ICT and other technical disciplines. Some countries are pursuing the idea of supporting working families in their use of ICT in their daily routines such as commuting. But as a whole no country expresses an integrative approach in which KBS and GM is intertwined closely.

Chapter 4 shows that the NAP processes generally do succeed in integrating the perspectives of social partners on the NAP. Nevertheless the NAP processes at least in the Nordic countries limit the scope of influence of the partners, who are – at least in the Nordic tradition – accustomed to be leading partners in the whole employment policy process and not just in the filling in of targets set at governmental or inter-governmental level.

At the same time the NAP process is not visible in the public policy processes in the sense of parliamentary or public debate. There is very little public interest attached to the NAP process. Furthermore NGOs are in most cases either not at all invited in to the NAP processes or in cases, where they are, they are not professionally equipped to contribute to the highly professionalised policy processes. Accordingly the NAPs are detached from the process, even if they were initially invited in.

Professional gender expertise is also consulted only on rare occasions. This consultation seems to be casual and only sought on specific issues and not as a part of a general gender mainstreamed procedure.

In dealing with the Lisbon targets of the KBS the countries seem not to have integrated employment policies and KBS-policies. As states both in chapter 3 and 4 the KBS is mainly reflected in education policies as a general commitment to enforce advanced education. Still there are some differences in the priorities between what Torfing (2000) would call the American Workfare model of prioritising job creation over education (Iceland shows this tendency when prioritising jobs for work even when dealing with young unemployed persons) and a Nordic strategy of education first.

According to the gender equality strategies chapter 3 and 4 shows that there is a confusion of positive action and gender mainstreaming. Moreover there seems to be a tendency that gender equality strategies were attraction most attention in the first years of the NAP processes.

Both chapter 3 and 4 discuss the issue of whether the NAPs and the activities planned and reported should merely be considered a rhetorical discourse with little social implication or whether the rhetorical discourses do actually – as would be the implication seen from the perspective of a Foucauldian theory of discourse – gradually change and form the social facts. There are convincing similarities in the NAPs carried out by the different member states. But whether this should be considered a matter of co-variance, of the effects of the national states acting simultaneously on similar employment problems and fiscal circumstances or whether this is truly a path toward realised policy convergence is not evident.

In chapter 3 the Gender Mainstreaming strategy is correspondingly seen as a rhetorical strategy to show that the member state in question cares about gender equality. At the same time there is clear evidence as shown in chapter 3 that GM strategies are provided with insufficient policy measures and insufficient resources in order to deal with the ambitious matter of narrowing gender gaps in the labour market.

In chapter 3 it is stated that the NAPs and the EES as such represent the thinking of the new elites. The question then is: Who are these elites? Are they the internationally university trained professionals representing either lobbies, national agencies, governments or the commission sharing the same professional and personal experience of global networking, the same international taste and standards but distancing themselves from ordinary citizens?

The European Employment Strategy was shaped in 1997 to combat joint employment problems in the 15 EU member states. Since then employment problems were successfully dealt with. Primarily the active labour market strategy was able to form more systematic and ambitious re-employment initiatives. Some member states however didn't rely on the EES to establish this strategy, as they initiated it in the years before the NAP procedures started in 1998. Probably these countries influenced and were influenced by the planning phase of the EES in 1993-97.

From the year 2004 the 25 EU member states are faced with the new challenges of new employment problems deriving from the new members in the enlarged EU. The new member states in Central- and Eastern Europe being in a different starting position as the position of Hungary represented in this study. Still with a number of employment problems connected to the political transition in 1989-90 and suffering from a large inactive group in the labour market, typically the elder part with insufficient skills. With a low degree of integrating women after child birth and elder women in the labour market and with an insufficient number of jobs.

In relation to the aims of the wellknow project to analyse the overall policy impacts of the EES time is both a main and critical aspect that should be considered as a possible bias factor that might endanger the ability of providing the right answers. The process was initiated only four years prior to the start of the Wellknow project. In considering that the process sets out to intrude in well-established policies in 15 and now 25 different countries with different political traditions, different labour market structures and employment problems to solve, this is a very short period of time. Another problem further enhancing the above mentioned is that the already theoretical and empirical studies used partly as a point of departure in this study were in some cases produced as early as in 2000-2002 and thereby only three and four years after the strategy has decided on and the first NAPs written. It is obvious that a likely result would be that the process has not changed anything at all or that it rather changed discourses than the social realities. Social realities tend to be more

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