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Gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering

The Project „YesWePlan! Promoting Women in Architecture and Civil Engineering” aims at sharing experiences and best practice examples for closing the gender gap in the field of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

Methods and tools are a country situation analysis and the development of a Career Tracking System that is able to give insight into career decisions and motives of a representative number of professionals. Based on these information tools and on a collection of gender equality best practise examples in the partner countries a compendium will be developed that will not only provide tools but also recommendations for practical measures to improve gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering to different relevant stakeholders.

Project partners are the Austrian Federal Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants (BKZT) the Chamber of Architecture and Spatial Planning of Slovenia (ZAPS), the Polytechnical University of Valencia in Spain (UPV), the Association for the Research on the City and Housing (ARVHA) in France and the Federal Chamber of German Architects (BAK) and the German OXYS Management UG.

The YesWePlan! partners have already discussed and developed – on basis of the country situation analyses done in the project – first approaches for measures to promote gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering and other technical professions.

Therefore, they would ask the EP FEMM Committee to consider the following aspects:

1. Reassessment and Revaluation of (professional) success

The EU value system currently focuses on a traditional understanding of efficiency, on economic growth and GDP value as the sole factors of success. Based on this, STE(A)M¹ professional success reflects a one-direction approach that is not compatible to meeting important life requirements relating to caring activities, inclusion, diversity, time, sharing time, enjoying time, participation etc. This means that the currently it is almost impossible for a person – independent of gender – to combine professional success and the fulfilment of other important life requirements. Currently, due to traditional roles and systems, it is mostly women who take over the fulfilment of other life requirements. So, without closing the gap between professional success requirements and other life requirements, it will be very difficult to close the gender gap. The idea of the gross national happiness index of Bhutan that is based on the collective happiness and well-being of a population and also measures positive social impact of a person to his environment that is either social, human, built or natural is a thought-provoking idea to take into consideration. In a society that appreciates the contribution of each individual and in which the question of gender diversity is a natural thing that encourages better quality of living, space, environment, society and happiness, etc quality is not possible without equality.

Regarding these aspects, we propose making a ‘wider picture’ by:

- ‘opening space’ for other ways to understand the professional development and acknowledging and **supporting this new space by new kind of awards, publications, etc.**
- acknowledging and accepting **this other (new) criteria for accreditations or professional or academic merits and supporting its inclusion in official scales and contracts.**
- supporting the incorporation of a gendered approach to architecture and civil engineering; that is to say, incorporating daily life and care as a basic issue to tackle when designing, defining it and quantifying the way of incorporating it.
- supporting its general inclusion in academic programs.

¹ STE(A)M = Science, Technology, Engineering, (Architecture) and Mathematics

2. New European Bauhaus

The New European Bauhaus Projects offers a chance to increase the visibility of women in Architecture and Civil Engineering as regards sustainable approaches for the built environment.

It is an opportunity for political stakeholders such as the EP FEMM Committee to initiate a discussion about new professional approaches as explained in 1. and to raise awareness about the fact that equality is an important and resourceful approach to sustainable living and building.

3. Pay Gap

Employers should set salary ranges to give applicants an orientation for realistic pay. This encourages women to negotiate their own salary based on this salary range. This measure helps ensure that women's salaries are equal to those of men.

4. Education

Interesting children in STE(A)M subjects as early as possible must be enhanced in kindergartens and schools. **Pedagogues are required to have at least a minimum knowledge about education based on gender equality. Incentive measures and prizes for best practise gender approaches** in kindergartens, schools but also Universities need to be further enhanced as well as the exchange of practise examples on national and European level. Additionally, parents should be included in projects to increase girls' interest in STE(A)M professions.

5. Awareness Raising

Role models play an important role in all age ranges and especially for girls and young women, the more so in the age of YouTube and Instagram. Moving female role models in the spotlight is important in educational surroundings (female teachers in STE(A)M subjects, inviting female experts to schools, internships with female STE(A)M professionals etc) but it would also be important to initiate campaigns via different social media channels, maybe in cooperation with popular female influencers /youtubers.

6. Other Measures

Financial support measures for SME helping to increase gender equality and raise employment of women in technical professions (e.g., supporting the costs for social insurance for women in order to decrease the costs for employing women)

Support programmes (EU programmes, national measures, initiatives by Universities, professional organisations etc) to initiate new gender equality networks for STE(A)M professions and to make them more efficient (with tailor-made coaching and mentoring programmes, internships, job market, start-up support, etc)

Support programmes (EU programmes, national measures, initiatives by Universities, professional organisations etc) that focus on personal and professional development courses for women in STE(A)M professions (e.g., courses on negotiation skills for women etc)

Encouraging national regulations and awareness raising initiatives boosting equality in family caring activities as only in a working world where fathers taking parental leave are as common as mothers doing so, (indirect) discrimination on the workplace can be finished effectively.