



Mainstreaming the Horizontal Themes into Structural Fund Programming

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With executive summary

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PREFACE

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This paper is a product of desk research and fieldwork visits among national and regional authorities in Member States (notably in member regions of the IQ-Net consortium) as well as Commission services in Autumn 2001. The field research team comprised:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The horizontal themes of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities have grown in importance over successive phases of the Structural Funds. The current round of programming presents a range of novel challenges and opportunities for policy-makers. Under the current approach, both themes are to be mainstreamed across the entire scope of programmes so that they are systematically integrated into every phase and level of Structural Funds development and operation. For the 2000-06 programming period, all programmes have made some sort of commitment to promoting both themes. The task now is to translate these commitments into reality.

The following paper addresses the challenges facing policy-makers in this task. It has several aims:

- to define environmental sustainability and equal opportunities (and the related concepts of 'sustainable development' and 'gender mainstreaming') within the context of the Structural Funds;
- to explore the character of 'horizontality' attributed to these themes and to understand the implications of mainstreaming;
- to investigate how these priorities have been integrated in the 2000-06 programmes and the challenges presented to policy-makers by their differing institutional and policy environments; and, finally,
- to consider how the themes can be promoted further by providing practical examples of practices and approaches relevant to each phase of programme implementation.

The challenge of the horizontal themes (Section 2)

The horizontal priorities need holistic approaches which involve the systematic inclusion of environmental and gender considerations in each stage of policy and at every level of governance. To achieve this, it is crucial to build up ownership of common understanding and values with respect to the themes. Effective integration requires capacity building among stakeholders, adapting programme management tools and instruments, identifying and filling gaps in current and future programmes, and mobilising political support for a new focus to economic development. One of the goals of this paper is to identify the conditions and tools by which these different activities can be achieved.

The evolution of the horizontal themes in the Structural Funds (Section 3)

To understand the current approach to mainstreaming environmental sustainability and equal opportunities in the Structural Funds, it is important to recognise that each theme has been shaped by wider, global debates over the past two decades. Much of the original impetus for promoting and translating the themes into policy actions has lain with international initiatives. Environmental sustainability was originally brought to prominence by the UN World Conference on Environment and Development's report, *Our Common Future*, urging that the major economic and sectoral agencies of governments be made directly responsible and fully accountable for ensuring that their policies, programmes and budgets supported ecologically *and* economically sustainable development. This idea of environmental integration was taken further by 'Agenda 21' agreed at the United Nations-sponsored conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which addressed the integration of environment and development in policy through the concept of sustainable development. In a similar manner, equal opportunities became an international policy priority and acquired an agenda for policy action in the wake of the UN World Conferences on Women in Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995.

Against this pro-active international background, a succession of EU initiatives have promoted these themes in the European policy environment from the 1980s onwards. The EU Environmental Action Programmes introduced the concept of environmental integration into EU policy areas, while the Treaty of Amsterdam enshrined an EU commitment to sustainable development. A commitment to equal opportunities dates back to Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, but EU policy became more active in the field with actions such as the *NOW* element of the Employment Community Initiative and a recognition of the need for gender awareness across all institutions and interventions.

The first introduction of thematic requirements for the Structural Funds took place in 1988. Although environmental appraisals were required, however, the 1988 Structural Fund regulations did not yet make specific reference to equal opportunities. Also, few programmes successfully integrated environmental sustainability as a development objective. In response, the 1994-99 Structural Fund regulations placed greater emphasis on both themes, recognising a need to respond to environmental issues in undertaking economic development and strengthening the provisions for equal opportunity issues to be taken into greater consideration. In both cases, this led to more pronounced - although still modest - integration in the programmes launched in 1994. For Objective 2, further Community guidance was issued to support the development of the revised 1997-99 programmes, providing a much stronger steer to each theme.

With the 2000-06 regulations and guidance, mainstreaming has been introduced as a critical goal of the Structural Funds (as discussed in section 2.2). Compared to previous rounds, integration has been perceived - and experienced - as a significantly more difficult task for policy-makers. Mainstreaming requires not just novel approaches to designing, implementing and evaluating programmes, but in many respects, a new paradigm for programming. The key challenges lie less in the content of themes, which draw on existing international, EU and national policy frameworks, but the process of mainstreaming itself.

The horizontal themes and programming documents (Section 4)

A first step to reviewing how mainstreaming is supported in the current programming round is to consider the programming documents themselves. There are two aspects to this: the strategic approach of programmes as a whole; and the integration of the themes into the different sections of the programming documents.

The overall strategic approach to mainstreaming by different regions is described in section 4.1. Although programmes vary significantly in how they deal with the horizontal themes, there is broad agreement on how each theme should be defined. Consequently, for most programmes, *sustainable development* tends to be equated with environmental sustainability, as suggested by the Commission's own guidance on interpreting the themes, although the scope of action varies significantly. Similarly, *equality issues* are usually limited to equal opportunities between men and women, although some programmes extend the definition to include other disadvantaged groups.

The majority of programmes appear to give more attention to environmental sustainability. This is perhaps not surprising given that equal opportunities has often been associated with other programme types, notably Objective 3, while environmental sustainability has been longer associated with Objective 2 programming in practical management terms.

There are common definitions of the themes, but the programmes vary greatly in their proposals for integration of the themes in practice. The programmes contain unique mixtures of approaches drawn from mainstreaming - where the themes are applied across programming as a whole - and positive action - where the themes are concentrated in dedicated priorities and measures. Most regions use a combination of positive action and mainstreaming or positive action alone. The degree to which mainstreaming is favoured depends on a number of factors including the impact of the wider national policy context, the scope for activity within the administrative arrangements for the Structural Funds and the commitment of individual programmes.

As well as considering the overall approach to mainstreaming, it is worth reviewing how the themes have been treated in the major components of the programme documents: analysis, strategy, and the individual actions (see section 4.2). With regard to analysis, the response to the analytical requirements of the horizontal themes has been mixed across the programmes. Environmental profiles have been an obligation in programmes for some time and, while many were previously criticised as lacking in relevance, their quality appears to have improved significantly in the new programming period. In contrast, analysis of equal opportunities has typically been more limited, often being included as one part of the more general analysis of the labour market situation within the regions, partly because of the absence of data allowing fuller analysis.

In terms of strategy, many programmes use special, stand-alone sections to address the themes in the programme document. Nevertheless, more so than in previous programming periods, there are references to the horizontal themes at the level of the strategic objectives, typically as cross-cutting programme goals. In the measures and priorities, only a handful of programmes present their commitments to the horizontal themes as separate priorities within the programme. They feature more prominently in specific measures designed to address each of the themes.

Preconditions for mainstreaming: institutional and individual capacity (Section 5)

In order for the integration strategies of the programming documents to be implemented successfully, mainstreaming demands several things including an holistic approach to socio-economic development and an 'ideological change' among all actors (from the policy-makers to the public, the final beneficiaries of policies). To cope with the demands these impose, certain 'pre-conditions' for implementing these strategies are crucial, notably: sufficient capacity building of programme and project managers and an adequate, supportive institutional framework.

Capacity building activities can be either general - addressed to a whole group of actors and related to the broadest aspects of the themes - or targeted – focussed on specific target groups and on defined topics (see section 5.1). The ways in which capacity building activities are planned and undertaken are influenced by a number of factors, including the overall status attached to the themes, the budget available for capacity building, the sensitivity of programme management to the themes, and the availability of thematic experts to provide guidance and training. Developing capacities is an incremental process: the more that is done, the more people perceive what can and should be done. While the initial push can be exogenously driven, once the process of building capacity has started and the value of the themes is more generally understood, a virtuous circle can be activated.

The semi-obligatory status of the themes requires programme managers to impose demands on project applicants and implementers. The effectiveness of this process depends greatly upon the understanding and acceptance of the meaning attributed to the themes at each level. However, the interpretations given to the themes often vary between organisations as well as within the same organisation. Consequently, for the process to work, it is important that adequate guidance is provided at each level - from programme managers to priority/measure managers and, ultimately, to project managers - covering the requirements and how they can be fulfilled. Tools to support capacity building are varied, including specialised training, staff secondments and detailed and widely-distributed guidance notes.

Capacity building alone cannot resolve the problems related to the integration of the themes in programme management and delivery. An effective learning process can be enhanced by the presence of an adequate institutional framework, as described in section 5.2. This should be capable of raising the horizontal priorities on the policy agenda, contributing to the generation of a clear and homogenous understanding of the issues and providing continuity to the inclusion of the themes in the process of policy-making and delivery. Such institutional frameworks typically consist of the creation of special inter-organisational expert/working groups, ensuring the themes are integrated at different stages of programming.

Operationalising the horizontal themes (Section 6)

The scope for implementing the horizontal themes as part of programming is largely determined by the individual commitment of policy-makers and the institutional scope they have for action. In this respect, the motivation for taking up the themes partly conditions the nature and extent of operational responses. A clear distinction exists between actors and programmes driven by regulatory obligations, and those embracing more fully the utility or importance of integrating these aspects into

economic development frameworks. If the themes are to be embraced by the policy environment, they need to be seen as a positive and legitimate element of the economic development agenda. This can be accelerated by endorsement at political levels which have real influence over programme actors. Where such political endorsement is not available, the themes risk being interpreted as peripheral issues that divert economic development programmes from their central tasks of raising competitiveness and creating employment. The creation of formal structures - along the lines noted in the previous section - is one means of ensuring that sufficient attention is given.

It is important to remember that, in many contexts, Structural Fund programmes may simply reflect established policy initiatives and approaches. Here, Structural Fund programme development does not necessarily equate to policy development, but is more akin to policy selection and combination. There are two implications of this. First, it is clear that methods and recommendations which are relevant to one region may not necessarily be directly applicable in others. Second, depending on the context, mainstreaming environmental and equality-related issues more fully into Structural Fund programming may require reflection to be taking place well beyond the Structural Funds.

Beyond these general, political considerations, there is a series of specific issues relating to how the horizontal themes can be practically integrated into all phases of the programming cycle - programme design, project generation, project appraisal and selection, monitoring and evaluation. Different tools are useful at different stages of the policy process.

Programme design

It has been an obligation for programmes to undertake an *ex ante* assessment of the situation of their eligible area as regards environmental sustainability and equal opportunities. A real problem for many in preparing *ex ante* evaluations has been the lack of data or of interpretative insights into available statistics. However, even identifying data deficiencies is important in highlighting future development priorities for economic observatories and statistical offices. A range of tools is available to verify the quality of responses made by programmes to horizontal theme issues. Such tools are useful at the programme design stage, for example in enabling a structured analysis of past programmes to inform future ones, in identifying the potential weaknesses in a draft programme or in enabling different strategic options to be compared for their relative horizontal theme implications.

Project generation and selection

The integration of the horizontal themes in the process of project generation and selection varies across IQ-Net regions. Laying down obligations and, much less frequently, offering incentives, are powerful elements which help to focus the attention of applicants on the horizontal themes. However, given that the concept of mainstreaming the themes is still novel in many policy contexts, obligation and reward systems are unlikely to yield rapid and consistent results unless actors take on two additional roles: (i) demystifying concepts and clarifying what is sought under them; and (ii) making provision to develop the awareness and skills of actors, enabling them to respond.

To support applicants in taking up mainstreaming approaches, it is useful to build confidence and familiarity by providing concrete and straightforward examples illustrating what is meant. Project design can be influenced through a process of applying a gender or an environmental 'lens' to projects - asking a particular set of questions about them to uncover gender and environment-related implications in the form of opportunities or threats, which previously may have gone unnoticed, and which can then be addressed through project design.

In many ways, the challenges faced by project developers in taking up the themes closely mirror those of programme developers and administrators. Project development toolkits have been developed in various contexts and for various sectors which target project developers with practical advice. Most programmes appear to be requesting relatively structured information from applicants on the way in which they have taken the themes into account in the design of their projects. In the same way that those developing projects require guidance, those assessing the horizontal theme content of applications also have a clear need for appropriate skills and tools.

Monitoring

The contribution of monitoring to the horizontal themes is: to track the progress of projects against objectives (and the progress of the programme, when aggregated); to provide a means to generate new information helping to understand patterns and trends where they have not previously been examined; and to supply valuable baseline information against which others can set realistic targets and judge their own progress. The challenge is to generate the necessary information to answer these questions, enabling appropriate outputs and impacts to be captured, but at the same time to limit the number of indicators and the burden of measuring these aspects (these are just part of the aim of projects and programmes). Establishing monitoring frameworks for the horizontal themes (HTs) has involved two broad tasks: gathering relevant baseline data and identifying adequate indicators and related quantified targets. Extensive work has been done on both these areas at the national and programme levels, leading to higher degrees of sophistication in current monitoring frameworks.

Evaluation

The mainstreaming of the horizontal themes can be reinforced by the insights generated by evaluation. Two organisational approaches to evaluation are available: to undertake dedicated thematic studies of the HTs or to address these aspects as an integral part of overall evaluations. While both options have merits, the mainstreaming approach is a strong argument in favour of the latter.

In terms of its design as an integral part of a wider Structural Fund evaluation study, HT-related evaluation should be adjusted to the scale and scope of HT integration

across programmes. With regard to scale, the issue is to ensure that HT-related evaluation elements are proportional to the HT relevance of the interventions being addressed. Determining the scope of HT-related elements of evaluation is more complex. Where equality issues and/or environmental sustainability are being mainstreamed into economic development programmes, it is argued that three types of evaluation are of value: summative evaluation, ascertaining what has been achieved in terms of economic outcomes; formative evaluation, addressing the processes and systems leading to these outcomes; and, finally, participative evaluation, where the process of evaluation itself is viewed as an opportunity to facilitate more active, inclusive learning processes. The latter two types of evaluation reinforce the key message that adjustment to programme management and delivery mechanisms and development of awareness and skills are prerequisites for change in terms of HT-relevant outputs and impacts. They also enable progress to be captured and rewarded, even before it has been translated through into programme outcomes.

It is important that in addressing the HTs, evaluators are assisted by foundations already laid, including *ex ante* assessments of the environmental and equality-related situation, and frameworks of monitoring indicators. Also helpful is integration of the HTs into evaluation frameworks in a systematic way from an early stage of programming. Nonetheless, responding to evaluating HT aspects of programmes still poses significant challenges, not least in terms of balancing competing demands for limited evaluation resources and identifying suitably experienced evaluators.

Conclusions

In conclusion, HT integration requires:

- **clarity** about the meaning and relevance of the HTs;
- **integration** of these issues across policies and programming phases through holistic approaches,
- **commitment** to developing the capacity of individuals and institutions to respond, and to taking the issues forward in concrete ways, and
- policy **continuity** and **coordination**.

These factors are necessary elements for a sustainable approach to the HTs. In addition, there may be grounds to anticipate that the systematic integration of equality and environmental awareness into the delivery of economic development interventions will, over time, assist actors, organisations and policies to evolve towards more ambitious and integrated responses more in line with the broader and longer-term objective of sustainable development.

Mainstreaming the Horizontal Themes into Structural Fund Programming

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is on the two horizontal themes which have been strongly targeted by the EC in the 2000-06 programme period - the environment and equal opportunities. Environmental sustainability (ES) and equal opportunities (EO) have been growing in importance for some time as elements of Structural Fund programming. Over successive programming periods, Commission pressure has increased the integration of these developing areas of policy as 'horizontal themes' (HTs) within Structural Fund programmes. Now, both are firmly on the agenda as horizontal dimensions. For both areas, policy has evolved slowly to reach the current mainstreaming approach which demands that the themes be incorporated within and across the entire scope of programmes.

The two themes are usually addressed separately. However, this paper argues that there are strong reasons to consider them in parallel. First, both are complementary, integral elements of the wider economic development paradigm of sustainable development. Second, as horizontal themes, ES and EO demand similar responses in order to be integrated into Structural Fund programming, and considering them together offers potential efficiencies and opportunities for learning.

It has been an obligation for Structural Fund programmes to respond to the issues of environment and equal opportunities since at least 1994. Initially, the responses in the 1994-99 programmes were relatively weak, and environmental and gender-related obligations were significantly increased moving into the current programming period. Highly specific requirements were set out and a clear message was sent that these themes should be integrated throughout programmes, across all stages of programming including monitoring and evaluation, across all components of programming documents, and into all policies pursued - an approach known as 'mainstreaming'.

For the 2000-06 programming period, all programmes have made some sort of commitment to promoting both environmental sustainability and equal opportunities. The challenge now is to translate these commitments into practice. This implies a huge shift of thinking that can only take place in a slow, incremental manner. The implementation of Structural Fund programmes during the last programming periods showed that it has not always been easy to include the two horizontal themes in programming documents, or, more importantly, in their implementation.

Considerable developmental work has been undertaken during the last few years by the EC and by national and regional organisations to build capacity in these areas. Nonetheless, not all the necessary tools to increase ES/EO inclusion in programme implementation are yet available to programme

managers and project implementers. Further work on these themes has been advocated with the aim of identifying examples of good practice for effective integration into programme management and delivery.

This paper has several aims. First, it intends to examine the relevance of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities to economic development, the relationship of these themes to sustainable development, the character of 'horizontality' attributed to them and the way in which this is being pursued through a mainstreaming methodology. Second, the paper investigates what has been asked of programmes over time and how they have responded, including recognising the significant problems which have been faced. Third, the paper considers how these themes can be promoted further. Examples are provided of practices and approaches relevant to building up individual and institutional capacity and to the various phases of programming.

One of the difficulties being faced is that many programmes are having to 'lead the way' on mainstreaming equal opportunities or environmental considerations widely within economic development programmes. This involves practical implementation of the mainstreaming approach in contexts where this approach has not yet been fully integrated into the wider policy arena. An implication of this is that taking stock of Structural Fund experience could generate insights of wider use in informing the pursuit of gender and environmental mainstreaming into other policy environments.

Following this introduction, this paper is divided into six further sections. The first section considers the concepts underlying the horizontal themes – the definitions and understanding of mainstreaming, the rationale for integrating the horizontal themes within economic development programming, the relationship of themes with the wider sustainable development debate and the challenges facing Structural Fund programme managers in mainstreaming gender and environmental issues.

Section 3 then charts the evolution of the horizontal themes within the Structural Funds against the background of international and EU awareness and commitments to gender equality and environmental sustainability. Section 4 discusses the current strategic responses, examining the overall approach to the horizontal themes in the 2000-06 programmes, especially at the level of strategic objectives, and their inclusion into different programme elements.

Section 5 considers the practical issues being faced by programme managers, in particular the processes for developing individual and institutional capacity at different levels within the programme. The practical theme is continued in Section 6 which discusses the operationalisation of the horizontal themes at different stages of programming – programme design, project generation and selection, monitoring and evaluation. Finally, Section 7 identifies the main conclusions to emerge from the paper.

2. THE RATIONALE AND CHALLENGE OF THE HORIZONTAL THEMES

The task of gender and environmental mainstreaming is relatively new as a policy approach, and has been experienced as challenging by many programmes. Providing a context for the paper, this section explores four questions:

- What is meant by mainstreaming?
- Why are the environment and gender relevant as themes to be integrated into economic development programming?
- What is the relationship of the issues discussed in this paper to the wider sustainable development debate?
- Why are the horizontal themes so challenging for Structural Fund programme managers?

2.1 Defining and understanding mainstreaming

‘Mainstreaming’ implies integrating a given issue or perspective fully and consistently into mainstream policies as they are developed, implemented and evaluated. The term has been most frequently and fully developed in the gender field, but is also applied here to treatment of the environment as a horizontal theme (HT). Mainstreaming aims to make relevant thematic considerations a regular part of the mainstream policy process and, in so doing, involves the issues in question being transformed from the exclusive concern of specialists to integral aspects of the day-to-day activity of all economic developers, understood and applied as a routine part of their work. At a basic level, economic developers are being asked to apply an environmental or gender ‘filter’ to all their policies, processes and decisions, assessing likely implications and making adjustments where appropriate.

There is frequently confusion about the relationship between ‘positive action’ projects and mainstreaming. Positive action is a term most frequently used for gender projects, but in this paper also applied to dedicated environmental projects. It refers to projects which are entirely focused on addressing a gender or environmental issue. Examples would include a female entrepreneurship scheme or the construction of a waste-water processing plant. Many programmes have interpreted mainstreaming as identifying the possibilities for positive action under different measure headings, but its true scope is broader. Instead, it involves considering whether *every and any* project or policy has uneven gender implications or negative environmental ones and whether it requires adjustments to its design or delivery. Mainstreaming and positive action are *complementary* policy responses – positive action being a sub-set of mainstreaming activity. They can co-exist where appropriate. In fact, positive action serves a particular role not only in addressing HT issues in a concentrated way, but also, in the case of equal opportunity projects, helping to prepare the way for fuller ‘mainstreaming’, by familiarising programme participants with relevant issues.

To place different approaches to horizontal themes in context, and to appreciate better the distinctions between them, it can be useful to consider a

hierarchical scale of integration of a horizontal theme into a programme.¹ At the first level of integration, an issue may be acknowledged as a 'horizontal' element of the programme, but with responses primarily comprising overall statements of commitment, with little follow-up or embedding. At a second level of integration, positive action projects may be supported, and expert thematic support called upon where necessary. At a third stage of integration – equating to mainstreaming – the specialist gender or environmental knowledge would be diffused among programme actors, including generalists, who would be applying it in the course of their day-to-day activity. In addition, while positive action projects may still be supported, the programme would also be sensitive to the potential environmental implications of all activities it supported.

2.2 Rationale for including environment and equal opportunities in economic development

An important preliminary observation about integrating environment and gender sensitivity into economic development programmes is that this process is motivated not only by social arguments but also by sound economic ones.

The economic case for integrating environmental issues into economic development programmes is arguably already well rehearsed, including the inter-relationship between the quality of the environment and the ability of areas to attract and retain investment. The economic opportunities presented by embracing environmental awareness, represent a 'business/environment win-win scenario'² for business, in which environmental improvement measures serve commercial ends. The 1994-96 Objective 2 programmes, for example, already included environmental improvement policies addressing the industrial legacy to assist reconversion, preventive policies (eg. pollution-reducing infrastructure) and forward-looking policies aiming to reduce resource utilisation, improve manufacturing efficiency or develop new eco-products, services and technologies.³

For equal opportunities, the *equity arguments* constitute perhaps the most familiar rationale for taking gender into account in Structural Fund programming - the agenda of social responsibility and human rights. However, there is also a clear rationale in terms of *efficiency arguments*, and, in particular, the potential negative economic impact of the under-utilisation of human talents.

Looking more closely, there are two key economic arguments. The first is *quantitative*: the greater the proportion of the workforce involved in economic activity, the better it is for the economy. The second is *qualitative*: to ensure their competitive edge, regions and the firms within them must ensure that the

¹ Bachtler J and Taylor S (1999) *Objective 2: Experience, Lessons and Policy Implications*, Report to the Commission of the European Communities (DG XVI), European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde.

² Envirowise (2001) *Resource Efficiency: A Management Guide*, EN320, Harwell International Business Centre, UK, <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk>.

³ Bachtler J and Taylor S, with Kearney C (1996) *Extended Synthesis of Agreed Single Programming Documents in Objective 2 Areas 1994-96*, Report to the European Commission (DG XVI), European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

most talented people in the available workforce are employed, and at a level which maximises their contribution.⁴ Where the role which individuals play in the economy is strongly shaped by gender differentiation (reflected in particular in the uneven distribution of social responsibilities), rather than merit or ability, then the capacities of one group may be being under-utilised while those of another are over-utilised, leading to inefficiency and reduced output.⁵

The clear differences between male and female patterns in the labour market indicate that, for economic development policies to maximise their impact, they need first to understand better the causes of inequality and second to tailor policies to address the specific circumstances of sub-groups. It is only then that the suppressed potential of all individuals as 'agents of regional development' can be freed up, for the benefit of the economy as a whole. Women need to be seen as vital development agents, who can only achieve their potential with equal access to productive resources, opportunities and public services.

2.3 The horizontal themes and the sustainable development debate

This paper is structured to address environment and equal opportunities as two distinct 'horizontal themes' of Structural Fund programming. In part, this reflects and derives from the EC's own presentation of these issues as parallel but distinct elements. The compartmentalisation of gender and environment can be questioned, since, at a broader level, both the environment and equal opportunities could be seen as constituent elements of the 'sustainable development' approach to economic development. Sustainable development theory considers that economic, social and environmental policies should not be made or implemented in isolation. Instead, in the long term interest, these three areas should be pursued simultaneously as inter-connected, mutually reinforcing elements of a complex whole:

- *continuing economic development* - creating greater wealth in a manner that reduces burdens on the natural environment;
- *social inclusion* - meeting people's material needs as well as their wider aspirations which add to quality of life; and
- *environmental protection* - recognising that environmental quality is linked to economic development - for example, as a factor in inward investment decisions - and social development, as a component of quality of life.

High-level policy statements, including the Treaty of Amsterdam, reflect the adoption and promotion of the 'sustainable development' approach by the EU. The concept is clearly translated into EU policy initiatives, including, for example, the European Spatial Development Perspective, which aims to provide a framework to co-ordinate spatial policies and policies with a spatial impact towards 'a balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the European Union' ensuring economic and social cohesion, the conservation and management of natural resources and the cultural heritage, and a more

⁴ Beck B (1998) Women and Work Survey - Balancing Act, *The Economist*, 18 July 1998, pp15.

⁵ For a broader discussion of this issue, see: Adnett N (1996) *European Labour Markets - Analysis and Policy*, Longman.

balanced competitiveness of the European territory. In fact, the ESDP states explicitly that “in accordance with the United Nations Brundtland⁶ report, sustainable development covers not only environmentally sound economic development, which preserves present resources for use by future generations, but also includes a balanced spatial development [...]”, which is provided by the reconciliation of a triangle of objectives related to the economy, the environment and society. Sustainable development is also translated through into the operating principles of the Structural Funds.

Why has this paper then addressed the issues of environment and gender in parallel? A first important rationale is that, while the environmental agenda pursued by the Structural Funds has clearly grown in momentum as a result of the guiding concept of sustainable development, the same cannot necessarily be said of the rise of equal opportunities, and gender mainstreaming in particular, as an economic development issue. The specific impetus came to a significant extent from a process of methodological debate about increasing the impact of economic development policy in developing countries. Had the impetus come from the social agenda encompassed by sustainable development, then it could be argued that its form and emphasis would have been different. In addition, the argument has also been made (among those currently engaged in promoting the gender mainstreaming agenda) that its conceptual inclusion as a sub-element of one of the pillars of sustainable development would reduce its visibility to an extent which could be damaging to its progress in informing economic development methods and resource allocation debates. Presenting gender and environment under a single umbrella of sustainable development potentially obscures these arguments.

A further rationale for addressing the issues in parallel is simply that this is the interpretation which many programmes have taken up in practice. At a practical level, many of the methods which enable one to be mainstreamed into a programme could be extended to the other (with appropriate thematic adjustment), enabling synergies and efficiencies to be achieved by addressing them in parallel.

The separate presentation of the two themes in many programmes (although not all), may still seem puzzling when we consider that the Structural Fund framework does acknowledge the sustainable development approach. Closer analysis helps to understand the apparent terminological and conceptual dichotomy between the holistic (and perhaps longer-term) approach to sustainable development which frames the strategic basis for Structural Fund programming and the more circumscribed and narrowly defined inclusion of environmental and gender-related considerations in Structural Fund programmes.

Straightforwardly, broad concepts are presented in EC documents to introduce the relationship between the economy, society and the environment. However, in developing expectations and requirements more explicitly, EC documents then compartmentalise the three elements, highlighting gender and environment in particular, since the economic dimension of programmes is

⁶ *World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

taken as given. This is the case, for example, in the Guidelines and the *Vademecum* for the 2000-06 programming period. The Guidelines for the co-ordination of the Structural Funds with the Cohesion Fund for the 2000-06 period refer to the “two horizontal principles of sustainable development and equal opportunities”. Here, compliance with the principle of sustainable development is intended as follows: “environmental considerations, and in particular compliance with Community environmental and nature protection legislation, must be incorporated into the definition and implementation of measures supported by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund” (p. 2). In similar vein, the *Vademecum* presents environmental and gender considerations as necessary elements of the background analysis for programmes, of the strategy and priorities, of partnership, and of the implementing provisions. It is possible that programmes have responded to the more specific, compartmentalised presentation, rather than also taking ownership of the broader, contextual framework.

This interpretation of the overall landscape provides scope to speculate about a future evolution towards sustainable development approaches, even where the approach of current programmes is segmented and inter-connections are not explicitly being made. Economic development actors are being encouraged, through the Structural Funds, to integrate two consistent perspectives into their practices – an environmental perspective, and a social perspective (gender equality issues). The mainstreaming approach has the potential to ensure that both inform the nature and delivery of economic development activities on a more routine and integrated basis. It is possible that this represents a step on the incremental path towards sustainable development.

2.4 Why is gender and environmental mainstreaming so challenging?

In moving from the concept of mainstreaming gender and the environment to practical policy action, programme managers have to consider some important challenges. First, the HTs have implications at the level of the individual and the way they perceive and interact with the world. Gender mainstreaming and environmental sustainability require actors to undertake a transition, as a result of which, they see and respond to the economy, society and the environment differently. Second, in order to integrate new policy directions into the complex systems which Structural Fund programmes represent, a holistic approach needs to be taken, addressing all stages, types and levels of activity and all involved actors and organisations. Third, given the variety of contexts in which Structural Fund programmes are designed and delivered, there is no standard method for embedding HT mainstreaming. The challenge is for each programme partnership to develop and pursue its own approach, using those routes (direct and/or indirect) through which influence can be exerted appropriate to their context. Each of these issues is explored below.

2.4.1 *New ways of seeing*

For the realisation of an ambitious framework – where the HTs are integrated at all levels and at every stage, hence involving all actors – it is crucial to build

up ownership of common understanding and values. No effective integration is possible without a real mobilisation around the horizontal priorities.⁷

At an abstract level, there is wide consensus around the principles of respect for the environment and equality of opportunity and, indeed, for the importance of the wider 'umbrella' concept of sustainable development. However, these ideas become less clear at the point of translating them into the actions and transactions of day-to-day life, especially where a mainstreaming approach is sought, and where preconceptions mean that the scope of these themes is misunderstood. In terms of sustainable development, there is a key distinction between the 'environmentalist' stance of opposing further development, and the sustainable development view, where economic growth is recognised as an essential objective, but which needs to be guided by limits and principles of sustainability. Likewise, negative associations with extremes of feminism can prevent gender mainstreaming ideas from being embraced.

The process of embedding the environment and gender into responses requires individuals to ask a different set of questions about the world around them, and to respond differently to the answers. For this to take place, individuals arguably first have to become aware of the subconscious assumptions which shape their current attitudes and actions, and then to adjust these to encompass new elements. A useful concept is the idea of learning to look through a gender or environmental 'lens' when assessing or designing projects - a process which reveals that relatively few activities are genuinely gender or environment neutral.

Taking the example of gender, the view that a given phenomenon has no gender implications and therefore is gender neutral may be accurate in some contexts. In others, it may simply be informed by a view which is 'gender blind', developed using assumptions informed by the norm, which is frequently male-oriented. Wherever resources are allocated or people are involved in an initiative or activity, there is the potential for uneven benefits or uneven access on a gender basis. For example, any employment policy which is not family friendly disadvantages women, since, overall, they carry the majority of caring responsibilities. Depending on the affordability of elderly care or childcare, this effect is likely to be more pronounced among lower income groups. Appreciating such unintentional features of policy design is a first step to developing gender awareness. Underlying the concept of gender mainstreaming is a recognition that women and men do not have the same situations, needs and resources, and that these differences can affect the way in which women and men can access everything from labour market participation to public services. By taking account of the different needs and situations of women and men, policy-makers can ensure better policy targeting, more effective delivery and greater equality.

Changing 'reflexes' is a slow process requiring persuasion via demonstration, and the exploration and testing of new ideas. This process is complicated by the fact that there are still many uncertainties in the gender and environmental

⁷ Fitzgerald R, *Mainstreaming gender equality in the European Union's regional policy – Lessons for public policy*, European Policies Research Centre (mimeo), July 2001, p.7.

fields, not to mention in sustainable development. Since there are numerous, unanswered questions, embracing these ideas means not only embarking on new paths, but also helping to build them.

2.4.2 *The need for a holistic approach*

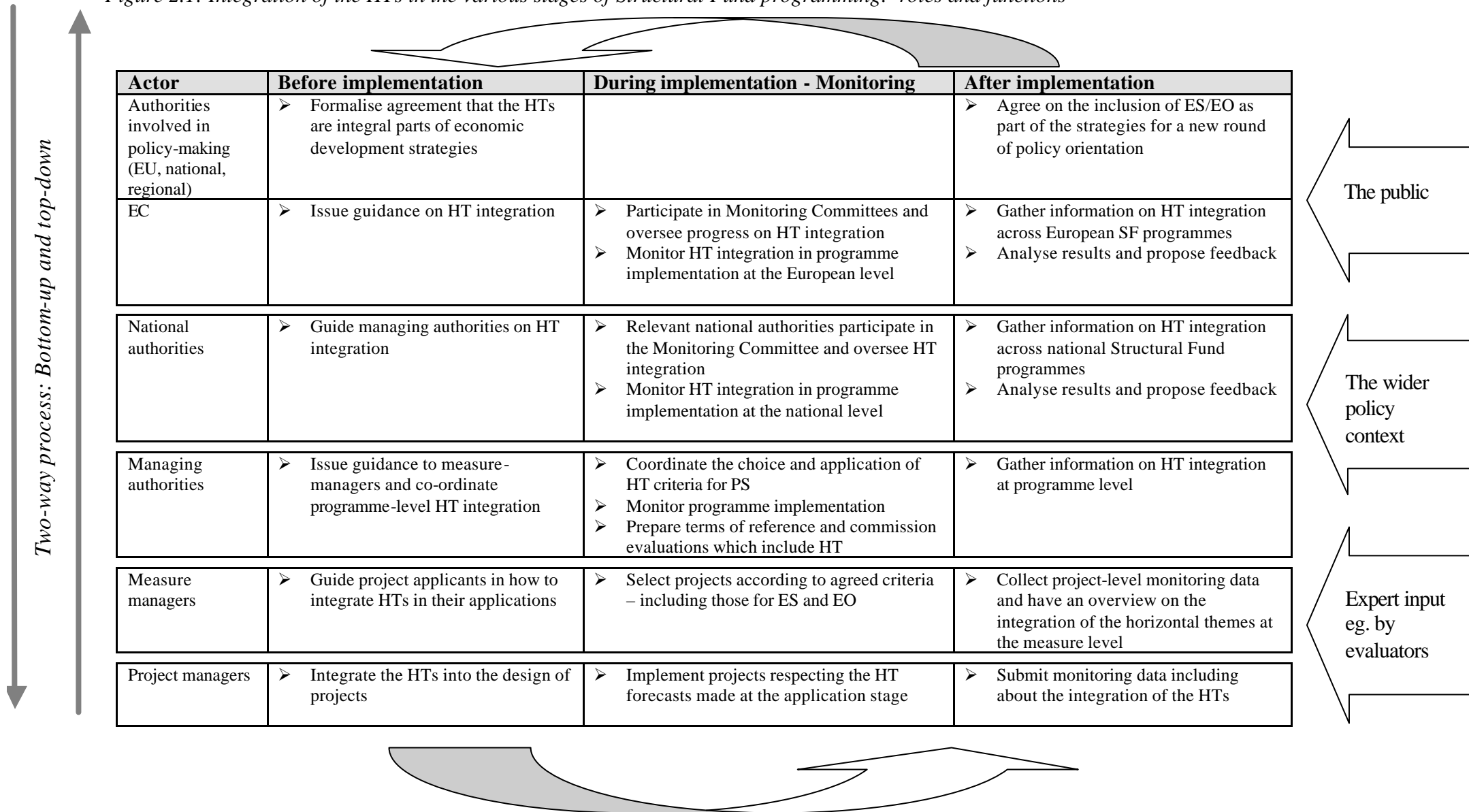
The second challenge for mainstreaming the HTs into Structural Fund programmes, which are delivered through complex, extended systems, lies in their horizontal character. To be embedded fully, holistic approaches are needed to facilitate the systematic inclusion of the HTs across all programme dimensions. A double level of integration is required, into both strategies and processes.

- **Integration into strategies:** this encompasses horizontal integration, across all policy areas in a programme, and also vertical integration through all levels of the strategic hierarchy, from strategic objectives through to priorities, measures and interventions.
- **Integration into processes:** this involves integration of the HTs into the operational activities undertaken at all stages of the programming cycle, from programme design, through to project generation, project selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Structural Fund programmes are delivered in a context of partnership and through interaction with the domestic policy environment. As such, the process of integrating the HTs implies the need for all organisations participating in a programme to adjust their own relevant structures, processes and policies accordingly.

Figure 2.1 synthetically represents the potential for HT integration through the various stages of Structural Fund programming, highlighting the actors involved at each level and the roles they might fulfil. The figure illustrates integration of the HTs emerging from a flow of influence down through the hierarchy of a programme, and being reinforced or adjusted as the programme progresses through a flow of information up from projects, to the programme level, to national and EC levels. The complexity of such an holistic approach is increased by the cross-cutting interactions that the various strategy components and implementation phases have with each other, in a loop of interdependencies and interrelations where the effectiveness of the integration of the HTs in one component of the strategy and/or implementation, is enhanced or weakened by the way in which the HTs are integrated (or not integrated) in others.

Figure 2.1: Integration of the HTs in the various stages of Structural Fund programming: roles and functions



This complexity justifies the need for a systematic approach towards the HTs which involves the pursuit of broad inclusion and pro-active participation in the process of policy-making and delivery, and attention to the co-ordination of the various inputs and policy components. This can be achieved through strong investment in capacity building and the creation of a supportive institutional framework.

2.4.3 *Available pathways to introduce policy and process change*

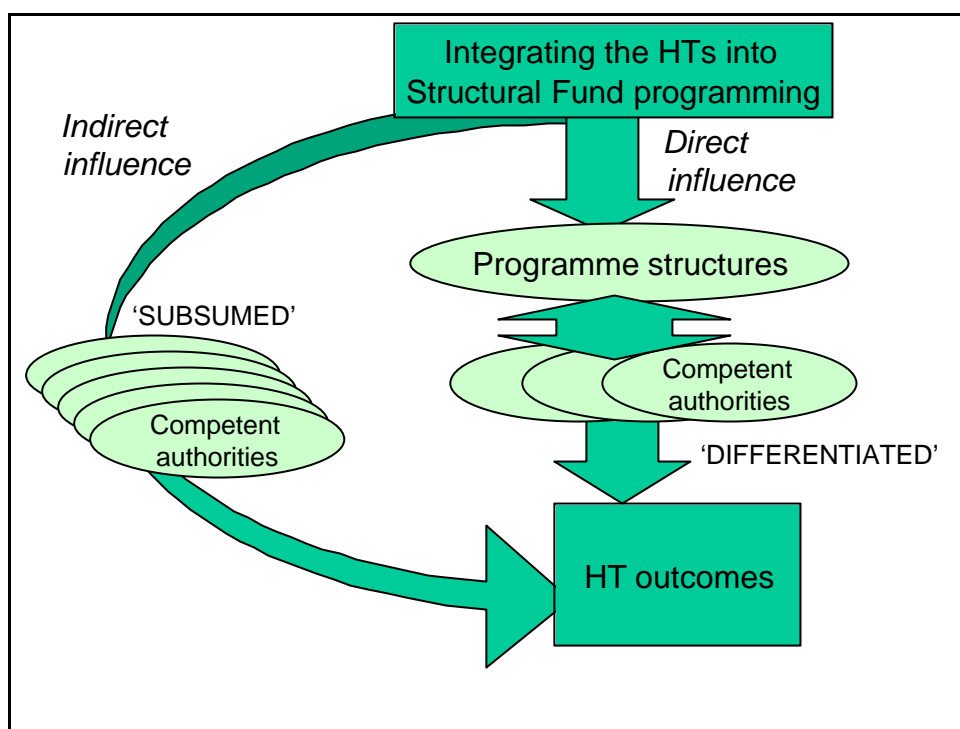
With gender and environmental mainstreaming, the Structural Funds are being used as a catalyst to bring about changes in economic development practices. In different institutional and organisational contexts, different programmes have different channels open to bring about change. Recent research on the experiences of regions taking forward sustainable development approaches into Structural Fund programmes in the last programming round identified various methods for integrating new ideas and approaches by using the idea of 'pathways':⁸

- building capacity among stakeholders;
- adapting programme management tools and instruments;
- identifying and filling gaps in current and future programmes; and
- mobilising political support for a new focus to economic development.

This framework can be elaborated with reference to previous IQ-Net work which has suggested that the overall institutional and operational configuration of Structural Fund programming in different Member States profoundly shapes the potential and limits of their ability to influence wider economic development practices (see Figure 2.2). In so-called *subsumed* systems (those where competent authorities manage allocations of the Structural Funds largely independently and where the programme has little profile in its own right), competent agencies each manage their own area of discrete competence, and there is little scope for a collective Structural Fund forum to influence their activities. A programme manager in this environment can require thematic monitoring information and the use of appropriate selection criteria, but direct influence extends little beyond that. Indirect available routes to influence might include seeking to persuade competent authorities of the merits of mainstreaming the HTs through open-ended non-prescriptive debate, winning high-level political endorsement for relevant issues, or disseminating the practices of agencies embracing the ideas imaginatively. In *differentiated* programmes, in contrast, there may be more opportunities for more direct influence over the way that involved actors pursue relevant issues, including through collective discussion and debate, and shared decision-making. In addition, programme managers are more likely to have control over decisions on programme indicator systems, selection criteria and project reporting.

⁸ Moss T and Fichter H (2000) *Regional Pathways to Sustainability*, DG Research, Brussels, Commission of the European Communities, p13.

Figure 2.2: Direct and indirect routes to cascading the HTs through programmes



3. EVOLUTION OF THE HORIZONTAL THEMES IN STRUCTURAL FUND PROGRAMMES

3.1 The emergence of ES and EO as horizontal themes in the EU

The mainstreaming approach for environmental sustainability and equal opportunities in the Structural Funds has emerged from a global debate on the two themes over the past two decades. Many key developments have taken place outside the EU and, indeed, much of the original impetus for translating the themes into policy actions lay with international initiatives, such as those overseen by the United Nations. To understand how the approach to the horizontal themes has been defined within the EU, it is useful to review the key conceptual steps in terms of the landmark reports and legislative milestones that preceded the 'trickling down' of the themes into EU policy areas.

One way to view this is as a process that proceeds from the initial commitment to the themes to taking practical steps to ensure the themes are applied in everyday aspects of policy. There has been a similar progression for both themes. It began with an increasing consensus on the relevance and definition of the themes, moving through their initial embedding in international and national regulatory frameworks, developing through the use of dedicated resources to promote the themes in policy (such as expert advisers and specialist agencies), and finally into their permeation into individual policies through positive action and mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming the themes in the Objective 2 programmes has followed a similar pattern. In dealing with the historical backgrounds of these themes in the Structural Funds, the sections below broadly trace this pattern in the following way: there are separate discussions of the origins of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities as policy issues in the EU, then, a more detailed account is given of how they came to be adopted within the Structural Funds. The current requirements for mainstreaming the horizontal themes are discussed more fully in a later section.

3.1.1 *The rising prominence of environmental sustainability*

The horizontal theme of environmental sustainability emerged from a wider global debate on sustainable development. The impetus in the EU for the integration of environmental protection and economic development – and its wider espousal of sustainable development – came from international initiatives which set the framework for EU action.

The seminal event was the call made by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)⁹ in 1987 for a global effort to integrate economic development and environmental protection. *Our Common Future* - the WCED report often referred to as the 'Brundtland Report' - urged that the major economic and sectoral agencies of governments should be made directly responsible and fully accountable for ensuring that their policies, programmes and budgets supported ecologically *and* economically sustainable development. Going beyond the conventional view of environmental policy, the WCED stressed that it was not simply a matter of environmental agencies implementing their own policies, but of other sectoral specialists recognising the environmental dimension within their work. This idea of environmental integration was taken further at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. From a sustainable development perspective, the programme of the resulting 'Agenda 21' addressed the integration of environment and development in decision-making, particularly at the strategic level of policy, planning and management.¹⁰ Adopting a long-term perspective and cross-sectoral approach, the programme called upon countries to ensure a three-way integration into decision-making at all levels and in all areas of government based on *economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection*. Further impetus was given by the debate associated with the Kyoto Treaty and the ambitions of the EU to ratify the Protocol by 2002.

Translating international and domestic sustainability commitments into the European policy environment, a succession of policy initiatives was launched from the 1980s onwards. In particular, the EU Environmental Action Programmes helped to introduce the concept of environmental integration into EU policy areas.¹¹ Whilst acknowledging sustainable development as an essential component of economic growth, the Third Environmental Action

⁹ World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *op. cit.*

¹⁰ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) *Agenda 21: The United Nations Programme of Action from Rio*, UN, New York.

¹¹ Johnson S and Corcelle G (1995) *The Environmental Policy of the European Communities*, Second Edition, Kluwer Law International, The Hague.

Programme (1982-86) called for a strategy to integrate environmental policy with socio-economic development, while the Fourth Environmental Action Programme (1987-92) further developed the theme of integration by advancing the idea of environmental responsibility. In 1993, the European Commission adopted *Towards Sustainability*, the Fifth Environmental Action Programme for the period 1993-2000. This represented a fundamental shift in outlook from earlier programmes by taking a holistic view of issues, reflecting the wider aims of sustainable development and integrating environmental concerns into the social and economic dimensions of policy. The programme considerably broadened the existing approach by requiring the integration of environmental concerns into all other areas of activity, including economic development processes supported by EC financial support mechanisms.¹²

The most recent development was the adoption of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme by the Gothenburg European Council, specifying the guidelines for environmental work within the EU over the next ten years. Apart from specifying priority areas for future action, the programme moves towards clearer specification of its strategic objectives and, crucially, the need to define measurable goals and timetables in areas such as land use, the urban environment and resource use.

Alongside the periodic action plans, two important elements of European policy in this area should be noted.¹³ First, the basic treaties of the EU were amended, initially in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which added further environmental objectives into the Treaty of Rome, stating that “*environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of other Community policies*”. The Treaty of Amsterdam in 1998 went further by adopting the threefold definition of sustainable development and stating that the Union’s financial instruments were required to work, simultaneously and in the long-term interest, towards economic growth, social cohesion and the protection of the environment. (Similarly, in the case of equal opportunities, equality for men and women was described as a basic democratic principle underpinned by the Treaty.)

Second, environmental integration has been regularly addressed at the summit meetings of the European Council. Beginning with an agreement to develop a structured reporting system on the issues at the Luxembourg Council in December 1997, subsequent councils have progressively considered environmental integration strategies in sectoral policies, environmental appraisal as part of policy development and the mainstreaming of environmental policies. At the most recent, Gothenburg Council (July 2001), the summit adopted a Sustainable Development Strategy, elevating ecological issues onto a par with social and economic aspects in the drafting of all future policies.

¹² CEC (1995) Progress Report on *Towards Sustainability*, COM(95) 624 final, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels; also CEC (1993) *Towards Sustainability - A European Community Programme of Policy and Action in Relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development*, Official Journal No C138, 17 May 1993, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels.

¹³ Clement K (2000) *Economic Development and Environmental Gain*, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London, pp.30-58.

With this gradual incorporation of new political priorities into policy, the themes have filtered through to the Structural Funds, with increasing requirements set out by each successive round of new Structural Fund regulations, as detailed below. A further significant driver in prompting stronger content in the Structural Fund regulations and increased follow-through into programmes has been critical evaluation and assessment undertaken by independent evaluators and EC auditors. In particular, the development of increased regulatory requirements was prompted by a series of reports that consistently revealed inadequate consideration of the environment in the Structural Funds. Following critical, independent reviews of Structural Funds and the environment,¹⁴ the European Court of Auditors published a report in 1992 that found little evidence to support any claims of environmental conformity within the Structural Funds.¹⁵ Further insight was provided by the 1996 Interim Review of the Fifth Environmental Action Programme which noted that, while there had been progress on the integration of environmental approaches both within the Community and individual Member States, sustainable development was still seen as the business of those who dealt directly with the environment.¹⁶ The ramifications of these criticism were felt in the regulations adopted for the new rounds of Structural Fund programming, as described later in this section.

3.2 The three-phase evolution of equal opportunities policy

As with environmental sustainability, the increasing emphasis on equal opportunities in the EU was partly driven by policy developments at a global level. Over time, the significance of gender issues has grown in the EU, to the extent that the European Council in Essen (December 1994) declared that the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men was a key priority of the EU and the Member States, on a par with the struggle against unemployment. While the significance of this area has grown, the methods through which objectives have been pursued have diversified.

Policy for equal opportunities evolved incrementally over the latter half of the twentieth century, responding to changes in society and the economy and the demands of the women's movement. In addition to reflecting changes in the wider environment, the responses of the Community have been determined by its own learning curve and the preoccupations of Member States. From the 1970s onwards, countries with more active positions on equal opportunities have pushed for other members to meet their own standards for economic and social justice reasons, via the conduit of Community resolutions and directives. Most recently, the accession of Nordic states, with their more

¹⁴ Baldock D and Corrie, H (1989) *The EC Structural Funds: Environmental Briefing*, Institute for European Environmental Policy, London. Also Baldock D and Wenning M (1990) *The EC Structural Funds: Environmental Briefing 2*, Institute for European Environmental Policy, London

¹⁵ CEC (1992) *Court of Auditors Special Report No.3/92* concerning the Environment together with the Commission's replies, Official Journal No C 245, 23 September 1992, commission of the European Communities, Brussels.

¹⁶ Clement K and Bachtler J (2000) 'European perspectives on the integration of environmental protection and economic development', in A Gouldson and P Roberts (Eds.) *Integrating Environment and Economy*, Routledge, London, pp.25-38.

sophisticated and integrated approaches to gender issues, has promoted the issue further among a wider group of Member States.

The Community's involvement in gender issues formally began with policies for equal *treatment*, particularly in an economic context, before extending to the active pursuit of equal *opportunity*. The starting point for equal opportunities in the Community is Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, providing for equal pay for equal work. The subsequent expansion of the Community's involvement in gender issues has several aspects, which have developed incrementally.

First, a set of consistent legal provisions has gradually accumulated. In this first phase of activity, legal frameworks were imperative in setting the ground rules, but were not – and indeed, could not be – sufficient to deliver equal outcomes. Overall, their influence has been limited, as seen in their failure to close the gap between average male and female incomes which persists largely because of continuing gender differentiation between occupations and the difficulty in demonstrating the 'equivalence' of different types of work (and thus, of their resultant remuneration).

Second, because gender has persisted as "the most significant determinant of occupational life-chances",¹⁷ there has been a need to go beyond passive (legal) provisions to pro-active measures: positive action and positive discrimination. Since the 1980s, this second phase of action has seen the EU supplement the legislative framework with specific programmes to promote equality in practice. These initiatives include the Community's Action Programmes, launched in 1982, and the *NOW* element of the Employment Community Initiative, which began in 1991. Although with limited resources, these initiatives are considered by the Commission to have had 'a substantial knock-on effect, particularly by stimulating further action in the individual Member States'.¹⁸

Positive action can make an important contribution, either through stand-alone measures or as part of wider programmes, but the approach does have limitations. As a result, the need for gender awareness across all institutions and interventions led to the third phase of EU action – the movement for '*gender mainstreaming*'. This concept, which is central to the EU's current policy for equal opportunities, was originally given formal expression at the UN Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in 1985 and then explicitly endorsed at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 where a Platform for Action was formally adopted. In response to the Platform for Action, a sustained effort has been made progressively to integrate gender mainstreaming into policies for both the developing and the developed world.

The EU has joined this endeavour, promoted by political support at the highest levels,¹⁹ pursuing the principle through its Medium-Term Community Action

¹⁷ Rees T (1998) *Mainstreaming Equality in the European Union*, Routledge, London.

¹⁸ CEC (1996) *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union*, Annual Report 1996, Office For Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

¹⁹ Council of Europe (1998) *Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices*, EG-S-MS (98) 2, Strasbourg.

Programmes for Men and Women. The Fourth Action Programme (1996-2000) sought to ensure that an awareness of equal opportunities became an integral part of all the Community's economic and social policies, including the Structural Funds, in order to achieve the maximum number of women in employment and to upgrade their contribution to economic, social and public life. Supporting this effort, a Communication on mainstreaming adopted in February 1996²⁰ took stock of progress and made suggestions for future priority areas for action. This has been further reinforced by the recent Community Framework Strategy of Gender Equality covering the 2001-05 period and the continuing presence of equal opportunities as a Community Initiative theme in the current programming round.

For both equal opportunities and the environment, development has culminated with the Commission's guidelines for the 2000-06 programmes,²¹ emphasising the importance of incorporating the two horizontal priorities thoroughly into all Structural Fund measures. The guidelines restate the commitment made in the Amsterdam Treaty and at the European Council in Vienna that environmental considerations, and in particular compliance with community environmental and nature protection legislation, must be incorporated into the definition and implementation of measures supported by the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund. In addition, the guidelines state that the incorporation of equal opportunities principles into all policies is no longer an option but an *obligation*, and that an overall mainstreaming approach for equal opportunities must be introduced into all Structural Funds programming. A fuller discussion of the new regulations and guidelines is given in a later section, following a brief history of how the themes have been adopted specifically within the Structural Funds.

3.3 Environmental sustainability and equal opportunities in the Structural Funds

3.3.1 1989-93 programmes

The first introduction of the HTs in the Structural Funds took place in 1988. The 1988 Structural Fund regulations incorporated a requirement for environmental appraisal of the Structural Funds but they did not make specific reference to equal opportunities.

In the 1989-93 programming period, there was a requirement for programmes to adhere to and comply with environmental regulations, although as a whole, environmental issues were not prominent. In particular, ideas of 'sustainable development' had not yet been integrated: programmes were perceived as economic and social strategies with limited environmental aspects. Consequently, job creation and economic development took precedence over environmental protection. Few programmes integrated the environment in the

²⁰ CEC (1996) *Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into all Community Policies and Activities*, Commission of the European Communities, COM (96) 67 final of 21.2.96, Brussels.

²¹ DG Regio (1999) *The Structural Funds and their Coordination with the Cohesion Fund: Guidelines for Programmes in the Period 2000-06*, Communication of the Commission of the European Communities, Brussels.

sense of using its protection or improvement as a development objective. The Commission reacted with concern, noting as early as 1990 that:

“On the one hand, there [was] a severe backlog of problems to be remedied, while on the other there [was] a risk that development measures financed by the Funds [would] aggravate the pressure on the environment (creating precisely the kind of problem that other funds [were] seeking to remedy).”²²

Where programmes did address environmental issues, it generally occurred either within infrastructure programmes (where the level of integration varied substantially)²³ or in contexts where environmental protection issues were already a part of day-to-day national and regional development processes, as in Denmark.²⁴ Moreover, the Commission had no legal grounds for requiring more active programme-level responses to their environmental concerns.

The equality picture was even less advanced at this stage. The 1988 Structural Fund regulations made no specific reference to equal opportunities, except in the sense of this being an area of legislation with which to comply, nor was gender mainstreaming yet an official policy dimension of Structural Fund programming. Dedicated, mainly ESF-financed, programmes did emerge in response to identified issues with the objective of undertaking positive action to create or facilitate opportunities for women and other disadvantaged groups. However, Objective 2 programmes themselves did not contain a systematic equal opportunities dimension, either in terms of the regional analysis they undertook or their resultant policy and project responses.

3.3.2 1994-99 programmes

The 1994-99 Structural Fund regulations placed greater emphasis on both themes. They recognised a need to respond to environmental issues in undertaking economic development and strengthened their provisions for equal opportunity issues to be given greater consideration. In both cases, this led to more pronounced - but still modest - responses in the programmes due to be launched in 1994. Objective 2 +programmes, however, were in the unique position of having two, three-year programming phases, allowing a progressive development of the approach to the two themes to evolve over the whole period.

Turning first to the environment, provisions were significantly strengthened in the 1994-99 Structural Fund regulations. In preparing Regional Development Plans or Single Programming Documents, Member States were obliged to meet four obligations:

- to prepare an assessment of the environmental situation of the region concerned;

²² CEC (1990) *Annual Review of the Structural Funds*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

²³ Woodford J (1991) *Conflict or Convergence? Environmental Priorities and the Structural Funds* Environmental Policy Discussion Paper No.1, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

²⁴ Bachtler J and Taylor S (1999) *Objective 2: Experiences, Lessons and Policy Implications*, report to DG XVI of the European Commission, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

- to evaluate the environmental impact of the strategy in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and in agreement with the provisions of Community law in force;
- to make arrangements to associate the competent environmental authorities designated by the Member State in the preparation and implementation of the operations foreseen in the plan; and
- to ensure compliance with Community policy and legislation concerning the environment.

The 1994-96 Objective 2 programmes showed improvements in integrating environmental concerns (although not yet under the heading of a sustainable development approach). As required by the new regulations, SPDs examined the state of the environment, reporting, environmental impact, environmental gain and environmental integration. Nonetheless, the level of effective integration of the issue and of impact assessment remained low. The focus of environmental aspects was on the environment *per se* rather than on sustainable development in its broader sense. The majority of the SPDs included environmental profiles, and while programmes made considerable progress with the identification of impacts, there was a tendency to focus primarily on environmental measures. Most programmes approached the environment from a horizontal perspective, with environmental issues appearing within sub-strategies or within priorities and strategic objectives.

In addition, the Structural Fund regulations made the pursuit of equal opportunities outcomes an explicit goal to which *all* structural measures should contribute.²⁵ The Community became responsible for ensuring that equal opportunities was developed as an integral part of all Structural Fund programmes. The references were stronger for the ESF, with Article 1 of the ESF's regulation requiring the Member States and the European Commission "to ensure that operations under the different objectives respect the principle of equal treatment for men and women". In addition, the positive action programme *NOW* was renewed as a separate and specific initiative²⁶ following strong lobbying and a positive appraisal of its achievements.

Although some progress was made under the Objective 1 and 3 programmes, active integration of equal opportunities was slow to develop, and remained a limited element of Objective 2 programmes, especially during the first half of the programming period (1994-96), where the gender-oriented equal opportunities elements largely consisted of standard clauses concerning respect for relevant legal frameworks (this even though most SPD economic analyses identified a *need* for specific equality and inclusion-driven interventions and for wider awareness of the distributional impacts of interventions).

For Objective 2, Community guidance was issued to support the development of the revised 1997-99 programmes, which addressed the environment and

²⁵ Regulation 2081/93 (OJ No L 193, 31.7.93, p5), Regulation 2082/93 (OJ No L 193, 31.7.93, p20), Regulation 2083/93 (OJ No L 193, 31.7.93, p34), Regulation 2084/93 (OJ No L 193, 31.7.93, p39) and Regulation 2085/93 (OJ No L 193, 31.7.93 p44).

²⁶ CEC (1994) *The Future of Community Initiatives under the Structural Funds*, COM(94)46 final, Brussels, 16/3/94.

equality specifically, providing a much stronger steer. In response to the low level of effective integration and impact assessment in the second programming period, the Commission issued notes for guidance for Objective 2 regions in the third phase of programming (1997-1999), and these notes specifically listed 'Environment and Sustainable Development' amongst the new priorities. Acknowledging that the complementary nature of the environment and regional development was increasingly being recognised, the guidance stated that the horizontal character of the environment needed to be borne in mind in the definition and implementation of other Community policies and especially in Structural Fund programmes.

For equal opportunities policy, attention was drawn to the Structural Fund-related advice contained in the 1996 Council resolution on mainstreaming.²⁷ The role of the Structural Funds in equal opportunities policy was to "reduce inequality of opportunities between men and women with regard to the rate of employment, the level of training, access to the labour market and involvement in the decision-making process".²⁸ The Commission's guidance note on reprogramming priorities was supplemented or reinforced by specific input from designated desk officers during the programme preparation phase, as well as, in some cases (eg. France), further formal advice issued by national authorities.

With respect to equal opportunities issues, the drafting of the 1997-99 Objective 2 programmes provided the opportunity for a major step forward. While the Commission's strengthened requirements resulted in many programmes placing more explicit emphasis on the theme, responses overall were limited, with only 16 out of 73 programmes taking full account of the guidelines according to Commission analysis,²⁹ and many responses appearing superficial or 'tokenistic'. The main responses comprised: statements of general compliance with equal opportunities legislation (as previously); the inclusion of more gender-disaggregated statistics and (less often) analysis in the regional profile; and some programme objectives relating to gender outcomes or equality of access to opportunity. In addition, many programmes invited 'positive action' projects to address identified imbalances, targeted at women, but forming integral parts of general measures.

3.3.3 2000-06 programmes

The progressive developments described above set the context for a more interventionist approach towards the two themes by the Commission for the 2000-06 programming period. The 1999 Structural Fund Regulations further strengthened the requirements for the inclusion of the two horizontal themes in programmes, making them more systematic and extensive (see Table 3.1). HT integration is now articulated around a comprehensive framework, where the horizontal themes feature under most of the main headings addressed by the

²⁷ CEC (1996a) *op. cit.* p1.

²⁸ CEC (1996b) *Resolution on mainstreaming equal opportunities of men and women into the European Structural Funds*, Official Journal C 386, 2.12.1996, p1.

²⁹ Wulf-Mathies M (1998) *Information Note from Mrs Wulf-Mathies to the Members of the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and Women's Rights*, DG XVI, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 24.2.98.

Regulations. The two themes are mostly dealt with in parallel, with requirements relating to: programme preparation, content, monitoring, evaluation and information. The *Vademecum* and other Commission Working Papers and Technical Documents specify further the regulatory requirements and suggest methods for compliance. A summary of the main HT-related requirements in the current regulatory framework is provided in the table below. The impact of the increased regulatory requirements on current Objective 2 programmes and the extent to which they are responding to the advocated integration of the HTs is addressed in the following section.

Table 3.1 Regulatory requirements for the horizontal themes

HT Regulatory References/Requirements Council Regulation 1260/1999	Environmental Sustainability	Equal Opportunities
General reference to the fact that in the “efforts to strengthen economic and social cohesion the Community also seeks to promote the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities , a high level of employment, equality between men and women and a high level of protection and improvement of the environment ; ... efforts should in particular integrate the requirements of environmental protection into the design and implementation of the operation of the Structural Funds and help to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women ... ”		
Partnership (art 8)	The need to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental protection and improvement requirements should be taken into account in designating partners for programme development. The <i>Vademecum</i> reinforces this stating that authorities responsible for the environment should be included (p. 34).	The need to promote equality between men and women should be taken into account in designating partners for programme development. The <i>Vademecum</i> reinforces this stating that authorities responsible for the promotion of equality between women and men should be included (p 34).
Compatibility (art 12)	Operations supported by the Funds shall conform with environmental protection policies and actions.	Operations supported by the Funds shall conform with policies for the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of equality between men and women.
Content of programmes (art. 16)	Description of an appropriate strategy and priorities selected for sustainable development and conversion of regions and areas. The <i>Vademecum</i> states that the programmes should indicate the extent to which the strategy takes into account environmental conditions, the integration of environmental requirements and compliance with Community environmental policy and instruments (<i>Vademecum</i> p. 30).	<i>The Vademecum</i> states that programmes should indicate the extent to which the strategy takes into account the integration of women and men into the labour market (<i>Vademecum</i> p.30).
SPD content (art. 19)	An evaluation of the expected impact, including on the environmental situation, should be included in the SPDs. Description of the current situation should include a detailed description of the environmental conditions in the region(s) concerned, its main strengths and weaknesses and arrangements for integrating environmental dimensions into the assistance in order to ensure compliance with Community rules (<i>Vademecum</i> p. 29).	Description of the current situation should include an assessment of the situation in terms of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities, including the specific constraints on each group (<i>Vademecum</i> p. 29).

HT Regulatory References/Requirements Council Regulation 1260/1999	Environmental Sustainability	Equal Opportunities
Differentiation of rates of contributions (Art 29)	The Funds contribution shall be differentiated according to the Commission's view of the importance and relevance of the assistance to the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of equal opportunities and for the protection and improvement of the environment, mainly through the precautionary principles of preventive action and polluter pays.	
Monitoring (art. 35-36)	The indicators shall relate to the specific character of the assistance concerned, its objectives and the socio-economic, structural and environmental situation of the Member State concerned and its regions.	Balanced representation on the Monitoring Committee between women and men is required.
<i>Ex ante</i> evaluation (art. 41)	<p>Environment must be taken into account, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ an <i>ex-ante</i> evaluation of the environmental situation of the region concerned, in particular of sectors of the environment which are likely to be considerably affected by the assistance; ➤ the arrangements to integrate the environmental dimension into the assistance and how they fit with existing short- and long-term national, regional and local objectives (eg. environmental management plans); ➤ the arrangements for ensuring compliance with Community rules on the environment. <p>The <i>ex-ante</i> evaluation shall give a description, quantified as far as possible, of the existing environmental situation and an estimate of the expected impact of the strategy and assistance on the environment.</p> <p>The <i>Vademecum</i> also specifies this, p. 32.</p>	<p>Equality between men and women must be taken into account, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ an <i>ex-ante</i> evaluation of levels of equality between men and women, especially with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work and the specific constraints on each group; ➤ an estimate of the expected impact of the strategy and assistance, particularly on the integration of women and men into the labour market, education and vocational training, women in business and the reconciliation of family and working life. <p>The <i>Vademecum</i> also specifies this, p. 32.</p>
Mid-term evaluation (art. 42)	Mirrors the approach of the <i>ex ante</i> .	Mirrors the approach of the <i>ex ante</i> .
Information and publicity (art. 46)		The Managing Authority is responsible of informing potential final beneficiaries, trade and professional bodies, the economic and social partners, bodies promoting equality between men and women and the relevant non-governmental organisations about the opportunities afforded by the assistance.

4. HORIZONTAL THEMES: STRATEGIC RESPONSES

4.1 The horizontal themes in 2000-06: overall approach

As previously reported,³⁰ for the 2000-06 programming period, the European Commission emphasised the importance of mainstreaming the horizontal themes, in particular environmental sustainability and equal opportunities. The recommended approach was that support for these themes should not be restricted to particular parts of programmes (eg. specific priorities and measures) but should be mainstreamed. As noted elsewhere in the paper, the new programmes have shown marked progress towards integrating the themes. The present section will present and discuss the approaches adopted.

Prior to this review, two points are worth highlighting. First, the Commission guidelines encouraged progressive integration of the themes into programmes: consequently, while few programmes have fully mainstreamed the horizontal themes, the vast majority have taken steps to integrate them more fully into their approach to programming. Programme managers have regarded their adoption of the themes as an incremental process in which the current programming round is a further staging point rather than a final destination.

Second, in reviewing the approach to integrating the themes presented in the programming documents, a distinction should be made between what is described in the programmes and how the themes are eventually implemented. Programme documents which give little obvious attention to the themes may conceal highly active approaches in practical implementation. Conversely, a detailed account in the programmes of how the horizontal themes will be pursued matters little if there are not the political commitment and administrative processes to follow through.

Two approaches can be used to review the integration of the horizontal themes. The first is to examine the way in which the themes have been interpreted and their prominence in relevant documents (including the relative emphasis on individual themes). The second is to consider how these themes are taken forward into policy, especially the extent to which programmes favour mainstreaming and/or positive action.

4.1.1 Emphasis on horizontal themes

Although programmes vary significantly in how they deal with the horizontal themes, there is broad agreement on how each of the themes should be defined. Such common interpretations can be attributed to a range of factors: centralised guidance from the Commission; a convergence of national policy approaches dealing with each theme; and the practical limitations of promoting the themes through the Structural Funds (as will become clear in later sections). They reflect a wider, shared policy environment affecting all programmes, which has reinforced the similarity of their starting points if not the pathways chosen by policy-makers.

³⁰ Bachtler J and Michie R (2001) *Programme Review November 2000 - May 2001*, IQ-Net Paper 10(1), May 2001, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

For most programmes, *sustainable development* tends to be equated with environmental sustainability, a scope suggested by the detail of the 2000-06 Regulations and the Commission's own Guidance. Where the themes have been explored in the SPDs, programmes have stressed the environmental component of the three dimensions of sustainable development: a commitment to economic growth; a consideration of social cohesion and quality of life concerns; and, a determination to ensure environmental sustainability. As the table below shows, working definitions of the theme have a common focus on environmental protection and the sustainability of natural resources. There are, though, notable differences in the scope of activity. Some programmes concentrate on limiting the environmental damage caused by the programmes (such as *País Vasco* in Spain) while others take a more extensive view, encompassing non-physical environmental elements in the theme (as in *Satakunta*, where aspects of the 'cultural' environment are given attention).

Table 4.1: Defining the horizontal themes

Environmental Sustainability	
<i>Norra Norrland (Sweden)</i>	Promotion of environmental sustainability as a component in sustainable development
<i>País Vasco (Spain)</i>	Minimising the negative impacts of the programme on the region's environment
<i>Steiermark (Austria)</i>	Sustainability of natural resources in conjunction with cultural sustainability and sustainable development as achieved through integrated and cooperative regional development
<i>Toscana (Italy)</i>	Reducing the pressures on environmental resources while increasing the economic benefits of the region's environmental assets
<i>Satakunta (Finland)</i>	Improving the physical and cultural environment, enhancing environmental responsibility within businesses and communities, and encouraging the development of environmental technologies
<i>West of Scotland (UK)</i>	Environmental protection and enhancement as a key element of economic regeneration
Equal Opportunities	
<i>Denmark</i>	Supporting equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market
<i>East Wales (UK)</i>	Tackling barriers to equal access to education, training and employment based on gender, disability, ethnicity, language or culture
<i>Kempen/Antwerpen (Belgium)</i>	Labour market access for women and specific disadvantaged social groups (eg. asylum seekers)
<i>Niederösterreich (Austria)</i>	Improvement of equal opportunities and the socio-economic situation of women
<i>Norra (Sweden)</i>	Supporting the creation of a society in which women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities, as well as equal opportunities for ethnic minorities
<i>Saarland (Germany)</i>	Equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market

In addition to following the letter of the Commission's guidance, the emphasis on environmental sustainability can be explained by several factors. In part, it results from what might be called 'conceptual drag', where policy-makers retain much of earlier approaches to highlighting environmental issues within the programme, or from situations where sustainable development in its wider sense has not been embraced by the wider policy community. Environmental sustainability is also an easier concept to convey to project developers and managers who must ultimately comply with new thematic criteria. However, in a number of cases, it has been a deliberate decision about how to promote sustainable development. Many regions would argue that the other two components of sustainable development - economic growth and social cohesion - are already addressed within the programmes; what receives insufficient attention is environmental sustainability. In consequence, programmes often use the theme as an additional, cross-cutting priority within the strategies, filling a gap within the programming approach.

Not all the programmes have taken this stance. Some have adopted a more comprehensive approach to sustainable development. For example, in *Flanders*, sustainable development is regarded as consisting of the protection of the environment, the more efficient use of natural resources *and* social development. In the *East of Scotland*, all three aspects of sustainable development are emphasised, so much so that equal opportunities can be considered as part of, rather than parallel to, the theme.

More similarities tend to be found in the ways in which *gender mainstreaming* is defined. For the most part, the theme has been interpreted as equal opportunities between men and women. This could be cast in wide-ranging terms (as in *Niederösterreich*, where it covers the general socio-economic situation of women) as well as with a more targeted emphasis (as in *Denmark*, where it is focused on labour market access, although equal opportunities are more widely embedded in Danish policy).

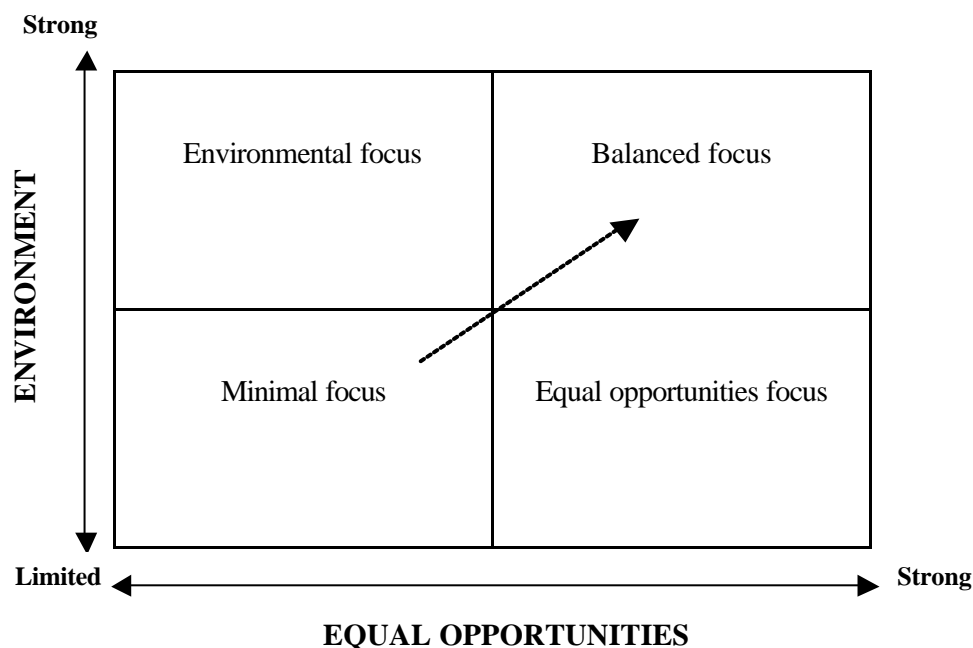
In some cases, the definition has been extended to include access by consistently and structurally disadvantaged groups. This is particularly evident in the UK, where programmes consider the equal opportunities of ethnic and disability groups as well. Similarly, *Norra* in Sweden includes integration of immigrants into the labour force as a key element of its approach.

Where differences between programmes – and, very often, countries as a whole – are more pronounced is in the emphasis placed on each theme within the programmes. The 'visibility' of the themes can be measured in several ways: the attention given to them in the background analysis; the prominence within the description of the strategy; and the existence of dedicated priorities, measures or selection criteria. These will be discussed below, but a broad indication of how the themes have been variously pursued can be explored using the following matrix (Figure 4.1). It shows four sets of approaches, depending on whether either or both themes have been rigorously integrated into the programmes:

- *balanced focus*: here, both themes appear to be actively integrated into the programmes with more or less equal weight;

- *environmental focus*: in this case, environmental sustainability is given considerably more attention than equal opportunities;
- *equal opportunities focus*: the opposite case, where the equal opportunities theme is promoted and environmental sustainability is limited;
- *minimal focus*: where neither theme has received significant attention in the programmes.

Figure 4.1: The visibility and balance between the horizontal themes



The Commission's own approach is expressed by the arrow within the matrix: continual reinforcement of both themes in the programmes to the extent to which this is appropriate in any specific context. However, only a handful of programmes can be characterised by a 'balanced focus' with strong emphasis given to both themes. One example is the *North East of England* in the UK, where both themes have dedicated sections in the background analysis and have been given equal weight in the criteria for project appraisal.

Most Objective 2 programmes can be classified as environmentally-focused, where the emphasis on environmental sustainability is prominent throughout the programming documents, but equal opportunities feature less explicitly. A typical example is *Lombardia* in Italy, where environmental sustainability is prominent in the programme's analysis and strategy, while the treatment of equal opportunities is more limited.

The lesser visibility of equal opportunities is highlighted by the fact that no programmes could be classified in the 'equal opportunities focus' box of the matrix. The majority of programmes give more attention to environmental sustainability for several reasons. First, equal opportunities has often been associated with other programmes, notably dedicated Community Initiatives and Objective 3, the latter because of the traditional concentration of relevant activity in training measures. Applying the theme to all types of Structural Fund measure is a novel concept for some regions. At the same time,

environmental sustainability issues have been longer associated with Objective 2 programming given the often considerable negative legacy of past industrial activity. The greater focus on the environment is evident both in its use as a criterion for assessing all projects as well as in 'ring-fencing' parts of the programme to support the theme (eg. dedicated measures).

4.1.2 *Emphasis on mainstreaming*

Apart from the emphasis placed on the different themes in the programmes, it is important to consider the extent to which they are fully mainstreamed. This can be difficult to define fully, as mainstreaming is more about an approach to programming, often embedded in a series of attitudes and practices, rather than a checklist of outputs. Moreover, as noted above, mainstreaming within the programmes should not necessarily be equated with regional or national commitment to mainstreaming in either the Structural Funds or the wider policy context, nor their commitment to the principles underlying the themes. For some regions, commitment to the themes is more adequately addressed by non-Structural Fund policies. Indeed, where they appear in the programmes, the preference may be for the use of dedicated, positive action at priority and measure levels rather than mainstreaming through the programmes as a whole. Moreover, some policy-makers consider that compliance with the themes may distract from what are seen as the fundamental economic and social development objectives of the Structural Funds, potentially resulting in diminished resources for those objectives and little impact on either environmental sustainability or equal opportunities.

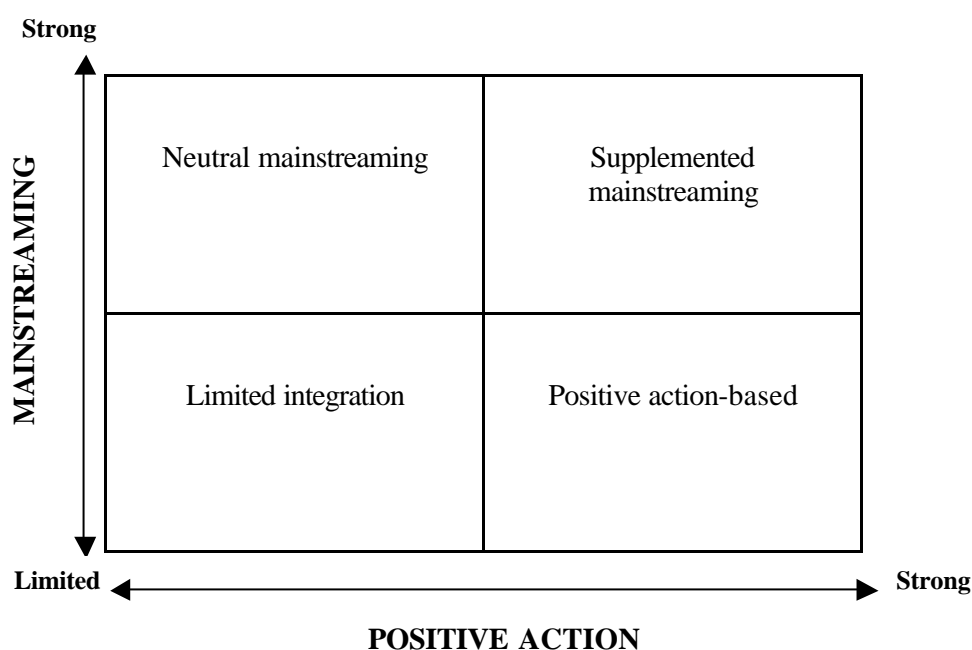
Nevertheless, the characteristics of highly mainstreamed approaches to the themes can be described. Where programmes have actively adopted mainstreaming, the programmes typically contain most of the following:

- a full analysis of the region's situation with regard to the themes, often in separate analytical sections;
- a clear strategic expression of how the themes will be integrated into the programmes, for example as separate cross-cutting themes or in specific priorities;
- special arrangements for project appraisal and selection, fully reflected in the attention to capacity building among programme actors and project applicants where required; and
- evidence that the issues have been taken into consideration in evaluation and monitoring systems.

While, as a whole, mainstreaming features more strongly in the 2000-06 programming period, this conceals a diversity of approaches across programmes. In particular, programmes display contrasting balances of mainstreaming (the application of the themes across programming as a whole) and positive action (the concentration of parts of the programmes on promoting the themes). Mainstreaming and positive action are complementary approaches and can be used to generate four different 'models', as shown in the matrix below (Figure 4.2). The different approaches can be characterised as follows:

- *'supplemented mainstreaming'*: in which the horizontal themes are mainstreamed throughout the programmes (eg. as core criteria in the appraisal of all projects) as well as the subjects of specific priorities and measures promoting them (eg. measures targeting women entrepreneurs and the use of energy-saving technologies by businesses);
- *'neutral mainstreaming'*: in this scenario, programmes have foregone the use of dedicated measures, often as a way of avoiding the themes being 'segregated' within particular parts of the programmes;
- *'positive-action-based'*: here, the themes are supported by special actions and mainstreaming does not take place, either for reasons of capacity (eg. where the ability to carry the themes through all aspects of programming needs to be a longer term goal) or by choice (eg. the themes better serve the programmes as components of the overall strategy rather than underlying principles); and
- *'limited integration'*: where the themes do not appear to be extensively integrated into the programmes in any fashion.

Figure 4.2: Relative focus of programmes on HT positive action or mainstreaming



Using this classification, a less clear pattern emerges for the overall approach to thematic mainstreaming by the programmes. While there are some regions pursuing 'neutral mainstreaming' and some where 'limited integration' is apparent, the majority of regions use a mixture of positive action and mainstreaming or positive action alone, especially with regard to environmental sustainability. The degree to which mainstreaming is favoured depends on a combination of different factors: the impact of the wider policy context; the scope for activity within the administrative arrangements for the Structural Funds; and, the individual commitment of programmes to undertake mainstreaming. It is worthwhile reviewing these in a little detail.

First, wider policy has an important influence setting the framework for activity. Clearly, a pro-active approach to the horizontal themes at national and regional levels is likely to be reflected in the integration of the themes within programmes. However, while this is the case in Sweden - where the pervasive importance of the themes is well recognised across the whole policy spectrum - this is less the case in Denmark, where policy-makers consider it less critical to mainstream the horizontal themes in the Structural Funds because they are so deeply embedded in the wider policy environment. Where Structural Fund mainstreaming has been particularly active, it can be linked to the scale of recent activity in the field of the horizontal themes rather than the historical importance of the themes. For example, in the UK, the government's pro-active stance in equal opportunities and sustainable development has had 'trickle-down' effects on the design and delivery of the Structural Funds.

The latter point suggests that the horizontal themes in the Structural Funds can have an experimental, and sometimes missionary role. This links with a second key factor affecting how mainstreaming is approached. Programmes are capable of adopting more comprehensive mainstreaming if such an approach is compatible with how the Structural Funds are organised in individual regions and countries. For secretariat-based systems - as in the UK and Sweden - it can be easier for programmes to develop distinctive and independent approaches to mainstreaming outside the limits of existing policy frameworks. Where the Structural Funds are implemented through existing government agencies and ministries, the interpretation of the themes will be more determined by *in situ* policy frameworks. For example, in Germany, the sectoral approach to administering the Structural Funds has meant that departmental policy approaches to the themes shape how they are addressed.

Lastly, the role of individual commitment should not be underestimated. The degree to which the themes are mainstreamed often reflects the individual priorities of key policy-makers or programme managers in each programme, or more commonly, an alliance of common interests by relevant agencies.

4.2 The horizontal themes in the 2000-06 programmes: programme components

As well as considering the overall approach of programmes to integrating the horizontal themes, it is worthwhile reviewing how they have been addressed in the different components of the programme documents. In mainstreaming the themes throughout the programmes, they have been given a higher profile in the key sections of SPDs and Programme Complements. The following section reviews how the themes have been treated in the contextual analysis, overall strategies and individual priorities and measures of the 2000-06 programmes.

4.2.1 Contextual analysis in programmes

Fundamental to policy actions to support the themes in the programmes is an understanding of the current situation of the regions in terms of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities. Nevertheless, the response to the analytical requirements of the horizontal themes has been mixed.

Environmental profiles have been an obligation in programmes for some time, but many were previously criticised as lacking in relevance to the programme they accompanied. The information provided, usually comprising a description of the quality of the environment in the relevant eligible area, was rarely linked explicitly to the programme and policies it accompanied. Moreover, descriptions largely concentrated on the state of the *physical* environment in the region – especially in terms of air and water quality, ecological conservation and reclamation of industrial land.

The quality of environmental profiles appears to have been significantly improved for the new programming period. For example, in Scotland, environmental profiles were prepared “which illustrated, as clearly as possible, the relationship between environmental issues and the main socio-economic aims of the programmes”.³¹ In particular, this was to address the perceived lack of wide understanding of the connection between environmental issues and economic development. While most profiles continue to interpret environmental sustainability in the narrower physical environment terms, there is increasing attention being given to other aspects of the theme, such as the use of environmental technologies and management systems by businesses (eg. *West Midlands*) and the sustainability of the cultural environment (eg. most Italian Objective 2 programmes), and these have been linked more explicitly to actions within the programmes. In a few cases, programmes also undertook Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments of the programme to ensure that the measures were unlikely to exacerbate environmental problems in the region (eg. *West of Scotland*).

Equal opportunities as a theme has received significantly less attention. Again, practices from earlier programmes have had a strong influence on the approach undertaken by many regions. With the traditional association of equal opportunities with ESF measures, the analysis of equal opportunities has typically been appended to the more general analysis of the labour market situation within the regions. Even here, the focus has tended to be on a handful of labour market measures (such as the gender composition of unemployment) rather than a fuller analysis of the causes of gender imbalances in employment (especially access issues such as childcare provision and transport). In some cases, a gender analysis of entrepreneurship is undertaken as well.

The relatively more limited attention given to equal opportunities in contextual analysis is partly related to data deficiencies. For most regions, apart from labour market and business ownership, there is little existing data available on gender differences in the regional economy. In other cases, the analysis is brief because of the perceived absence of significant problems in the thematic area: for example, *Niederösterreich* notes that the provision of childcare facilities – traditionally one of the key barriers to women’s access to the labour market – is strong in the region and consequently does not feature strongly in the programme. However, some programmes have given due attention to equal opportunities and provided separate sections to deal with the theme. One useful example is provided by the *North East of England* below.

³¹ *Structural Funds Projects: Final Report*, forthcoming, Scottish Natural Heritage, 2000.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES PROFILE IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND

Detailed profiles analysing the existing situation in the region with respect to equal opportunities and environmental sustainability are presented in the region's SPD. The profiles are substantial, consisting of the whole of the second volume of the SPD (the EO profile is some 70 pages long, the ES profile, 110 pages). Both were specially commissioned studies to be included within the programme. The EO profile was carried out by CURDS at the University of Newcastle with the following objectives: to present a description of the eligible area in terms of the theme; to set the policy and organisational context; and to assess the potential impacts of the programme.

The Equal Opportunities profile is unusual in the detail with which it sets the context for the theme in the region. It combines analysis of existing data with a desk review of research studies on different issues. The profile addresses the five main target groups under the region's interpretation of the horizontal theme: gender; ethnic minorities; disability; lone parents; and age (above 50 and under 25). Other groups are briefly covered where there is some data (eg. asylum seekers and refugee groups). For most groups, data limitations have restricted what kind of analysis can be conducted. For the most part, the profile concentrates on the relatively low levels of economic activity of the groups, drawing on information within the UK Labour Force Survey, in terms of: unemployment; employment; occupation (as a proxy for job quality); and skills and qualifications.

In addition, the analysis considers the aspirations of these groups and the impediments to those aspirations, placing the low levels of activity within context. Not surprisingly, the analysis by gender is more detailed, adding welfare dependency (in receipt of benefits), part-time employment, home-working, earnings levels (for full-time employment by sector and occupation), self employment and the gender composition of employment by sector.

4.2.2 Strategic responses in programmes

Many programmes use special, stand-alone sections to cover how the themes will be treated. These sections usually define the themes, reiterate the importance of their mainstreaming throughout the programme and, in some cases, demonstrate how the themes can be linked to different priorities (eg. in terms of types of activities which would be favoured under each measure in compliance with the themes). The quality of these sections varies, ranging from what appear to be sections designed to address Commission guidelines as a formality to rigorous examinations of how the themes underpin the strategy's priorities.

Another indicator of programme responsiveness is the degree to which regions are making strategic commitments in relation to the horizontal themes. More so than in previous programming periods, programmes from across the EU make reference to the horizontal themes at the level of the strategic objectives, as the list in the box below indicates. In the discussions of strategy, several SPDs have explicitly recognised that new thinking and fresh approaches are necessary, although as yet it is not clear whether commitments are more than presentational.

Table 4.2: Strategic objectives relating to the HTs

Environmental Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ to improve the tourist, cultural and environmental heritage of the region (<i>Lombardia</i>) ➤ to promote sustainable urban development (<i>Meuse-Vesdre</i>) ➤ to support an attractive living environment (<i>South Finland</i>) ➤ to decrease the factors which pose a potential environmental risk and improve access to parks and protected areas, and the recovery of degraded sites (<i>Toscana</i>) ➤ to protect and enhance the environment (<i>West of Scotland</i>)
Equal Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ to support employment creation, employability and equal opportunities (<i>Catalonia</i>) ➤ to work towards an equality of opportunity for all people in the region (<i>East of Scotland</i>) ➤ to create equal opportunities for women and men in work (<i>Nordrhein-Westfalen</i>) ➤ to address the disproportional labour market involvement of women (<i>Sachsen-Anhalt</i>) ➤ to promote equal opportunities (<i>West of Scotland</i>)

The varied interpretation of the horizontal themes is immediately evident from the above list: sustainable development is sometimes considered in broad terms (encompassing economic, social and environmental factors), but more usually the strategic objectives focus on environmental protection or improvement; social inclusion has both social and spatial elements; and, equal opportunities refers sometimes to women alone and sometimes to a broader concern with integrating disadvantaged groups into the labour market.

It is not always clear how the strategic discussion of the themes translates into action through the other parts of the strategy. A declaration of principle in favour of the themes is often not carried through explicitly into priorities, measures and targets. In some programmes, the importance of the themes is further enhanced by making them a cross-cutting priority. In only a few cases have targets been attached at strategy level for achievements under each theme. For example, in *Nordjylland*, two global goals are given with respect to equal opportunities:

- a reduction in the higher level of unemployment of women in relation to men to less than 30 percent; and
- a reduction in the number of women with no qualifications to less than six percent of the total number of women in the region.

4.2.3 Integration at priority and measure level

Below the strategic level, there is some action to address the horizontal themes through the priorities and measures. A small group of programmes has a

blanket commitment to consider equal opportunities and sustainable development in all aspects of the programmes. For example, in *Western Scotland*, all measures are required:

- “to reflect the commitment to mainstreaming of equal opportunities and include scope for positive action where capacity in the region is weak”; and
- “to develop opportunities or actions for environmental awareness-raising among SMEs”.

Other programmes present their commitments to the horizontal themes at priority level. For example, the *Rural Wallonia* programme undertakes to promote equal opportunities in all measures under the priority ‘investing in human resources’. In *Alsace*, the programme has explicit targets for equal opportunities in graduate recruitment and entrepreneurship for its priority ‘developing business and jobs’. The *Haute-Normandie* programme is one of several French programmes with an environment-related priority to give the theme more emphasis, an approach also found elsewhere: eg. *País Vasco*, with a priority dedicated to ‘Environment, natural heritage and water resources’; and *Lombardia* and *Toscana*, with a priority on the full exploitation of natural resources. For the most part, environmental sustainability is more likely to be encapsulated as a programme priority rather than equal opportunities, but there are examples, such as *Nordrhein-Westfalen* with the measure ‘Support for female employment’. At the same time, there are targets within more general priorities to support the horizontal themes – for example, in one of *South Finland*’s priorities (‘Increasing the attractiveness of South Finland, and the competitiveness of its enterprises’), one of the goals is to guarantee that 30 percent of new enterprises are founded by women.

More generally, the horizontal themes are addressed in certain measures of the programme only. The table below categorises the measures in programmes according to their relevance to each HT (total, partial, marginal, and not relevant). With respect to sustainability, leaving aside the ‘traditional’ measures relating to environmental improvement/protection (urban regeneration, land reclamation etc.), there appears to be an implicit assumption that many types of measure are not relevant to the goals of sustainable development. The main exception is in the field of business development where some programmes are promoting environmental awareness and the adoption of more sustainable business practices and technologies. For instance, *Bremen* and *Nordrhein-Westfalen* both have measures providing support for environmental technologies, and *Meuse-Vesdre* highlights the environment among the areas prioritised for networking of scientific and technological competence. In *Lombardia*, one measure aims to reduce the environmental impact of production processes by encouraging the adaptation of new emission- and waste-reducing technologies. Wider interpretations of the theme are rare, but are apparent in *Niederösterreich*, where the sustainability of the cultural environment (eg. cultural and architectural heritage) is the objective of one measure.

Table 4.3: Programme measures and their degree of relevance to the horizontal themes

	Environmental Sustainability Measures				Equal Opportunities Measures				Total	Predominance
	Total	Partial	Marginal	None	Total	Partial	Marginal	None		
Steiermark	1	7	2	8	0	3	6	9	18	Environment
Niederösterreich	3	11	0	6	0	0	1	19	20	Environment
Kempen/Antwerpen	1	3	0	7	0	2	0	9	11	Both limited
Denmark	0	3	0	4	0	2	0	5	7	Both limited
? land	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	2	Both limited
South Finland	1	5	0	4	0	2	0	8	10	Environment
Satakunta	1	6	0	2	0	3	0	6	9	Environment
Nordrhein Westfalen	2	5	1	16	1	9	1	13	24	Balanced – partial
Lombardia	6	9	0	5	0	1	0	19	20	Environment
Toscana	10	16	0	0	0	3	0	23	26	Environment
Pais Vasco	5	8	0	14	0	2	0	25	27	Environment
Norra Norrland	1	11	5	6	1	7	12	3	23	Balanced – extensive
Norra	0	4	0	1	0	0	5	0	5	Balanced – partial
East Wales	0	5	0	2	1	3	1	2	7	Balanced – partial
West of Scotland	0	8	0	0	2	6	0	0	8	Balanced - partial

The situation is similar in the case of equal opportunities. Again, there is no explicit reference to the theme of equal opportunities (or assumed application) among many measures. The exceptions tend to be in the fields of business development and human resources where there are either specific measures oriented towards improving female entrepreneurship rates or the position of women in the labour market, or women are identified as a particular ‘target group’ under more general measures:

- in *Alsace*, there is a research and professional training measure targeting young women particularly with technology training, and female trainees are a priority under two measures promoting business development in micro firms and training for the unemployed;
- obstacles to disadvantaged groups gaining access to the labour market are the focus of one of the measures in *Kempen/Antwerpen*, with particular reference to issues such as childcare provision;
- *Meuse-Vesdre* highlights women, the young and handicapped as targets for entrepreneurship training;
- *Nordrhein-Westfalen* is prioritising equal opportunities (and sustainable development) projects in the development of certain sectors of technology and skilled employment, and - along with *Sachsen-Anhalt*, which has

similar schemes - is providing dedicated support for female employment under two measures;

- *Steiermark* has a qualification measure for people threatened with labour market exclusion (one of the aims being to support the potential of female workers); and
- under the heading of business development, the *Toscana* programme has a measure targeting the creation of SMEs by young people and women.

5. DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

5.1 Conditions for integration of the HTs

The cross-cutting character of the horizontal themes demands two things for their successful integration: an ***holistic approach*** to socio-economic development and an ***ideological change*** of all actors involved (from policy-makers to the final recipients of policies). This makes great demands on all those involved in policy-making and implementation.

As discussed above, the integration of the HTs in the various stages of policy design and implementation is not always straightforward. No ready-made universal solutions are available to policy designers and implementers. The need to create tools and develop an interdisciplinary approach is among the major constraints which make HT integration so difficult. The HTs, moreover, present a crucial challenge: integrating the specific skills needed for each phase of programme implementation with the specialist skills required of the themes themselves. As pointed out by Liisa Horelli³² (on gender mainstreaming, although it is also applicable to environmental sustainability):

“gender mainstreaming requires at least three different types of knowledge: comprehension of concepts dealing with equality and gender, understanding of the specific area or sector in question (for instance labour or youth policy) plus the know-how of methodology consisting of analytic, envisioning and process tools”.

The innovative character of the HTs and their interdisciplinary (horizontal) character can be disaggregated into a set of conditions or necessary elements which would enable HT integration across policies and programmes. These relate to the actors involved and to the strategies that can or should be implemented. These are presented in the table below, which shows that the conditions apply to both actors and strategies.

³² Horelli L (1999) *Conditions and methods for mainstreaming gender equality in the Finnish Ministries – An extended case study for the mainstreaming project of the Nordic Council of Ministers*, Paper presented at the Women's Worlds 99: 7th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, Tromsø, Norway, June 20-26 1999.

Table 5.1: Conditions for HT integration across policies and programmes

Necessary elements	Actors	Strategies
Clarity	Common understanding of the meaning attached to the HTs across all actors involved is essential to deliver coherent policies	Clarity of the strategic focus and direction of policies is essential to deliver coherent policies and results
Relevance	HTs have to be perceived as relevant by the actors involved to favour pro-active approaches (ownership)	The relevance and status of HTs can be enhanced by targeted and well-thought out strategies
Visibility	HTs need to be perceived as integral parts of policy-making and yet, at the same time, as specific themes which need specific policies and tools	The visibility of HT strategies can be enhanced by effective communication
Accessibility	Information on the HTs has to be available to the subjects involved in policy-making and implementation and to the wider public to establish credibility and ownership of policy	
Integration		Integrated approaches to decision-making are necessary to deliver the mainstreamed approaches required by the HTs; this involves the inclusion of private stakeholders and public organisations in the process of policy-making and delivery
Coordination		Coordination of policies is needed to ensure that there are no overlaps or contrasting directions
Continuity		Long-term commitments and policies are needed to deliver real and sustainable results

Clearly, the two levels – subjective and objective - need to be in harmony: strategic choices which are not supported by an adequate subjective framework have little chance of being successfully implemented.

Achieving these specific conditions for the effective implementation and delivery of HT policies can be enhanced by capacity building, that is by a range activities undertaken to increase the awareness and the competences

related to the HTs, and by setting up adequate institutional frameworks. The sections that follow will explore these issues.

5.2 Building capacity

5.2.1 General versus targeted capacity building

Capacity-building activities can take several forms and involve various and different sets of targets. This section explores the theme of HT capacity building, investigating the forms it can take, why it should be considered an incremental process and why it is so crucial in enabling HT requirements to be met. A range of examples is provided in the text.

Perhaps the most basic differentiation among the different kinds of capacity building relates to the scope for activity and the subjects targeted. As described in Table 5.2, capacity-building activities – in relation to the horizontal themes - can be either general, ie. addressed to a whole group of actors and related to the broadest aspects of the HTs, or targeted, ie. addressed to specific target groups and on defined topics. The table compares these two types of capacity building in terms of their target groups, aims, advantages, disadvantages, suggested uses and form. General capacity building broadly aims at awareness raising, which in turn raises the profile of the HTs, giving them more visibility and credibility and clarifying their scope. Targeted capacity building is oriented towards the generation of adequate skills for those actively involved in HT delivery (ability).

Table 5.2: General versus targeted capacity building

	General Capacity Building (awareness)	Targeted Capacity Building (ability)
<i>Addressees</i>	Virtually everyone	Relevant target groups (eg. programme or measure managers, partners etc.)
<i>Aim</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overall awareness-raising about the HTs (meaning, rationale, relevance, tools) ➤ Accountability 	Generation of specific competences
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Can be used to generate shared values which will benefit the whole process of policy implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Can be targeted where it is most needed ✓ <i>Ad hoc</i> expertise can be built in the process ✓ Content can be calibrated and become more specific
<i>Disadvantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Can present high-costs and low effectiveness: needs careful planning and the use of tools similar to those of commercial advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Targeting also means excluding: it requires adequate thinking and justification
<i>Suggested use</i>	To sensitise, target groups, generate common understandings and create a shared culture	To address specific aspects of policy implementation
<i>Form</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ TV campaigns ➤ Press advertisements ➤ Web-sites ➤ Programme documentation ➤ General briefings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training seminars ➤ Interdisciplinary working groups ➤ Days of exchange ➤ Guidance notes

In theory, a combination of both types of capacity building would be beneficial to HT integration. However, the way in which capacity building activities for the HTs are planned and undertaken is influenced by a number of factors, including the status attached to the HTs, the budget available for capacity building, the sensitivity to HTs of those in charge of capacity building within programme managements, and the availability of HT experts.

An interesting example of an integrated combination of the two approaches in relation to the theme of environmental sustainability is a special 'environmental ranking list' included in the Objective 1 Operational Programme for Local Development in Italy as part of a major incentive to enterprises (law 488/1992) (see Box). The Managing Authority of the programme is planning an integrated intervention consisting of a communication strategy and training activity supported by environmental experts.

CAPACITY BUILDING USING A SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL RANKING LIST – THE ITALIAN OBJECTIVE 1 OP FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

In the framework of the Objective 1 Operational Programme for Local Development, the implementation mechanism of a traditional, national incentive scheme co-financed under the Structural Funds has been supplemented by the creation of a special ranking list for environmental projects.

The design of this new intervention was inspired by a study undertaken under the 1994-99 OP for Industry, which aimed to identify effective incentive mechanisms to support the environmental investments of firms. This study analysed firms' needs for environmental investments and highlighted the potential for intervention. The study and the results of the environmental *ex ante* evaluation led to the introduction of an environmental ranking list as a means to support enterprises wishing to introduce environmental innovation and improvements.

A technical working group - with participants from the Institute for Industrial Promotion (IPI – Technical Assistance to the OP), the Ministry of Productive Activities (Managing Authority of the OP), the Ministry of Environment (national environmental authority) and selected social and economic partners - identified implementation mechanisms, including targeted selection criteria and indicators.

The innovative character of the interventions led the Programme Secretariat to identify the need for *ad hoc* capacity building and promotion.

General promotional activity: the Communication Plan of the OP includes a specific set of interventions for the environmental ranking list. Promotional activity includes:

- General information to the public, ie. TV advertisements
- Publication of a guide on the intervention, including detailed guidance to project applicants on how to fill in application forms
- Local *ad hoc* promotional meetings across the six Objective 1 regions, where politicians and national civil servants present the intervention to potential applicants
- On-going support and advice provided by the local offices of the Institute for Industrial Promotion
- Information days dedicated to entrepreneurs, consultants and interested associations.

Specific capacity building: the officers of the Ministry of Productive Activity and of the banks involved in the process of project selection will be trained in:

- the themes of environmental sustainability and sustainable development;
- the methods for project appraisal; and
- the mechanism for the controls that will have to be undertaken of the projects funded.

This training activity will be done using experts in the areas.

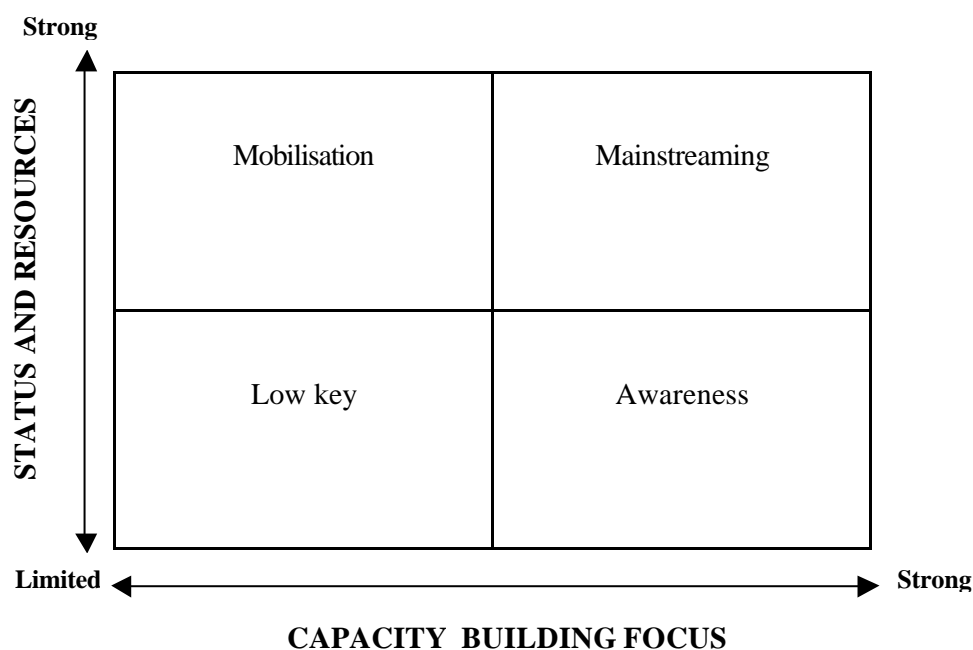
5.2.2 *An incremental process*

Developing capacity is an incremental process: action prompts perceptions of the need for more action. Often the initial push is exogenously driven. However, once the process of building capacity has started and a true understanding of the value of the HTs has been built, a virtuous circle can be activated which involves increased capacity building activity, more targeted and sophisticated approaches and increased effectiveness in translating theoretical HT integration into practice.

While a balance between general and targeted forms of capacity building activities is desirable, there is more likely to be oscillation between the two extremes. Theoretically, various stages of capacity-building activity for the HTs can be identified with regard to Structural Fund programmes (see Figure 5.1).

1. *Initial Stage: Low Key (low emphasis on the HTs).* In this phase, only minimal broad and non-targeted forms of capacity building are undertaken, often with a view to responding to the requirements provided by the legislation. An example of this stage is represented by the publication of programmes and evaluation reports, which also include elements related to the HTs. At this stage, the HTs are dealt with among a range of other subjects and not as individual issues. They are not a priority focus. In the diagram below, this stage is represented by the 'low key' quadrant.
2. *Second Stage: Increasing Awareness.* Again, under an external push, more effort is made internally by the programme management to develop the basic skills which enable programme managers to take the HTs on board. These increased efforts are still predominantly oriented towards compliance with regulatory requirements; however, HT-related capacity building becomes more focused and targeted and leads to the development of greater awareness and sensitivity by those in charge of their integration across the programme. It is at this stage that positive action is emphasised as a tool for HT integration (the 'awareness' quadrant in the diagram).
3. *Third Phase: Towards Mobilisation.* An increased awareness of HTs among programme managers makes them keen to do more. However, to 'do more' they need to build wider sensitivity to the HTs among other programme participants. HT-related capacity building becomes more intense and generalised (the 'mobilisation' quadrant).
4. *Fourth Phase: Towards Mainstreaming.* As general capacity building leads to increased awareness and acceptance of the HTs among a wider audience, there is stronger mobilisation leading to the possibility of investing in more targeted and sophisticated forms of HT capacity building. Increased capacities (both in general and specific terms, ie. with regard to the specific tools for HT integration) make it both desirable and possible for a mainstreamed approach to be applied to the HTs.

Figure 5.1: Focus and role of capacity-building activity



Of course, it is also possible that after extensive work on an area it could be felt that other areas should be prioritised. Here, further capacity building would be aimed at updating, rather than extending, available competences.

Lombardia is an example of how capacity building has developed incrementally. Here, the Commission's request for a more elaborated environmental *ex ante* evaluation of the 2000-06 SPD led to the regional programme managers bringing in an inter-disciplinary group of experts to reformulate the document. The results of this evaluation prompted the programme managers to integrate the environmental dimension further in the preparation of the Programme Complement. To assist in this process, the same group of experts was also asked to provide some targeted training. This was very operationally focused and departed from the critical aspects of the environmental evaluation. Once PC drafting activity was finalised, specific guidance was issued for project applicants and implementers. Moreover, specific sensitisation work on the theme of environmental sustainability was planned in the region, through networks of entrepreneurial associations and local authorities, starting with those areas characterised by particular environmental problems. In this process, the pro-active approach of the experts in suggesting solutions and improvements has been highly valued by the programme managers.

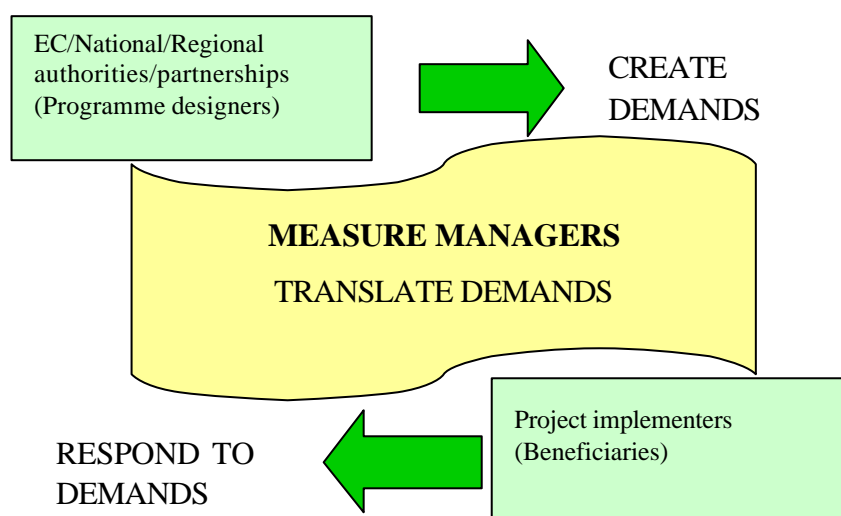
5.2.3 Demands and responses

A crucial element in HT integration is clarifying the outcomes expected. HTs impose new commitments, the understanding of which is limited among the various actors involved in programme management and implementation. Because of their partly compulsory status, the HTs imply that those managing the programmes must impose demands upon project applicants and

implementers (Figure 5.2). The effectiveness of this process depends in part at least upon the understanding and acceptance on the meaning attributed to the HTs at each level. However, the interpretation given to the HTs often varies between organisations as well as within the same organisation.

For the process to work, it is necessary that project applicants receive adequate guidance from measure managers on what the requirements and demands are and how they can be fulfilled. However, for measure managers to deliver guidance and capacity building, their specific capacities must first be built.

Figure 5.2 Cascading HT demands through to beneficiaries



There are many examples of specific capacity building among programmes, often as part of broader training programmes which embrace various aspects of programme implementation. Among the significant examples are the training commissioned by the Irish Department of Justice, Equality and Reform to improve gender awareness and capacity among the civil servants involved in the management of the NDP and the creation in Austria of a Coordination Unit for Gender Mainstreaming. Both are illustrated in the case studies below.

CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITY MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE IRISH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

In Ireland, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform contracted EPRC to provide written *guidance, factsheets* and *training* on gender mainstreaming in respect of the operational programmes on Housing, Transport and Agriculture and Rural Development. This activity was funded through the Irish National Development Plan (NDP).

The *factsheets* provide a synthesis of the current gender situation in each of the areas under examination, presenting possible recommendations for mainstreaming, supported by international case studies. They have been published and diffused broadly among civil servants and programme managers.

Training sessions comprised several elements:

- an initial presentation by the NDP Gender Equality Unit – explaining the meaning and relevance of gender mainstreaming
- presentations based on one of the sectoral areas illustrating the specific, concrete relevance of gender mainstreaming, drawing out issues and tools from the *factsheets* and providing the opportunity for questions and answers, and
- a series of workshop sessions where participants were split up into groups. In the first workshop, participants were asked to report back on projects they had formulated, identifying how gender could be taken into account at every stage of the project. The workgroups were composed of a mix of people from different departments, agencies and project sponsors to encourage networking and to provide experience of working with different actors. In the second workshop, the groups were asked to consider what their organisation currently does well or poorly in the field of gender mainstreaming, and to identify one thing they could take back to their organisation from the training day. Participants in this workshop were grouped with colleagues in order to generate understanding and support for change within organisational practice. At the end of the workshop sessions, participants were asked to report on one learning experience and one action to take away.

The experience was rated as very valuable by participants who underlined how the sessions had been able to increase consciousness of the gender implications of policies and interventions that they had been considering so far as gender neutral.

GEM – COORDINATION UNIT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE ESF (AUSTRIA)

The GeM was established in Austria in late 2000 by the Federal Ministry for Economy and Labour (BMWA) and is co-financed under the Objective 3 programme. It has a three year operational period from 2001-2003 and its aim is to support the integration and operationalisation of gender mainstreaming primarily in the Objective 3 programme in Austria. Its target group is end users of Objective 3 finance including the Labour Market Service (AMS), the Federal Ministry for Education and Science (mainly in the area of lifelong learning) and the Territorial Employment Pacts (which comprise a separate priority of the Objective 3 programme). GeM services are aimed at those directly involved in the design and operation of ESF measures.

The GeM has emerged as a result of the on-going evaluation of the 1995-99 Objective 3 programme, which included a specific focus on equal opportunities. The evaluation highlighted not only the need for equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming to be rooted in the new programme but also for a specific support structure to be in place to increase the effectiveness of this process. The BMWA issued a call for tender for the Coordination Unit and a private research institute (*L&R Sozialforschung*) won the three-year contract. The GeM employs two thematic experts and one administrative member of staff.

The main areas of activity undertaken by GeM are three-fold:

- *Information:* distributed primarily through the GeM website (www.gem.or.at). The website provides information about new developments and seminars in the area of gender mainstreaming. In addition, it provides an extensive database of materials related to gender mainstreaming in Austria and other countries. Monitoring of the website shows it to be very successful with over 10,000 hits over a nine-month period since January 2001 and an average logged-on time of nearly 30 minutes. Information dissemination is also carried out through a bi-annual newsletter which provides information on seminars and recent developments and acts as a forum for raising questions. Membership of a mailing list ensures more regular updates.
- *Networking:* GeM organises Round Tables in the *Länder* on an annual basis to which all the organisations involved in the implementation of ESF measures are invited to participate. This provides a forum for exchange of experience and the further development of ways of implementing gender mainstreaming in ESF activities. In addition, international events provide contact opportunities with organisations outside Austria and the website contains a large number of organisational links.
- *Consultancy/Advice:* the key support tool developed and provided by GeM is a Toolbox which contains guidelines on implementing gender mainstreaming in practice in ESF projects. The Toolbox contains an introduction to GeM and background principles of gender mainstreaming, followed by detailed practical guidelines at institutional level (rooting gender mainstreaming in institutions, Territorial Employment Pacts and project management), programme level (implementing gender mainstreaming in programmes) and project level (gender-sensitive project development and monitoring and gender-specific impacts of projects). The GeM will expand this material by requirement. Annual GeM seminars are organised for the end users of the ESF monies to support them in the practical use of the Toolbox and respond to direct questions or issues.

The GeM is purely a resource and support centre for organisations involved in the implementation of ESF programmes and has no specific power to enforce the gender mainstreaming approach. However, the awareness raising activities and practical support tools of the GeM Unit provide a strong starting point for help where there is interest among ESF-related organisations and a springboard for the dissemination of best practice and positive experiences in this area.

Similar initiatives can be promoted within groups of project applicants, as in the case of the *Nordrhein-Westfalen Zentrum Frau in Beruf und Technik*, which provides advice and guidance to project applicants and organises information events on the theme of gender integration.

NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN – CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

The *Zentrum Frau in Beruf und Technik – ZFBT* (Centre for Women in Employment and Technology) is a publicly-funded organisation which was established in 1994 by the city of Castrop-Rauxel with financial support from the government of *Nordrhein-Westfalen*. It operates a variety of gender equality programmes covering a number of economic sectors. The Centre works closely with businesses and economic organisations, unions, labour offices and those offering further education services.

The Centre is currently running an Objective 2 funded project entitled 'Implementing Equal Opportunities as a Horizontal Aim'. Within this projects it aims:

- to operationalise criteria for the implementation of the horizontal task of 'creation of equal opportunities for women and men in employment' as well as for innovative projects, and to assess existing monitoring templates from other *Bundesländer* and other countries on their suitability for transfer;
- to be active in the transfer of information as well as to provide and undertake training; and
- to enable the transfer of concepts and experiences of equal opportunity approaches in business support, especially in SMEs.

The ZFBT is pivotal in achieving a gender mainstreaming approach within projects. Through the use of monitoring sheets, every project will be assessed in terms of how the gender issue is addressed and affected as a result of planned activities. It is also necessary for those involved in project development to be aware of different methods and approaches which can be taken to address gender issues. Project managers and implementation units also need to recognise where there could be a gender impact. Given that there is still a lot of uncertainty about how relevant the gender theme is for many project applicants and implementation units, it is unrealistic for this issue to be properly considered without prior coaching. The ZFBT uses its knowledge of the region and regional actors to plan and target knowledge transfer information events.

Activities to date have included a number of information events. One example is the 'Workshop on Methods of Target-Oriented Planning for the Optimisation of Employment and Structural Policy Activities'. The workshop targeted employees in the *Regionalstellen Frau und Beruf* (Regional Organisations for Women and Employment) which are involved in employment and structural policy implementation. The workshop focused on methods of target-oriented project planning, disseminating methodological frameworks for the development and implementation of equal opportunity oriented projects.

The Centre also provides advice to projects and organisations wanting further, personalised assistance in becoming more gender aware in their project approach.

Particular attention has been paid to developing the capacities of project appraisers and applicants in the UK, with the scope of training encompassing not just the application and monitoring requirements of the horizontal themes, but also their justification. It has been seen as just as important to persuade partners and applicants of the *value* as well as the *necessity* of meeting the horizontal theme criteria (although, in practice, this aspect of training has been limited by time pressures).

Initially, training has been limited to project appraisers in most regions, particularly staff in the programme secretariats. Training appraisers has been made more difficult in some programmes by the extensive use of project 'packages' involving intermediary bodies in the project generation, development and appraisal process. With so many programme partners, it has not been possible to provide full training as yet. This has been compounded in many regions by the late hiring of dedicated staff who were not involved with the programme from its initial stages as well as pressures arising from the late start to all programmes.

Western Scotland is among the regions which have been more active in training. Here, special training sessions have been given to the secretariat, the Advisory Groups involved in project selection and groups of project applicants with similar needs (eg. local authorities). In the *East of Scotland*, groups of project applicants are taken through deferred applications as case studies to illustrate how questions can be interpreted and answered and where the relevant information has been found.

The second way in which horizontal theme compliance has been distributed is through the use of detailed guidance notes to applicants. Many regions have provided stand-alone guides on how to integrate the horizontal themes into projects (and, in some cases, guidance to appraisers on how to assess the thematic quality of projects). Such guides typically include definitions of the themes, examples of how they can be incorporated into different types of projects (often at measure level), an explanation of how the themes will be appraised and details of how to get more advice. An example of the *East Wales* guide is given in the box below. In a few cases, the guidance notes are downloadable to applicants via the Internet.

Lastly, special Advisory Groups have been set up within programmes to provide advice on how the themes are being addressed in programme implementation. For example, in the *East Midlands*, the remit of the Equality Advisory Group has been to develop an implementation plan for mainstreaming equal opportunities within the Objective 2 programme to cover programme management, project generation and marketing, project appraisal and selection, and monitoring and evaluation. In *East Wales*, an Equality Unit has been set up within the programme executive to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the equal opportunities theme within the Structural Funds programme.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY GUIDANCE TO PROJECT APPLICANTS IN EAST WALES

A specialist set of guidance notes was produced for the East Wales programme to assist project applicants and programme managers (those responsible for sub-sections of the programme) in meeting the sustainable development objectives. Expert consultants were brought in to develop the note and the final document was distributed by mail and via the Internet. The guide – called *Maximising the Environmental Sustainability of the East Wales Objective 2 and Transitional Programme* - has four sections.

- *Explaining the sustainable development approach.* This provides the theoretical context for sustainable development actions within the programme by supplying a detailed description of the theme. In particular, it draws a distinction between ‘sustainable development’ and ‘business as usual/minimisation’ models and the practical implications of those differences in terms of project design.
- *Meeting the sustainable development objectives of the SPD.* Here, practical advice is offered on how to design and develop projects meeting the objectives, involving a discussion of how strongly the environmental selection criteria relate to different priorities and measures.
- *Implications of the objectives by Priority and Measure.* Targeting the measure level, the note gives guidance on: how to design and deliver an environmentally sustainable project (by presenting a series of questions to both applicants and managers and using case-study examples of positive action projects); a selection of best practice actions (principally in terms of positive action projects); and suggested targets for reporting progress. It also describes the selection criteria on which projects will be evaluated in terms of the minimum criteria for receiving a ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ score.
- *Guidance on monitoring indicator selection.* The guidance covers how indicators and targets can be chosen for the project and practical suggestions for establishing monitoring systems.

Finally, the guidance note has a glossary of terms and contact details for further advice and assistance on different aspects of project design and application.

A similar guide has been produced in *Sachsen-Anhalt*, with reference to gender mainstreaming in general. Although it does not have a specific Structural Fund focus, it can easily be applied in this context.

A GUIDE TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING – *SACHSEN-ANHALT*

The Ministry for Labour, Women, Health and Social Affairs has overall responsibility for the gender equality in *Sachsen-Anhalt*. It has sponsored the publication of a brochure on gender mainstreaming, which states that successful integration of gender mainstreaming within an administration requires staff training, cultural change and institutional commitment.

Although gender equality is part of the German Basic Law as well as the *Sachsen-Anhalt* constitution, it is recognised that this has not yet been fully achieved and that a lot more remains to be done. The brochure outlines some of the instruments which can be used to further gender mainstreaming from the perspective of an administration. This comprises:

- developing awareness and sensitivity as the basis for gender policy activities;
- routine assessment of gender-specific effects of political measures;
- intra-departmental coordination and management to ensure the implementation of gender mainstreaming; and
- monitoring.

Reference is also made to other gender-specific initiatives currently in place in Germany, and this includes mention of the current Structural Fund approach to gender mainstreaming. Given that the implementation of the Objective 1 programme in *Sachsen-Anhalt* is undertaken by ministries, a strong *Land* gender mainstreaming initiative spanning all ministries should feed into the mechanisms in place for Objective 1 implementation. At the same time, the Objective 1 programme should allow the gender effects of the programme to be monitored and evaluated.

As the examples above show, capacity-building activities can theoretically take several forms, including face-to-face contact with project applicants (eg. during the activity of project selection), the organisation of training modules, the establishment of working groups and steering committees, the dissemination of guides, the organisation of conferences and days of exchange, and the secondment of civil servants and other actors. Secondments, for example, are used extensively in the UK to bring specialist knowledge to the heart of Structural Fund units and enable 'cross-fertilisation'.

In Sweden, NUTEK organised a conference in mid-November 2001 to support people and organisations involved in regional development to deal with the three themes of equal opportunities, sustainable development, and ethnic/racial integration.

SWEDEN: CONFERENCE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ETHNIC/RACIAL INTEGRATION

NUTEK, the Swedish central business development agency and secretariat for the Structural Fund Monitoring Committees, organised a conference in mid-November 2001 to support regional developers in dealing with the three themes of equal opportunities, sustainable development and ethnic/racial integration.

An interesting feature of the NUTEK conference is that the HTs were dealt with together, rather than separately (as often happens). The conference was organised in co-operation with several other national institutes, including the body implementing the ESF, the national agencies for environment, equality and integration issues, and the Ministry of Industry. The involvement of these organisations enabled collaboration between these national-level organisations. Cooperation is encouraged by the national government but often not well practised. Indeed, regional level links tend to be better. In addition, the cooperation pooled expertise in the priority areas, allowing organisations to concentrate on their strengths. NUTEK could then bring in-depth, regional development expertise together with the specialist knowledge of the equality and environment departments and the different focus of the ESF organisation.

The target group comprised Structural Fund programme managers, those involved in the regional growth agreements, equity or environmental experts in the County Administrative Boards, municipalities, the Association of Municipalities and other organisations involved in regional development projects or entrepreneurship support. The targeting was deliberately broad, and effort was made to ensure that wider regional development practitioners knew that they were also the target group. Past experience showed that invitations for conferences or seminars on this subject tended to be directed to the equality or environment experts. Similarly, regional development events were attended by regional development practitioners and the two were often not brought together. This combining process was critical to achieve the aim of the conference - more effective treatment of these priorities. NUTEK tried to encourage people who were not already working effectively in this area to attend in order to increase their expertise and understanding of these themes. The response to the conference was positive, with a good mix of experts and regional development practitioners.

The rationale behind the conference was to address the problem that, while many regional development practitioners know that the HTs should be taken into account and in many cases would like to do this, they often do not have the tools or know-how to apply them effectively. The primary conference aims were two-fold:

- first, to introduce these themes again, raising issues which might have been new, such as the wider sustainable development discussion, or the argument that the effective consideration of these themes could act as a motor for economic development. Although consideration of these areas was not new, many people still needed to think through the full implications and see where equality, sustainable development and integration aspects were relevant in different areas.
- second, to provide practical tools for dealing with these themes and illustrate their use.

The structure of the conference followed these aims, starting with general discussions on sustainable development, thematic workshops, discussion of the increasing number of soft factors relevant to regional development, and consideration of how to continue support work. The conference was viewed as the start of a process of support and training. Each participant received a CD with a range of material, studies, checklists, possible methods for dealing with the issues and other relevant documentation.

Commissioning studies and evaluations is also a crucial way to improve capacities. The European Commission has been active in promoting research on the HTs and in organising conferences to disseminate the results of such research. On the theme of equal opportunities/gender mainstreaming, for example, DG Regio commissioned a series of national studies on equal opportunities and the Structural Funds in the late 1990s, sponsored a good practice brochure on 'Women, actors of regional development' and supported work on EO evaluation. However, the limited publication and dissemination of many of these documents, impeded their impact on policy activities.³³ Evidently, for these kinds of activities to be an effective learning tool, studies need to be supplemented by adequate dissemination of results (even in simplified forms) and by the discussion of emerging themes among relevant groups.

As a final point, it is worth mentioning the impact of ICTs on the dissemination of information on the HTs. Programme managements make use of the Internet for diffusing guides for project applicants and similar information. In addition, various web-sites explicitly devoted to the HTs can be found. For example, at a general level, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions has developed a section of its website (<http://www.eurofound.ie/>) devoted to sustainable development which also includes a Tools Directory, recognising that: "one burgeoning area of activity on the Internet is the provision of tools, applications and resources to help in the practical implementation of sustainable development policies". The database lists and classifies existing tools and aims to be a reference point for researchers and social partners. Depending on the field of enquiry, other sources abound.³⁴ One example is the UK 'Envirowise' project (<http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/>), a UK government programme offering free, independent advice to businesses to help them appreciate and respond to environmental issues, with a view to supporting moves towards a more 'sustainable' economy. Among its web-based resources are a wide range of practical, downloadable publications including case studies, best practice guides, tools and reference notes written by experts to provide up-to-date information on waste minimisation issues, methods and successes.

5.3 Institutional responses

Capacity building alone cannot resolve the problems related to the integration of HTs in programme management and delivery. An effective learning process can be enhanced by the presence of an adequate institutional framework, capable of raising the horizontal priorities on the agenda, of contributing to the generation of a clear and homogenous understanding of the issues and of providing continuity to the inclusion of the HTs in the process of policy-

³³ Braithwaite, M (2000) *Mainstreaming Gender in the European Structural Funds*, Paper prepared for the Mainstreaming Gender European Public Policy Workshop, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 14-15 October 2000.

³⁴ A few examples of websites devoted to the HTs are: UK - www.sustainable.development.gov.uk/; Italy - www.governo.it/pariopportunita (specifically on Structural Funds www.governo.it/pariopportunita/strumenti/fondi_ue/ue.htm); the Finnish web-sites of the Ministries of Social Care and Health and the Office of the Ombudsman for Equality (www.tasa-arvo.fi/www-eng/index.html) and of Employment (www.eurofem.net/valtavirtaan/english.html).

making and delivery. In terms of the ‘conditions’ described in section 5.1, adequate institutional responses can contribute to *clarity* about the meaning of the HTs, enhance the possibility and scope for policy *integration* and *co-ordination*, and can provide *continuity* to policy-making. Institutional responses can also increase the *visibility* and perceived *relevance* of the HTs and make the themes more *accessible* (and credible).

Institutional responses can relate to the re-organisation of administrations (ie. the merger of ministries or departments, or the creation of specialist units within existing ones) and to the re-definition of internal procedures and working methods within administrations (including the people involved and the institutional culture of each organisation). This section discusses examples of both types of institutional responses.

As relates to the first aspect – the organisations available – past experience shows that institutional responses are a crucial part of the wider HT strategies of various Member States and regions. The box below illustrates some examples of national level institutional responses with reference to the integration of the broad theme of sustainable development; the categorisation is drawn from a recent OECD publication (2001) on *Sustainable Development – Critical Issues*.

ORGANISATIONAL APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE EXECUTIVES OF OECD COUNTRIES³⁵

Three main national institutional responses to sustainable development priorities were identified by the OECD sustainable development report:

- *Coordination approaches*, such as the creation of broad-based inter-ministerial working groups, committees, task forces, etc. Among the examples quoted are those of France and the UK. In France, an Interministerial Steering Group was created in 1995 to facilitate the ‘greening of government initiatives’, while, in the UK, a Cabinet Committee of Ministries competent on issues with environmental relevance was established to support policy co-ordination.
- *Structural approaches* are characterised by attempts to better integrate policies through internal institutional innovation (eg. through the creation of mega-departments dealing with different aspects of sustainable development that have traditionally represented conflicting interests). Among the examples quoted is the creation in the UK in 1997 of the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (one of the ministries responsible for Structural Funds issues – reorganised in summer 2001, transferring environmental issues to a new rural ministry).
- *Strategic approaches*, which involve fewer structural changes and focus more on the need to develop a shared agenda towards sustainable development. The examples illustrated include the creation in Belgium of a Task Force in the *Bureau Fédéral du Plan*, with the task of developing a federal-level strategic framework for sustainable development.

³⁵ OECD (2001) *Sustainable Development: Critical Issues*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris.

The framework developed in the OECD report can be applied to the experience of IQ-Net partner regions and countries with reference to both HTs. An example of a coordination approach, for instance, can be found in Finland, where under the 'Plan of Action for the promotion of gender equality' for the period 1997-99, an initiative involving six national Ministries was carried out to develop models, methods and tools which could be easily disseminated to and used by Finnish civil servants (see Box).

DEVELOPING A MAINSTREAMING METHODOLOGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN FINLAND

Developing a mainstreaming methodology (DMM) was one of the pilot projects of the Finnish Equality Programme, funded by the Equality Office of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. It involved the participation of six separate Ministries, each undertaking specially tailored equality pilot projects, over the period 1998-2000. The aim of DMM was to create a methodological package to enhance the mainstreaming of equality in administrative activities and procedures, as well as for staff development and training for Finnish civil servants. The objective was to create instruments or tools which could enable government departments to respond more appropriately to the needs of clients and citizens. The frame of reference for the DMM comprised a combination of different approaches to mainstreaming, including a synthesis of various equality programmes (UN, EU, Finnish government, Nordic Council of Ministers), insights from feminist research and evaluation theories.

General research questions were identified which could be further refined or targeted for use in the individual pilot projects of the Ministry. The questions were:

- How should mainstreaming be defined and operationalised in different areas?
- What kind of techniques should be applied in the enhancement of equality in different areas?
- What kind of mainstreaming models can be constructed in different areas, and what is the impact of ethnic and socio-cultural factors?
- What is the added value of mainstreaming (products, change of practice) in current administrative culture?
- What are the characteristics of a Nordic mainstreaming methodology?

An example of one of the pilot projects undertaken under the DMM framework was mainstreaming as part of the reorganisation of the Ministry of Labour. The objective of this pilot project focused on monitoring and assessing the impact of the mainstreaming component of the reorganisation. The equality group of the Ministry, assisted by consultants, tailored a four-step gender impact assessment comprising: gender archaeology (historical context); definition and mapping of criteria and evaluation indicators; definition of the gender balance; and, plans for 'gender futurology'.

A further objective of the DMM project was to create a web-site providing information and training materials related to gender mainstreaming. It was anticipated that the website would contain information on a variety of areas including international policy on gender equality, definitions of mainstreaming, a gender glossary, statistics, tools and methods for gender mainstreaming, relevant links and a discussion group.

A 'structural approach' to gender mainstreaming is evident in Sweden where a strong framework for EO integration is in place both at national and regional levels. In line with the fact that gender mainstreaming is a national government policy, it is considered the responsibility of the whole government: the Minister for Gender Equality Affairs acts as a coordinator, but all Ministers are considered to have responsibility for gender mainstreaming in their respective policy areas. Within the Ministry for Gender Equality Affairs, a Division for Gender Equality supports the equality work nationally and regionally, elaborates methods and analyses, reviews government documentation from a gender perspective, undertakes training initiatives and information dissemination and deals with international cooperation and with all matters relating to the Equal Opportunities Act. In addition, there is: a Council on Equality Issues, which is a forum for discussion on equality issues, chaired by Minister for Gender Equality and comprising representatives of political parties, women's organisations, social partners and popular movements; an Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, established in 1980 following the Equal Opportunities Act with primary responsibility to ensure compliance with the Act; and, an Equal Opportunities Commission.

At regional level, each of the 21 County Administrative Boards (CABs) has a gender expert. These experts have been in place since 1995 and act as a resource for the CAB executive in introducing a gender equality perspective into all areas of operation. Tasks of the equality experts include: organising seminars and information dissemination to spread knowledge; initiating questions and actions; spreading good practice; responding to national position papers (eg. the recent government paper on equal opportunities in transport and IT); and coordinating equal opportunities in the region ie. acting as the central point of contact in this area. The CABs drew up strategies for the period 1997-2000 for promoting gender equality in the county and these provide the basis for future analyses and assessments of regional efforts in this area. Gender issues have also been one of the major concerns of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, which has been working actively with gender issues since the mid-1990s.

Another example of a structural approach – with particular reference to Structural Fund programmes – is represented by the creation in Italy of a network of environmental authorities (national and regional), under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment, to support the managing authorities in charge of Structural Fund programmes. Originally established with reference to the Objective 1 programmes – the CIPE deliberation³⁶ specifying tasks for the environmental authorities only dealt with Objective 1 programmes – the network also applies *de facto* to the Objective 2 regions. The functions attributed to the Environmental Authorities are as follows:³⁷

- to cooperate systematically with the Managing Authorities and the priority and measure managers of Structural Fund programmes throughout all

³⁶ CIPE Deliberation 4 August 2000.

³⁷ Rete delle Autorità ambientali e delle Autorità della programmazione dei Fondi strutturali – Unità di Coordinamento (2001) *Proposta in ordine al "Piano operativo" delle Autorità ambientali*, 8 February 2001.

programming and implementation phases (definition, selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) with the aims of implementing the environmental sustainability criteria in the objectives, selection criteria and indicators and guaranteeing the correct application of community, national and regional environmental legislation;

- to ensure delivery of the *ex ante* evaluation of environmental issues and aspects related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage;
- to prepare synthesis reports, up-dated periodically, on the situation of the environment with reference to the interventions funded by the Structural Funds; and
- to cooperate in the preparation of the annual reports of the programmes.

The CIPE deliberation has also required the environmental authorities to draft an Operational Plan (*Piano Operativo*) for their activities, which has to be approved by the competent Monitoring Committee. The Guidance note prepared for the elaboration of these plans includes a table (reproduced in Table 5.3) which illustrates the activities of the environmental authorities with reference to every stage of programme design and implementation.

Table 5.3: Tasks of the Italian Environmental Authorities

Phases	<i>Ex ante</i> appraisal of environmental protection aspects	<i>Ex ante</i> appraisal of the aspects of protection of the historic, architectural, archaeological and landscape heritage	Systematic cooperation with the Managing Authority of the interventions	Systematic cooperation with Measure Managers
Definition of the interventions	<i>Ex ante</i> appraisal of the legislation and of the environmental sustainability of the interventions	<i>Ex ante</i> appraisal of the respect of the legislation and the impact of the interventions on cultural and landscape heritage		Contribution to the definition of interventions
Predisposition of implementation procedures	Identification of ES selection and appraisal criteria	Identification of selection and appraisal criteria for the protection of cultural and landscape heritage	Elaboration of guidance principles for the selection of interventions	Contribution to the definition of selection criteria and to the definition of implementation procedures (bids etc.)
Selection				Systematic participation in the phases of assessment and selection of the operations
Implementation	Preventive identification of the procedural obligations relating to the environment (eg. permissions and other similar requirements)	Preventive identification of the procedural obligations relating to cultural and landscape heritage (eg. permissions and other similar requirements)	Identification of the impact of the necessary obligations identified in the implementation of the programmes and definition of measures to increase efficiency	
Monitoring			Elaboration of indicators	
Evaluation			Elaboration of indicators, techniques, methodologies for interim and <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Contribution to interim and <i>ex post</i> evaluation

With reference to the experience across IQ-Net partners, institutional changes for the broader inclusion of HTs in policy-making and delivery relate mainly to the creation of *ad hoc* units dealing with the two issues separately at the national, regional or programme levels (or at all levels), with functions of providing guidance, capacity building and dissemination, and coordinating interventions and policies. Strong, institutional responses appear in those countries which have been identified as having a long-standing tradition in the HTs, such as Finland, Sweden and the UK, but are increasingly characterising other countries (eg. Italy).

It is interesting to note that attempts to integrate ES at the national level often tend to cascade to the lower levels of governance. In Scotland, for example, the theme of sustainable development in the Structural Funds has been brought forward by a comprehensive institutional framework of cooperation among the organisations devoted to the Structural Funds and environmental authorities and organisations.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION IN SCOTLAND

Institutional involvement in support for sustainable development in the Scottish 1994-99 programmes formed the basis for further improvements in participation in the 2000-06 programming period. In the 1994-99 round, the joint Competent Environmental Authorities (CEA) comprised Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Scottish Office Development Department (which subsequently became the Scottish Executive Development Department). These organisations brought with them different environmental remits and perspectives including landscape, access and nature conservation (SNH), the management and control of pollution (SEPA) and advisory functions in cross-cutting issues such as transport, climate change and energy (Scottish Executive).

Over the 1994-99 programming period, there was increasing recognition of the value of involvement by the environmental bodies, both governmental and non-governmental, and the scope to secure funding for environmental projects. It became clearer, as understanding of the sustainability agenda grew, that Structural Fund assistance was a key opportunity to deliver sustainability in practice through partnership projects involving economic development, social inclusion and environmental stewardship.

The participation of environmental organisations took a variety of forms, including involvement in aspects of the planning process, participation in *ex ante* studies of the environmental impact of assistance, and contributions to delivery arrangements through participation on committees, grant-aiding environmental personnel, developing monitoring targets and preparing guidance. Experience of participation gave the environmental bodies insights into the nature and potential of involvement. Several ways to enhance this were recognised in advance of the 2000-06 programming period. These included the need to have fuller and more effective participation at all stages of programming, and to provide improved information about the environmental situation and its relevance to economic development and to capitalise on good practice developed by previous projects. SNH and SEPA sponsorship supported this process, and dedicated staff were recruited under the auspices of a joint project. This formed the basis for a participative approach in the new period, designed to build up support and ownership of the environmental dimension and ensure its relevance to the economic and social partners.

‘Internal’ institutional responses - ie. those relating to the working methods, the institutional culture and, ultimately, the people in each organisation - are also important. In some cases, the active inclusion of HTs in the process of policy and programme development and implementation is deficient because of the difficulty of interaction between different units, departments or directorates general even within the same organisation. The difficulties faced in generating consensus around the issue of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission are illustrative, including the difficulties in pinpointing gender as one of the crucial elements in the agenda of EC desk officers, especially those responsible for rural interventions. It has been noted that:³⁸

“In spite of the clear policy commitment on the application of gender equality to all policy areas and programmes, certain areas of the Structural Funds have been protected from ‘interference’, most notably the ‘harder’ areas of Structural Fund support, such as transport and energy, and the more technical areas of EAGGF (such as milk quotas, early retirement schemes) ... without doubt the European Commission is stronger on policy formulation (and legislation), than on developing accompanying arguments, procedures and instruments for translating policy into practice within the framework of programmes and projects”.

Often, departments within a single organisation ‘compete’ with each other for the achievement of what is perceived as their own priority. Building awareness, understanding and ownership are important tools for enhancing the perception of the HTs as a matter for every department. However, appropriate inter-institutional mechanisms can also contribute to achieving greater coordination and motivation. An example of this can be found, with reference to gender equality, in *Sachsen-Anhalt*. Here an *ad hoc* Ministry is responsible for gender mainstreaming, namely the Ministry of Labour, Women, Health and Social Affairs, which has the overall responsibility for mainstreaming gender across all policies. To enhance coordination, a civil servant responsible for gender mainstreaming is also included in each of the remaining Ministries.

The way organisations take the HTs on board is also influenced by the dominating institutional culture, by the resulting number of actors involved in the themes and by the allocation of responsibilities related to the HTs. In theory, within an organisation, the HTs could be addressed by: no specific individual; a specialist with expertise and motivation; or all staff and participants.

Evidently, only the last approach is sustainable over the long term as it embeds the HTs in the culture and processes of organisations. So far, the HTs have often been taken forward by a single individual or a small group of passionate and committed actors, who in some cases may face ‘suspicion’ or hostility from others. This is a problem because, as soon as a key person moves to another organisation or department, the institutional memory is lost as well as the

³⁸ Braithwaite, M (2000) *op. cit.*

momentum created. In addition, the burden and complexity attached to the HTs can overwhelm even the most motivated specialists, especially where HT-related tasks are little understood in their wider institution.

The HTs need to be rooted in institutions to become a permanent and mainstreamed part of policy making. As has been seen here, this can be provided by a mix of capacity building and institutional responses.

6. OPERATIONALISING THE HORIZONTAL THEMES

While environmental sustainability and, to a lesser extent, equal opportunities are increasingly established themes of Structural Fund programming, they are still relatively new, especially as horizontal ‘mainstreamed’ elements. The process of fully adopting and adapting to these ideas will be gradual and incremental. Even in Sweden, where there are relatively strong framework conditions supporting these dimensions, Structural Fund actors have expressed the view that they lack the practical tools they need to apply the horizontal priorities systematically through programme implementation. More challenging still, for those who have taken a more holistic view, is the journey towards sustainable development, which embraces these ideas as constituent elements of a distinctive development pathway involving the integration of social, environmental and economic objectives. The overall novelty of these elements, relative to prevailing economic development approaches, and the need to obtain the commitment and active participation of partnerships means that practical interpretations of what is meant in the context of Structural Fund interventions are required, in addition to tools and methods enabling operationalisation.

As ever, responding at all phases of the programming cycle is a key dimension of progressively and consistently integrating the issues. This section of the paper addresses the phases of programming, aiming to draw out principles and practices at each which may be transferable. It addresses programme design, project generation, project appraisal and selection, monitoring and evaluation.

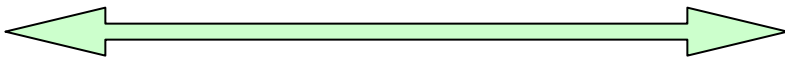
6.1 The importance of motivation

Building on the previous discussion, an overall observation about the HTs is that the motivation for taking them up conditions the operational responses. The clearest distinction is between actors and programmes driven by regulatory obligations, and those embracing more fully the utility or importance of integrating these aspects into economic development frameworks. These attitudes are characterised in Figure 6.1 below as ‘compliant’ versus ‘pro-active’. Note that the more positive responses are likely to involve more resources being dedicated to the development of relevant elements, and that a greater effort will be made in terms of consultation, communication and innovation. In interpreting the figure, there are four things to bear in mind.

- HTs can be applied at the programme, policy or individual level. The overall approach of a programme may not be the same as that of its constituent elements nor of the actors operating within that programme.
- The profile is likely to be different for different HTs. In practice, there is often greater acceptance of environmental considerations than equality-related issues in Objective 2 programming.
- The figure is dynamic. The position of the programme or its individual contributors can change as a result of activity undertaken. For example, an *ex ante* or interim evaluation might spark reflection and induce change. This could involve moving actors and, in a favourable environment, a programme, further towards a proactive stance, convincing them that there are HT-related issues of economic significance to be addressed.
- The figure juxtaposes crude extremes - reality is more subtle. Programmes may have a compliance orientation simply because, in reality, they have little control over the approaches pursued in their constituent parts by relevant competent authorities. Many programmes may not conform to all aspects of the positive orientation because of their judgement about the significance of these issues relative to the objectives of their programme and the balance of other aims being pursued.

Across whole programmes, a central question is what encourages or enables positive rather than compliant responses or the transition towards the latter? Among the recurring responses are resources and commitment, gaining legitimacy for gender mainstreaming and environmental sustainability as relevant, integral elements of economic development, increasing knowledge and understanding and ensuring that systems are in place for following through on commitments.

Figure 6.1: Contrasting compliant and proactive approaches to integrating the HTs

	Compliance orientation	Proactive orientation
		
Relevance: Are the HTs relevant to the programme?	It is an obligation to respond to them.	Yes. They are integral elements of a sustainable development approach.
Aim: What is the guiding objective?	Meeting the minimum requirements placed on the programme in terms of responses to the HTs.	Addressing the horizontal themes effectively in a horizontal way, fully integrating them where this is appropriate.
Analysis: Is analysis undertaken, and why?	Yes, <i>ex ante</i> assessment is an obligation. It has been done to satisfy Commission requirements.	Yes. This is a key stage. It has been used to inform debate about the issues and opportunities to be addressed.
Integration: Have the HTs been integrated explicitly into programme development?	Limited or no special provision has been made in the development process. A verification may have been done eg. HT experts checking drafts of the SPD for HT implications and feeding in comments and amendments to ensure compliance.	Dedicated structures have been established to take the HTs forward. The HTs have been an explicit element on which debate has been focused and input invited. HT experts have been involved in an iterative process.
Responses: Does the programme encourage applicants to address the HTs?	Projects are free to include relevant elements, should they so wish.	Yes. Projects are actively encouraged (or required) to reflect on these issues and to develop active responses.

6.2 Programme design

While the programme development phase is now complete for the current Objective 1 and 2 programmes, drawing lessons from past programme development processes continues to be valuable. First, this is because the programme development phase lays the foundations for programme implementation. Second, programme management teams are frequently involved in the development of other *ad hoc* programmes on an on-going basis, (eg. under Innovative Actions or Interreg programmes) and can benefit from lessons learned.

In discussing methods of Structural Fund programme development, it is important to bear in mind the diversity of approaches to managing the Structural Funds across the Member States. In many contexts (especially those characterised as operating ‘subsumed’ systems), Structural Fund programmes may seek to influence, but in fact largely simply reflect the established policy initiatives and approaches in their geographic area. Here, Structural Fund *programme* development does not necessarily equate to *policy* development.

There are two implications of this. First, it is clear that methods and recommendations which are relevant to one region may not necessarily be directly applicable in others. Second, mainstreaming environmental and equality-related

issues more fully into Structural Fund programming may require change to take place well beyond the Structural Funds, in other areas of economic development policy-making. This being the case, tools developed and used under the Structural Fund heading could see wider applicability, even in regions where they are not directly transferable into the Structural Fund framework.

6.2.1 *Commitment to the HTs*

To be embraced by a policy environment, any issue must be seen as a positive and legitimate element of the economic development agenda. An important accelerator of this is endorsement at political levels. Examples include the declaration by *País Vasco* of the strategic importance of environmental sustainability for all regional strategies, which has filtered through into policy responses of government departments, and the Scottish Executive Equality Strategy. At a broader level, environmental sustainability and gender mainstreaming have been formally integrated into the philosophy of policy for some time in Sweden.

Where environmental sustainability and gender mainstreaming issues are new and relatively untried, and such political endorsement is not yet available, they can be interpreted as peripheral issues which will divert economic development programmes from their central tasks of raising competitiveness and creating employment. In this context, strong messages about the economic case for mainstreaming environmental and equality-related issues into economic development programmes can be extremely valuable (see Box), as can approaches which “avoid the negative image of sustainability as a complex, abstract concept, presenting it instead as an essentially simple idea based on making common sense connections and developing effective governance”.³⁹

To drive forward the process of mainstreaming the HTs at the programme design stage, commitment needs to be formalised by establishing appropriate structures and mechanisms. An example is the focus groups established in *Western Scotland*, for three Horizontal Themes (environment, equal opportunities and innovation). These enabled focussed discussion and exchange to take place, structured around three key phases, which, in turn, fed into the wider programme development process (see Box). Among the benefits of creating structures was to give a high profile to the HTs and to provide continuity and coherence to the way they are addressed. In addition, the multi-sectoral structures, which brought programme actors and thematic experts together enabled a marriage to be achieved between specialist knowledge and the knowledge of the mainstream economic development professionals involved in programme development. In addition, it ensured that expert input was transformed into something directly relevant to the programme before it was presented more widely.

³⁹ Moss T and Fichter H (2000) op. cit.

INSTITUTIONALISING THE INTEGRATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ISSUES INTO PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT: WEST OF SCOTLAND FOCUS GROUPS

In the Objective 2 area of *Western Scotland*, Strathclyde European Partnership (SEP) set up a focus group to provide a resource for the plan team and for the programme managers at the preparation and implementation phase. The Focus Group met for the first time in March 1999, and was made up from Partnership nominations and individual invitations. It includes partners with equal opportunities expertise, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, and partners with knowledge of key economic development themes such as business development, transport and training. The range of activities undertaken by the Focus Group have included: developing information sources; holding an awareness-raising seminar; developing an action plan; considering guidance and experience from other organisations; and, undertaking a process of strategic equal opportunities assessment of the Programme, through all its stages of development. The Focus Group followed the Commission's lead in examining the needs of both women and men, but also took the view that equal opportunities should be considered as a wider issue, encompassing gender, race, and disability. The Focus Group also acknowledged that the lack of statistical data in all areas, but especially race and disability, would impact on the ability to understand issues fully and design objectives to tackle them.

Consideration of equal opportunities has been a consistent feature of programme development, with the Equal Opportunities Focus Group acting as a resource and support throughout the process.

Formal Strategic Equal Opportunities Assessment has taken place at three main stages:

- First, broad equal opportunities issues were mapped against different economic themes (infrastructure, enterprise, learning, and inclusion) in advance of the priorities and measures being drafted.
- Second, a more detailed assessment of the scope of priorities and measures was undertaken. As a result, suggestions were made and incorporated into the body of the Programme.
- In the third stage of the assessment, key interactions were identified, with positive action for equal opportunities incorporated accordingly into the description and scope of measures.

6.2.2 Informing the content of programmes

The challenge of mainstreaming is to translate relatively abstract concepts clearly and concretely into the specific context in which a programme is being developed and will operate. Insights derived from statistical and interpretative analysis are essential to support a vital process of 'evidence-based' policy development. Data provide the raw material for reflection leading to new insights about a particular context which in turn influence policy design and resource allocation.

It has been an obligation for programmes to undertake an *ex ante* assessment of the situation of their eligible area as regards ES and EO issues. This analysis

should be appropriate in scope to the proposed programme. For example, gender analysis should encompass the situation of men *and* women, and ideally consider disparities roundly (eg. considering not only disparities in overall employment levels but also in terms of the quality and precariousness of employment and potential barriers to different groups entering or progressing in the labour market). Environmental analysis, in turn, should be explicitly related to the programme it accompanies. Few *ex ante*, for example, address the environmental performance and capabilities of the business base, although this is often a key area of environmental intervention for Structural Fund programmes.

A very real problem in preparing *ex ante* evaluations has been the lack of data or interpretative insights into available statistics. However, even identifying data deficiencies is important in highlighting future development priorities for economic observatories and statistical offices. (Indeed, gender-related data deficiencies identified by one French region in the last round led to the decision for its Objective 2 programme to support the establishment of a statistical observatory.)

Given that resource and time limitations restrict the original work which can be undertaken, it has been found to be beneficial to exploit any relevant studies and sources of expertise which are already available, especially where they are directly related to the geographic areas targeted. In addition, it can be beneficial to look more widely at research and analysis (both in the national and international context), exploiting existing specialised studies to broaden expectations in terms of possible outcomes, to open up debate and to appreciate that there may be a range of possible reasons for patterns observed.

**DATA COLLECTION AND CONSULTATION EXERCISE:
'THE WHOLE SOCIETY' STUDY BY THE NATIONAL BOARD OF HOUSING,
BUILDING AND PLANNING IN SWEDEN (BOVERKET)** ⁴⁰

The Swedish government commissioned Boverket to study land use, building and spatial development from an equal opportunities perspective. The initial period of the study concentrated on the collection of data and experiences from a wide range of people, through seminars and discussion groups. It also involved an examination of statistics and existing research in the field. The work was run in close consultation with the National Environmental Protection Agency, NUTEK (the Swedish Board for Industrial and Technical Development), the National Rural Area Development Agency and Nordplan. In addition, Boverket consulted the Swedish Committee for Transport, undertaking a collaborative project about women and public transport, the Committee for the Consumer and the Environment, and the Association of Swedish Local Authorities.

Preliminary conclusions were that, in Sweden, "men's priorities, apart from their realities, for the most part control physical planning and the built environment". Their 'realities' are reflected by the following statistics: in the Swedish building sector, 97 percent of managers are men. In terms of political representation in local authorities, the proportion of men is 60 percent, and amongst leaders, 75 percent. Of Sweden's 264 city architects, 234 are men. More men than women are involved in physical planning, both as decision-makers and as planners, and amongst citizens who take part in consultation processes. A few local authorities have consciously worked on getting more women involved in planning (the example of Norway is cited, where there has been considerable effort since the 1980s to increase the involvement of women in urban planning at all levels).

The main outcome so far has been to highlight the need for new working and organisational methods, particularly those based on co-operation and participation, and the need for disaggregated statistics.

6.2.3 Integrating the HTs into programmes

Good quality information allows relevant and effective responses to be derived. Many *ex ante* evaluations make an explicit link between the gender and environment-related analysis of eligible areas and the policies proposed. Perhaps surprisingly, this was rarely the case in previous programmes.

Niederösterreich illustrates the process of making explicit links between the *ex ante* evaluation of the HTs and the programme. The section of the *ex ante* which addresses the environmental impact of the programme includes an assessment of framework conditions and possible strategies for sustainable development. It interprets environmental protection as a potential contributor to competitiveness generally, and highlights areas where the programme could contribute, including:

- support for 'environmental projects';

⁴⁰ Reported in: Fitzgerald R and Michie R (2001) *Gender Mainstreaming and Housing: Fact Sheet for the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programme*, prepared for the NDP Gender Equality Unit, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Ireland.

- support for companies/production branches with relatively lower environmental pollution levels;
- spatial considerations and increased environmental standards; and
- environmental assessment component of large projects.

The section is completed with a description of the likely environmental impact of the programme by priority and strategic focus.

The section of the *ex ante* addressing gender mainstreaming concludes that “possibilities for direct and explicit implementation of the approach are smaller” given that the programme is purely ERDF-financed. Nonetheless, the section on the equality impact of the programme identifies a number of areas where, despite the lack of ESF support, equality could be supported:

- stronger consideration of equality issues in strategic goals;
- new diverse employment options for women through the overall support of economic and competitive growth in the region; and
- improved quality of life in rural areas which could have a positive effect on women particularly impacted by isolation and poor communications.

The potential relevance of the 2000-06 *West of Scotland* programme to the horizontal themes was also identified, but in this case using the focus groups described above. The box below sets out the main areas of potential identified by the gender mainstreaming group, which were subsequently integrated into the programme.

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The relevance of 2000-06 measures to equality issues is as follows:

- *Competitive Business Base*: positive impact on the Equal Opportunities aim of extending and focusing entrepreneurship. The impact on entrepreneurship is likely to be over the long term and the extent of impact will be contingent on the targets set and the criteria adopted for assisting new and existing SMEs.
- *Competitive Locations*: positive impact on the Equal Opportunities aim of ensuring equality of access to economic opportunities through development of physical and social infrastructure (encompassing location, transport, safety, security, dependant care) and, in particular, access to new information and communication technologies.
- *Competitive Workforce* is likely to have a positive impact on labour market segregation.
- *Community Area Regeneration* has the potential for a significant positive impact across all equal opportunities policy themes, in particular access, contingent on the incorporation of equal opportunities into Social Inclusion Partnership strategies.
- *Addressing Barriers to Economic and Social Exclusion* and *Routes to Opportunities* will have a positive impact on the Equal Opportunities aims of balanced labour market and access.

6.2.4 Verifying the quality of responses

A range of tools is available to verify the quality of responses made by programmes to HT issues. Such tools are useful at the programme design stage, for example in enabling a structured analysis of past programmes which can inform future ones, in identifying the potential weaknesses in a draft programme or in enabling different strategic options to be compared for their relative HT implications.

One example of a verification exercise was that undertaken in *West Cumbria and Furness*, in which consultants used a mapping methodology to analyse the Objective 2 programme of the time in order to assess its contribution to sustainable development (in the full sense) and to identify gaps.⁴¹ The analysis found that almost half the programme already had the potential to be spent on activities which support one or more areas contributing to sustainable development. Several gaps were identified, but it was found that these could potentially be addressed not by developing new policies, but by giving greater weight to environmental criteria in project appraisal, extending these criteria to all measures and increasing training to applicants.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) provides a valuable further tool in assessing the environmental implications of programmes at a collective level. Some Structural Fund programmes have undertaken SEAs as part of their programme development process, although in many cases, the verification process (which was often undertaken by the organisation responsible for the environmental element of the *ex ante* evaluation) was less fully developed than a fully fledged SEA exercise.

While interest is growing in Gender Impact Assessment tools, these are less well developed overall, with the predominant focus to date potentially being on project rather than programme level tools (paralleling the development of the SEA after the embedding of the project-oriented Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)).

6.3 Project generation and selection

The integration of the HTs in the process of project generation and selection varies across IQ-Net regions, reflecting several factors:

- the Structural Fund programmes have differing national arrangements for project generation and selection,⁴² for example, automatic systems versus competitive tendering systems, and rigid versus iterative approaches to project selection;
- the wider national and regional priority placed on the HTs as policy issues;

⁴¹ Moss T and Fichter H (2000) op. cit.

⁴² Taylor S, Bachtler J and Rooney M (2000) *Implementing the New Generation of Programmes: Project Development, Appraisal and Selection*, IQ-Net Paper 7(2), European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

- the priority placed on these issues by programme partnerships, partly based on the perceived relevance of these themes to the field of intervention of the programme; and
- the specific capacities of programme actors.

6.3.1 *Project generation*

Those involved in generating, appraising and selecting projects for Structural Fund support, such as programme secretariats and measure managers, are important facilitators of change. This includes not only programme secretariats, but, as appropriate, those who are eg. measure or scheme managers. Table 6.1 explores four main directions in which their influence is exerted over applicants. Laying down obligations and, much less frequently, offering incentives, are powerful elements which help to focus the attention of applicants on the HTs. An example of obligation is the use of Special Conditions of Grant in *Western Scotland* to ensure that projects which have not responded fully to HT issues develop an HT Action Plan in partnership with the programme secretariat, in the period preceding the submission of their first claim. In turn, systems rewarding HT responses include Flanders, where a higher rate of award can be offered to selected projects which include HT responses (although this is done in parallel to the Structural Funds, through the Flemish Investment Support Fund). The main German regional incentive scheme can be operated in a similar way, and is sometimes used like this in combination with Structural Fund support.

Given that the concept of mainstreaming the HTs is still novel in many policy contexts, obligation and reward systems are unlikely to yield rapid and consistent results unless actors take on two additional roles: (i) demystifying concepts and clarifying what is sought under them; and (ii) making provision to develop the awareness and skills of actors, so enabling them to respond. Reassurance and demystification are particularly important preparatory elements, lowering barriers to considering the HTs as relevant issues, and so preparing the way for enabling techniques. The two latter roles can be developed most fully in those contexts where an iterative, negotiated process of project development takes place. However, even where this is not the case (eg. where a competitive call is made for projects which are then approved or declined based on their content as seen), clear communication about expectations can still help to increase the chances of applicants being able to respond appropriately.

Table 6.1: Four routes for programme actors to facilitate change at the project development stage

Obliging	Rewarding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Responding to the HTs can be made an obligation by programme managers. ➤ Include questions in the application form which have to be filled in. ➤ Follow up consistently: ensure that HT responses are understood as an obligation, not a choice. ➤ While it may not be acceptable to reject a good project because it has not responded sufficiently to HT issues, an alternative is to make additional work on HT issues a Special Condition of Grant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In competitive systems, scoring can be designed to reward projects with good HT elements, increasing their chances of being funded. ➤ Programmes could offer higher rates of award to projects addressing the HTs effectively. In Flanders, this is done in parallel through the Flemish Investment Support Fund.
Reassuring and demystifying	Enabling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote wide understanding of the mainstreaming approach, including: (i) underlining the economic rationale; and (ii) showing how it is complementary to, but distinct from, positive action. ➤ Demonstrate that what is being sought are rational, straightforward responses, derived directly from relevant reflection. ➤ Popular preconceptions about extremes of feminism and environmentalism can be unhelpful. ➤ Ensure that the <i>ex ante</i> analysis of the environmental and equal opportunities situation is connected to the programme. This will provide applicants with a head start in appreciating the potential relevance of their project to the HTs. The <i>ex antes</i> should highlight risks and opportunities which projects could help to address. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shape the application form to encourage reflection about the relevance of the HTs to a project. ➤ Offer support to applicants in understanding the implications of the HTs, including by running awareness-raising sessions and applicant workshops. ➤ Identify and publicise relevant examples of best practice. These should give a clear indication of the type of responses sought (making this more concrete) and also underline that responses are derived from a process involving research, reflection and dialogue. ➤ Refer applicants to experts for help with HT aspects. ➤ In parallel, ensure the thematic experts are suitably prepared to provide appropriate support to applicants. In particular, they need to understand the Structural Funds.

6.3.2 Demystifying the HTs

The above section has already given some impression of the scope for environmental sustainability and equality issues to be integrated into Structural Fund regional development programmes and the projects they support. As noted, there is often scope for positive action projects. However, these are just part of a wider mainstreaming approach whose result should be to generate more projects

which integrate aspects of equality or environmental awareness into their design and delivery, although this is not their central focus.

While the nature of positive-action opportunities tends to be clear, mainstreaming responses are often much more difficult for actors to grasp. To support applicants in taking up mainstreaming approaches, it is useful to build confidence and familiarity by providing concrete and straightforward examples illustrating what is meant. These could be presented in the SPD and PC (under measure headings or in the horizontal theme *ex ante* evaluations) or developed as part of guidance materials. Table 6.2 offers some examples of ways in which gender and environmental awareness could be integrated into Structural Fund programmes - not only as the theme of positive-action projects, but also as a mainstreamed dimension of other more 'standard' economic development projects. The examples are organised under headings representing broad types of intervention, such as business development, human resource development and economic infrastructure. Examples are valuable in reassuring people about what is being requested, and initiating the generation of ideas.

An excellent example of communication helping applicants to understand the scope of mainstreaming is found in *Western Scotland* (see Table 6.3), where a guidance note sets out examples of some typical projects, using these to highlight how a mainstreaming approach could alter their design and delivery to be more environmentally and gender sensitive (and in many cases proactive). The suggestions provide a starting point for discussion and development. The note also highlights some tips on mainstreaming the horizontal themes: (i) consider the issues before the project design stage is complete; (ii) use a client-group/customer focus; and (iii) think about both the content of the scheme and the way it is delivered.

In appreciating and demystifying the scope and relevance of the HTs, a further message to communicate is that a mainstreaming approach does not always have to lead to changes in the design or delivery of a project. Responses in the form of changes to project design are elaborated through a process of applying a gender or an environmental 'lens' to projects - asking a particular set of questions about them to uncover gender and environment-related implications in the form of opportunities or threats, which previously may have gone unnoticed, and which are then addressed through project design. In some cases, this 'proofing' process leads to no relevant issues being identified, in which case the project does not change. Such a project, in demonstrating that it had undertaken 'proofing', would still conform with having been generated using a mainstreaming approach.

Table 6.2: Illustrative examples of positive action projects and projects mainstreaming ES or EO

Environmental Sustainability		
<i>Examples of 'positive action'</i>		<i>Examples of mainstreaming the HTs across all measures</i>
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of new green products technologies and processes ➤ New firm formation in environmental sectors ➤ Introduction of Environmental Management Systems (EMS) into business ➤ Energy-saving technologies for high energy consumption firms ➤ Waste and water management projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ business process efficiency initiatives to include consideration of waste reduction or minimising resource use ➤ innovation scheme to encourage new product and process development projects to consider and respond to environmental pressures/implications ➤ consultancy advice to SMEs which includes environmental aspects among a range of integrated services
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training where the main theme is environmental eg. increasing the number of firms able to implement Environmental Management Systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inclusion of environmental issues as an integral part of broader learning packages, eg. including energy-efficient building techniques and awareness of waste-related legislation in construction training ➤ Delivery of training courses in ways which reduce the need to travel eg. distance learning using ICTs & delivery of courses close to residents of disadvantaged area
Tourism, natural heritage and quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prevention of coastal erosion ➤ Conservation and full exploitation of the natural heritage ➤ Landscaping and other environmental improvements, including the creation of wildlife habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Integration of new visitor attractions with public transport ➤ Tourism projects making provision to address the environmental impact of increased visitor numbers

Environmental Sustainability		
<i>Examples of 'positive action'</i>		<i>Examples of mainstreaming the HTs across all measures</i>
Economic Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparing unused industrial sites for re-use, through clearance of disused buildings and decontamination of land ➤ Encouraging use of sustainable/renewable energy sources (eg. Kempen/Antwerp) ➤ Construction of research facilities dedicated to environmental innovation ➤ Creation of an environmental demonstration centre (PRODEM in Kempen/Antwerp) ➤ Pollution-reducing infrastructure, eg. emission reducing infrastructure (NRW) or industrial waste-water processing plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduction of the environmental impact of construction: locating new business infrastructure on brownfield sites, prioritising local sourcing of materials to reduce transportation, using techniques which minimise and/or recycle building waste ➤ Reduction of the environmental impact of buildings when in use: eg. using energy efficient building techniques (insulation, solar panels), locating premises where they are easily accessible using public transport or where they benefit from other existing infrastructure.
Transport infrastructure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Intermodal transport hubs and other transport infrastructure which promises positive environmental impacts in terms of reduced emissions (eg. Basque Country)

Equal Opportunities

<i>Examples of 'positive action'</i>		<i>Examples of mainstreaming the HTs across all measures</i>
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promotion of female entrepreneurship (eg. support for female employment in NRW) ➤ Business initiatives tailored to the needs of women's businesses (eg. micro-credit scheme in West of Scotland, delivered through a women's business development centre) ➤ Support for activities and services where under-represented groups are more likely to be employed ➤ Encouragement of new firm formation in social support sectors (eg. childcare) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Verification that the design and delivery of mainstream business development measures are configured in ways which do not present barriers to under-represented groups ➤ Encouragement for more family-friendly working practices in businesses as part of wider business development projects ➤ Verification that the proportion of female entrepreneurs participating in schemes at least matches their proportion in the overall business population ➤ Leadership and management development programmes to consider the contribution of attributes and styles which are more typical of females (eg. communication, co-operation, non-hierarchical organisation, team-working) ➤ Projects with micro-SMEs that explicitly value and develop the contribution of the spouse to the firm
Transport and other basic Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training for women living in rural areas to drive buses on new local routes - creating employment and increasing access to employment at the same time (Ireland) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Transport infrastructure to enable excluded people to gain improved access the labour market, eg. improving public transport as a travel to work option, including from rural areas

Equal Opportunities

<i>Examples of 'positive action'</i>		<i>Examples of mainstreaming the HTs across all measures</i>
Human Resource Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training courses where participation is restricted to under-represented target groups, especially where they aim to enable a labour market imbalance to be addressed (eg. enabling the access of more women to construction or engineering industries, or more men to service sector opportunities) ➤ Training courses addressing particular issues of groups facing difficulties, eg. updating IT skills for returners to the labour market who have taken a career break as carers, re-skilling those previously employed in heavy industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delivery of flexible training (in terms of time and place) to facilitate participation in mainstream courses by those with caring responsibilities ➤ Training with 'pathways' approaches which ease re-entry into the labour market (eg. including work placements for those lacking experience - shown to be more effective for women than training alone) ➤ Balanced participation in courses related to employment which is traditionally male-dominated
Economic Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dedicated incubator units with shared facilities for female led SMEs ➤ Teleworking centres in rural and remote areas to facilitate access to employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Business premises including design features making them more accessible to all, eg. considering the accessibility of the location by public transport, and to the disabled, and enhancing security eg. through effective lighting and security services ➤ Incorporation of childcare facilities in business premises

Table 6.3: Illustrations of projects and their relevance to the horizontal themes of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities - Examples from West of Scotland training materials⁴³

Project Example	Illustrative Mainstreamed HT Responses	
Economic infrastructure project on a brownfield site	Environmental sustainability	Integration of equal opportunities
<p><i>The comprehensive redevelopment of a former steelworks in Lanarkshire to create a mixed use light industry/office estate. Works will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>site analysis & decontamination if necessary</i> ➤ <i>professional services – surveyors, architects fees</i> ➤ <i>access road construction & provision of water & sewerage and service connections</i> ➤ <i>building construction and landscaping</i> ➤ <i>site promotion and marketing</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ selection of location to make best re-use of land and buildings and infrastructure, including transport infrastructure ➤ re-use/recycling of construction wastes ➤ energy efficiency in construction (passive solar, depending on aspect) ➤ consideration of landscape impact and habitat construction from soft landscaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ disabled access to and within the buildings ➤ child and dependant care facilities ➤ safety and security ➤ consultation with under-represented groups
Flexible community learning centre	Environmental sustainability	Integration of equal opportunities
<p><i>As part of a wider housing redevelopment, the construction and promotion of a flexible community learning centre, incorporating:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>small-scale space for social economy businesses</i> ➤ <i>common ICT, meeting and library facilities</i> ➤ <i>training suites</i> <p><i>The centre will also be co-located with a local authority neighbourhood office, and with citizen's advice bureau, and the project forms an identified part of the SIP strategy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ energy efficiency included in building construction ➤ contribution to the improvement of local green and open space from associate landscaping works ➤ promotion of environmental management, if appropriate, in training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ disabled access to and within the buildings ➤ child and dependent care facilities ➤ safety and security ➤ consultation with under-represented groups ➤ consideration of the needs of different groups in the community, including women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities ➤ cost and timing of training activity to take account of different needs

⁴³ Adapted from West of Scotland HT briefing material available on the Strathclyde European Partnership website: www.wsep.co.uk.

Project Example	Illustrative Mainstreamed HT Responses	
Cluster-oriented business-development scheme	Environmental sustainability	Integration of equal opportunities
<p><i>A development programme focusing on business start-ups and SME growth in sectors with the potential for growth – supplier to multi-national electronic companies, cultural and heritage tourism, and niche market food and drink companies. Activities funded by the project will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>awareness-raising activities promoting the services available</i> ➤ <i>networking opportunities – website, possible links to research institutions</i> ➤ <i>financial support – soft loans</i> ➤ <i>access to general consultancy services to support business development, including business planning, marketing, baseline comparisons, and product development</i> ➤ <i>access to relevant higher level training opportunities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recognition of environmental drivers and associated opportunities, including rising resource costs, future legislation, customer demand and the effects on supply chains of adoption by larger companies of Environmental Management Standards ➤ ensuring the availability and integration of appropriate environmental expertise, such as research institutions and waste minimisation services ➤ inclusion of an environmental component of any associated training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ role models used in marketing to reflect full range of target groups ➤ networking events at range of times, formats and locations ➤ links to research institutions should be with a range of departments including to equal opportunities research groups ➤ range of financial facilities available, appropriate to the needs of different groups ➤ gender analysis by sector ➤ appropriate training in equal opportunities issues
High-level management training in creative industries	Environmental sustainability	Integration of equal opportunities
<p><i>A programme of development of high-level and innovation management skills for middle managers in the creative industries across Western Scotland. Specific professions might include: film & TV; architecture & design; and software development. Activities will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>marketing and promotion</i> ➤ <i>co-ordination of foresight focus groups</i> ➤ <i>learning by example and mentoring as well as theory; training by both professionals and academics</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inclusion of environmental issues as a component of training – in this case, the possibilities of using scenic locations to promote the image of the region, and the corresponding recognition to manage sensitive areas to ensure their long term protection. 	<p>Middle managers are more likely to be male than female; therefore, to redress the balance, it is important to consider the approach to recruiting participants in the project, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ promotion and marketing (including use of role models from different background) ➤ a wide range of people as mentors ➤ understanding of people-friendly policies as a component of training

6.3.3 *Enabling applicants to respond: tools to support project developers*

Project developers operate in different Structural Fund environments. In Sweden and the UK, an iterative, supportive process is available (in these cases via programme administrators) to assist them in developing and refining their projects. In other contexts, it may be up to the project developer to elaborate responses to the HTs more autonomously. Even in a supportive context, however, project developers cannot be passive. They have to 'own' the mainstreaming idea before they can apply it. The challenges faced by project developers in taking up the HTs in many ways closely mirror those of programme developers and administrators. It follows that, with some adjustment, tools and techniques targeting one group can be valuable to the other. Much work has already been done in developing tools for both these audiences. The challenge now, to an extent, is ensuring the circulation and application of these tools.

Project development toolkits have been developed in various contexts and for various sectors, which target project developers with practical advice. Many transferable principles can be derived from such work. A relatively straightforward example relevant to the Structural Funds is provided by *Auvergne*, where a two-page fiche was written to structure reflection and so support project applicants in fully understanding gender mainstreaming in training and entrepreneurship projects. The region took on a mainstreaming approach when it was realised that positive action projects alone would not be sufficient to address gender-related inequalities in unemployment patterns. A partnership process was first launched to take stock of the equal opportunities capacities in the region, to reflect on definitions which would help to win acceptance for the mainstreaming idea (taking the view that gender disparities should be the focus rather than women only), and to better understand the nature of inequalities in the region. Then, tools were developed to help to implement the approach, among them the fiche. Using the fiche, applicants are asked to demonstrate clearly the steps they have taken to identify and respond to gender-related issues.

THE AUVERGNE FICHE: HELPING PROJECT IMPLEMENTERS TO MAINSTREAM GENDER INTO TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROJECTS

Aiming to support applicants to address mainstreaming at the project application stage and to follow this approach through into the whole project lifecycle, the Auvergne guidance is presented as a series of questions organised under six headings: ongoing reflection; diagnosis; project preparation; implementation; monitoring and evaluation. The following illustrates some of the questions which guide reflection.

Diagnosis

- Obtain statistical information which gives socio-economic insights into disparity. For example:
 - Analyse numbers of unemployed men and women in the target area
 - Determine the age and level of those who will benefit from the project
 - Obtain figures on the number of unfilled vacancies in the area

- Identify any similar projects already undertaken and analyse their results
- Identify any barriers to access by men and women

Project preparation

- Have both men and women been involved in designing the project?
- Has reflection considered lifestyle? How will you address any problems related to mobility and caring responsibilities and the costs associated with these?
- What are the aims of the project in terms of:
 - male/female (re)entry to the labour market?
 - durability of this (re)entry?
 - awareness raising among trainers and employers?
- How do you plan to evaluate your intervention to show what it has achieved?

In the area of construction and regeneration, a further illustration of a tool is the checklist developed by the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) to help gender perspectives to be taken into account in housing projects (see Box). Also in the area of construction, 'BEQUEST' could be considered a parallel tool, providing a multi-disciplinary approach to built environment quality assessment which includes a toolkit for making urban projects more environmentally sustainable and assessing the urban sustainability of project proposals.

INCLUDING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN HOUSING PROJECTS: SIDA CHECKLIST, SWEDEN⁴⁴

SIDA, the Swedish Development Co-operation Agency, operates action programmes for several areas central to international development cooperation, including poverty, democracy, equality and the environment. As part of their work, they produced a checklist called 'Tips: How to include a gender perspective in housing projects'. Among the points potentially relevant to Structural Fund projects are the following:

- Acknowledge diversity (between women and men, within groups of women and men and among household structures). Check all assumptions about who does what work and who has what responsibilities relating to housing before moving ahead with an initiative.
- Support infrastructure that meets women's as well as men's needs.
- Establish close contact with community organisations and other groups promoting gender equality in the area.
- Encourage the active participation of women users in project design, implementation and evaluation.

⁴⁴ Reported in: Fitzgerald R and Michie R (2001) *Gender Mainstreaming and Housing: Fact Sheet for the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programme*, prepared for NDP Gender Equality Unit, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Ireland.

- Make provision to facilitate women's involvement in projects, such as convenient hours, collective childcare and transportation.
- Minimise paperwork and bureaucracy to encourage the involvement of representatives from immigrant groups or uneducated women and men.
- Ensure that both women and men are offered training in project management, housing design, construction and maintenance (skills transferable within the economy after completion).
- Publicise the project through information channels accessible to women, such as community centres, trades unions and women's groups.
- Promote collective organisation and action by women to increase their bargaining power and leadership skills.
- Create mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation by male and female users/participants, including communication channels with programme planners so that women users may continually articulate their concerns.

The process of requesting information from applicants can help to structure their thinking and encourage reflection and active responses. Most programmes appear to be requesting relatively structured information from applicants on the way in which they have taken the HTs into account in the design of their projects. In some cases, relevant sections of application forms have been deliberately designed to encourage applicants to reflect on the likely impact of their projects, including by setting out explicit questions and using tables to encourage detailed responses. An example here is the approach used in *Flanders* to explore environmental impacts:

Application form elements encouraging reflection about the HTs - Flanders			
Effective Environmental Protection			
What are the expected environmental protection merits of the project?			
What are the direct and indirect consequences of the project in relation to waste, and noise, air, water and soil pollution?			
What are the direct or indirect consequences of the project in terms of biodiversity, landscape, and historical and cultural heritage?			
Effect	Current situation Baseline	Consequence /impact - positive/negative - importance	Probability
Nature: Quality of the landscape			
Nature: Biodiversity			
Environment: Amount of waste produced, noise, air, water, ground pollution			
Historical and cultural heritage: Preservation, restoration, usage, ...			

Economic use of natural resources

What are the expected merits of the project in terms of economic use of natural resources?

What are the direct and indirect consequences of the project in relation to the use of natural resources: energy, water, raw materials, nature-reservations?

Does the project encourage an efficient use of natural resources or a lasting use of renewable resources?

Effect	Current situation Baseline	Consequence /impact - positive/negative - importance	Probability
Use of Energy:			
- non-renewable resources			
- renewable resources (solar, wind,...)			
- efficiency and productivity			
- use of water			
Use of raw materials: Exhaustion, re-use, recycling			
Mobility: Personal or public transport			
Use of space: Nature and open spaces, revitalising sites and buildings, intensified use			
Used materials			
Water: flow, origin			

Social development with respect for the needs of everybody

What are the expected merits of the project in terms of social development?

What are the direct and indirect consequences of the project in relation to public health, public safety?

Are all the relevant social costs considered? Is there any unloading of public costs onto other social groups?

Effect	Current situation Baseline	Consequence /impact - positive/negative - importance	Probability
(Public) Health: within or outside the company			
(Social) safety: within or outside the company			
Cost to society			
...			

In England, applicants are asked to complete checklists addressing relevant issues. These vary in their scope and complexity, as can be seen with reference to environmental sustainability. For example, in *North East England*, the Environmental Sustainability Checklist includes questions on project impacts on designated conservation areas, use of brownfield sites, waste reduction measures, improved energy and water usage, recycling, more efficient and alternative modes of travel. Similarly, in the *West Midlands*, all projects are expected to demonstrate how they improve the resource efficiency of the regional economy, for example, through (as appropriate) use of clean technologies, energy management policies, waste minimisation, greater efficiency in transport schemes, encouraging alternative modes of transport,

landscape planning and local material sourcing. Supplementary criteria are frequently used as well, depending on the type of project: in *North East England*, for example, the main criterion for capital projects is that structures are accredited as meeting BREEAM standards.⁴⁵

Where applicants respond negatively in the English checklists, reasons have to be cited. Guidance notes make clear that detailed responses are required. For example, according to the guidance provided by the *West Midlands*, an ‘unacceptable’ statement would be to say simply “*this new building will be highly energy efficient*” while an ‘acceptable’ response would be: “*this new building will be highly energy efficient due to the inclusion of a natural ventilation system, double the recommended thickness of wall insulation, plenty of natural light and a lighting control system that ensure that lighting is only used during times of occupation, as well as an energy monitoring and management system to review on-going energy efficiency gains.*”

Significantly, equal opportunities checklists and project appraisal frameworks appear to have been more difficult to devise in England. While standard criteria can be set for sustainable development - such as transport use and recycling - equal opportunities criteria can be highly dependent on the local situation. The extent to which projects are addressing disadvantaged groups is linked to identifying which groups are likely to be relevant to particular projects. This places much greater emphasis on understanding the demographic characteristics of different parts of the programme area.

Given the complexity of providing thematic information, some regions have divided the project application process into two stages. *East Wales* has a staged application process. A streamlined application form is submitted initially to project advisory groups for appraisal: as well as descriptions of the project, the form summarises how the horizontal themes will be treated in brief. If the project fits with the programme’s strategic priorities, applicants are invited to fill out the more detailed second part of the application, which examines their approach to sustainable development and equal opportunities more intensively.

6.4 Project selection

In the same way that those developing projects require guidance, those assessing the HT content of applications also need appropriate skills and tools. The need for guidance and structured support is especially great given the frequent time pressures on these actors, and the large number of other issues which they have to address in parallel in the project assessment process.

The *Norra* Objective 1 programme administrators realised that their project assessors required a tool to give additional structure to appraising project content. Finding that existing methods were not entirely applicable, the two gender equality experts in the Norrbotten and Västerbotten County Administration Boards (which administer the Funds) were asked to work out a

⁴⁵ BREEAM (Building Research Establishment’s Environmental Assessment Method) is a widely accepted certificate of environmental standard accreditation, covering building performance in the areas of: management; energy use; health and well being; pollution; transport; land use; ecology; materials; and water.

new system. The result, entitled 'Gender Equality Keys' drew on existing systems but added new elements and was tailored specifically to the Structural Fund process (see Box).

**A TOOL FOR PROJECT ASSESSORS:
'GENDER EQUALITY KEYS' (NORRA NORRLAND)**

A system of 'gender equality keys' has been developed by the gender equality experts in the two CABs of the Norra Norrland Objective 1 programme for use in project selection. The equality keys have been structured under the same headings as the Structural Fund application form and the questions have been matched to this structure. Project assessors can use these keys when working with applications and they are also to be made available on the programme website as a guide for applicants. The equality keys, therefore, can be used both in application preparation and assessment and further provide a structure for discussions with project leaders. This is particularly useful where uncertainty exists about how to tackle gender equality related issues in particular projects.

The gender equality keys are:

Project organisation

- number of women/men in all groups?
- gender division of steering group, reference group and/or other groups which are involved in the project?

Description of project background

- are the conditions for men and women described?
- are there gender divided statistics?

Project description

- do the objectives affect men/women?
- target group - men/women?
- are the activities in the project addressed to men/women?
- who gets the money - men/women? (eg. use of external services, consultancies)
- is the project owner's description under the heading 'gender equality' satisfactory?

Expected results

- are the indicators divided men/women?
- are the expected results different for men/women?
- whose demands are met - men/women?

Dissemination of results

- how are the results of the project disseminated effectively to men/women?

Conditions

- with reference to the equality keys, are there any special decisions relating to the project eg. specified gender spread in research teams etc.

The type of considerations which can be raised by the keys include:

- **Project Organisation:** is the gender balance the same in project groups with different levels of influence (ie. is the Steering Group with real powers either male or female-dominated while the balance is more equal in groups with less direct influence)?

- **Project description:** What is the gender balance in the groups finally receiving Structural Fund support (eg. a good gender balance may exist in the project team itself but a high proportion of the money may then be used for external consultancies which are often strongly male-dominated)?
- **Dissemination:** Are the differing situations and information access points for men and women taken into account in dissemination strategies? Are the results of womens' projects disseminated only to women or also to (often male-dominated) decision-makers?

To ensure the most effective implementation of the Equality Keys, two days of training were given to project assessors in the Norrbotten CAB in March 2001. As an integral and novel part of the training, genuine applications from a range of priorities and areas were used to illustrate how the keys could be used in different types of project. The idea is that the keys are applied to all the projects which are assessed, although it is recognised that, in reality, this happens to differing degrees. What has certainly emerged as a result of having this tool, and providing the associated training, is that the awareness of the issue among the Structural Fund programme team is much higher and practical help is available to put this area into action. The novelty of these gender issues to many of the assessors means that their knowledge is now much greater and the structured keys make it much more likely that a gender perspective will be applied, despite the time pressures on these staff.

An alternative approach is used in the *East of Scotland* to structure consideration of the rounder objective of sustainable development. Here, project assessors consider submissions against twelve core criteria, agreed by the partnership, which together ensure that key aspects have been addressed.

CORE CRITERIA AND PROJECT SELECTION IN THE EAST OF SCOTLAND

Following an initial technical check of the project application, appraisal within the programme executive involves an assessment of each application against a range of programme core criteria, supplemented by a series of additional measure-specific criteria. Produced as a result of East of Scotland's pilot project, the core criteria reflect the programme's comprehensive sustainable development aspirations and reflect the three components of sustainable development (economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability). In other words, sustainable development (and as part of East of Scotland's all-embracing definition, equal opportunities) have been mainstreamed into the selection criteria. These criteria are:

- *net additional jobs*: the extent to which the project will create/safeguard net additional jobs;
- *evidence of demand*: evidence of adequate market research undertaken for the project;
- *leverage*: extent to which other sources of finance would be leveraged in by the assistance;

- *infrastructure impact*: degree to which the project will make use of existing infrastructure;
- *resource efficiency*: positive impacts on water, energy and material usage, waste recycling and ‘green’ products development;
- *access and opportunity*: the extent to which the project actively promotes the full and equal participation of individuals and social groups in the local economy;
- *local added value*: the scope of the project for generating local added value (eg. local sourcing);
- *capacity building*: how far the project addresses deficiencies in local economic and social infrastructure and skills pool;
- *social inclusion*: the degree to which disadvantaged groups are integrated by the project into mainstream activities;
- *strategic integration*: links between the project and other relevant regional/national strategies; and
- *durability and feasibility*: the ability of the project to become self-sustaining over time.

The criteria are weighted differently depending on the specific Measure. Against each of these criteria, the project is scored on a graduated scale: ‘low’, ‘marginal’, ‘medium’, ‘good’ and ‘high’ (numerical values are not used to avoid the impression of a quantitative value being equated with a final assessment of project value). Projects are then grouped into different prioritisation bands, ranging from ‘poor quality’ to ‘high quality’. The advisory groups base decisions on whether to accept, defer or reject projects on these bands.

6.5 Monitoring

If the HTs are being mainstreamed, then the relevance and contribution of projects to HT-related objectives needs to be assessed, including through monitoring. The contribution of monitoring to the HTs is to track the progress of projects against objectives (and the progress of the programme, when aggregated), provide a means to generate new information helping to understand patterns and trends where they have not previously been examined, and provide valuable baseline information against which others can set realistic targets and judge their own progress.

Ultimately, monitoring must enable a key question to be answered: what is the impact of the programme on equal opportunities and environmental sustainability?

The challenge, therefore, is to generate the necessary information to answer these questions, at the same time limiting the number of HT indicators and the burden of measuring these aspects (since these are, after all, just part of the aim of projects and programmes).

Monitoring requirements relate broadly to three levels⁴⁶:

- defining context indicators;
- classifying projects in accordance to their relevance to the HT; and
- identifying output, result and impact indicators.

Monitoring arrangements have not yet fully been worked out in many regions, and as such the monitoring framework for the HTs is also often not entirely developed. However, the activities developed so far would seem to suggest that of the three requirements above the classification of projects is the least problematic. The approach suggested by the EC *Vademecum*⁴⁷ and by the Working Paper 3⁴⁸, to classify the projects as positive action, ES/EO oriented and neutral, appears to have been widely taken up in programming documents. This general classification allows the overall portfolio of projects to be assessed - at a very basic level - for the extent and depth of their environmental and gender responses. The primary aim of the general classification is to provide a straightforward overview of programme activity, showing what proportion of projects (in terms of number or value) relate to the HTs and to what extent.

Broadly, problems related to HT monitoring relate to the other two requirements, defining context indicators and output, result and impact indicators and the relative targets. The difficulties can be categorised under two distinct but related sets of problems: first, the availability of baseline data against which the outcomes of the programmes can be compared, in order to establish the effects and impacts achieved; and, second, the identification of adequate indicators and the quantification of related targets.

6.5.1 *The availability of adequate HT baseline data*

HT baseline data appear still to be problematic, partly due to the relatively novel character of the horizontal themes. Especially in the areas where HT relevance is less direct, gender disaggregated or environment related data are often not available. The problem of the lack of baseline data is being addressed in some countries. In Ireland, for example, the government has commissioned a major project for the collection of data on all areas financed under the NDP, including gender-disaggregated data (see case study box below). At the web page of the Irish Department for Gender, Equality and Law Reform (www.irishgov.ie/justice/equality/gender), a Databank of statistics on women and men in Ireland, related particularly to National Development Plan policy areas, is available on-line. In addition, some general information is provided about the concept of gender mainstreaming, how this is applied within the framework of the NDP (and of the Structural Funds) and the specific requirements for gender mainstreaming.

⁴⁶ For more details on this, see Taylor S *et al* (2000) *op.cit*.

⁴⁷ The *Vademecum* suggests categorising projects into three groups: (a) where the main focus is environment or equal opportunities; (b) environment-friendly or positive in terms of male-female equality; or (c) neutral.

⁴⁸ The Working Paper proposes the same approach as the *Vademecum* for equal opportunities, although its approach for the environment is slightly different, categorising projects into: (a) positive; (b) neutral; and (c) negative in environmental terms

**ENRICHING GENDER-RELATED BASELINE DATA:
A STUDY OF THE IRISH EQUALITY DIVISION FOR ENABLING GENDER
MAINSTREAMING IN THE NDP**

In late 1999, the Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform commissioned a consultant to develop and produce a Databank of Gender-Disaggregated Statistics in the context of the National Development Plan 2000-06 (NDP).

The development of the databank was guided by a Steering Committee representing a number of organisations with an interest in the future use of the statistics. Based on the advice of the Steering Group, it was decided to construct the databank around the six operational programmes of the NDP, focussing on the sub-programmes and individual measures contained within these operational programmes. The statistics collated aim to place the operational programmes and measures in a gender equality context, rather than act as statistics which can measure how these programmes perform in relation to gender equality.

The statistics in the databank were compiled in spring 2000 and were the most recently available at that time. The databank contains more than 500 statistics, and its construction represents the first comprehensive gathering of gender-disaggregated statistics from such a wide range of Irish sources into a single databank. Statistics are provided for the State as a whole and, where available, for the recently established NUTs II Regions, namely the Southern and Eastern Region and the Border, Midland and Western Region. The databank provides a selection of information pertinent to each statistic including: its definition; the date to which the statistic relates; the frequency of availability and the source.

6.5.2 *HT indicators*

Indicators are important to capture the actual HT-related achievements of projects, in terms of their physical outputs, intermediate results and impacts. The difficulties they involve are reflected in the fact that outcomes vary across types of intervention and therefore indicators have to capture this variety. For the current programming period, HT indicators and targets have been the subject of significant developmental work and, as a result, HT indicator coverage for the new programmes has improved overall. Many programmes have accumulated more experience of monitoring these types of project. Some have gone further and undertaken dedicated studies to improve their responses. Further assistance has been provided by: the growing range of resources and guidance produced by national and regional level bodies; the supportive efforts of EC bodies and other international organisations including the OECD, which has been very active in addressing sustainable development; the incremental attention paid to these themes by the academic community; and, the emergence of more specialists in the field whose expertise is available to practitioners.

The indicators included in the Programme Complement for the new 2000-06 SPDs would seem to be more sophisticated than they were in the past. There have been improvements in terms of the indicators chosen, and in their collection. For example, work was undertaken by DATAR in the 1997-99 programming period to encourage the French Objective 2 programmes to

collect gender-disaggregated information for a limited number of indicators. DATAR's commitment to the improvement of monitoring indicators has continued in the current programming period, when an initiative has been launched to harmonise how the various indicators are interpreted by the regions (see Box). It quickly becomes clear, in fact, that the compilation of a national overview of the impacts of the Funds would not be possible in the absence of a common approach to monitoring across the regions.

IMPROVING THE EVALUATION OF REGIONAL PROGRAMMES BY HARMONISING DEFINITIONS OF HT INDICATORS IN FRANCE

Programme evaluation is decentralised in France. It is part of the remit of the Managing Authorities in the regions to decide how to carry out regional evaluations. However, the lack of coherence between the regions during the previous 1997-99 programming period made it very difficult for DATAR to exploit the results of the regional evaluations at the national level. For the new programming period, it was decided that a limited number of indicators should be used across regions to enable evaluators to draw considerations on the programmes that could be aggregated at the national level. These indicators are integrated into PRESAGE, the computer database used to register, select, manage, monitor, evaluate and control projects co-financed by the Structural Funds in France.

In relation to the horizontal themes, four options are available to record the impact of projects, which can be 'prominent', 'positive', 'neutral' or 'negative'. In addition, a box can be ticked to indicate whether a project is strongly focused on a single horizontal theme (ie whether it is a positive action project). Projects taking up the a mainstreaming approach would claim a positive impact on the HTs but not be HT focused.

The application of this framework has been more complicated in practice than DATAR anticipated, because the meaning given to the above options – and more generally to the themes themselves – varies significantly from one region to another, depending on local contexts. For instance, indicators assessing the sustainability of economic development take on a particular significance in Brittany, where the environment has been particularly degraded, and this is different from the situation in other regions.

As a result, it was recently decided to harmonise the definitions. To do this, a typology of the typical impacts of assisted projects is being created. This will be used to improve the accuracy of the data entered into PRÉSAGE. DATAR considers this to be a crucial condition if it is to exploit the results of regional evaluations. This is part of a wider aim to expand, improve and build on evaluations.

National-level work on indicators, with particular reference to the environment, has been done in Austria, where ÖROK, the Austrian federal coordination organisation for regional policies, commissioned a study with the aim of preparing in methodological terms for the environmental part of the *interim* evaluation and improving the basis for environmental monitoring of Structural Fund programmes in the current programming period. In part, the impetus for the study came from DG Environment, which was very active in the negotiation of the Austrian programmes. A commitment to this on-going methodological evaluation is included in the SPDs. The study, entitled *Methods to Evaluate the Environmental Impact of the Structural Fund*

Programmes (Methode zur Evaluierung von Umweltwirkungen der Strukturfondsprogramme), is being undertaken by the ÖIR, an Austrian research institute. The study contract was awarded in March 2001, and the first methodological results were produced at the end of April. The basis for this work was an earlier study undertaken in preparation for the Objective 1 programme, together with subsequent work carried out in conjunction with the central monitoring body in Austria. The main outcomes of the report are illustrated in the case study box below.

STUDY ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS – AUSTRIA

A report has been commissioned in Austria addressing the issue of environmental indicators. It builds on the Commission requirement for a classification of projects into environmentally positive, neutral and negative. In the Austrian case, this three-fold categorisation has been re-classed as: (i) environmentally neutral (ie. meets Austrian legal requirements); (ii) positive or environmentally-friendly; and (iii) very positive or primarily environmentally-oriented. The difficulty in using this categorisation alone is the openness of interpretation, making comparison extremely difficult. The first stage of the report, therefore, proposes two additional components for the monitoring of environmental impacts:

- *Improved definition of the Commission's three-part environmental indicator.* Every project entered in the monitoring system must be ranked neutral, positive or very positive in four distinct areas:

- A. pollution (sewage, air, ground, noise);
- B. resource usage (water, energy, raw materials, *Hilfstoffe*, sites);
- C. waste; and
- D. biological diversity/landscape.

This differentiation should increase the quality of environmental information as a project may have no effect in one area but a positive impact in another.

- *Additional justification or information when a project is ranked either 'positive' or 'very positive'.* This is designed to provide a plausibility test for the evaluator and should describe in more detail why the positive or very positive indicator was selected. The report defines projects which can be classed as positive or very positive as:

- projects where the environmental damage is significantly less than the legal requirements; or
- where no specific legal requirements apply, projects where the environmental damage is significantly lower than in the respective sector; or
- where no specific relevant sectoral link exists, projects which significantly contribute to an improvement in the (regional or company) status quo (eg. environmental projects such as the recovery of contaminated sites or projects to reduce transport levels).

This additional justification is only required of larger projects with eligible costs in excess of €350,000. There is a set range of possible justifications under each of the four environmental headings and up to three can be selected under each category, included as a list in the electronic monitoring system.

Further, projects of this size must supply certain additional company-related information to provide a broader picture of the environmental profile of the company. These are two-fold:

- Does the project have an environmental certificate?: (i) *Öko-Audit*; (ii) ISO 14001; (iii) *Ökoprofit*; (iv) *Betrieb in Klimabündnis*; (v) other; (vi) none.
- Are there environmental activities within the firm which are over and above the legal requirements in this area?: (i) environmental employee; (ii) ISO 14001; (iii) waste economy concept; (iv) energy concept; (v) concept for the reduction of personal transport (eg. company bus); (vi) other; (vii) none.

The report notes that there are certain areas where interventions are environmentally neutral and, for these projects, only the category of neutral will appear in the electronic monitoring system. This complies with the EC requirement to have every project ranked on the basis of one of the three indicators. The report includes a guideline matrix which provides examples under each of the three indicators (or states where an intervention is considered environmentally neutral) for every relevant intervention code.

Finally, the report proposes that a detailed assessment of environmental impact be undertaken for large projects in excess of €3.5 million. In the 1995-99 programming period, 49 percent of total project costs were associated with two percent of the projects, which had eligible costs over €3.5 million. Given this financial weighting, a more in-depth environmental assessment for projects of this size was considered justified. An additional questionnaire would therefore be applied to all large projects which were not classified as environmental projects. Environmental projects co-financed by the federal environmental agency KKA undergo a separate impact assessment as part of the KKA selection procedures. The additional assessment would be based on qualitative rather than quantitative information and the project discussion phase prior to final funding approval provides a suitable forum for talking through the questionnaire in greater depth. This information acts both as a plausibility check for evaluators and as a basis for the selection of possible case studies for the mid-term and *ex post* evaluations.

A summary of the steps which are now required in Austria for the monitoring of environmental projects on the basis of the study is as follows:

Table 6.4: Environmental monitoring for small, medium and large projects in Austria

Small projects (eligible costs less than €350,000)	Medium projects (eligible costs between €350,000 and €3.5 million)	Large projects (eligible costs in excess of €3.5 million)
Sector analysis* Environmental indicator of the EC applied across four environmental areas	Sector analysis Environmental indicator of the EC applied across four environmental areas Written justification where positive/very positive indicator is selected Additional company- related indicators	Sector analysis Environmental indicator of the EC applied across four environmental areas Written justification where positive/very positive indicator is selected Additional company-related indicators Detailed assessment of environmental impact

* The report considered that initial conclusions about environmental impact can be drawn from the categorisation of projects and firms by sector. General information about the specific energy and raw material usage, as well as emission production, of sectors supported under the programme can provide pointers to the potential environmental effects likely to be associated with its implementation.

The next stage of the methodological study is to apply this system to the monitoring data which are now being entered into the system to test its effectiveness and propose any modifications required in advance of its use for the interim evaluation. A potential problem with this is the timescale - the test phase and proposed modifications were planned for early 2002 but the late start of the programmes means that data which currently exists in this area is weak and would not comprise a good basis for testing the methodology. Overall, this methodology should make it possible for the interim evaluation to assess environmental impacts on the basis of intervention code, project size, EU indicator category and sector. The additional justification required for projects between €350,000 and €3.5 million also means that an on-going evaluation can be carried out in greater detail than the basic EC criteria would allow and that changes across the programming period can be tracked. This may help to show whether awareness of environmental measures is changing and emerging in the way in which the impacts are being described in monitoring information.

6.5.3 Setting reasonable targets

Developmental work on monitoring has been done in other countries than Austria, including the UK. The box below illustrates the example of the *West Midlands*, where a mainstreamed approach to the HTs has been translated into the application of a standard set of indicators across all programme themes.

HT TARGETS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS PROGRAMME

In the Programme Complement for West Midlands, programme targets have been set for different objectives under the horizontal themes. With the indicators the same across each theme, it is possible to review overall progress towards meeting the themes' objectives for the programme as a whole and for individual Measures.

Under the sustainable development theme, there are three key issues: safeguarding air, soil and water quality; protecting landscape and wildlife; and positive urban environment. A set of standardised outputs with varying targets has been set for each issue including: environmental businesses assisted; environmental innovation projects supported; capacity building initiatives; public transport initiatives; and environmental enhancements.

A similar set of common indicators has been used to chart progress in the four key issues under equal opportunities (under-representation of disadvantaged groups in growing industries; over-representation in lower paid, lesser quality jobs; lower activity rates; and access barriers to employment and training opportunities). The output measures include: proportion of disadvantaged people as a share of beneficiaries; disadvantaged people benefiting from European Social Funds; disadvantaged people entering new employment; and women returners benefiting from ESF support.

Defining HT targets appears to be a particularly difficult task for programme managers, especially because of the limited past attempts to measure the impacts of policies on these areas. Research evidence suggests that in some cases the identification of relevant indicators has been considered as the primary concern at the stage of programme and PC drafting, while a more accurate quantification of the targets pursued is deferred to the mid-term review of programmes when the environmental performances of the projects implemented will enable the identification of trends and forecasts.

6.5.4 *Monitoring as a tool for policy-making*

Increasing involvement of *ad hoc* experts in the definition of indicators and targets seems a common trend for both themes. This confirms the observation that the value of monitoring as a tool for programming is now shared increasingly among programme managers and policy-makers. The importance of monitoring as a pivotal element for understanding the patterns of economic development and for directing policies has already been discussed in other papers.⁴⁹ It appears that, in the establishment of current monitoring frameworks, more attention is being paid to the effectiveness of data collection and to the relevance of data for evaluation. In addition, *ad hoc* capacity building activities are often being planned in advance and undertaken to ensure that project applicants know how to generate relevant data and interpret the indicators. An example of this 'functional approach' to monitoring is in *Toscana*. Here, the programme management has defined the framework for monitoring and evaluation of the SPD at an early stage, identifying the consultants in charge of the two activities even before the approval of the Programme Complement (PC). This enables the programme management to

⁴⁹ Taylor, S *et al* (2000) *op. cit.*

benefit from the expertise of the consultants at a stage where this can feed into the drafting of the PC. In relation to the monitoring and evaluation of the environmental aspects of the programme, the framework established includes:

- an articulation of the environmental evaluation of the programme by types of project, the starting point being that all projects produce effects on the environment, either directly or indirectly; and
- the consideration of direct and indirect impacts, as well as secondary impacts (ie. the positive or negative environmental consequences of each intervention).

Environmental monitoring indicators are being developed and integrated across all measures, in a cooperative process involving the programme secretariat, the measure managers, the regional environmental authority and the consultants in charge of monitoring and evaluation.

6.6 Evaluation of the HTs

Under the Structural Fund regulations, it is now an obligation for Structural Fund evaluations to address the HTs. This promises to be beneficial in at least two respects:

- demonstrating any contribution which has been made in concrete terms, so verifying the relevance (or otherwise) of these issues in programmes; and
- ensuring that the necessary information is generated to enhance the incorporation of these issues into subsequent activities, including by enabling the identification and sharing of good practice.

The obligation has been followed through already by the EC in its guidance on the forthcoming mid-term evaluation,⁵⁰ which is intended as an “aid to those commissioning and those undertaking a mid term evaluation”. In the guidance, the overall aim of interim evaluation - “to assess the initial results of the various forms of assistance and to make recommendations for any changes needed to ensure that they achieve their objectives” - is disaggregated into six more specific objectives, of which one is:

“To assess the extent to which horizontal priorities - equal opportunities and the environment in particular - have been integrated into the forms of assistance”.

Among the explicit aims here is to assess the “effectiveness of the policy of ‘mainstreaming’, leading to recommendations, if necessary, for more effective integration of these priorities into all forms of assistance” (p5). Given that planning will be starting soon for the mid-term evaluation process, reflection on how to operationalise this obligation is timely.

Tools and methodological support are needed to increase the quantity, quality, consistency and comparability of gender- and environment-related evaluation findings. Programmes face significant challenges in ensuring that their mid-term evaluations address the HTs in an effective way, particularly given that time, resources and specialist knowledge may be limited.

⁵⁰ DG Regio (2000) *The Mid Term Evaluation of Structural Fund Interventions*, Working Paper No 8, 5 December 2000, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels.

In terms of design choices, there are two possible overall approaches:

- to ring-fence HT aspects and address them with dedicated thematic evaluation studies; or
- to address HT aspects as an *integral* part of mainstream evaluation activity.

Both approaches present particular opportunities and risks, which are set out in more detail in Table 6.3. It is certainly the case that thematic evaluations focused on HTs have been extremely valuable in the past in focusing increased attention on HT issues, and facilitating a step change in how these issues are addressed. For example, a Scottish study which considered the environmental aspects of 1994-99 programmes increased knowledge about what had been undertaken previously in terms of mainstreamed approaches (much of which had not been widely recognised), and generated ideas about policy design and delivery which have been integrated into 2000-06 programmes.⁵¹ However, while thematic evaluations remain possible, at the discretion of relevant programming authorities, and may in some contexts be extremely beneficial, it appears that the EC is at the same time encouraging an approach in which mainstream evaluations more routinely address the HTs in an integrated way.

Table 6.3: Relative merits of separate and integral evaluation of the HTs

Separate thematic evaluation of HTs	Integral evaluation of HTs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensures themes receive significant attention. ✓ Facilitates the selection of thematic experts as evaluators. ✓ Useful where HT issues are new and a focused approach would help to bring a step change in awareness and ability. ✓ Where they are undertaken across multiple programmes (eg. as is being considered in Scotland), they can help promote an active exchange of practice and draw wider lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensures continuity as the HT will be addressed in all stages of evaluation (<i>ex ante</i>, interim and <i>ex post</i>). ✓ Useful where HT issues are well understood. ✓ Can reinforce the perception of the HTs as horizontal elements, relevant to all aspects and phases of programming, and at the heart of progressive, integrated economic development approaches. ✓ Potentially cost effective compared to commissioning separate studies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Cost implications of additional separate studies. ✗ Risk of perpetuating the perception that the HTs are a stand-alone issue. ✗ Risk of lack of continuity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Risk of superficial treatment of HTs, perceived as just one of many elements to be dealt with - and not the most important. ✗ Possibility that HT aspects will be addressed qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

An example of HT integration as part of a wider evaluation is provided by *Toscana*. The secretariat of the SPD has selected an evaluator for the whole programming period, specifying in the terms of reference that the chosen evaluator should have sufficient expertise in environmental sustainability to be able to undertake effective evaluation of these aspects in parallel with wider

⁵¹ Faulk A, Clement K and Philip Immirzi C (2000) *Project-level Evaluation of the Environmental Impact of the 1994-99 Funds in Scotland and Influence on the Development of the 2000-2006 Programmes*, Paper to the EC Conference 'Evaluation for Quality', Fourth Conference on the Evaluation of the Structural Funds, Edinburgh, 17-19 September 2000.

evaluation. The framework for the environmental aspects of the evaluation, within the broader mid-term and *ex post* evaluation exercises is set out below.

EVALUATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE TUSCAN SPD

In *Toscana*, the programme Secretariat has selected the evaluators for the 2000-06 SPD at an early stage of programme implementation, in order to allow the preparation and implementation of a coherent and integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation.

The methodology set out for the *interim* and *ex post* evaluation of the programme, includes a specific section on the environmental aspects of the programme. This entails the subdivision of the evaluation into distinct phases as follows:

- The collection of all relevant information included in the projects
- Beneficiary surveys
- The elaboration of analyses of the data gathered
- The reconstruction of the degree of implementation of the interventions:
 - A first comparison between the environmental effects delivered with those estimated in the environmental *ex ante* evaluation
 - The identification of the environmental components (water, soil, air etc.) which are most relevant to the programme and the measurement of the first effects delivered
 - A first verification of the coherence between the environmental objectives of the SPD and the results that can be forecast from the implementation of the projects approved
 - A first assessment of the environmental impact of the projects implemented by territory
 - A first quantification of environmental effects which were not anticipated by the *ex ante* environmental appraisal
 - The elaboration of an aggregate picture of the environmental effects delivered at measure, priority and programme level

The evaluation is intended to capture both direct and indirect impacts, and also secondary impacts (ie. the positive or negative environmental consequences of each intervention), the starting point being that all projects implemented under the framework of the SPD will have an impact on the environment.

It remains to be seen how prominent the HTs will be in the mid-term evaluations. They are perhaps most likely to be taken up systematically where the HTs are explicitly built into the operational and specific objectives of programmes, since the EC guidance states that the analysis of effectiveness will be based on the assessment of achievements relative to the operational objectives set out at measure level in the PCs and the specific objectives contained in the SPD priorities.

In addressing the HTs, it will be necessary to identify methodological responses which are appropriate in scale and scope. With regard to scale, the

issue is to ensure that the extent of HT-related evaluation elements is proportional to the HT relevance of the interventions being addressed. Scope is more complex. Where equality issues and/or environmental sustainability are being mainstreamed into economic development programmes, the aims of evaluation include, but are not confined to, ascertaining what has been achieved in terms of economic outcomes - so-called summative evaluation. In fact, three possible inter-related dimensions of evaluation activity can be highlighted, each with specific merits: summative evaluation, formative evaluation (addressing process) and evaluation as a developmental process in itself. It is argued that programmes should consider the potential to pursue all three dimensions, given that a precondition to delivering responses to the HTs is that they be integrated into processes and understood by actors, and that programmes are currently engaged in an active learning process which could be further facilitated.

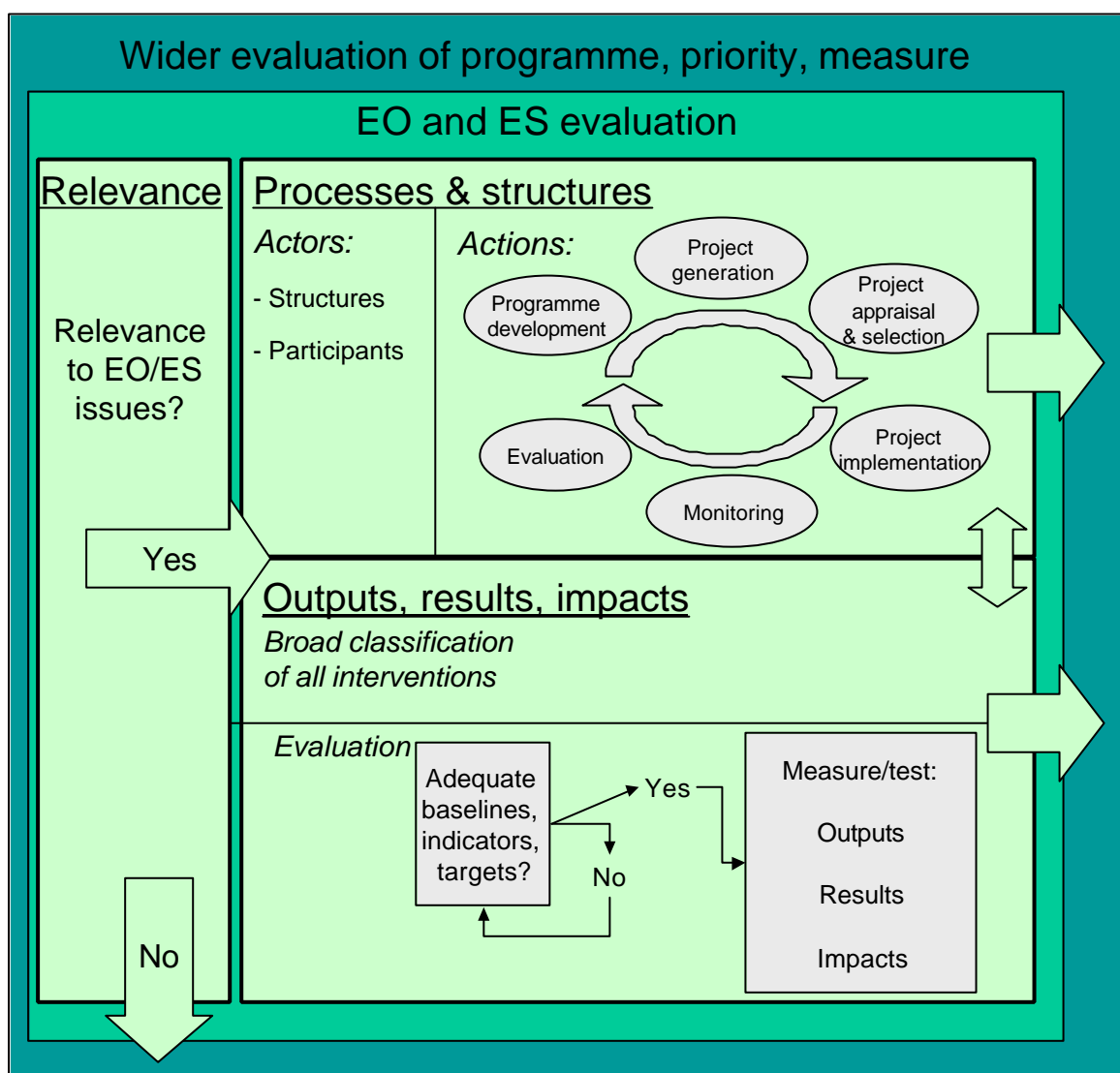
- **Summative evaluation:** This is a core dimension of economic development evaluation. In the case of the HTs, it would be focused on measuring the activities of the programme in terms of their concrete HT-related outputs, results and impacts (the latter being more pronounced at the *ex post* stage), assessing these relative to initial targets and trends in baseline statistics. It would aim to capture the direct and indirect impacts produced by interventions on environmental sustainability and the respective situations of men and women.
- **Formative evaluation:** For the HTs, this involves assessing how extensively and effectively environmental and equality issues have been integrated into programme systems and processes. It is especially appropriate at the mid-way stage of a programme, since adjustments can still be made to processes and systems, if they are found to be wanting. Measuring changes to systems and processes and the incremental learning and adjustment processes which they reflect is especially important when a new policy impetus is being integrated, since these changes should ultimately be what leads to greater HT-related outputs and impacts. Addressing processes also enables the efforts of a partnership to take issues on board to be rewarded, even before they have necessarily become visible in terms of project outcomes.
- **The evaluation process as a catalyst for learning:** Where evaluation is undertaken in a participatory, inclusive, discursive way, the process itself can raise further awareness about the HTs, encourage them to be taken forward more actively and generate ideas about how to do this in specific contexts. In this way, evaluation itself can nurture learning processes. This dimension is often neglected in evaluation design, but is particularly important in a field such as gender mainstreaming or promoting sustainable development, where progress is conditional on building the necessary capacity.

Reflecting these observations about scope and scale, Figure 6.2 below schematically represents HT-related elements of interim evaluation. According to this, there could be three stages to HT-aware evaluation. The first involves an assessment process helping effort to be focused where it is most relevant. The second and third stages would be undertaken in parallel,

and comprise formative evaluation, addressing processes and structures, and summative, focusing on outputs, results and intermediate impacts.

The diagram places these elements within, rather than apart from, the wider framework of evaluation. This is a useful conceptual approach, promoting the idea that HT-related evaluation questions can be interpreted, where possible, as a coherent complementary dimension of the wider evaluation taking place, rather than as an additional stand-alone exercise.

Figure 6.2: The elements of HT evaluation



In order to focus attention and evaluation resources appropriately, the first stage of HT-aware evaluation is to consider the relevance of the programme and its constituent parts to the HTs. The systems which are now in use to broadly classify the contribution and relevance of projects to each HT, (in accordance with EC advice), provide a useful shortcut enabling evaluators to target their work. Different programmes have configured their classifications differently. Some appear to distinguish between 'positive' (ie positive action), 'oriented' (ie mainstreamed) and 'neutral' actions while others have classified

project implications as positive, neutral or negative. It remains to be seen which classifications will prove to be most helpful in providing a head start for evaluation. Certainly, the former approach, which distinguishes positive action responses from mainstreaming, would seem more useful in efficiently helping to show the degree to which a mainstreaming approach has begun to be embraced.

Once the overall relevance of programme elements has been assessed, two parallel evaluation processes would be started. First, evaluation of the outcomes of implemented interventions would involve the assessment of the adequacy of baseline, indicator and target data (where necessary supplementing and improving this), the measurement of outputs, results and initial impacts and the assessment of these outcomes relative to the targets and forecasts initially set. Second, process or formative evaluation would involve addressing the set of actions, systems and procedures that characterise each implementation phase and the actors involved in each, considering how and where HT aspects had been integrated. As the figure highlights, the two parallel stages of evaluation inform each other and also feed into the more general evaluation process. Addressing the third, related dimension of evaluation mentioned in the list above, undertaking these evaluations in an interactive way, focused on raising questions rather than prescribing answers, also has the potential directly to facilitate growth in knowledge and capacities and improvements to processes.

In addressing the HTs, evaluators should be assisted by the foundations which have already been laid, including by *ex ante* assessments of the environmental and equality-related situation, and the frameworks of monitoring indicators which significant effort has been devoted to elaborating, and which include HT elements. The context may be particularly supportive where the HTs have been integrated into evaluation frameworks in a systematic way from an early stage of programming, as in *Toscana*. Nonetheless, evaluating HT aspects of programmes will still pose significant challenges.

First, the availability of reliable and up-to-date information on HT outcomes is not guaranteed, even though indicator frameworks have been elaborated, and this may impede evaluators in some cases. Even where data is being collected, early feedback suggests that there are teething problems in terms of varying interpretations of what should be reported under standard indicator headings. Second, the difficulty of balancing competing demands for limited resources could lead to 'issue overload' which in turn could reduce the quality of evaluations across all areas. Third, it may prove difficult in some contexts, especially where integrated evaluations are being undertaken, to find suitably experienced evaluators who are able to supplement Structural Fund and evaluation expertise with strong knowledge and ability in multiple horizontal issues of which environmental sustainability and gender mainstreaming are just two. A practical proposal to address this issue has been made in Scotland, where it has been suggested that evaluators will be required to demonstrate specific expertise in the horizontal themes, combining in consortia if necessary to do this. On a more positive note, while many evaluators are likely to have limited relevant experience (especially as regards gender issues) in the interim evaluation round, experiences gained now should ensure the situation is more favourable in successive evaluation rounds.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This report has addressed the integration of the two horizontal themes of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities into the current round of Structural Fund programming. Requirements to respond to these issues became more extensive and systematic in the 2000-06 Structural Fund regulations.

To provide essential context, the report first explored the definition and origin of the horizontal themes (HTs), placing them in the broader framework of the long-term international and European development goal of sustainable development, which combines three elements: a commitment to economic growth; a consideration of social cohesion and quality of life concerns; and, a determination to ensure environmental sustainability. The rationale for integrating environmental sustainability and equal opportunities as horizontal dimensions of economic development programming was also addressed, emphasising in particular the strong economic as well as social justifications for this.

The paper then considered how requirements to respond to these issues have evolved over time in the Structural Fund arena, focusing particularly on the challenges posed by the most recent integration strategy, 'mainstreaming'. This approach offers a route to systematically embed equity and environment-related concerns into economic development by integrating awareness of these issues into every level and stage of programming and every policy area - in particular, aiming to inform every decision-making forum and decision.

A review of the content of selected 2000-06 programmes illustrated how the themes have been translated in practice into programming documents (often showing more systematic and developed responses for the longer-established HT - environment). This review illustrates the significant, but also uneven, progress which has been made in terms of integrating these themes more robustly and systematically into programming documents. Opportunities for 'positive action' are still frequently provided (a vertical integration through dedicated environmental or equal opportunities measures or project opportunities). In addition, there is more frequent evidence of the 'mainstreaming' approach, with the HTs integrated horizontally, in the documents at least. Elements of a mainstreaming-type approach include integration of HT-related issues into the regional analysis and strategic objectives, reinforcing their wide relevance, and inclusion of measure-specific or programme-wide selection criteria encouraging environmental or gender dimensions to be built into projects more generally. Applicants are more often being asked explicitly to consider the implications of interventions for gender equality and the environment, and to build in more proactive responses where this is appropriate. To provide a deeper understanding of the responses illustrated by programmes, the reasons for approaches taken were also explored, and visual illustrations used to characterise the different approaches adopted.

The implementation of 2000-06 programmes is now underway, and many programme managers and their partnerships are reporting significant practical challenges in operationalising the commitments to gender mainstreaming and

environmental sustainability contained in their programming documents. The process of translating a commitment on paper into the content of projects and the processes by which they are generated and delivered is complex in any policy environment, but in the Structural Funds, this is particularly the case. There are three main reasons for the difficulty. First, these themes have implications at the level of the individual and the way they perceive and interact with the economy, society and the environment. Second, in order to integrate new policy directions into the complex systems which Structural Fund programmes represent, a holistic approach needs to be taken, addressing all stages, types and levels of activity and all involved actors and organisations, and obtaining ownership for these questions across a wide and diverse partnership. Third, given the variety of contexts in which Structural Fund programmes are designed and delivered, there are no standard solutions to mainstreaming the HTs.

Taking cognisance of the practical difficulties faced by many programmes in operationalising the mainstreamed HTs, the report has placed strong emphasis on providing a wide range of practically oriented examples, tools, methods and frameworks. These relate broadly to two areas: the development of individual and institutional capacity; and the integration of the HTs into the various stages of the programming cycle.

Capacity building at the individual *and* institutional levels is essential to mainstreaming the HTs, since the lack of understanding of the meaning or relevance of these approaches among partnerships impedes their practical application. Concepts and techniques need to be communicated widely.

The paper used a wide range of examples to demonstrate how building the capacity of individuals to address the HTs can help to overcome constraints. A key message is that capacity building is an iterative, incremental process, which can be most effective where programmes implement a complementary range of capacity-building measures, including both general awareness raising and more specialist or applied development. An important initial stage of building capacity is to demystify what is involved in mainstreaming the HTs, emphasising the integral relevance of equality and environment-related questions to mainstream economic development practices.

Building capacity also involves facilitating adjustments in the institutions which deal with the HTs. At a broad level, experience across countries shows that, over the last decade, strong emphasis has been placed on the identification of adequate, institutional responses to enable the integration of environmental or gender-related issues in many facets of policy, not just the Structural Funds. Such moves are often part of broad governmental commitments to the HTs. Institutional adaptation increases the scope for policy coordination, consistency and continuity. It can involve structural changes, such as the creation of new *ad hoc* institutions or the structural adaptation of existing ones, and/or cultural changes eg. to internal working methods and approaches to policy. In the Structural Fund field, institutional adaptation has included, for example, the integration of horizontal theme responsibilities into the mainstream activities of those participating in programme administration, and the adjustment of relevant programme

management structures (including increased awareness of the gender balance of decision-making structures such as the Monitoring Committee).

In terms of the programming cycle, the operationalisation of the HTs across Structural Fund programmes ideally takes places at each stage: programme design, project generation and selection, monitoring and ultimately evaluation. The various strategic components and implementation phases of a programme have cross-cutting interactions, in a loop of interdependences where the effectiveness of the integration in one component of strategy or implementation is enhanced or weakened by the way in which the HTs are integrated in others. This reinforces the need for a holistic and consistent approach, which is challenging to achieve in practice. Experience reviewed by the report indicates that, in addition to capacity-building activities, the integration of the HTs across all components and stages of programmes implementation can be enhanced by the following:

- evidence-based policy-making and programme design;
- a process of project generation which not only indicates clearly what is required of applicants, but also seeks to reassure them and is supportive in facilitating their responses;
- the integration of HT considerations consistently into project selection processes; use of monitoring as a tool to focus attention on relevant patterns (which may not previously have been being measured) and to quantify and make visible relevant achievements; and
- evaluation, where an approach is recommended which addresses not only gender and environment-related outcomes, but also the processes by which these have been delivered and, in addition, uses the initial evaluation process itself as a tool to encourage reflection and debate.

An overall message of the review is that those programmes which have embraced the issues most actively appear to have made most progress.

Looking to the future, there are grounds to anticipate that the systematic integration of equality and environmental awareness into the delivery of economic development interventions could, over time, assist actors, organisations and policies to evolve towards more ambitious and integrated responses more in line with the broader and longer term objective of sustainable development.

Lastly, it is argued that there are four necessary elements for a sustainable approach to the HTs within Structural Fund programming. The starting point is to ensure *clarity*, in particular that the meaning and relevance of the HTs is fully appreciated and understood, addressing areas of doubt or uncertainty. *Integration* of the HTs across policies and programming phases requires holistic approaches involving all stages, structures and mechanisms. *Commitment* needs to be realised in effective instruments, procedures or systems for developing the capacity of individuals and institutions to respond, and for taking the issues forward in concrete ways. Finally *continuity* requires a co-ordinated and integrated approach within the wider policy environment that extends beyond the scope and lifetime of the Structural Fund programmes.