

Promoting gender equality at the EBRD



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In line with the Bank's mandate to promote transition to market economies in its countries of operations, it recognises that gender equality and the promotion of equality of opportunity is a fundamental aspect of a well-functioning economy. Given its distinct features as a project-based transition-focused institution, the EBRD can support clients to structure their investments to empower women economically through initiatives that can directly improve women's economic well-being by preventing gender discrimination and mitigating the negative effects of lack of equality. These projects encourage women entrepreneurs' access to finance, support equality of opportunity in the workplace and promote career advancement, to ensure that women, as well as men, benefit equally from the Bank's investments.

Gender at the EBRD

The EBRD's Gender Action Plan (GAP) was approved in May 2009 by the Board of Directors. The GAP addressed the need to have specific interventions to increase the Bank's positive impact on opportunities for women and gender equality. In April 2013, the Board of Directors of the EBRD endorsed the Strategic Gender Initiative (SGI), which represents the evolution of the GAP and focuses on how the Bank will address identified country-level gender gaps and promote women's socio-economic empowerment, equality of opportunity and participation in the labour market, building on the lessons learned from the GAP. The three components of the SGI are the promotion of:

- ▶ access to employment and skills
- ▶ access to finance
- ▶ access to services.

The SGI will focus mainly on the SEMED region, Central Asian countries and Turkey. The EBRD's Gender team is responsible for implementing the SGI and coordinating the initiative across the Bank.

Over the past few years and particularly during 2012, the Bank has made significant progress in implementing the Gender Action Plan (GAP). Fifteen projects have been or

are being implemented spanning a range of the Bank's sectors. Below are some highlights of 2012:

Access to finance and Business Advisory Services

One of the key areas of the Bank's gender efforts is the promotion of gender equality in the marketplace, namely improving access to finance and building the capacity of women-owned and women-managed businesses in order to support market growth and expansion.

Through its investment projects, the EBRD has sought to improve access to credit for women entrepreneurs by supporting its client banks in increasing their portfolio of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) owned and/or managed by women and in establishing Women in Business (WiB) programmes. Such credit lines have been provided to the Bank's Turkish clients T. Garanti Bankası A.Ş. and Yapı ve Kredi Bankası A.Ş. Preparations are under way to expand the WiB programmes to other Turkish client banks over the coming years.

One of the ways that the EBRD promotes entrepreneurship in the region is through the Small Business Support (SBS) team, which provides access to and works with

experts at a local and international level, laying the foundations for innovative and sustainable businesses. From bee-keeping in Baku, cashmere in Mongolia, air conditioners in Egypt, wineries in Georgia to eco-tourism in Montenegro, the SBS network of experts have skills in quality management, marketing, engineering and beyond. SBS builds a knowledge network and becomes the vital link to a unique array of local consultants. For companies looking to compete internationally experts from across the world are brought in. The aim for all of SBS's clients is the same: if there is openness to new ideas, change and investment, SBS can give entrepreneurs access to unique insights, advice and the know-how to take their businesses to another level. The team has adopted these core principles to provide extensive support for women starting their own businesses. During 2012, there were Women in Business programmes under way in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine, helping women to start and manage their owned thriving businesses.

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Municipal infrastructure initiatives

The way in which municipal services are designed and implemented can mean that men and women do not enjoy an equal share of the benefits that these improved services can bring. The EBRD has been introducing gender considerations into the development of municipal and environmental infrastructure projects so that services developed meet both women's and men's needs as consumers. The Bank launched several municipal sector projects in order to develop and strengthen areas of the Bank's investments with a strong potential for promoting gender equality and access to services for all.

Based on the Bank's experience of its two pilot projects in the Kyrgyz Republic, in 2012 a Municipal Advisory Services project was developed for the City of Bishkek. The project supports the City to ensure services are demand driven and to improve human resource policies and practices both from an equal opportunities and commercially focused perspective. The project consists of three main components which include: developing processes to include gender considerations in the design and delivery of demand-driven municipal services; promoting equal opportunities in HR policies and practices and; adopting an approach for gender-responsive budgeting and capacity-building to deliver demand-driven and customer response services.

Equal Opportunities Initiative

The EBRD has been developing an Equal Opportunities Initiative to promote equal opportunities and HR best practices by its clients with a particular focus on women's equality of opportunity in the workplace. Advisory services have been provided to clients so that they can identify what measures they could adopt. Working with the companies' senior management priority actions are drawn up that can relate to a number of initiatives such as work-life balance policies, training and development, recruitment and career progression and corporate behaviour as well as provision of basic facilities.

Gender opportunities in the SEMED region

With the expansion into SEMED, the EBRD is actively developing its project pipeline and relevant gender gaps are being identified. For example, the Bank is working with a prospective client bank in Jordan focused on the development of a dedicated credit line and specialised services for women borrowers. The Bank is also engaging with prospective clients in the municipal and infrastructure sector and, where possible, gender issues will be considered for incorporation into the project design, implementation and operation of services such as the provision of water. In Morocco, the Bank has launched a study to support a potential microfinance institution client who intends to design products to help women borrowers. The Bank is also in discussion with a number of other potential clients in SEMED with regards to carrying out equal opportunities audits.

Women in Business panel and awards ceremony

At every Annual Meeting since 2002, the EBRD has held a Women in Business panel inviting leading business men and women to share their experiences and to underscore the activities and achievements of female entrepreneurs in the Bank's region and beyond. The EBRD Women in Business awards ceremony recognises women from the region who have made outstanding contributions to developing or leading businesses in different sectors. During the Annual Meeting in London in May 2012, the Women in Business panel focused on the challenges facing women in the knowledge economy and discussed ways to better capitalise on women's potential as innovators, entrepreneurs and industry leaders. The awards were presented to three women for their achievements in banking, industry and entrepreneurship.

IFI cooperation and collaboration

In April 2012, the EBRD hosted a two-day workshop sponsored by the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) Gender Working Group in Turkey. The workshop focused on access to and quality of employment for women. The

general objective of the workshop was to bring together experts and decision-makers from MDBs and relevant government agencies to discuss issues in key economic areas, to explore good practices for replication and to identify key actions for accelerating and promoting good practice and progress.

In 2012, the EBRD was elected to chair the MDB Working Group on Gender for the next two years and this will provide a useful platform to take this work forward.

Promoting equal opportunities and HR best practices at IDO, Turkey



During the due diligence of the recently privatised ferry company Istanbul Deniz Otobusleri (IDO) in Turkey, the Bank identified that of the 626 direct employees only 17 were women. The client agreed to a review of the staffing issue and to take measures to improve the ratio with the assistance of a technical cooperation project. Specific recommendations for IDO with respect to HR practices and policies were put forward which IDO is now implementing.

For example, IDO has amended its management policy to include a new sub-policy of "Diversity and Equality of opportunity". Furthermore, IDO has committed to amending sub-contractor agreements, as they come up for renewal during 2013, to align them with its gender equality and diversity policy and implementation plan. Meanwhile, IDO has taken on board recommendations made with regards its recruitment policies, in line with international good practice. As a result the number of its direct women employees has almost tripled and the number of indirect sub-contracted female employees doubled.