



Gender Equality Action Plan 2003-2004

promoting equal opportunities in the labour market

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Contents

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Employment and Training Corporation
Malta

Acknowledgements

The Employment and Training Corporation would like to thank the Commission for the Advancement of Women, the Department for Women in Society, the Ministry for Social Policy and the Labour Market Policy Committee for their contribution to the drafting of this report. A note of thanks goes also to those individuals and organisations who have contributed in any way.

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The Employment and Training Corporation is pleased to present this Action Plan at an important phase in the development of labour market policy in Malta. The need to empower women in the labour market has been felt for some time now, and equal treatment for both men and women workers is upheld by the Constitution of Malta.

John Camilleri Chief Executive

For the Social and Economic Benefit of our Country



ETC believes that greater female participation in the labour market would be of both social and economic benefit and is committed to enabling this participation. This commitment was recently given added impetus in the Joint Assessment Paper of Employment Policy Priorities, signed by both the Government of Malta and the European Commission in October 2001. In this Paper, one of the top policy priorities to which Malta is committed is increasing the female employment rate and enabling women and men to balance work and family life.

In line with Malta's gender policy more generally, as well as its post-Beijing commitments and the guidelines in the European Employment Strategy, ETC endorses a mainstream approach to gender issues. This approach seeks to bring the

needs and concerns of both women and men into the development of policies and programmes. The goal is to make the labour market equally inclusive of both women and men. This means that both are to have equal access to employment of one's choice and to decent working conditions; to enjoy equal reward for work of equal value; and to be able to balance one's work with one's family responsibilities.

ETC believes that women's position in the mainstream labour market may be strengthened through a range of targeted actions. Through this plan, ETC will seek first of all to ensure that its own services are equally open to both women and men, and that the impact of its services is closely monitored and brought into our planning systems.

The plan will also help women to break into new fields and forms of work; to upgrade their skills; and to enable them to progress in their careers.

This two-year plan is the first of its kind, and will provide a platform for future plans to build upon. Efforts have been made to develop the plan together with experts in the field, and to deliver many of its actions in partnership with other entities.

ETC would like to thank all those entities and individuals who helped to formulate this plan.

ETC will continue to welcome all suggestions that enhance policy and practice on women, men and the labour market, as well as proposals for joint initiatives on the theme of equal opportunities and gender equity.

1.0 The Policy Context

The commitment to promote equal opportunities for women in the labour market builds upon, and complements, other provisions that have sought to strengthen women's social and economic status over the years.

1.1 The Local Scenario

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and has been an integral part of public policy for many years.



“The State shall promote the equal right of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and for this purpose shall take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination between the sexes by any person, organisation or enterprise: the State shall in particular aim at ensuring that women workers enjoy equal rights and the same wages for the same work as men.”

The Constitution of Malta, Article 14

In 1989 a Circular from the Office of the Prime Minister declared it government policy to promote gender equality and to eliminate discrimination, and set up a national machinery to assist government in its task. This was further strengthened when in 1991, the Constitution was amended to include the prohibition of sex discrimination. Malta had now acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Article 14 of the Constitution reflects Malta's commitment to promoting gender equality.

This commitment has been made manifest in a number of legislative amendments in recent years. In 1993, Act XXI incorporated various reforms to those legal provisions popularly known as the 'Family Law'. The Act sought to promote a culture based on consensual decision-making in marriage. Provisions that discriminated against married women, as spouses or as mothers,

were repealed, and recognition was given to the fundamental principle of equality between the spouses. Married women were now to assume the same duties and powers over their children as the father, and to participate in the administration of property acquired during marriage.

More recently, the White Paper issued in 2001 to propose changes to Malta's employment and industrial relations also seeks to strengthen the position of women in the labour market. In fact, raising the female participation rate is cited in the opening commentary as being a key socio-economic target that inspired the proposed changes. The revised law would provide for the issuing of Legal Notices on such family-friendly measures as maternity and parental leave, as well as leave for urgent family reasons. New articles also provide for the granting of minimum employment conditions for those working on reduced hours, and for the pro-rating of rights for part-time workers. The White Paper proposes a whole new section to protect

against discrimination, both in recruitment and during the course of employment. It addresses the issue of equal remuneration for work of equal value, and it offers protection against harassment at the place of work.

February 2002 saw the issue of the White Paper proposing a Gender Equality Act. In the Paper, gender equality is seen as a matter of human dignity, and equal opportunity as being of benefit both to the family unit and to social and economic development. The White Paper reaffirms the Government's commitment to the principle of gender mainstreaming, where efforts to promote equality are not restricted to measures that assist women but extend further to systematically include a gender perspective throughout policy and planning in government.

The White Paper covers discrimination in employment, reinforcing equal opportunities in access to employment and suppressing sexual harassment at work or

in education or training. It also addresses issues of discrimination in self-employment and makes it illegal for financial institutions to discriminate except on basis of genuine financial risk. It proposes that spouses of the self-employed who participate in their partners' business activities should be entitled to fair compensation.

The White Paper also makes it illegal for any education or training facility to discriminate in access to vocational guidance, training and retraining. It also proposes as unlawful the advertising of job vacancies in a way that promotes discrimination.

The White Paper provides for the establishment of a Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality between Men and Women. The new Commission would incorporate both the existing Commission for the Advancement of Women as well as the Department for Women in Society, and would streamline their efforts and optimise the use of resources.

1.2 International Instruments

Malta's efforts to bring about gender equality in the social and economic spheres, reflect a larger international trend. The second half of the twentieth century saw the development and ratification of a range of conventions concerning women's position in the labour market by supranational organisations. Labour Market policy in Malta has been significantly influenced by a number of them.



United Nations

Setting the Global Gender Agenda

The United Nations was established on 24th October 1945 by 51 countries committed to preserving peace through international cooperation and collective security. Today, nearly every nation in the world belongs to the UN: membership now totals 189 countries. The UN works on peace, human rights and development. One of its divisions is dedicated to the advancement of women, in all countries and walks of life. Malta is a member of the UN.

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www.un.org

As referred to in the foregoing section, in 1991 Malta ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and thirty articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and also defines the agenda for action, including:

- The incorporation of the principle of gender equality in the legal system and the abolition of all discriminatory laws
- The establishment of tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination
- The elimination of all discrimination against women by persons, organisations and enterprises.

Malta also participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. This coincided with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The Government of Malta, along with other States, committed to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. This Platform is made up of various strategic objectives, which address poverty and discrimination against women, as well as women's empowerment and their access to social and economic resources. The objectives most relevant to employment are the following:

Objective F.1

- To promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.

Objective F.5

- To eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.

Objective F.6

- To promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men



International Labour Organisation

Gender Promotion Programme

More and Better Jobs for Women and Men

The International Labour Organisation was founded in 1919 and is a specialised agency of the United Nations. Better known as the ILO, it formulates international labour standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations. Its objectives are to promote decent employment, income, and social protection for all women and men, and to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue. The ILO has a Gender Promotion Programme, a diversity of measures that strengthen equality of opportunity.

www.ilo.org/genprom/eeo

As a member of the International Labour Organisation, Malta is covered by the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, 1998. This means that along with other countries, Malta is obliged to respect, promote and realise a number of fundamental principles and rights. One key principle is the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Malta is also signatory to various International Labour Office Conventions and recommendations, which together make up what are known as International Labour Standards. An ILO Convention is a legal instrument, and signatory states are obliged to bring their national law and practice into conformity with its provisions and to report periodically to the ILO on the issue.

Malta is signatory to the following two Conventions that concern gender directly:

- The Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No. 100), ratified in 1988.
- The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 1958 (No. 111), ratified in 1968.

Convention No. 100 establishes the principle of equal pay for women and men for work of equal value. Convention No. 111 addresses equality of treatment and opportunity, including access to employment and conditions of work. The full texts may be found on the ILO website.

Malta has not ratified Conventions 156 and 177, which address Workers with Family responsibilities and Homeworking respectively. However, Government is committed to consider the ratification of both of these conventions following the enactment of the new Employment and Industrial Relations Act.

Unlike Conventions, ILO Recommendations do not have to be ratified. They lay down guidelines that member states should follow. They are listed below and may be seen in greater detail in Appendix A:

- Rec 90: Equal Remuneration
- Rec 111: Discrimination
- Rec 150: Human Resources Development
- Rec 165: Workers with Family Responsibilities
- Rec 182: Part-time Work
- Rec 191: Maternity Protection



www.europa.eu.int

The European Union was set up by the Treaty of Rome, after the Second World War. It has 15 Member States and is preparing for the accession of 13 more. It is based on the rule of law and democracy, and its principal objectives include: a) establishing European citizenship; b) ensuring freedom, security and justice; c) promoting economic and social progress; and d) asserting Europe's role in the world. It is run by five institutions, each with a specific role: the European Parliament; the Council of the Union; the European Commission; the Court of Justice; and the Court of Auditors.

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The European Union has a long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality, enshrined in the Treaty since 1957. Women and men are equal before Community law, and equal treatment legislation is an integral part of the *acquis communautaire* that Malta - like other applicant countries - is bound to respect.

The European Union has sought to strengthen women's position in the labour market through its Resolutions and Directives; and its Policies and Programmes. Details of these may be found in Appendix B. In the course of its application for membership, Malta has already incorporated a number of EU requirements into its legal framework and an overview is provided below.

Directive 75/117/EC requires Member States to apply the principle of equal pay for men and women. The new Employment and Industrial Relations Act, 2002 transposes this Directive, and will enter into force over the coming months.

Directive 76/207/EEC requires Member States to implement the principle of equal treatment regarding access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions. Equal treatment regarding these issues has been incorporated into the White Paper providing for a Gender Equality Act referred to above, which will enter into force in late 2002.

The Gender Equality Act will also cater for Directive 97/80/EC, which places the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex upon the respondent. It also calls for the provision of an authority to hear and investigate cases of this nature. The Act will also cater for Directive 86/613/EEC which requires the equal treatment of men and women engaged in self-employed activities, as well as the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood.

Two important Directives that bear upon women's labour market position, though perhaps less directly, are those concerning social security. In its Commentary to the Gender Equality White Paper, Government states its intention to review the Social Security Act in the light of these Directives.

It commits to proposing the necessary amendments to Parliament with a view to ensuring gender neutrality in social security.

It is not only the legal provisions of the EU that address women's labour market participation. Gender issues have been mainstreamed through most of the EU's operations. They occupy a prominent place in the EU's Employment Strategy, which involves the issue of policy guidelines to Member States each year. These guidelines fall under what are known as four broad 'pillars': improving employability; developing entrepreneurship; encouraging adaptability; and strengthening equal opportunities.

Although Member States are called upon to include the gender perspective in each guideline, a whole pillar is targeted at addressing gender issues specifically, in recognition of the fact that women's labour market position in Europe still lags behind that of men. The EU calls upon Members to take actions to raise the female employment rate above 60% by 2010.

The guidelines for 2002, for instance, call upon Members to develop measures that:

- Promote gender mainstreaming in labour market policies and programmes
- Tackle gender gaps in employment, unemployment and remuneration; and that
- Enable women and men to balance work and family life.

Although Malta as a candidate country cannot yet participate fully in the Employment Strategy, it has taken its first step towards doing so. This was the drafting and signing of the Joint Assessment Paper on the Employment Policy Priorities of Malta. It was signed by the Government of Malta and the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs of the European Union in October 2001.

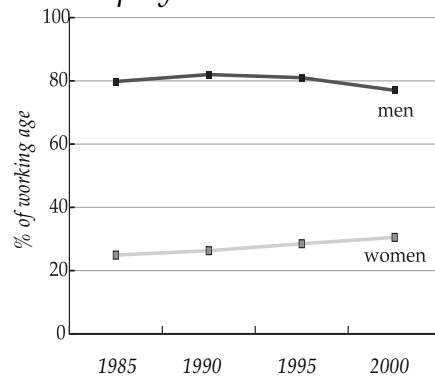
One of the six policy priorities to which Malta committed itself in this Paper is raising the employment rate, particularly that of women. Malta is bound to report on progress against these priorities every May before the year of accession, when it will be required to draw up its first National Action Plan based on the abovementioned employment guidelines.

2.0 Women in the Labour Market

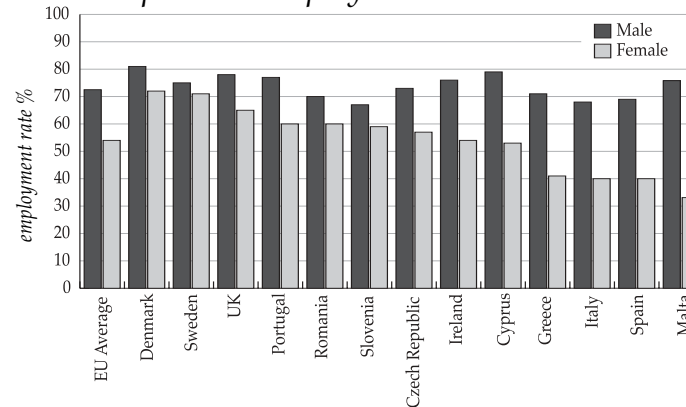
An overview of key trends relating to women's position in the Maltese labour market.

Reference is being made to both the Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted quarterly by the National Statistics Office, and to records held by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). Data for December 2001 derives from the Labour Force Survey while trend data derives from ETC records. The reason for the use of two sources is that the LFS was only introduced in 2000 and thus cannot yet offer a picture of longer term trends.

Employment Rates



Comparative Employment Rates



Gradual rise of women in employment

The proportion of working age women in employment has risen steadily in recent years. In absolute terms, the number of women in employment has risen from 28,625 in 1983 to 39,690 in December 2001. Over this time period, women's share of total employment rose from 24.6% to 28.9%. ETC data shows the female employment rate to have risen ten percentage points between 1983 and 2001.

The female employment rate remains low...

However, the female employment rate remains very low. (The employment rate is derived by dividing all female employees by the female population aged between 15 and 64.) The Labour Force Survey for December 2001 placed this rate at 31.6%. This figure is 22.4% below the European Union average of 54%. It is also low when compared exclusively to other Southern European countries, with an average female employment rate of 45.3% (for Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal at end 2000).

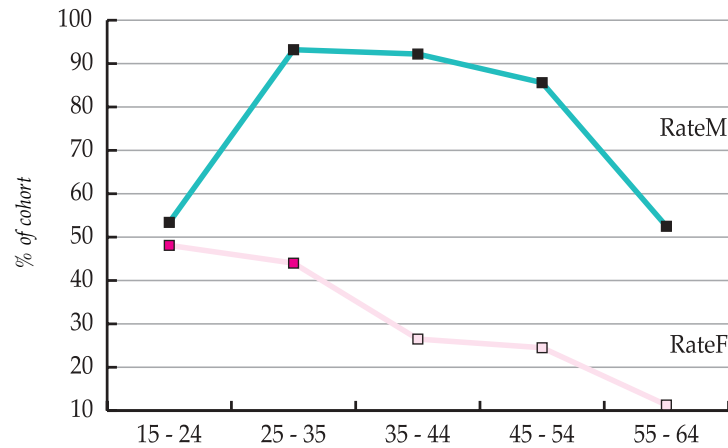
...but the trends are changing

This is evident if one compares the data for different age groups. Drawing on revised ETC data since 1983, one can see that younger women have become more likely to stay in employment. It was traditional in earlier years for a woman to resign on marriage; indeed it was compulsory in the public sector until 1981. This may have created a large reserve of women whose skills are less relevant to today's labour market. The trend appears to have changed. In previous years women tended to resign on marriage. Today, women are more likely to resign following the birth of their first child, or in some instances their second, suggesting the very real difficulties in balancing work and family life. These different experiences of female cohorts require a range of policies and programmes.

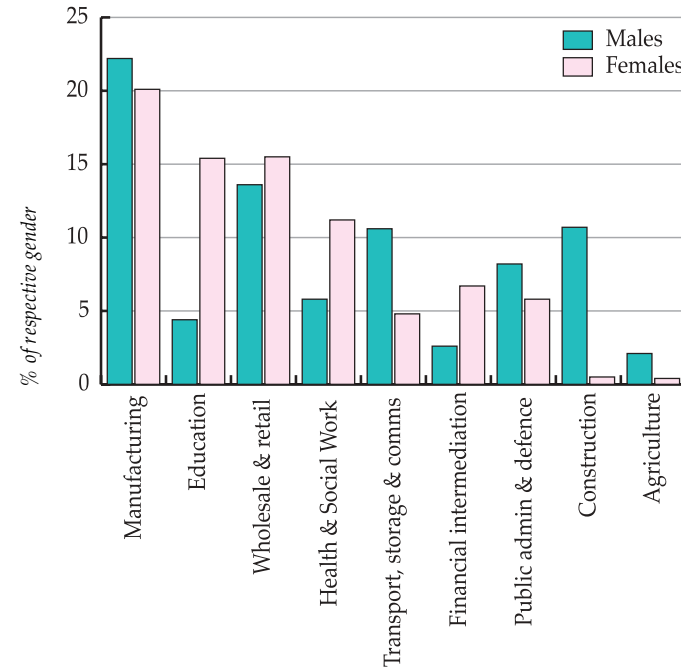
Most economically inactive women are mid-career...

The Labour Force Survey also measures the inactivity rate of women and men, that is, how many persons are neither employed nor unemployed. In December 2001, 71.1% of all women were found to be economically inactive compared to 28.9% of all men. Apart from those of pension age, women are most likely to be inactive in the middle of their career between age 35 and 54. Men, on the other hand, are most likely to be inactive at the end of their career, between 55 and 64.

Age Distribution of Employed



Economic Activity



...most female inactivity is due to domestic reasons

In fact, there is a marked drop in female employment after the mid-twenties. In the September 2001 LFS half of all inactive women cited personal or family responsibilities as the reason for their inactivity, while retirement and education were the most prominent reasons for inactive men.

Growth in part-time work as primary job

While four fifths of all women in employment are employed on a full-time basis, there has been a significant increase in the number of persons working on a part-time basis - whether as a primary or secondary job. Far more women than men work part-time as a main occupation. The December 2001 LFS placed the full-time to part-time ratio at 83:17 for women and 97:3 for men.

More women in services

While in 1983, working women were split equally between the production and the service sectors, by 2001 the balance had tipped in favour of services. Today, three quarters of all employed women work in the service sector. Of these, two-thirds work in market services.

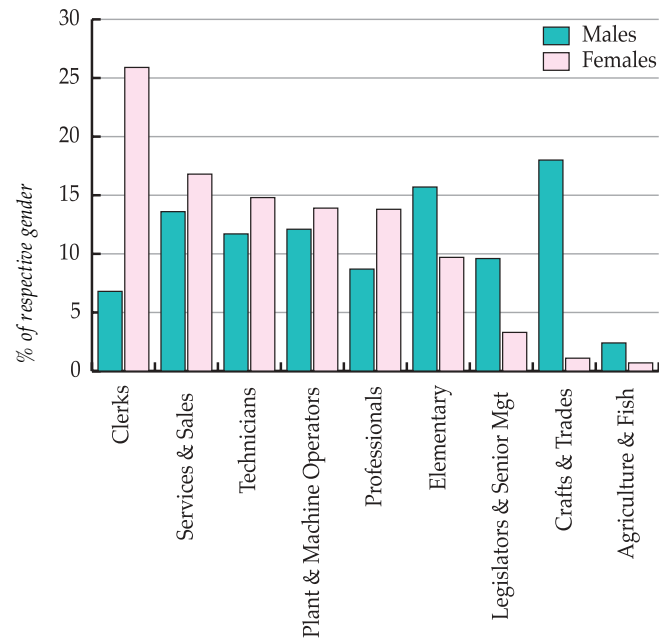
More likely to be employed in private sector...

Since 1983, there has been an increase of ten per cent in the proportion of employed women working in the public sector. However, over two-thirds of female employees are to be found in the private sector - almost nine percentage points higher than the corresponding rate for men. The proportions of all male and all female employees who work in the civil service are equivalent, although the proportion of male employees in parastatal bodies is twice that of women.

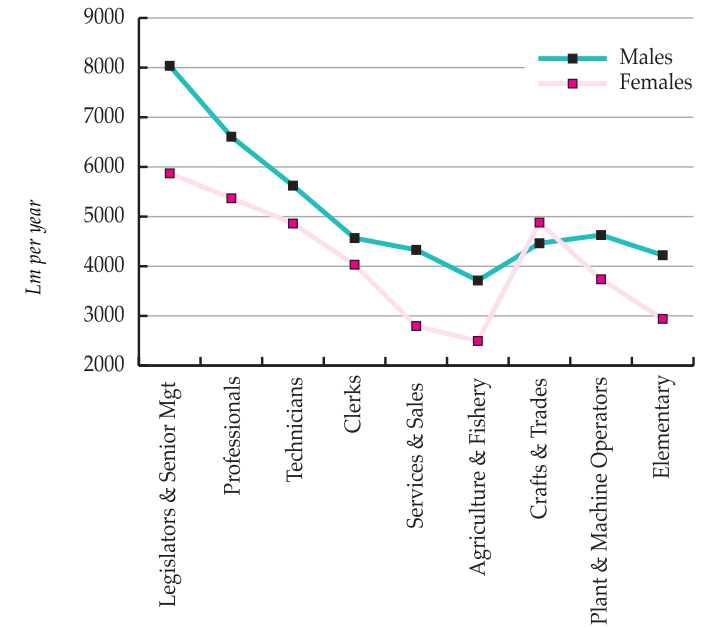
...but much lower rate of self-employment

The proportion of working women who are self-employed is under half that of men. In the December 2001 LFS, the ratio of employed to self-employed is 91:8 for women and 83:17 for men. ETC data also shows female self-employment to have dropped by four percentage points from its 1983 levels. It is worth noting, however, that the LFS shows that the proportion of unemployed women who take action to enter self-employment is almost twice as great as that of unemployed men.

Main Occupations



Average Salaries by Occupation



Less seniors, more professionals

The proportion of male employees in legislative and senior managerial positions is over double that of female employees. This proportion holds true for men and women both under and over the age of 35. On the other hand, the number of female professionals as a proportion of all female employees is almost double that of men, which also holds true for both age groups.

Similar educational profile...

Over the past decades, the gap between women's and men's educational attainment has narrowed. For instance, while in 1960 there were 85 women for every 100 men in secondary education, this had risen to 108 by 1998. The same occurred in tertiary education, where in 1960 there were 69 women for every 100 which had risen to 102 by 1998. In the nineties alone, the proportion of female school leavers who opted for further education rose by 18%, to reach 66% by 1999 - a proportion similar to that of male school leavers.

...but still some evidence of segregation...

Although women today make up the majority of tertiary students, there is still some evidence of segregation in subject choice. While both male and female students are most likely to opt for education; economics, management and accounts; and the arts, women are under-represented in engineering and architecture. On the other hand, there are more female than male students in medicine and social welfare.

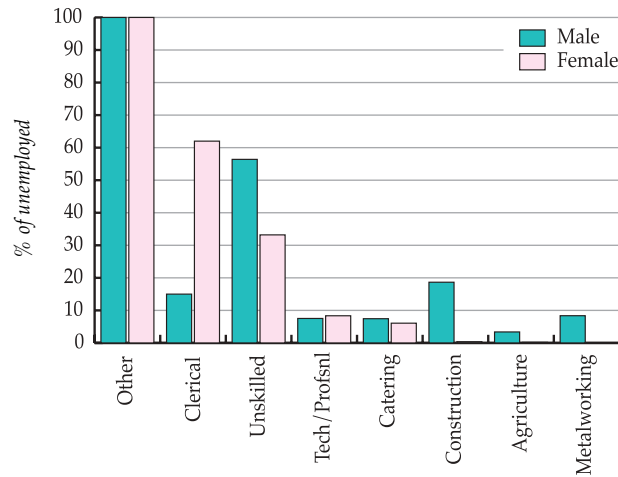
...and still under-represented in technical education...

Unlike tertiary education, the large gap in technical education persists. While in 1960 there were 13 women for every 100 men, this figure still stood at 18 by 1998. In 1999, there were two female students at the technical institute for every 100 males, and 5 females for every 100 males opting for trade schools. On the other hand, females predominate in the secretarial and commercial vocational courses.

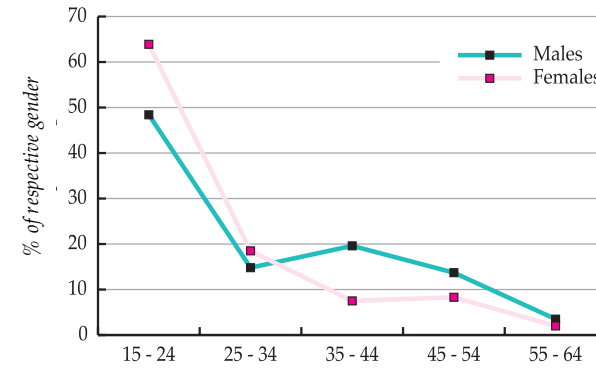
Women earn four fifths of male earnings

According to the Labour Force Survey, women earn just under four fifths of male earnings, across every occupation, except craft and related trades workers. This holds true across all age groups, although the disparity tends to increase with age. The gap is greatest for legislators, senior officials and managers, services and sales workers followed by those in elementary occupations; and smallest for clerks, technicians and associate professionals and machine operators. It is most evident in the private sector, in real estate, renting and business activities; other community, social and personal service activities; and hotels and restaurants.

Occupational Preferences of Unemployed Persons



Unemployed



...and in science & technology, architecture and engineering

The number of female scientists in Malta is very low. For every 100,000 persons in the workforce aged under 35, there are 70 female science graduates to 460 male ones. In the academic year 2000/1, women only made up 17% of engineering students; 17% of IT students; 33% of architecture students and 47% of science students. In the same year, the women cohort only made up 3% of ETC's Technician Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS) and 17% of its Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS) with most of the latter opting for the hairdressing apprenticeship.

More unemployed than men...

At 7.8% in December 2001, the proportion of the female labour supply that is unemployed is higher than the figure of 6.0% of the male labour supply.

...though more likely to be young...

More than half the unemployed women were aged below 25; in fact, the proportion of youth among the female unemployed is 16 points higher than the proportion of youth among the male unemployed.

...more inclined to clerical work...

Over three-fifths of women registering for employment would like to do clerical work, suggesting the need for occupational guidance to broaden the aspirations of those registering for employment. This is followed by a preference for catering, then for technical/professional work. The three top references for men are unskilled labour, construction and clerical work.

....and faster at leaving unemployment

Men appear to take longer to leave unemployment than do women. Women are less likely to become long-term unemployed, that is, for over twelve months although it is not yet clear whether the majority leave the unemployment register after having a job, or after becoming discouraged and dropping out of the labour supply. Unemployed men are more likely to utilize ETC's services in searching for a job, whereas unemployed women tend to apply directly to employers.

3.0 A Review of the Issues

An overview of some key factors shaping women's decisions to enter or leave the labour market.



The past thirty years have seen a progressive strengthening of women's rights. For instance, there have been provisions for equal pay for work of equal value in the public sector since the late 60s while the private sector followed suit a few years later. Individual taxation and pro-rated benefits for part-timers were more recent developments that benefited women.

In recent months, two White Papers have been published that further strengthen women's position in the labour market, dealing with Employment Relations and Gender Equality respectively. These

developments have taken place in parallel with others that have strengthened women's rights as citizens too. Two key examples are the ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1991), and the Family Law which, in 1993, placed husbands and wives on an equal footing within marriage.

Despite these developments, female employment remains low, and this is a cause for concern. From a social perspective, it means that many women may miss out on the opportunity to be

creative, to socialise, to raise their income, and to actively participate in politically organised groups. From an economic perspective, it means untapped productivity. In the longer term, too, as the population ages and working contributors to social security become less, women's absence from the formal economy affects the sustainability of the social security system. There are a number of issues that are widely believed to affect women's choice to enter employment and their capacity to retain it. Some of the main issues are highlighted in the coming pages.



Lack of regulated and affordable childcare provision

Many women still opt to care for their children on a full-time basis. A number of others find the lack of regulated and affordable childcare services to be a significant barrier to their labour force participation. It is not yet clear whether the marked drop in women's employment that occurs in their twenties is due to an option for full-time childrearing or whether it reflects persistent structural difficulties in balancing parenthood and work.

Unequal sharing of domestic responsibilities, job retention and career progression

Another important factor is the 'double shift' that many women undertake. That is, while they assume equal responsibility as a family breadwinner, they still assume the lion's share of care and domestic work. This double shift is hard to sustain and can impact negatively on the well-being of the whole family but especially on the woman as both parent and worker.

Abrupt withdrawal of social benefits

Social assistance benefits are withdrawn quite abruptly when people on benefits enter employment. This withdrawal is often a disincentive for women - and men - to come off benefits. There are two main reasons. Firstly, the earning power of many unskilled persons is not far off benefit levels, especially for families with children. Secondly, there is often uncertainty around whether a job will work out, which makes the loss of benefits a significant risk. A number of countries have gotten around this issue by withdrawing benefits gradually as the persons concerned establish themselves at work. In Malta, too, single parents may earn up to minimum wage without their benefits being withdrawn.

Work-life balance in private sector employment

Balancing one's work and family life is particularly challenging in the private sector, where parental leave, flexible working hours, responsibility breaks and reduced hours are rare occurrences. While the financial case against family-friendly measures is often made, the business case for retaining the expertise of female employees is rarely promoted.

Weak representation in vocational training...

While there has been a great improvement in women's take-up of post-secondary and tertiary academic studies, women remain over-represented in the caring and educational sectors and their share of vocational training remains negligible in traditionally male domains. Women's perception of the vocational route to a career appears still to be shaped by the stereotype of the technical world being a male one. In this regard, the strengthening of the career guidance and counselling function and the use of gender specific pedagogical styles is fundamental.



... and significantly, in the ICT industries, science and technology

In general, women are poorly represented in information technology and communications, both in education and within the higher-skilled, higher paid jobs in industry. They currently make up less than one fifth of IT studies at tertiary level.

Low levels of entrepreneurship

Self-employment among women has decreased despite Labour Force Survey evidence that unemployed women, at least, tend to make more effort to become self-employed. The proposed Gender Equality Act aims to ensure in an effective manner, that it would be unlawful for financial institutions to discriminate against women entrepreneurs.

Less security in atypical work

Atypical work refers to all work that is not based on a standard, indefinite contract of a forty hour week or thereabouts. It includes part-time work, work on definite contracts and homeworking. Experience across Europe suggests that there are important differences between the conditions of employment, pension rights and the training possibilities of full- and part-timers; furthermore, atypical workers are mostly women. It is important that women are informed of their rights and obligations as regards social security, conditions of employment and taxation.

Gender pay gap

While it is important to enable women's access to the labour market, it is also important to ensure that they enjoy comparable working conditions to men. Women receive four fifths of male earnings in similar occupations and across age groups, though more markedly in low-skill occupations and in the private sector. This statistic is comparable to that across the European Union; so much so, that the Commission's 2001 priority theme in gender issues was precisely the tackling of the gender pay gap. While in the past Malta had ratified two ILO Conventions on the issue, the recent endorsement in the White Paper on Employment Relations of the right to equal pay for work of equal value is welcomed.

Sexual harassment

Lastly, but very importantly, is the issue of dignity at work. Harassment in employment undermines workers' confidence by reminding them that they are not seen as serious and equal. Women's performance has been shown to be at its best in working environments that respect human dignity and that avoid innuendos that trivialise women's position at work, and that often lead to higher absence and lower performance.

Both recent Acts on Employment Relations and Gender Equality respectively make sexual harassment at work an offence, while the latter Paper also extends it to education, training and any entity offering a service to the public.

Overcoming gender stereotypes

The decision to choose an occupation or a career over another is often subconsciously influenced by beliefs as to which activities or characteristics are appropriate to women and men. Repairing cars and fridges is often associated with men, while nursing and kindergarten teaching are mostly associated with women. These stereotypes can hinder men from entering into areas associated with caring, while they may limit women from entering the more technical fields. Overcoming gender stereotypes may require courage and effort in order to overcome socially constructed restrictions in occupation and other life choices.



Two successful female entrepreneurs are Ms. Mary Gaerty and Ms. Doris Sammut, who manage Green Skips Services Limited together. They are active in various environmental groups and organise awareness sessions in schools about waste management practices.

A success story is that of Ms. Debbie Schembri, a woman with a disability who moved on from registering for work to take up the position of receptionist at MITTS. She has worked in this establishment for the past six years, during which time she has received in-service training in computer basic skills and customer care. Ms Schembri stresses how important the support of management and colleagues has been, and emphasises the need for persons with disability to persist in striving for their goals.

Men, too, often have to make that extra effort to break into fields that are stereotypically 'male' or 'female'. One success story is that of Mr Richard Cassar, who has been working as an enrolled nurse paediatric at the Special Care Baby Unit at St. Luke's Hospital for these last nine years. Mr Cassar is the only male nurse working at the Unit, where parents often expect to find female staff. Mr Cassar says that he receives full support from his colleagues and derives great satisfaction from his work.



One role model for aspiring female scientists would be Professor Angela Xuereb, a member of both the Institute of Health Care and Faculty of Medicine and Surgery respectively. She co-ordinates the B.Sc. Hons. Medical Lab Science Programme and conducts research on osteoporosis. She says the great support of her husband and family has helped her to balance her profession with her family life.



At Playmobil Malta, management focuses on how to develop the potential of each employee, male and female. A number of human resources policies have been introduced that lead to enhanced performance, such as gender-neutral recruitment, selection and promotion processes; flexible working arrangements and homeworking, and equal access to training opportunities. Other initiatives include non-financial rewards such as a well-women clinic for all women employees, the services of a doctor and a qualified nurse, and the provision of special leave depending on the needs of the employee.



Ms. Claudia Galea has an Airline Transport Licence, and is one of the eight women pilots with the national carrier, out of a total of 138 pilots. Ms. Galea states that she was always fond of aviation, meteorology and astronomy, and flying was a natural career choice. Success, she says, depends on one's commitment to lifelong learning.



Another success story is that of Mr. John Rolé, a qualified social worker who currently leads the fostering team at Agenzija Appogg. Although social work is traditionally considered a female domain, Mr. Rolé has occupied this post since 1996, and has long years of experience in social work with children and families.



4.0 Programmes and Initiatives

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Addressing the various issues highlighted in this report calls for effort all round. Strategic and co-ordinated initiatives by all the social partners are necessary for women and men to gain equal status in the labour market. Broadly speaking, better representation at decision-making levels - in political, economic and social life - should serve to make the concerns of women and men visible and to make them an integral part of the policy process.

Job creation policies are important, as is the monitoring of the impact of economic and industrial policies upon employment rates of women and men. Self-employment, too, may be promoted by making fiscal incentives for entrepreneurs equally accessible to women. Overcoming the glass ceiling in employment is a challenge, and calls for greater trust in women's abilities as well as greater readiness to assume

leadership positions. Conditions of employment and social security provisions must remain inclusive of women's concerns, and action against discrimination and harassment must be swift and serve as a clear deterrent.

Within this larger context, ETC believes that it can make a significant contribution to strengthening women's labour market

position. This section provides an overview of the initiatives that ETC will undertake over the coming two years. These consist of employment and training initiatives; awareness campaigns; and research projects. Wherever possible, these initiatives will be carried out in consultation and partnership with related entities, and ETC welcomes proposals for collaboration. A schedule of these initiatives may be found in Section 5.0.

The initiatives have been grouped under four themes:

4.1 General measures

4.2 Promoting equal access to employment

4.3 Facilitating retention of employment

4.4 Enabling progression at work

4.1 General Measures

ETC is committed to mainstreaming gender issues throughout the Corporation. We believe that to flourish, mainstreaming must be embedded throughout an institution and not depend on the efforts of a few individuals.

By mainstreaming, the Corporation recognizes that policies and programmes are rarely gender neutral in their impact, and therefore require analysis and evaluation in terms of how they affect women and men. Over the next two years, The Corporation will be taking a number of critical measures to help make gender mainstreaming a reality.



Recruitment of Senior Executive (Gender Issues)

In October 2002, a Senior Executive was recruited to focus solely on gender issues in the labour market. This official will enable the mainstreaming of gender issues through in-house training and support and will be responsible to implement the various provisions of this plan. She will also be responsible for working with ETC stakeholders on issues of gender equality.

Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines

ETC will be designing and disseminating a Gender Impact Assessment Tool across its Employment and Training Services Divisions, to enable them to ensure that its programmes and services have a positive impact on women's labour market participation. Staff will be trained and assisted to use the Tool.

Gender Monitoring

ETC is in the process of strengthening its competence in labour market analysis. Such analysis will be conducted on a regular basis with particular focus on women in the Maltese labour market.

Target Setting

The Employment and Training Divisions are in the process of ensuring that all their operational data are disaggregated by gender, and of establishing targets that reflect an improvement, for both women and men, in their access to and outcome from ETC services.

Cooperation

ETC will maintain close links with the national machinery for gender issues and will consult and inform statutory and nongovernmental entities on a regular basis as to women's position in the labour market.

4.2 Promoting Equal Access to Employment



Support for Guidance Teachers

Regular fora will be held for secondary school guidance teachers to inform them of labour market trends and to raise their awareness of gender-related matters. ETC, in close collaboration of guidance teachers, will facilitate extra-curricular visits by students to places of work where women are occupying non-traditional jobs. ETC will provide information sessions about employment and training to students and parents at schools on a regular basis.

Guidance and Counselling for Women Returners

ETC's Employment Advisors will receive specialist training in the issues most common to women returners, including advising them on employment rights, training opportunities, labour market trends, childcare opportunities, and social security rights and obligations.

Women's Empowerment Programme

The Empowerment Programme for Women will be developed further after a proper evaluation of the course. This will include conducting a tracer study of all course participants, and consulting past and present trainees. Additional courses will be offered to client groups with particular employment and training needs.

Promoting the Vocational Option for Women

An action plan will be drawn up to study young women's perception of the vocational route; to identify and address any discriminatory issues, whether deriving from stereotypes or structures; and to train vocational education providers in gender-related issues. This action plan will be drawn up together with stakeholders, including parents who are influential in the career decisions of their children.

Conducting a Gender Audit

In partnership with FHRD, ETC can offer training targeted at those working in HR capacities. This may involve the provision of best practice examples, the setting of benchmarks and targets and the development of networks. It may also involve the carrying out of a gender audit of their organisation, covering the following four areas:

- a. **access:** recruitment criteria, both internal and external; identification and elimination of stereotypes and barriers; broader evaluation of skills and attributes; accountability of interviewing boards; and interviewing techniques.
- b. **professional development:** analysis of training opportunities, pay setting, and the structure and process of career development.
- c. **work-life balance:** instituting and promoting flexibility measures to enable a balance between home and work
- d. **the work environment:** policies and procedures on health and safety and on dignity at work.

Childcare Campaign

ETC will develop a range of educational brochures for both parents and employers. This will include one brochure on the potential benefits of childcare and on what parents should look for in choosing a childcare facility. It will also include a brochure on the benefits to employers of promoting work-life balance among the workforce and of retaining experienced female staff, and will suggest a number of possible childcare schemes to employers.

Women Returners

ETC has embarked upon a qualitative research project to look into the factors that affect the employment decisions of women outside the labour market.

Telework

ETC will undertake a study of the opinions of employers and employees as to how desirable and feasible it would be to promote and regulate telework. It will also study the requirements of employers and the enterprise, costings, skill levels and training of employees, and recommendations to make this a flexible yet secure form of employment for those who opt for it. This study will be followed by a marketing strategy to promote quality telework.

4.3 Facilitating Retention of Employment

Childminding Service

The Corporation will be a key player in bringing about the development of quality childminding services. It will do so through active participation in the task force established by the Ministry for Social Policy to study government's role in the development of a framework for national and affordable childcare. The Corporation will also step up its training of childminders.

Work-Life Service

ETC, in close collaboration with partners, will offer organisations consultancy services on various schemes and services that enable work-life balance for employees. ETC will also host an annual forum for unionists and other interested parties on successful practice regarding local and international initiatives to improve the work-life balance for women and men.

Temping Opportunities

ETC will undertake a feasibility study of temping opportunities in Malta, that is, of temporary work and the legislative and administrative changes that may be needed to regulate such jobs.

Managing Parental Leave

ETC will offer assistance to employers in identifying and training suitable people to provide cover for persons on parental leave.

Gender Issues for Trade Unions

ETC will organise a series of workshops to train trade union officials in gender concepts, advocacy and mainstreaming, and to develop a gender equality handbook for union use.

Media Spots and an Information Campaign

ETC will, in conjunction with the Department for Women in Society and media experts in the field of gender equality, run an information campaign, that includes a series of TV spots on work-life balance, eg. on sharing domestic responsibilities, and the rights and duties of prospective full-time and part-time employees. These spots will bear a positive message, promoting the value of both women and men's contribution to the work and home fronts respectively, and present an informed choice about the pros and cons of seeking employment.

Atypical Work

ETC will undertake a study that looks into the prevalence of atypical work, its various forms, and the social security and employment protection issues surrounding them. It will eventually, in liaison with the Department for Employment and Industrial Relations, publish informational material on the rights and obligations of atypical workers.

Women in Science and Technology

ETC will undertake a Tracer Study of female graduates in science, engineering and technology. This is to have a qualitative dimension, with a view to understanding women's experience, and to identify factors that have helped and hindered them in pursuing a career in science or technology.

4.4 Enabling Progression at Work

Mentor Training Programme

In conjunction with FHRD ETC will offer a training programme for persons in employment, who wish to serve as mentors for young women in their organisation.

Pay Equity at Work

In conjunction with FHRD ETC will design and deliver a training course for HR personnel on establishing pay equity. This will suggest ways of measuring the skill, responsibility and working conditions associated with any given job with a view to establishing equitable and gender-neutral pay.

Job Evaluation Tool

Drawing on best practice in EU Member States and in consultation with other labour market actors, ETC will develop an instrument in both Maltese and English that will help employers evaluate a job with a view to ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

Career Development Skills for Women

ETC will, together with the FHRD, develop and deliver a course of advanced skills required for career progression today, such as assertiveness, negotiation, information management, work-life balance and others.

Equal Opportunities Award

ETC will launch an Award to recognise employer excellence in promoting equality in training, promotion, pay and innovative family-friendly practices. The latter may include flexitime, part-time positions, special leave, contact during parental leave, and childcare assistance. This Award will form part of an ongoing campaign to promote the adoption of an Equal Opportunities Policy at every place of work.

Longitudinal Studies

Longitudinal studies will be launched every three years, of the school-leaving male and female cohorts, and their experience of work and learning will be traced over time.

Sectoral Studies

Every year a study will be launched on a particular sector in Malta, with a view to understanding employment dynamics in the sector, the gender implications, and any action that may promote job creation and equality of opportunity in the sector.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

Qualitative research will be undertaken with women in senior management and professional positions in Malta, in both the private and public sector, with a view to understanding what has helped and/or hindered their performance and progression at work.

5.0 A Schedule of Initiatives

In addition to the Gender Impact Assessment Tool and the Gendered Labour Market Analysis, the initiatives described above will be grouped in four phases over the two years of this Plan. Each phase will be based on a central theme and accompanied by an educational campaign.

January 2003 to June 2003

Make an Informed Choice

- Formalise co-operation with guidance teachers
- Draw up action plan to promote vocational education
- Draft manual on gender equality in occupational guidance
- Launch tracer study of women in science and technology
- Launch sectoral studies programme



January 2004 to June 2004

Develop Your Own Career

- Review and strengthen Empowerment Training
- Introduce training in career development skills
- Launch a mentor training programme
- Launch research on the Glass Ceiling in Malta
- Launch longitudinal studies



July 2003 to December 2003

Work-Life Balance is Possible

- Prepare and launch Childminding Scheme
- Establish Work-Life Services
- Launch ETC outreach programme
- Launch of Gender Audit Seminars



July 2004 to December 2004

Know Your Rights

- Design and publicise job evaluation tool
- Design and disseminate guidelines on pay equity at work
- Disseminate publication on rights of atypical workers
- Launch Telework feasibility study
- Design and deliver gender issues training for trade unions



Appendix A

Key Recommendations that have been issued over the years by the International Labour Organisation.



Equal Remuneration

(Recommendation number 90) 1951

Members must take appropriate action to ensure that male and female employees enjoy equal remuneration for work of equal value, through legislation (where appropriate), through encouraging job appraisal, and through raising the productive efficiency of women.

Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)

(Recommendation number 111) 1958

Members should formulate national policy to prevent discrimination in employment and occupation, and to promote equal treatment and opportunity in access to vocational guidance and training,

placement, security of tenure, equal pay for work of equal value, equal conditions of work.

Human Resources Development

(Recommendation number 150) 1975

That equal opportunity measures should include providing girls and women with vocational guidance on the same broad range of educational, vocational training and employment opportunities as boys and men, encourage them to take full advantage of such opportunities and create the conditions required for them to do so. This includes providing daycare facilities for children to enable the participation of women with family responsibilities. It also includes flexible forms of training, eg. Part-time or through distance learning.

Workers with Family Responsibilities

(Recommendation number 165) 1981

Measures to be adopted and applied with a view to preventing direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of marital status or family responsibilities; to enable workers with family responsibilities to become and remain integrated in the labour force, and to re-enter the labour force after an absence due to these responsibilities.

Part-time Work

(Recommendation number 182) 1994

In accordance with national law, part-time workers should have access on an equitable basis to all forms of leave available to full-

timers. Also, where possible, workers should be enabled to work on a part-time basis for caring purposes, and subsequently return to full-time work.

Maternity Protection

(Recommendation number 191) 2000

Calls on members to endeavour to extend maternity leave to at least 18 weeks. leave. Calls for provision of alternative work/ conditions of work to a pregnant or nursing mother whose current job, as certified by a medical certificate, is too arduous or places her or her child at risk. Holds that a women should be entitled to return to her former position - or an equivalent position - at same pay after maternity leave.

Appendix B

EU Resolutions

Resolutions adopted by the Council of the European Union are not binding on Member States.

They are statements of principle that indicate government agreement, either on principle or on the intention to act. A number of resolutions centre upon women in the labour market:



- Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Family and Working Life (2000)
- Incorporating Equal Opportunities between Women and Men into all Community Policies and Activities (1997)
- Situation of Assisting Spouses of the Self-Employed (1997)
- Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities for Men and Women into the European Structural Funds (1996)
- Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making (1995)
- Promotion of the Dignity of Women and Men at Work (1990)
- Equal Participation by women in an employment-intensive economic growth strategy within the European Union (1994)
- Reintegration and Late integration of Women in Working Life (1988)
- Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women (1986 and 1982)

EU Directives

Directives are Community laws adopted by the Council of the European Union on a proposal of the European Commission. Directives are binding on all Member States as to the objectives they lay down, but it is up to the national governments to choose the form and means to be used to implement the objectives.

Eight directives are particularly relevant to women in the labour market:

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Directive: 75/117/EEC

Approximation of the Laws of Member States Relating to the Application of the Principle of Equal Pay for Men and Women

Stipulates equal pay for the same work or for work of equal value. Calls on Member States to implement grievance procedures for persons who feel wronged under this Directive.

Directive: 76/207/EEC

Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment for Men and Women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions

Prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of sex, particularly as regards family and marital status, in access to all jobs and posts and all levels in the hierarchy.

Directive: 79/7/EEC

Progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security

It applies to statutory benefit schemes protecting against various contingencies. It prohibits discrimination in the scope of schemes; conditions of access; contributory requirements; and benefit calculation.

Directive: 86/378/EEC

Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Occupational Social Security Schemes

Member States are required to eliminate discrimination on the ground of sex in occupational pension schemes that are excluded from 79/7/EEC above.

Directive: 86/613/EEC

Application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood

Member States are to ensure the absence of all discrimination on grounds of sex, directly or indirectly, for women and men in self-employment and their spouses.

Directive: 96/34/EC

Framework agreement on parental leave - concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC

Brings into force a framework agreement that sets out minimum requirements designed to facilitate the reconciliation of parental and professional responsibilities for working parents.

Directive: 92/85/EEC

Introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

Introduces minimum measures, which include assessing the workplace impact on such women, and the adjustment of working conditions and hours in order to avoid risk.

Directive: 97/81/EC

Framework agreement on Part-time Working - concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC

Brings into force a framework agreement that aims to ensure comparable treatment between those working on a flexible basis and full-time staff on indefinite contracts.

Policies and Programmes

In this section we are focusing on three key aspects of the European Union's agenda that affect women in the labour market. These are the EU's Employment Strategy, the European Social Fund, and the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2000 - 2005).

These measures take place in a broader policy context, considerably influenced by a series of European Councils:

- **The Lisbon European Council of March 2000** set a new strategic goal for the European Union to become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.”

- **The Nice European Council of December 2000** approved the European Social Agenda, which states that the return to full employment involves increasing employment rates, reducing regional gaps, reducing inequality and improving job quality.

- **The Stockholm European Council of March 2001** agreed that regaining full employment involves not only more jobs but better ones, and the quality of work must be maintained and improved. Agreement was also reached on the following target employment rates among persons of working age in European Union Member States:
 - **By 2005:** An overall rate of 67% and 57% for women
 - **By 2010:** An overall rate of 70% and over 60% for women
 - **By 2010:** A minimum rate of 50% for persons aged between 55 and 64

European Employment Strategy

The European Employment Strategy is the Union's key tool through which to bring about the objectives mentioned above. The Strategy was born following the adoption of the Amsterdam treaty, which introduced a new title on employment at the Luxembourg Jobs summit in November 1997. It was agreed that this strategy should be built on thematic priorities, grouped in four pillars and described in Employment Guidelines. Every year, these Guidelines have to be translated into National Action Plans for Employment (NAPs) by Member States. The NAPs are then analysed by the Commission and the Council, and the results presented in a Joint Employment Report. The results are the basis for reshaping subsequent Guidelines and for country-specific recommendations to Member States.

European Employment Strategy

Four Pillars

- Improving Employability
- Developing Entrepreneurship
- Encouraging Adaptability
- Strengthening Equal Opportunities

The fourth pillar of the annual guidelines covers measures that relate to the strengthening of equal opportunities between women and men. The guidelines for 2002 call upon States to develop measures that:

- promote gender mainstreaming in labour market policies and programmes
- tackle gender gaps in employment, unemployment and remuneration; and
- enable women and men to balance work and family life.

Although Malta as a candidate country cannot yet participate fully in the European Employment Strategy, it has taken its first steps in this regard. This was the drafting and signing of the Joint Assessment Paper on the Employment Policy Priorities of Malta. It was signed by the Government of Malta and the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs. One of the six policy priorities to which Malta is committed relates to the raising of the employment rate, particularly that of women. Malta is bound to report on progress against these priorities in May 2002 and May 2003, before drawing up its first National Action Plan for the year of accession.



“ To increase the overall employment rate, with particular emphasis on active promotion of female labour market participation and implementation of measures to address gender gaps, including the enactment and enforcement of comprehensive gender equality and anti-discrimination legislation and the promotion of family-friendly working arrangements. ”

*Joint Assessment Paper
Employment Policy Priority No. 2*

The European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the main financial tool through which the European Union translates its strategic employment policy aims into action.

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/index_en.htm

Already set up by Treaty of Rome, it is the longest established Structural Fund which, for over 40 years, has invested, in partnership with the Member States, in programmes to develop people's skills and their potential for work.

As do the other Structural Funds, the ESF enables the Union to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between women and men. The new Structural Fund Regulations for the period 2000 - 2006 include several new provisions relating to gender equality. Primarily, as with the employment guidelines, the gender perspective is to be incorporated into all programmes, though also supplemented by specific measures in favour of women.

The following are the key ways in which the Regulations seek to strengthen gender equality:

Articles 1& 2

Stipulates that the Structural Funds must help to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between women and men.

Article 41

Ex-ante evaluation of the national plans must take equal opportunities into account

Article 29

The contribution of the Funds to the promotion of equality is to be made clear

Article 35

The Monitoring Committees are to guarantee a balanced participation of men and women.

Article 36

Statistics and monitoring indicators are to be broken down by sex

Article 46

The Managing Authority is responsible for ensuring that publicity is given to the package and for informing bodies that promote equality for women and men.

Together with horizontal integration of equal opportunities, specific measures to benefit women are still needed to reduce inequality. The regulations uphold this dual approach. The ESF covers measures to increase the involvement of women in the labour market, including their career development, their access to new job opportunities and to starting up businesses, and to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market.

Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2000 - 2005)

In addition to the above measures, a Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality is also running. This Strategy provides for a programme that takes over from the previous forth action programme on gender equality. 50 million euro was targeted for the implementation of this programme, which includes gender mainstreaming policies as well as specific actions targeted at women.

Its key elements are set out here, though the full version may be found at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/index_en.htm

The Strategy

1. A gender equality framework strategy to embrace all policies and a programme in support of the framework strategy
2. Based on Subsidiarity and complementarity

Setting the Objectives

1. Promoting Gender Equality in Economic life
2. Promoting Equal Participation and Representation
3. Promoting Equal Access and Full Enjoyment of Social Rights for Women and Men
4. Promoting Gender Equality in Civil Life
5. Promoting Change of Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Tools and mechanisms

1. Reinforcing co-operation with the EU national gender equality authorities and co-ordination of the activities
2. Reinforcing of Commission structures
3. Reinforcing co-operation among the Community institutions
4. Strengthening partnership
5. Setting indicators and benchmarks
6. Ensuring information, reporting and evaluation



Gender Equality Action Plan 2003-2004

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