

**National Commission for
the Promotion of Equality**

UNLOCKING THE FEMALE POTENTIAL

RESEARCH REPORT

Entrepreneurs and Vulnerable Workers in Malta & Gozo
Economic Independence for the Maltese Female
Analysing Inactivity from a Gender Perspective
Gozitan Women in Employment



Copyright © National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), 2012

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)
Gattard House, National Road, Blata l-Bajda HMR 9010 - Malta
Tel: +356 2590 3850
Email: equality@gov.mt
www.equality.gov.mt

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of research and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author and publisher.

Published in 2012 by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
Production: Outlook Coop

ISBN: 978-99909-89-44-1

FOREWORD

Dear reader,

NCPE's commitment to eliminating gender equality in Malta comes forth again with this research exercise. As you will read in the following pages, through the European Social Fund project – ESF 3.47 Unlocking the Female Potential, NCPE has embarked on a mission to further understand certain realities that limit the involvement of women in the labour market. Throughout this research, we have sought to identify the needs of specific female target groups that make up the national context. Among other objectives we delved deeper into the variances between the needs of male and female entrepreneurs, the hardships of temporary and casual workers whose employment is considered vulnerable, the perceptions of employed females with regards to the glass ceiling and glass cliff, how Maltese women view financial independence, the effects of social security benefits on the decision to take up employment, the skills available in the inactive segment and which roles females not contributing to the labour force see themselves in, as well as a thorough study of the Gozitan female population on how they view employment and how Gozitan society views employed females.

It has been an exciting journey through two very full years of research to discover and bring to you these findings. In the 2nd chapter, we have also included policy recommendations that we hope will address the most urgent needs when it comes to gender inequality and discrimination. Important conclusions that can be covered in future studies as well as in future legislation can also be found here. In the analysis we have also assessed the impact of relevant policy actions and projects. We trust that this research will be fruitful and will be useful for policy development in order to enhance gender equality. Special thanks go to M. Fsadni & Associates involved in this research as well as to all NCPE staff.

Dr Romina Bartolo LL.D, MJuris (EU Law)
Executive Director, NCPE
December 2011

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 Objectives of the Project.....	13
1.2 Structure of the Report	13
1.3 The Research Consultant's Key Expert Team	14
 2. UNLOCKING THE FEMALE POTENTIAL – SALIENT CONCLUSIONS & POLICY CONSIDERATIONS	 15
2.1 The Situation of Male and Female Entrepreneurs and Vulnerable Workers in Malta – Salient Conclusions and Policy Considerations.....	15
2.1.1 ACTIVITY I: The Situation of Male and Female Entrepreneurs in Malta	15
2.1.2 ACTIVITY II: The Situation of Vulnerable Workers in Malta	23
2.2 The Relevance of Economic Independence to the Maltese Female – Salient Conclusions and Policy Considerations.....	32
2.2.1 ACTIVITY I: Analysing The Glass Ceiling and Glass Cliff Effect and How This Affects Females in the Labour Market	33
2.2.2 ACTIVITY II: Assessing The Relevance of 'Economic Independence' to the Maltese Females.....	39
2.2.3 ACTIVITY III: Analysing the Effect of Social Security Benefits on Women in Their Decision to Take Up Employment or Not	44
2.3 Analysing Inactivity From A Gender Perspective – Salient Conclusions and Policy Considerations.....	47
2.3.1 ACTIVITY I: Analysing Inactivity From A Gender Perspective.....	48
2.3.2 ACTIVITY II: Assessing the Skills of Inactive Women	55
2.4 Research on Gozitan Women in Employment - Salient Conclusions and Policy Considerations.....	61
2.4.1 Gozitan Women in Employment.....	61
 3. THE SITUATION OF MALE AND FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS AND VULNERABLE WORKERS IN MALTA.....	 64
3.1 Research Objectives	64
3.1.1 Overriding Research Objective	64
3.1.2 Project Specific Objectives.....	64
3.2 A Review of Recent Literature	65
3.2.1 A Definition of Entrepreneurship.....	65
3.2.2 Vulnerable Employment	74
3.3 Research Methodology	79
3.3.1 Research Methodology	79
3.3.2 Shortcomings of the Research Study	81
3.4 ACTIVITY I - Entrepreneurship in Malta.....	81
3.4.1 Qualitative Research - The Salient Findings	81
3.4.2 Quantitative Research – Salient Findings.....	82

3.5 Activity II - The Situation of Vulnerable Workers in Malta.....	98
3.5.1 Qualitative Research – Salient Findings.....	98
3.5.2 Quantitative Research – Salient Findings.....	100
3.6 Conclusion.....	120
4. THE RELEVANCE OF ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE TO THE MALTESE FEMALE	121
4.1 Research Objectives	121
4.1.1 Overriding Research Objective	121
4.1.2 Project Specific Objectives.....	121
4.2 The Relevance of Economic Independence to The Maltese Females - A Review of Recent Literature	122
4.3 Research Methodology	130
4.3.1 Research Methodology	130
4.3.2 Shortcomings of the Research Study.....	132
4.4 Qualitative research - The Salient Findings.....	132
4.5 Quantitative Research – Salient Findings	134
4.5.1 ACTIVITY I - Analysing the Glass Ceiling and Glass Cliff and how this affects Females in the Labour Market.....	134
4.5.2 ACTIVITY II – Assessing The Relevance of ‘Economic Independence’ to the Maltese Female.....	153
4.5.3 ACTIVITY III – Analysing the Effect of Social Security Benefits on Women in their Decision to take up Employment or not	166
4.6 Conclusion.....	178
5. ANALYSING INACTIVITY FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE	179
5.1 Research Objectives	179
5.1.1 Overriding Research Objective	179
5.1.2 Project Specific Objectives.....	179
5.2 Analysing Inactivity From a Gender Perspective - A Review of Recent Literature.....	180
5.2.1 Inactive Women in the Maltese Labour Market	180
5.2.2 Skills and the Inactive Female Population	183
5.3 Research Methodology	186
5.3.1 Research Methodology	186
5.3.2 Shortcomings of the Research Study.....	188
5.4 Qualitative Research – The Salient Findings	188
5.5 Quantitative Research – Salient Findings	190
5.5.1 ACTIVITY I – Analysing Inactivity from a Gender Perspective.....	191
5.5.2 ACTIVITY II – An ‘Inactive Population Skills Study’	202
5.6 Conclusion.....	221

6. RESEARCH ON GOZITAN WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT	222
6.1 Research Objectives	222
6.1.1 Overriding Research Objective	222
6.1.2 Project Specific Objectives	222
6.2 Gozitan Women in Employment - A Review of Recent Literature.....	222
6.3 Background Statistical Data on Employment.....	228
6.4 Research Methodology	231
6.4.1 Research Methodology	231
6.4.2 Shortcomings of the Research Study	232
6.5 Qualitative Research - Salient Findings.....	232
6.6 Quantitative Research - Salient Findings.....	234
6.7 Conclusion.....	252
REFERENCES	253

- 13% of respondents maintain that benefits discourage unemployed persons from looking for a job
- A bit less than half of respondents who wish to find a part time job say that they would be earning more through employment than they are currently receiving in benefits
- Only one out of ten respondents say that they would not be earning more from a job than the benefits
- Half of respondents say that they would earning more if they had a job
- 26% of respondents did not know if they would be earning more through employment
- 23% of respondents claim that they would earn less.

Awareness and availing of Government Incentives

- 'Iftaħ in-Negożju Tiegħek' (Start your own Business) scheme which was aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and thus increasing the participation in the labour market, is the scheme which the respondents are mostly aware of.
- "I CAN" Employability Programme and the Work Trial Scheme were also known to the respondents.
- Bridging the Gap Scheme, tax incentives on child care services are the incentives that the respondents are the least aware of.
- The "I CAN" Employability Programme is the scheme which was made use of the most by respondents, followed by the Work Trial Scheme and the Training Subsidy Scheme Objectives.
- Even though it was the scheme which respondents were mostly aware of, the "Iftaħ in-Negożju Tiegħek" (Start your own Business) scheme was the one which was the least used by the respondents, followed by tax incentives on child care services.

Policy Considerations

- More awareness on incentives to enable unemployed persons to make full use of them is imperative.
- Awareness raising campaigns on the incentives and programmes should include the benefits of dual earning spouses especially to women.

Respondents' Suggestions For Increased Participation in Labour Market

- The government/ authorities should increase job opportunities.
- Offer incentives to employers to employ Maltese employees rather than foreigners.
- Increase salaries.
- Offer incentives targeting older employees.
- Offer more work opportunities in Gozo.
- Offer more training opportunities.
- Offer incentives targeted towards separated persons.
- More availability of childcare services.

2.3 Analysing Inactivity From A Gender Perspective – Salient Conclusions and Policy Considerations

Overriding Research Objectives

The overriding research objective of this research project aimed at researching inactivity in the labour market from a gender perspective. This was researched by way of two Activities.

ACTIVITY I: to analyse inactivity from a gender perspective. This research project focused on identifying, understanding and validating the reasons underlying the inactivity of the female segment in the Maltese and Gozitan population.

ACTIVITY II: to conduct an 'inactive population skills' study to understand better where and why the skills of the inactive do not match the requirements of the current labour market.

The following are the salient conclusions and research findings emanating from the studies and policy considerations addressing these Research Objectives.

2.3.1 ACTIVITY I: Analysing Inactivity From A Gender Perspective

I. Profile of the Inactive Woman

- The majority of inactive women are married and have one or two children, aged 13 years or over.
- More than half of inactive respondents have a secondary level of education and the vast majority (81%), are not pursuing any education or training.
- Nearly one in every four women aged between 15-34 years is either not satisfied or, not at all satisfied, with her activity status.
- The percentage of women who are not satisfied or not at all satisfied, goes down to 16% in the case of older women whose age is between 35- 59.
- Those who are satisfied or very satisfied with their activity status amount to 43%, in the case of those who are 15-34 years old. This percentage goes up to 55% in the case of older women in the 35-59 age bracket.
- The vast majority (84%) of inactive women, who are under 35, expressed an interest in finding a job.
- Nearly half (46%) of the older women (35-59 years old) are also interested in finding a job.
- Less than one out of ten inactive women aged between 15-35 is not interested in finding a job.
- One out of three inactive women aged 35-59 is not interested in finding a job.
- Nearly all inactive women (90%) claimed that they would be willing to be trained in order to become employable.
- The mothers of nearly three out of every four women who participated in the survey were also inactive in the labour market.

Policy Considerations

- There are clear differences in the orientation to paid work between younger and older inactive women.
- The fact that 84% of those aged 15-34 expressed an interest in finding a job is encouraging and policy makers should take note of this cohort of women who are more willing to re-enter the labour market. Policies geared at this age group are likely to yield better results.
- A clear distinction should be made between policies geared at younger women who are in their childbearing and childrearing years, and older women whose children are older.
- Incentives geared at younger women which for example focus on child-care credits and NI credits, may not be effective or attractive to older women. Specific policies need to be carved out for the cohort of older women (35-59) in order to attract them back to the labour market.
- It is extremely encouraging to note that 90% of inactive women are willing to further their education and training in order to become employable. ETC should consider targeting part of its budget and resources for this cohort of potential workers.

II. Past Employment History

- One out of every four women (26%) never worked in the labour market.
- Just over a third (34%) of inactive women were absent from the labour market for more than ten years.
- The majority of women (73%) who previously worked did so on a full-time basis.
- The largest group of inactive women (37.5%) previously worked in the manufacturing sector.

Policy Considerations

- Since the largest group of inactive women previously worked in the manufacturing sector and since their numbers are substantial, specific policies could be targeted at women who worked in this specific sector.
- Government could have specific policies geared at employers in the manufacturing sector in order to encourage them to offer more flexible and innovative working conditions in order to attract this cohort of women back to similar employment.
- In view of the decreasing manufacturing sector, women previously employed in this area may need to be retrained in order to enable them to work in different sectors where more job opportunities exist.

III. Reason for Their Inactivity

- Over a third of the inactive women (38%), irrespective of their age, said that they were not working in order to take care of their children.
- A small minority (6%) were not working in order to take care of their parents (the percentage goes up to 8.2% of those aged 35-59).
- An even smaller minority (3%) were taking care of other relatives (the percentage goes up to 5.1% of those aged 35-59).
- One out of every five women (20%) in the 35-59 age bracket, indicated that they feel too old to look for work and nearly the same amount (17%) said they are not motivated to work.
- Only 7% of those under between 15-34 years indicated that they lack the motivation to work.
- On average, 3% do not think it is financially worthwhile to work.
- On average, 11% said they can afford to remain out of the labour market. However, fewer younger women (7%) said so.

Policy Considerations

- The care of children is proving to be the biggest stumbling block for Maltese women.
- This highlights the urgency to tackle important issues like the universal provision of childcare for the under 3's, and the provision of after school services for school-age children, without further delays.
- Childcare services which tally with typical working hours are likely to ease the headaches for working parents and enable more women to work.
- Elderly care is causing problems to a much smaller cohort of inactive women (9%), however more services for the elderly and the disabled could also reduce the number of women being affected negatively.

IV. Motivation to Work?

- Three out of every four women want to work for financial reasons.
- Nearly one out every three women want to work in order to socialise.
- Just under a third (29%) want to pursue a career.

Policy Considerations

- Policies on making work pay are likely to make a difference to women. Hence, one needs to analyse how the current tax credits on offer to women returnees, affect women in low paid or part-time jobs. Other incentives may be required to address such women whose income falls below the taxable income threshold.
- Highlighting the benefits of dual income for the family is important when communicating with inactive women.

V. Recruitment Services

- A majority of inactive women (60%) said they would seek work through ETC or other recruitment agencies.
- Just over half (56%) prefer to find work through newspapers.

Policy Considerations

- With the majority of inactive women claiming that they are likely to seek help through ETC to find work, Malta's Public Employment Service should cater for inactive women as a specific target group in order to offer tailor made services in line with their needs.
- ETC should have programmes and possibly a specific unit that focuses on the need of women wanting to return to paid work.

VI. Gender Roles

- Nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) agree that it is possible for a woman to be a good mother and to have a career at the same time if she has support.
- Over half of respondents (58%) claimed that they agree or strongly agree that both men and women should work.
- Just over half of respondents (51%) disagree with statements about traditional gendered roles, namely that men should work and women care for the family.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents (73%) think that ideally a woman with caring responsibilities should work on a flexi-time/part-time/reduced hours/ teleworking basis.
- Less than half of respondents (40%) agree or strongly agree that mothers of young children should not work.
- Nearly half (49%) think that the father should be the main breadwinner when the children are small.

Policy Considerations

- It is clear that perceptions about gender roles are slowly changing. More education on the benefits of equal gender roles could speed up the process towards more gender equality.
- There should be more focus on men's role in achieving gender equality. A lot more can be done, for example to encourage more men to share the household chores and caring roles with their partners/spouse.
- NCPE should follow up the recommendations of this project and work with other entities in order to ensure that the employment and caring gaps between women and men continue to be reduced, thus ensuring more equitable gender roles.

VII. Perceptions of Childcare Facilities

- Just over a third (35%) claim that there are no childcare services in their town or village.
- A similar amount (35%), do not know whether such facilities exist in their town or village.
- Less than a third of inactive women (30%) are aware of childcare services in their locality.
- Less than half (42%) are willing to use the services of a childcare centre.
- Well over half of respondents (65%) still prefer to take care of their children themselves.
- Over half (54%) agreed that childcare centres are beneficial to children.
- Well over half of respondents (63%) believe that childcare centres are beneficial to children if only used for a few hours a day.
- Less than half (41%) believe that if they take their children to childcare they would feel as though they are 'abandoning' their children and hence they would not consider themselves to be good mothers for doing so.
- Less than half (42%) would feel that their mind is at rest when their child is at the childcare centre.

Policy Considerations

- The fact that a little less than half (42%) of inactive mothers are willing to use the childcare centres, shows that perceptions on the use of childcare are slowly changing. However, the findings indicate that inactive women are still confused on childcare and mothers are still riddled with guilt feelings if they send their children to childcare centres.
- Educating inactive women and the general public on the benefits of quality childcare is essential in order to increase the confidence of those using them. Addressing negative misconceptions is also important.
- At present, childcare centres are regulated through the National Standards for Child Care Facilities (2006). However, these are not legally binding and not all childcare centres are obliged to comply with them. Since over five years have elapsed since these regulations have been enacted, childcare centres should finally become regulated by an act of law without further delays as this is likely to increase the confidence of parents in their use.
- The fact that 70% of inactive women either do not know whether childcare services exist in their locality or said there were none, shows that this issue requires much more attention than it has been given in the past by policymakers.
- The availability of more childcare centres should decrease the number of inactive women claiming they are not aware of, or do not have, a childcare centre in their locality. Policy makers should consider using EU funds to increase the number of childcare centres.
- NCPE should ensure that awareness about this vital service does not dwindle.

VIII. Perceptions of Childcare Facilities (by those who had used them, n=36 respondents)

- The vast majority of those who use childcare (78%) believe that the level of quality of childcare facilities was either good or very good.
- Only 8% believe that the service offered in childcare was very poor or poor.
- Just under half of the respondents (42%) would like to see lower prices being charged for the use of childcare.
- More than a third (39%) want more childcare centres to be available.
- Less than a third (31%) want extended opening hours of these hours which match typical office hours and the same amount believe that the staff should be better trained/more qualified.

Policy Considerations

- The issue of affordability remains high on the agenda of those who use childcare services. Since incentives to use childcare centres is tied to a tax break, policy makers should find ways of supporting mothers and fathers on low income who do not pay tax because they fall under the established thresholds. Single parents may need more help on this.
- The vast majority (78%) of mothers who used childcare centres are very satisfied with the service. The positive experience of such families could be useful in media campaigns or in Public Announcements to encourage more parents in similar situations to use them.
- The issue of the opening hours of the childcare centres is of some concern to inactive mothers. Could the opening hours of child care centres become more regulated in order to ensure that working parents are well serviced without one of the parents having to change to part-time jobs, or to give up work, in order to pick up their children?

IX. Perceptions of Elderly Care Facilities (n= 600 respondents)

- Nearly half of respondents (46%) prefer to take care of their elderly themselves rather than using a care facility and (41%) feel they would feel they are abandoning them, if they did use a care facility.
- Less than half of the respondents (42%) would be willing to retire in an old people's home.
- Just over half of inactive women (59%) think that the carers are professional and know how to handle their relative.

- A majority of respondents (62%) feel that their mind is at rest when their relative is at the care centre.

Policy Considerations

- Like in the case of the use of childcare, there is still some resistance to the use of care facilities for the elderly.
- More daycare facilities for the elderly in the community could solve the needs of inactive women who care for elderly parents but who could care for them at night.
- More homes for the elderly providing 24 hour care facilities are also necessary for inactive women who deal with elderly requiring more round the clock assistance.

X. Government Incentives to Encourage More Women to Work

- A large percentage of women (68%) were not aware of any government incentive to encourage more women to remain or return to the labour market.
- Only a small proportion (13%) of those aged 15-34 were aware of the €2000 tax rebate (23% of those aged 35+ knew).
- An even smaller proportion (4%) of those aged 15-34 were aware of the €1000 tax rebate on those who use childcare centres.
- Less than one in ten (8%) of those aged 15-34 were aware of the National Insurance credits to parents.
- Less than one in ten (8%) of those aged 15-34 were aware of the existence of subsidised childcare centres.
- It is abundantly clear that more information is needed on incentives earmarked at encouraging more women to return to the labour market. A sustained campaign by different stakeholders should help in disseminating information on such incentives.

Policy Considerations

- NCPE together with government entities can play an important role in raising awareness on these issues, using free air and radio time to give information on this subject to the general public.
- Childcare centres should alert parents who use their services on the childcare tax rebates.
- The income tax department could also give out more targeted information on tax incentives targeted at women returnees.

XI. Suggestions for Services That Would Encourage More Mothers to Work

a. Flexible Working Conditions

- The vast majority of women (81%) agree with Teleworking and with reduced working hours (77%).
- More than three out of every four women (79 %) agree with flexible working hours.

Policy Considerations

- The issue of flexible working arrangements, especially for women in the private sector, should be given more attention by policy makers.
- Keeping in mind that a number of employers already acknowledge the importance of family friendly measures, government should consider introducing a clause in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (2002) giving working parents the right to request flexible working arrangements. Parents whose request is rejected should have the right to appeal the decision. This would give a legal base to transparency mechanisms within companies. Equality Mark certified companies have already formally taken on board such practices.

- Policy makers should legislate in ways that make fathers share some of the family responsibilities so that mothers can extend their working time.
- One needs to check whether requests for flexible working conditions are so high because, for example, school opening hours do not tally with typical full-time working hours. Requests for flexible working arrangements may decrease if childcare and school opening hours are more in line with normal working hours.

b. Incentives to Women Returnees

- The vast majority of women (82%) agree with tax or financial benefits in the first 5 years for inactive women who return to work.

Policy Considerations

- It is abundantly clear that the vast majority are in favour of tax benefits to encourage more women to return to work. The issue of raising awareness on such benefits cannot be stressed enough, since it is seen so positively.

c. Incentives to Employers

- A large proportion of inactive women (79%) agree with tax credits or financial benefits to employers who introduce flexible work arrangements.

Policy Considerations

- Policy makers should find ways of encouraging employers to offer more family friendly measures to both women and men.
- This could be done through tax credits and incentives to buy equipment like laptops, for workers to work from home, for example.

d. Childcare Issues

- A large majority of inactive women (83%) suggest the setting up of childcare centres at the place of work or close to work.
- More than three out of four women (78%) suggest the setting up of childcare centres in each locality attached to primary /secondary schools.
- The majority (72%) believe that childcare should always be subsidised.
- 70% agree that childcare centres should have an extended range of services and opening hours (only 9% disagree).
- There is less consensus (39%) on the issue of the extension of school opening hours through after-school play activities.

Policy Considerations

- There is no doubt that there is wide consensus amongst inactive women on the need to set up more childcare centres both at the place of work or close to work, and also in each and every locality. Policy makers should ensure that childcare services are widely available and accessible in order to allow working parents to choose the services that best suit their needs.
- Since nearly 40% agree on the need to extend school opening hours through play activities, policy makers should raise awareness about the available services and should continue investing in such schemes, since their uptake is likely to increase as the number of younger women also increases in the labour market.

e. Facilities for the Elderly

- The vast majority of respondents (81%) agree that there should be more governmental facilities for the elderly/people with disability.

Policy Considerations

- The need for more government facilities for the elderly/persons with disability is evident and policy makers should continue investing in this area.

f. Awareness Raising

- 70% agree with educational campaigns to change traditional gendered roles.

Policy Consideration

- NCPE and other stakeholders should take note of this high demand for educational campaigns on gendered roles. This could be done by tapping EU funds and by using the local media.

g. Education and Training

- The vast majority (86%) of inactive women agree with the proposal for more training for inactive women.

Policy Considerations

- ETC should organise tailor-made courses for inactive women in order to support them in their bid to become active in the labour market.

h. Other Services

- Well over half (64%) agree with the introduction of longer shop office hours/ Sunday shopping. Only 18% disagree.

Policy Considerations

- Policy makers should take note of this demand with regards to shop and office hours on Sunday.

i. Maternity Leave

- The majority (63%) of respondents believe that maternity leave should be extended and should be paid in full. 19% of inactive women said that this does not affect them.
- Close to a third of respondents (29%) believe it should be extended to 6 months, whilst (27%) believe it should be extended to a full year.
- More than three out of every four inactive women (78%) would still consider making use of the maternity leave extension if they are only partially paid for this leave extension.

Policy Considerations

- Whilst the majority of inactive women (63%) agree that maternity leave should be extended and paid in full, it is interesting to note that the vast majority (78%) of inactive women would still consider taking the leave even if they are only paid partially for the extension. This shows that they are willing to bargain some of their income for more time with their baby. However, unless maternity leave is paid, mothers with low means and those living on one income, may be constrained to return to paid work earlier, whilst those who can afford to, will take a longer maternity leave.
- Whilst by 2013 the maternity leave is due to increase to 18 weeks from the current 14 weeks (2011), this still falls short of the 20 weeks proposed by the Estrela Report, which also suggests that the leave is fully paid.

2.3.2 ACTIVITY II: Assessing the Skills of Inactive Women

I. Respondent Profile: Inactive Females and Local Employers

Profile of Inactive Females (n=600)

- 18% reached no formal level of education, some 29% attained a school-leaving certificate level and 27% possess an Ordinary level of education. 19% obtained an Advanced level or equivalent level of education. 6.5% possess a tertiary level of education.
- The younger inactive females tend to possess a higher level of education than the older ones.
- 64% of the women are married, 2.2% co-habit, 28% are single and 5.3% are annulled/ divorced/ separated/ widowed.
- 64% of the women have child-caring responsibilities and are mothers of 1-2 children.
- 7% have dependent-adult caring responsibilities.
- 38% of the females have been out of paid employment for more than 10 years, while 25% never worked in their lives.
- 40% were employed in the 'manufacturing sector' and a third of these were employed as a 'plant and machine operator/ assembler'. 25% held a 'service/ market and sales worker' position.
- Over 40% had held their last employment for more than five years and the high majority of these were employed on full-time basis.

Profile of Employers (n=600)

- Interviewed companies employed at least one employee
- Companies hailed from Malta's 9 leading industry sectors.
- More than 57% of the employers are micro-companies (1-9 employees); 25% are small enterprises (10-49 employees) and 18% are medium-to-large enterprises (50+ employees).
- 87% hailed from the private sector and the remaining 13% from the public sector.
- 5.6% employers hailed from Gozo.
- Within the last 5 years, 26% of the employers recruited inactive females who were inactive for five years and over.
- The 'health, social work and care work sector' employs the highest number of female employees, who were previously inactive for five years and over, followed by the 'education' sector and the 'public service' sector.
- The companies which employ the larger number of 'previously inactive' females, possess a higher female-to-male workforce ratio and also offer family-friendly measures more than other employers.
- From the employers who employ previously inactive females, 43% employed women with an 'Ordinary' level standard of education, 32% employed women possessing a school leaving certificate and 23% employed inactive females holding an 'Advanced' level standard or equivalent.

Policy Considerations

- Since nearly one in five women (19%) has an advanced level of education and a further 6.5% have a tertiary level of education, this shows that there is a considerable cohort of educated inactive women, who could possibly further their education and training in order to increase their chances of re-entering the labour market.
- MCAST, ITS, ETC and University should organise specific courses that cater for those who are currently inactive but who already have a certain level of education. Currently few, if any courses, cater specifically for women returners in these institutions.
- Since those with lower levels of education are older, one could consider organising specific training courses for this cohort of inactive women combining work related skills, social skills and for example writing and reading skills for those who have no formal education. Those with

a school leaving certificate and those who possess O'level standard of education, could be offered similar courses but with a higher level of academic content to build on their existing qualifications.

- Since the biggest cohort of inactive women (40%) worked in the manufacturing sector, one could consider organising sector specific training in order to encourage these women to re-enter the labour market. Building on their past experiences and their strengths, such women could be offered courses that update their skills in order to make them more employable.
- It is fundamental that when organising courses aimed at attracting women back to the labour market one should consider the location, timing, means of advertising the course and its length in order to ensure that they reflect the needs of such women.
- The largest proportions of previously inactive women have entered sectors like health, social work, care work, and education. Such sectors are normally administered by government and hence they have more flexible working. This shows that work-life reconciliation remains an important factor for women with caring responsibilities. Hence, employers should be made aware that by offering flexible working conditions they are likely to attract more workers to their organisation.

II. The Skills of Inactive Females

Language Skills

- 75% of inactive females consider themselves proficient users of oral and written Maltese.
- 60% of inactive females feel they are proficient users of oral and written English.
- 22% feel they are proficient in Italian.
- Local employers' perceptions on the language skills of inactive women were slightly different. 64% of the employers, who recruited inactive women during the last five years, feel that these females are proficient in Maltese, while 49% of these employers believe that these females are proficient in English. 10% of these employers believe that these females are proficient in Italian.

Personal Skills

- Responsibility, communication and reliability are the three leading personal skills/ qualities characterising inactive women.
- Number crunching and calculations, creativity and artistic skills are their weakest personal skills.
- The employers who engage previously inactive women also perceive and confirm these as the strongest and weakest personal skills of inactive women.

Critical Skills

- Both inactive females and employers who employ inactive females perceive that the strongest critical skills characterising inactive females are teamwork, time management, customer handling and problem solving.
- Their weakest skills are project management, negotiating, financial management and entrepreneurial skills.

ICT Skills

- 60% and 53% of the inactive females believe they have good or very good skills in using email and searching the internet respectively.
- 44% believe they have good or very good skills using word processing packages and 31% possess good or very good proficiency with spreadsheet packages.
- 12% believe they possess good or very good proficiency in graphic design packages.
- Local employers employing inactive females also confirm these ICT competency levels.

Policy Considerations

Employers seem to undervalue the skills of inactive women. Hence it is important that when speaking about the inactive population, one needs to point out that this is not a homogeneous group, but a mixed cohort ranging from those who have a post secondary or tertiary level of education (19% and 6.5% respectively), to those with no formal qualifications who amount to 18% but, who may have varying additional skills ranging from ICT to language and other personal skills that are useful at the workplace.

- Inactive women have been perceived to be good at teamwork, time management, customer handling and problem solving. Furthermore, responsibility, communication and reliability were identified as being important qualities characterising inactive women. When designing courses for inactive women, one should build upon these strengths and make participants aware of them as a selling point during their interviews.
- More language training is needed to increase the pool of inactive women who are able to speak a foreign language fluently.
- It is encouraging to note that nearly half (44%) of inactive women have good or very good skills in word processing and over half (60%) are able to use email.

III. Employee Skills Required by Employers

Practical Skills Required

- 44% of all employers feel that the most important practical skills they look for when recruiting new employees (not necessarily inactive females) are previous work experience and team work.
- 42% of employers perceive sound social skills as essential in their line of business.
- Inactive females also confirmed that the practical skills most requested by local employers are previous work experience, teamwork and computer/ ICT skills.
- 81% of the employers who recruited inactive females in the last five years observed that inactive women do possess sound teamwork skills but unfortunately a significant number of them do not have the required job experience.

Personal Skills Required

- 53% of all employers perceive 'honesty' as the most important personal skill they look for in an employee at their workplace. 49% indicated 'reliability/ taking work seriously' and 45% indicated 'courtesy/ politeness' as the most important personal skill they look for in an employee.
- Inactive females also confirmed the above three personal skills as those mostly sought after by employers. They also mentioned 'punctuality'.

Specific Technical Skills Required

- 45% of all employers require prospective candidates to possess specific technical skills in their respective line of business. These technical skills largely comprise 'IT and computer software skills', 'mechanical skills' and 'engineering skills' and are mostly required in the 'financial, business and community services sector', the 'transport, communications and ICT sector' and in the 'health, social work and care work sector'.
- 17% of inactive females possess some kind of specific technical skill. The technical skills of the younger age group females were largely related to the fields of 'beauty and hairdressing', 'art and creativity', and 'media and graphic design' while the technical skills of the older age group females were sewing and crafts skills.

Policy Considerations

- Since one out of four inactive female respondents indicated that they have never worked in their lives and more than a third (38%) stated that they have been out of paid employment for more than 10 years, lack of work experience is likely to hinder them from finding paid

work. Hence, when organising courses for inactive women, where possible, these should include a work-experience or a work-taster, to enable such women to refresh their skills and increase their work experience in order to adapt to today's work needs and environment. Such courses should have elements that focus on the self esteem of women and on the importance of equitable gender roles, in order to ensure that women are sufficiently empowered to return to work, after a long absence from the labour market

IV. Training

Training Attended by Inactive Females

- 72% of inactive women do not attend any type of training. The two salient reasons for this are because they do not have the time to attend courses or training or simply because they are not interested or motivated in doing so.
- 22% are undergoing some type of training, while 8.5% plan to do so in future. A good majority of these are undergoing training or plan to undergo training with the specific objective of improving their job prospects and enhance their employability potential.
- Other inactive women are attending training for their own personal development and to widen their knowledge, in general.
- 72% of the employers who recruited inactive females in the last five years observed that these females are furthering their studies through training and courses.
- Some 40% of all inactive women never participated in any computer training.
- Another 20% learnt computer skills alone at home (self-taught) without any formal computer training. 19% took a course in computer training either at University or at a private education institution.
- 75% of inactive women do not possess an ECDL certificate.

Inactive Females' Future Employment Ambitions

- 30% of inactive females either do not see themselves working in any business sector in future (16%) or do not know which business sector to work in (13%).
- 19% of inactive females would see themselves working in the 'health, social work and care work' sector, 14% in the 'education' sector and 13% in the 'wholesale and retail trade' sector. 10% of inactive females see themselves working in the 'public administration' sector and a further 10% would prefer working in the 'hotel and restaurants' sector.

Training (for Inactive Females) Recommended by Local Employers and Inactive Females Themselves

- 36% of all employers suggest that inactive females should undergo more computer skills and ICT-related training for these to increase their chances of finding employment.
- 31% of employers suggest that inactive females should seek job-specific training to be able to acquire specific technical skills.
- 20% of employers recommended that inactive females take on social skills training (e.g. teamwork, assertiveness, customer care, time management, etc).
- Yet another 20% of employers recommended that they attend general training on new work practices/ retraining.
- These findings substantiate the employers' perceptions on the most required 'employee skills' (social skills and computer skills) required by them and that the most lacking skills among inactive females are technical skills.
- Inactive women recommended the following training or courses which may enhance their skills and assist them in finding employment, which largely match the training recommended by local employers:
 - Basic computer skills
 - Social skills training

- Communication courses/ basic training to keep up with the current work environment/ be able to integrate
- Inactive women also indicated that training courses should be made available in all localities and that part-time courses should also be held in the morning.
- Inactive women suggested that job opportunities and courses offered should be better advertised.

Policy Considerations

The areas of work which interest most inactive women are: health, social and care work (19%) followed by work in the education sector (14%). Jobs in these two sectors are likely to be in the Public domain. Because government is trying to control the number of jobs in the public sector/ service, such women should be encouraged to explore alternative areas of work offered by the Private sector. Alternatively, if there is demand for such jobs in the public sector/service, one should ensure that such jobs are marketed in ways that attract the attention of inactive women, amongst others. Unless such marketing earmarks inactive women, there is the risk that this category of women who are not registering for work, will not become aware of such vacancies and work opportunities.

- Courses related to the wholesale and retail trade sector and to the hotels and restaurants' sector are also likely to attract interest since 13% and 10% of inactive women declared that they prefer to work there.
- As reiterated earlier, the timing and location of courses aimed at inactive women, should take into consideration the specific needs of such women. For example, those with small children are more likely to be in a position to attend training courses when their children are at school. Moreover, if courses are held closer to their town or village, inactive women may be more inclined to attend than if, for example, the courses entail a longer journey.
- When advertising courses aimed at inactive women, one should ensure that they reach the target audience. Different mediums may need to be used in order to reach them. Schools could be a good medium for disseminating courses aimed, amongst others, at younger mothers whose children attend primary or secondary schools.

V. Job Opportunities Available

- 38% of all employers do not have any job vacancies (over the last five years) which could have been appropriate for inactive females seeking employment. In fact, these employers did not employ any previously inactive females over the last five years. These employers were largely engaged in the 'real estate and construction sector'.
- Another 35% of employers did have job vacancies (over the last five years) appropriate for inactive females seeking employment. These employers hailed largely from the 'hospitality and tourism sector' and the 'public administration' sector.
- An additional 27% of employers claimed that some of their job vacancy opportunities were deemed to be appropriate for inactive females seeking employment. These hailed from the 'health, social work and care work sector' and the 'financial, business and community services sector'.
- Almost half (45%) of all employers find difficulty in filling job positions requiring 'low-skilled' employees as against almost a third (27%) of employers, whose difficulty lies more in filling in 'high-skilled' job positions.
- The following findings relating to the difficulties encountered by employers to fill in job positions emerge across all of Malta's 9 leading business sectors:
 - 15% and 7% of all employers encounter difficulty in filling in their 'operational (in services)' and 'operational (in manufacturing)' job vacancy positions respectively.
 - 8.5% and 8% of all employers find difficulty in filling in their 'salespersons' and 'elementary workers/ unskilled workers' job positions respectively.

- The more difficult-to-fill 'specialised/ skilled positions' include 'technician' (7%), 'managerial/ line managers' (6%) and 'senior management' (4.5%) respectively.
- 32% of employers do not find difficulty in filling in job positions.
- The study's research findings concur with information obtained from the Employment & Training Corporation (ETC) which shows that the most sought after and advertised job positions across Malta's 9 business sectors are largely positions, which do not demand highly specialised technical skills and high qualifications. The 3 most sought after positions (by business sector) advertised on ETC's website/ recruitment facilities during the period May 2010 – May 2011 comprised:
 - Financial, Business and Community Service: Customer Care/ Telephone Operator; Cleaner/ Room Attendant; Cleaner.
 - Retail and Wholesale: Sales Person; Delivery Person; Sales Person (Promoter).
 - Real Estate and Construction: Construction, Concrete Shutterer; Electrician (Building); Labourer (Building Construction).
 - Hospitality and Tourism: Cleaner/ Room Attendant; Waiter, Waitress; Chef/ Sous Chef or Chef De Partie.
 - Transport, Communications and Ict: Salesperson (Travel); Clerk, Accounting and Bookkeeping; Computer Professional.
 - Health and Social Work and Care Work: Storekeeper; Nurse, State Registered (Srn); Instructor/ Other Associated Professional.
 - Public Administration: Teacher, Primary Education Facilitator (Education Environment); Care Worker/ Children.
- 64% of all employers do not take 'gender' into consideration when they recruit new employees.
- 28% of all employers take 'gender' into consideration for certain job positions, which require physical strength (where male applicants are preferred) and which require good customer interface and organisational skills (where female applicants are preferred). This finding emerged more in the 'health, social work and care work' sector.

Policy Considerations

- This research confirmed that the most sought after and advertised job positions across Malta's 9 business sectors are largely positions which do not demand highly specialised technical skills and high qualifications. When one considers that nearly half of inactive women (47%) have a secondary level of education or lower, one may need to increase awareness about work opportunities for this cohort of women who may still be able to find a job, in spite of their low qualifications.
- In order to make work pay, government should consider giving in-work incentives to women in low paying jobs.
- ETC could consider organising job fairs/ information sessions for inactive women in order to increase their awareness about current work opportunities and about training courses available to them. These could possibly be held in collaboration with local councils.
- Whilst it is positive to note that 64% of employers claim that they do not take gender into consideration when recruiting new employees, it is worrying to note that 28% do so and tend to prefer men or women for specific jobs. This shows that certain employers are not aware that it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender. NCPE and other government entities should continue to raise awareness about such issues with both employers and prospective employees.