

Employment



Relevance of gender in employment

While considerable progress has been made in relation to women's labour market participation over the past decades, deeply entrenched inequalities persist. They are the result of discriminatory norms and attitudes, the unequal distribution of care responsibilities in the household and the way institutional structures consider and integrate gender. While women's activity rate has increased during the past years, men's activity rate has remained largely stable. The slow tempo of changes in the sharing of unpaid work represents a serious constraint for women's equal access to the labour market and their equal control over economic resources.

Gender gap is the term used to describe the unequal outcomes achieved by women and men on the labour market, as well as women's restricted access to rights and assets worldwide. No country in the world has fully closed the gender gap. The main gender gaps in the labour market concern differences in:

employment rate.

part-time work.

unpaid care and family responsibilities.

access to rights and assets (professions and decision-making positions).

working conditions.

hourly wages (gender pay gap).

the possibilities for economic independence.

[1] The activity rate is the percentage of economically active population aged 15 – 64 years on the total population of the same age.

The economically active population (also called labour force) is the sum of employed and unemployed persons.

Issues of gender inequalities in the policy area

Gender employment gap

In all Member States and in most accession countries employment and participation rates for women, even if increasing in the last decades, are still systematically lower than for men. The employment rate for women in the EU Member States is approximately 62%, versus 75% for men. Looking at the average number of working hours of women and men, the gender gap in employment is much larger than the general trend shown by the employment rate: almost a third (32%) of employed women across Europe work part-time.

Women's increased activity rates do not translate into greater employment rates, which remained relatively stable between 2008 and 2012. In parallel, there has been a gradual meeting of women's and men's employment rates, largely driven by a relative decrease in the employment rates for men (3 percentage points), due to the impact of the economic crisis.

Despite the convergence in employment rates, gender-based segregation in employment is still a problem, with women and men over/under-represented in various sectors and occupations. In 2012, women accounted for only 9% of workers in the construction sector, in contrast to over 66% of those working in arts, entertainment and recreation-related sectors. As for occupations, in 2012, only 11% working in craft and related trades workers were women, 17% of plant and machine operators or assemblers and 33% of managers were female.

Gender-based occupational segregation is linked to a number of factors, such as differences in knowledge, skills and abilities stemming from education and training; differences in household roles and the distribution of unpaid work; entry barriers and organisational culture and practices; gender identity, norms, attitudes and stereotypes.

As a result, women and men have been affected differently by the economic crisis. Women's engagement in non-trading and public sectors meant they did not face increases in unemployment during the initial stages of the crisis. However, recent and more restrictive government fiscal policies and the delayed effects of cuts in public budgets have led to employment losses for women.

Part-time work

Although women have entered the labour force in great numbers, their working hours constitute a fundamental difference in their participation in the labour market compared to men.

The distribution of part-time work between women and men is a useful measure from a gender equality perspective. It is both derived from, and reinforces, norms attached to the roles of women and men in the domestic sphere and how these relate to their participation in the labour force. In the EU-28 on average in 2012, although women represented 46% of those in employment, they accounted for 76% of those working on a part-time basis and conversely only 38% of those working full-time.

Much of the increase in women's employment that occurred before the financial crisis is related to part-time employment. Men still account for less than a quarter of part-time employees. The share of men working part-time is small (8.2%). The involvement in part-time work is heavily influenced by the number and the age of children: female part-time workers with children aged 6 or below make up about 40% of the total female workers.

Gender differences are also high when considering transitions from full-time to part-time jobs. In the EU-28, only 2% of men have moved to a part-time contract from a full-time contract, while this percentage is more than 3 times higher for women (7%). Countries where more women have moved to part-time jobs are the Netherlands (13%), the United Kingdom (13%) and Italy (12%). Transitions from full-time to part-time work have been increasing as a result of the crisis from 1% for men and 4% for women in 2008, possibly as a way to contain reductions in employment.

Involuntary part-time work

Part-time work is considered involuntary when respondents report that the main reason for working part-time is that they are unable to find full-time work. During economic downturns, the involuntary component of part-time work typically increases, due to the reduction in demand for labour that drives down the number of hours worked, and increases the unemployment rate.

The share of involuntary part-time employment out of total part-time employment in the EU Member States increased from 25% in 2008 to 28% by 2012. In general, men working part-time are on average more likely to be involuntary part-time workers compared to women.

Working part-time has long-term effects on pay and prospects, including lower pensions and increased risk of poverty. Women's general disadvantaged position in the labour market makes mothers more likely than fathers to work part-time and take on childcare responsibilities. Gender imbalances will have less impact on pay inequalities when fathers take a more active role in sharing the responsibility for the care of children and other dependents.

Division of unpaid care between women and men

As the European Commission has stated, a major reason for women's low employment rates is the challenge of reconciling work, family and private life. The labour market participation of mothers is 11.5% lower than that of women without children, while the rate for fathers is 8.5% higher than that for men without children.

There is a clear linkage between childcare and women's and men's employment rates. On average in 2009, the employment rate of women with children under the age of 12 dropped by 12 percentage points (p.p.). For men the rate increased by 9.1 p.p. What is more, in a majority of Member States the employment rate for women decreases as the number of children increases. According to the latest European Commission report on the progress on gender equality, on average at EU-27 level, almost one third of women with care responsibilities are either in part-time work or inactive because of the lack of care services available for children and other dependents. In addition, poorly designed tax and benefit systems, in particular joint taxation, can – in combination with a lack of affordable and high-quality childcare facilities – create strong disincentives for second earners to take up work.

According to Eurofound, women spend 26 hours per week in unpaid work, against 9 hours for men. Between 2005 and 2010 the unpaid work gap between women and men workers shrank: in 2005, the average EU-28 female worker spent 20 hours more than the average male worker on unpaid work, while in 2010 this difference fell to 17 hours. However, this reduction was mainly due to the decrease in the number of hours female workers spent on unpaid work (children, housework, caring for adults), since the time men spent on unpaid work increased by only half an hour per week. According to the recent EQLS survey, among people who undertake housework or provide care at least once or twice a week, women estimate that on average they spend 28 hours providing childcare compared with 18 hours for men while housework occupies 14 hours a week for women and 11 hours for men.



"An important difference between women and men's employment rates is the different impact of parenthood. Whereas men with children tend to work more than men without children, the opposite is true for women: women without children have higher employment rates than women with children". Bettio, Platenga, Smith - Gender and the European Labour Market, 2013

Reconciliation

The reconciliation of work, family and private life is recognised at EU level as a priority for achieving gender equality, increasing women's participation in the labour market and promoting the sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men. Reconciliation is also a key element for achieving the Europe 2020 target of raising the employment rate of women and men aged between 20 and 64 to 75%. This signifies the necessity to address the barriers to women's participation in the labour market and to increase men's involvement in caring duties in the implementation of the strategy.

Policies aimed at promoting reconciliation include leave arrangements, flexible working-time arrangements, the provision of childcare and (formal) long-term care services for children, elderly and/or other dependent relatives allowing women and men to participate more actively in all areas of social life.

In particular, flexible working arrangements can be a strong tool in retaining women in the workforce. However, at the same time the concentration of women in specific employment contracts (such as, for example, part-time) especially if extended for long time, can have a negative effect on earnings, career progression and pension entitlements.

The status of women's working life is more likely to be affected by the care needs of others, which can be explained by a higher take-up of parental leave or by the position of women in the labour market – for instance, a higher frequency of part-time work as well as a higher rate of inactivity for women ('inactivity' refers to the percentage of persons who are classified neither as employed nor as unemployed in the labour market). Patterns of inequality are reflected in various EU Member State policies for the improvement of women's access to and position in the labour market. These policies promote more equal sharing of caring duties and the achievement of a better work–life balance.

Childcare facilities

It is recognised that the lack of promotion of work–life balance policies in general, and the lack of childcare facilities in particular, present a major obstacle to the economic independence of women. 'Reconciliation policies' in general and the provision of childcare facilities in particular enable both women and men to achieve economic independence. As stated by the OECD, the greatest pay differences can be observed in countries where there is little provision of childcare facilities for young children.

The importance of providing affordable and good-quality childcare has been recognised at the EU level as an important measure to improve the reconciliation of work, family and private life and to foster labour market participation and gender equality.

At the 2002 Barcelona Summit, the European Council agreed that the Member States should remove disincentives to women's participation in the labour market and, by 2010, strive to provide childcare to at least 90% of children between the age of 3 and the mandatory school age, and to at least 33% of children below the age of 3. The importance of the Barcelona targets was reaffirmed in 2010 in the employment guidelines adopted by the Council of the European Union and in the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011 – 2020. The importance of improving the supply of childcare services is also recognised in the Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010 – 2015.

However, the effect of childcare provision on women's employment is complex and it is not yet clear how far current childcare arrangements are designed to support the employment of both parents. The target that childcare systems should provide 33% coverage for children under 3 years of age was achieved by 10 Member States by 2014, while 90% coverage for children aged between 3 and the compulsory school age was achieved by 9 Member States by 2014. Of these, 6 Member States have achieved both targets.

Parental and maternity leave

The Directive on Parental Leave gives each working parent the right to at least 4 months' leave after the birth or adoption of a child (previously up to 3 months). At least 1 of the 4 months cannot be transferred to the other parent – which means it will be lost if not taken – that gives an incentive for fathers to take the leave. The Directive also provides for better protection against discrimination and a smoother return to work. Member States had until 8 March 2013 to transfer it into national law. The EU Commission is monitoring the compliance of the Member States.

Notwithstanding the fact that there has been significant progress in the extension of parental leave in EU Member States, women make up the majority of parental leave recipients. The proportion of all parental leave allocated to employed men compared to the leave allocated to employed women is a key indicator that links the reconciliation of work, private and family life to gender equality.

The data show a notable variation among countries in fathers' take-up of parental leave. For example, in 2007 in Sweden, there were 77 fathers for every 100 mothers taking parental leave, while in Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany and Slovakia there were fewer than 10 fathers for every 100 mothers in parental leave. Fathers' use of parental leave is particularly low if parental leave is organised along family lines (not as an individual and non-transferable right) and if it is not well paid. However, the ratio of fathers taking paternity leave is higher than those taking parental leave, especially in Finland or France where paternity leave is relatively short and well paid compared to the parental leave benefit. A higher share of parental leave allocated to fathers is likely to ensure a stronger effect on a more gender-equal distribution of care work within families.

Maternity leave is regulated at EU level by the 1992 Directive, which lays down a minimum of 14 weeks. In October 2008, the Commission proposed to review the current legislation, as part of the work–life balance package, based on the International Labour Organisation's maternity protection convention of 2000. The Maternity Leave Directive would have increase the compulsory maternity leave period in the EU from 14 to 18 weeks.

In October 2010 the European Parliament closed its first reading and submitted the amended legislation to the Council to extend maternity leave from 14 to 20 weeks on full pay and introduce 2 weeks' fully paid paternity leave. The text has remained in the Council ever since.

The European Commission issued an ultimatum in December 2014: the text would be scrapped if no progress was made within 6 months. The European Parliament, in a resolution voted on in May 2015, pressed the European Commission not to withdraw a draft EU Directive on maternity leave, despite 4 years' deadlock over it in the EU Council of Ministers. Nevertheless, in July 2015 the European Commission announced that with "no prospect of progress", the bill would now be consigned to the scrapheap with 73 other draft laws on which no agreement was reached by the end of the last 2009 – 14 legislature.

In August 2015 the Commission published a road map for the initiative A new start to address the challenges of work–life balance faced by working families, which will replace the 2008 Commission proposal to amend the maternity leave directive. To this end, in November 2015, the European Commission launched a first stage consultation with EU social partner organisations on how to improve work–life balance and reduce obstacles to women's participation in the labour market. The consultation document gives an overview of the main challenges arising from work–life balance for parents and people with caring responsibilities; it takes stock of the current EU-level legislation already existing in the area of work–life balance such as maternity leave, parental leave and part-time work, and invites the social partners to identify possible improvements to existing EU-level legislation.

Gender pay gap

In spite of more than 30 years of equal pay legislation the gender pay gap has remained persistent across all Member States regardless of the overall level of women's employment, national welfare models or equality legislation. A gender-segregated labour market, the difficulty of balancing work and family life, the undervaluation of women's skills and work are some of the complex causes of the persistent gender pay gap.

State of Play

Men's monthly earnings are higher than women's in every occupation. Moreover, earnings in male-dominated occupations tend to be higher than in female-dominated occupations, and especially so for men in white-collar jobs. On average, per hour of work, women are paid 16.4% less than men. In 2013, across Member States, the gender pay gap varied by 26.7 percentage points, ranging from 3.2% in Slovenia to 29.9% in Estonia.

The gender pay gap differs between Member States and between full-time and part-time jobs. In 2013, for full-time workers the highest pay gaps are observed in Hungary (above 20%), and the lowest, less than 2%, in Italy. In 2013 in the EU, the lowest gender pay gaps for part-time workers were recorded as Malta (8.2%), and the highest was Spain (33.7%). In addition, women are more likely to work part-time and to interrupt their careers to care for others. As a result, the gender gap in pensions stands at 39%. As highlighted by the European Commission, widows and lone parents – mainly mothers – are a particularly vulnerable group, and more than a third of lone parents are poor.

Research studies suggest that, even with all characteristics being equal (same length of service, same age, working in the same sector, same occupation and same level of education etc.), women generally earn less than men – the so-called unexplained part in the pay gap which does not result from identifiable differences in characteristics observed. Furthermore, lower relative wages of women create a vicious circle. A lower wage encourages more women to stay at home and take family responsibility in unpaid work. As such, women are less involved in the labour market. As a consequence, the pay gap results in both a consequence and a cause of the lower hours worked by women.

Equal access to economic and financial resources is very important for a number of economic outcomes, including poverty reduction and social inclusion. On average, women in the EU-28 earn 16% less than men. Sectoral and occupational segregation, women's over-representation in unpaid and part-time work and gender-based discrimination contribute to the pay gap, which increases in old age, as reflected in the gender gap in pensions of 39%.

Inequality in decision-making positions

In the economy, women still have difficulties in reaching decision-making positions. Women business owners make up only 33.2% of self-employed people, and women are still over-represented in lower-paid sectors across the EU. Management boards are dominated by men. Despite an intense public debate and some voluntary initiatives at national and European level, only marginal improvements have been noted: an incremental average increase in the number of women on boards of just 0.6 percentage points per year has been recorded since 2003. At governmental level, women account for 27% of senior government ministers and 27% of members of national parliaments.

Large companies across the EU continue to be disproportionately led by men, despite the strong economic and business advantages of gender balance and the presence of qualified and talented women. Data collected by the European Commission in 2014 show that women account for an average of 20.2% of top-level board members in the largest publicly listed companies registered in each of the EU Member States. There are only 4 countries – France, Latvia, Finland and Sweden – in which women account for at least a quarter of board members. Moreover, there are very few women in the most influential positions: only 3.3% of CEOs (chief executive officers) are women.

There is considerable variation between Member States, ranging from 32% of board members being women in France to just over 2% in Malta. Although no Member State has yet achieved gender balance in the boardroom, there has been slight progress over the last decade thanks to intense debate and regulatory pressure. In October 2003, only 2 of the current Member States (Romania and Slovenia) had governing boards made up of at least 20% women board members. Ten years on, 10 Member States have surpassed this level. However, there are still 6 Member States in which men hold more than 90% of board positions.

Improvement has been made since 2010, when the European Commission first announced that it would consider targeted initiatives to improve gender diversity in companies, stimulating debate and action across Europe.

Economic independence

Equal economic independence is vital for gender equality, as well as economic growth and prosperity. It can generally be achieved through equal access to, and control over, critical economic resources and opportunities and through equal access to employment.

Studies (Duflo 2012, Bolieka & Loko 2009) show a strong positive correlation between economic growth and gender equality. Consistently, EIGE's Gender Equality Index shows a clear positive relationship between gender equality and GDP in the EU Member States. Furthermore, women's ability to develop their full labour market potential has been associated with significant macroeconomic gains. Conversely, the loss in GDP per capita due to the gender pay gap has been estimated to amount to as much as 27% in parts of the EU. Increasing women's labour market participation could thus lead to increases in GDP. Additionally, increases in labour market participation can reduce poverty among women and will widen the tax base, specifically if the wage gap is effectively addressed.

Women are instead less likely than men to be self-employed, due to traditional perceptions of gender roles, but also to the greater difficulties women have in accessing financial funds, training, networking and in reconciling business and family.

While women are under-represented in self-employment, they are more likely to be involved in 'bogus' (i.e. not genuine) self-employment, which is linked with higher risks of poverty and defined by dependency on only one client, the presence of regular payments and the lack of capacity to freely hire new workers and/or make important business decisions.

Overall, women are substantially under-represented among self-employed workers, while simultaneously being more likely to be self-employed on their own account. Moreover, self-employment leads to much lower earnings and income for women and can lead to a greater risk of poverty over the life course, as women are more likely to work in more labour-intensive and less profitable sectors than men. The gender pay gap between women and men in self-employment vividly illustrates the disparities, standing at 45% at EU level.

A clearer differentiation between entrepreneurship and self-employment can aid the implementation and monitoring of policies promoting women's entrepreneurship.

Women face a number of difficulties and obstacles in setting up and maintaining businesses. Although most of these difficulties are common to both sexes, in many cases they tend to be more significant for women entrepreneurs. These include access to finance, unfavourable business regulations, cultural barriers, choice of business types and sectors, information and training gaps, lack of contacts and access to social support and networking, differences in the way women and men approach entrepreneurship, educational and occupational segregation and competing demands on time (double burden of home and work responsibilities).

Overall, women are less likely than men to be entrepreneurs, due to traditional perceptions of gender roles, but also to the greater difficulties women have in accessing financial funds, training, networking and in reconciling business and family. As highlighted by the European Commission the proportion of female entrepreneurs, at 33% (30% in start-ups), is some way short of optimal and most women still do not consider entrepreneurship as a relevant career option.

Realising both women's and men's full labour market potential can lead to significant macroeconomic gains. However, despite the progress made in women's economic empowerment through increases in educational attainment and the share of paid work, the unequal distribution of unpaid work and the gender segregation in employment and education hinder equal access to economic resources for women and men. Employed women are over-represented in the service sectors and in occupations that are characterised by lower status, career opportunities and pay, as well as in part-time work.

As the Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010 – 2015 points out, economic independence is a prerequisite for enabling both women and men to exercise control over their lives.



"There has been progress in most areas, but achieved at an uneven pace. At this rate of change, it will take almost 30 years to reach the EU's target of 75% of women in employment, over 70 years to make equal pay a reality, over 20 years to achieve parity in national parliaments (at least 40% of each gender), over 20 years to achieve gender balance on the boards of Europe's biggest companies and almost 40 years to ensure that housework is equally shared."
European Commission - Report on Progress on Equality between women and men, 2013

Gender equality policy objectives at EU and international level

EU level

Both equal economic independence and gender equality are fundamental principles of EU policy, going back to the introduction of the principle of equal pay with the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Since then the EU's approach to economic independence and gender equality in the labour market has expanded significantly in scope, in both soft and hard law.

The 1997 European Employment Strategy (EES) was a significant policy development, as it relied on a greater awareness of women's potential economic contribution and the detrimental effect gender inequality could have on jobs and growth.

The introduction in 2010 of the Europe 2020 Employment Strategy, aiming to achieve smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive economic growth, marked another important turning point in the evolution of European employment policy. In contrast to the 1997 EES, Europe 2020 shows a rather limited consideration of gender as it sets a headline target for employment of 75% for the population aged 20 – 64, which may be difficult to achieve if gendered labour market participation or the impact of gendered norms and attitudes are not specifically taken into consideration.

The employment guidelines include several considerations on gender equality. In Guideline 5: Boosting demand for labour Member States mention is made of the promotion of entrepreneurship and in particular to the support to the creation and growth of small enterprises in order to increase the employment rate of women and men. In Guideline 6: Enhancing labour supply and skills, gender equality including equal pay is said to be ensured in the labour market as well as access to affordable quality early childhood education and care. Guideline 7: Enhancing the functioning of labour markets mentions work–life balance. Guideline 8: Ensuring fairness, combating poverty and promoting equal opportunities stresses the need to reform the pension systems in order to secure their sustainability and adequacy for women and men.

In September 2010 the European Commission published the Strategy for equality between Women and Men 2010 – 2015, which includes the following actions that address some of the remaining gender gaps:

- improving women's participation in the labour market by facilitating work–life balance.
- promoting female entrepreneurship and working with Member States on the availability of affordable high-quality childcare.

- equal pay, e.g. working with European social partners to improve the transparency of pay schemes.

- ensuring that women's careers are not blocked by a glass ceiling effect. The European Commission will work together with the private sector to raise the number of women in

economic decision-making positions – either through self-regulation or an EU initiative.

The European Pact for Gender Equality (2011 – 2020) reaffirms the EU's commitments to closing gender gaps in employment, education and social protection, promoting better work–life balance for women and men and combating all forms of violence against women.

In addition to the European Commission's strategy acknowledging equal economic independence as "a prerequisite for enabling both women and men to exercise control over their lives and to make genuine choices", the EU has adopted a number of directives relating to equal economic independence.

Given that women are generally disadvantaged financially and exposed to greater risks of social exclusion, the elimination of the gender pay gap has long been a priority for the EU in a number of policy areas. The principle of equal pay was first introduced with the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Directive 2006/54/EC recast expanded on this and introduced the principle of the equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupations.

The European Commission's Communication of 2007 on the gender pay gap proposed a series of actions to tackle this problem. These included a better application of existing legislation, fighting the gender pay gap in employment policies, promoting equal pay among employers and through social partnership, and supporting the exchange of good practices across the EU. A new measurement methodology (based on the structure of earnings survey, SES) has been implemented in order to obtain harmonised and comparable data on the unadjusted gender pay gap across Member States. Moreover, a major communication campaign was launched on International Women's Day 2009, including exchanges of good practice between Member States on counselling services for employers and employees and on awareness-raising.

In Europe, the principle of equal pay was first introduced with the 1957 Treaty of Rome and it was successfully invoked in 1975 to defend Gabrielle Defrenne, who was an air hostess working for the Belgian national airline. The rights stemming from the Defrenne case are an unshakeable legacy for women in the EU, since the case led to the adoption of the first European directives on gender equality. Directive 2006/54/EC (recast) expanded on this and introduced the principle of the equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupations.

In 2012 and 2013 the Commission funded Equality pays off, which supported employers in their efforts to tackle the gender pay gap by organising training activities for companies in 34 European countries. As part of this project, a business forum was held on 21 March 2013 in Brussels. It enabled 165 representatives of companies, multiplier organisations and institutions to exchange knowledge and strategies on how to best foster gender equality.

Other directives have been concerned with employees' work–life balance (Directive 1992/85/EC and the Parental Leave Directive 96/34/EC amended by Directive 2010/18/EU) and the safety of employed mothers.

As anticipated before, in August 2015 the Commission published a road map for the initiative A new start to address the challenges of work–life balance faced by working families, which will replace the 2008 Commission proposal to amend the maternity leave directive.

In light of the rising engagement of both women and men in non-traditional forms of employment (e.g. part-time work), the EU has adopted legislation on the equal treatment of part-time and fixed-term workers (Directive 1997/81/EC; Directive 1999/70/EC). The Directive on part-time work establishes a framework to eliminate discrimination against part-time workers and to promote the quality of part-time work. It also aims to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and to contribute to the flexible organisation of working time in a manner that takes into account the needs of both employers and workers. Both directives are based on framework agreements between EU social partners. Framework agreements are major joint inputs by the social partners into European labour law and practice.

The European social partners – the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), BusinessEurope (formerly UNICE), the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP) – adopted a framework of actions on gender equality on 22 March 2005. The joint text highlights 4 priorities for national social partners to focus on over the coming 5 years: addressing gender roles, promoting women in decision-making, supporting work–life balance and tackling the gender pay gap.

Directive 2010/41/EU extends the principle of equal treatment between women and men to self-employed workers and aims to improve the protection of self-employed women and their assisting spouses or life partners, for instance by introducing maternity leave and allowances of at least 14 weeks.

In response to the high level of unemployment in Europe, in April 2012 the European Commission launched a set of measures to boost jobs, the so-called Employment package. It identifies the EU's biggest potential areas for jobs and the most effective ways for EU countries to create more jobs. It also builds on Europe 2020's agenda for new skills and jobs. All Member States have committed to achieving Europe 2020 targets and have translated them into national targets and growth-enhancing policies.

In 2013, in light of these developments, the EU took significant actions to accelerate progress towards genuine equality. In the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, country-specific recommendations aimed at promoting female employment were addressed to 13 Member States. To support Member States, significant co-funding possibilities will be offered through the 2014 – 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds to invest in childcare facilities and promote women's participation in the labour market.

In 2012 the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive with an objective of 4% of the under-represented sex among non-executive directors by 2020, and the European Parliament supported its objective and approach in 2013. The Directive must now be agreed in Council by EU Ministers to become law.

Gender balance in management positions

A 2009 analysis showed that of the more than 35,000 employees of the European Commission, the majority (53.5%) were women, but also that women are under-represented in 3 areas: senior management posts (21.4%), middle management posts (23.2%) and non-management posts (40.4%). Therefore, the Equal Opportunity Strategy 2010 – 2014 fixed targets for 31 December 2014: 25% women for senior management, 30% for middle management and 43% for non-management administrative posts. The strategy is based on the following principles:

Commitment of management: Managers are the main key to success and must be visible models in terms of equality both within and outside the institution. Creating an environment that favours equal opportunities requires a collective effort by everyone – directors-general, directors and heads of unit – to bring about a general change in behaviour.

Participation of all staff: Staff must be at the centre of this strategy so they understand and share the ambition and objectives, and become agents for change at their level.

Collaboration: Success relies on pooling the ideas and capacities of all stakeholders. This strategy will support the directorates-general and services in their efforts to ensure that their organisation and operations are in line with the commitments made under this strategy and favour their implementation.

Accountability: In return, the services and individual managers must play an active role, and, as part of local as well as central reporting procedures, they must report on their performance, including the progress they have achieved and not just the actions taken.

The strategy is built around 3 pillars: talent management, a respectful working environment and a flexible working environment. To meet the targets, throughout this period half of all appointments to replace retiring senior or middle management workers must be women, and for all services half of the first recruitments should be women.

In a press release to mark International Women's Day 2014, the European Commission stated it had achieved its equal opportunity targets 11 months ahead of schedule: "The latest figures show that all 3 targets were achieved on 1 February 2014: 27.9% of senior managers are now women, 30.3% of middle managers [are women] and 43.2% of non-management administrators [are women]. These percentages are expected to continue rising. They represent a significant improvement compared to 1995, when just 4% of senior managers were women, 10.7% of middle managers [were women] and 23.9% of non-management administrators [were women]."

European Parliament and the Council of the European Union

The European Parliament has called for action on gender gaps in economic governance. A report in June 2011 on Women and Business Leadership from the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality was followed in July 2011 by the European Parliament adopting a resolution which supported the Commission's action in March 2011. The resolution called for the Commission to propose legislation, including quotas, by 2012 if the steps taken by companies and Member States to reach the targets of 30% female representation in management bodies by 2015 and 40% by 2020 are found to be inadequate. It also called for data on female representation in all types of companies in the EU, and measures taken to increase representation. The resolution referred to previous actions in this area, including the report and resolution on Corporate Governance in Financial Institutions. The resolution on Corporate Governance recognised that while a 'one size fits all' approach would be inappropriate given the diversity of both corporate structures and approaches to their regulation across the EU, strong minimum standards were nevertheless required to ensure good governance across the financial sector.

International level

United Nations

This section outlines a number of important international work-related policy instruments and agreements with particular emphasis on gender equality.

Economic independence is a prerequisite for enabling both women and men to exercise control over their lives and to make genuine choices. Paragraph 26 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) mentions a clear commitment of states to “promote women’s economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services.” Area F (Women and economy) of the BPfA makes specific reference to women’s employment (and in particular female access to different type of contracts and working conditions) from the perspective of women’s economic independence.

Two of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) eight core conventions, which all Members States are required to respect and work towards, deal directly with gender equality:

Convention No.100 on the Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value 1951.

Convention No.111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupations, 1958. The latter is particularly broad-ranging and covers many aspects of discrimination in working life.

These conventions are part of the ILO’s Fundamental principles and rights at work. In addition, there are other ILO conventions and recommendations that also specifically refer to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment in employment. Some of the main ones are listed in the following table:

Work and family	C103 Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 C183 Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 C156 Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981
Employment promotion	C122 Employment Policy Convention, 1964 C142 Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 C158 Termination of Employment Convention, 1982
Working conditions	C089 Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 C177 Home Work Convention, 1996 C175 Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 C097 Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949

Gender mainstreaming within the Decent Work and the Global Employment Agendas

In addition to its conventions and recommendations, gender equality cuts across the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and provides a framework for promoting equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work.

The Global Employment Agenda (GEA) is the ILO's strategy for operationalising decent work in employment within the Decent Work Agenda. The GEA establishes decent work as a productive factor in itself and as a key strategy for productive job creation, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Within the GEA, employment is placed at the heart of economic and social policies. There is a firm principle that there can be no trade-offs between the quantity and quality of employment. The GEA seeks to show that discrimination is a violation of human rights. It also has macroeconomic implications (i.e. where female labour is not appropriately used or rewarded there will be less productivity and more poverty than there might otherwise be).

The GEA is composed of 10 core elements, each with implications for the position of women in the labour force.

The Decent Work Agenda and gender equality are being mainstreamed into the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the SDG 8 to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" includes a target aiming to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The ILO Equal Remuneration Convention in 1951 (No. 100) was the first international instrument on women's and men's right to equal pay for work of equal value. It was no coincidence that the convention was adopted after the Second World War, as women had been on the front-line of production during the war in many countries. The ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 1958 (No. 111) is closely linked to Convention No. 100 and prohibits distinctions, exclusions or preferences made on various grounds, including sex, that have the effect of impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation. The accompanying recommendation refers to the need to formulate a national policy for the prevention of discrimination in employment and occupation.

Policy cycle in employment

How and when? Employment and the integration of the gender dimension into the policy cycle

The gender dimension can be integrated in all phases of the policy cycle. For a detailed description of how gender can be mainstreamed in each phase of the policy cycle, visit EIGE's Gender mainstreaming platform.

Below, you can find useful resources and practical examples for mainstreaming gender into research policies. They are organised according to the most relevant phase of the policy cycle they may serve.

Practical examples of gender mainstreaming in employment

Malta

The Maltese Equality Mark is a national gender equality initiative aimed at increasing women's participation in employment (the women's employment rate in Malta is low), by promoting practices amongst employers that facilitate the reconciliation of work and care roles. The initiative is led by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) which launched the mark in 2010. The initiative established a standard for 'gender equality employers' and runs a certification scheme for public and private bodies which show that they implement gender equality in employment, including family friendly measures, and also in the way they provide goods and services.

The methodology includes an audit and a questionnaire to employees. Award of the Equality Mark is based on assessment of minimum criteria that entities need to fulfil. It has provided a standard and a brand, and helps employers to develop their policies.

The mark's launch was accompanied by an effective media campaign which ran until the end of 2012. So far 55 employers employing some 16,000 people have qualified for the mark.

The initiative is innovative in the Maltese context, and could be replicated in other countries. As the programme was considered a success, NCPE decided to continue with its promotion after 2012, when the EU co-funded project which was financing the initiative came to an end.

Key milestones on equal treatment in employment in the EU:

Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, Rome, 25 May 1957, Article 119 EEC Treaty, 'The principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work', now Article 141 EC Treaty of the Function of the European Union

Available [here](#).

1957 - 1957

Directive 75/117/CEE du Conseil, du 10 février 1975, concernant le rapprochement des législations des États membres relatives à l'application du principe de l'égalité des rémunérations entre les travailleurs masculins et les travailleurs féminins

Available [here](#).

1975 - 1975

Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions

Available [here](#).

1976 - 1976

Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security

Available [here](#).

1979 - 1979

Council Directive 86/378/EEC of 24 July 1986 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes (amended by Directive 96/97)

Available [here](#).

1986 - 1986

Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986

Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the 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.

Available [here](#).

1986 - 1986

Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the 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

10th individual directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC. Available [here](#).

1992 - 1992

Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC

Available [here](#).

1996 - 1996

Council Directive 96/97/EC of 20 December 1996 amending Directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security

schemes

Available [here](#).

1996 - 1996

Directive 1997/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC - Annex : Framework agreement on part-time work

Available [here](#).

1997 - 1997

Directive 1999/70/EC of 28 June 1999 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP

<p>Available here.</p>

1999 - 1999

Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC

Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions OJ L 269, 5.10.2002, pp. 15–20. Available [here](#).

2002 - 2002

Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services

Available [here](#).

2004 - 2004

Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast) OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, pp.

Available [here](#).

2006 - 2006

Directive 2008/104/EC, OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 19 November 2008 on temporary agency work

Available [here](#).

2008 - 2008

Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC

Amendment of the Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC. Available [here](#).

2010 - 2010

Directive 2010/41/EU of the european parliament and of the council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC

Available [here](#).

2010 - 2010

Current policy priorities at EU level

[The Lisbon Strategy](#), launched in 2000, was a response to the challenges of globalisation and ageing. The European Council defined the objective of the strategy for the EU as “to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion and respect for the environment” (European Commission, 2010a). The strategy was relaunched in 2005 – following a midterm review – to provide a greater sense of prioritisation. It focused on growth and jobs. A new governance structure based on a partnership approach between the Member States and the EU institutions was put into place.

The partnership concept has had a positive impact on the cooperation and division of responsibilities between the EU institutions and the Member States:

“The resulting dialogue between the Commission and the Member States developed into a constructive exchange of views whereby the Commission advised Member States on policy options, often drawing on its experience with other parts of the Union, while Member States offered a national perspective, highlighting opportunities for reform as well as identifying constraints”. [Lisbon strategy evaluation document, 2010](#)

In 2010 the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) built on lessons learnt from the earlier strategy, recognising its strengths (the right goals of growth and job creation, with 18 million new jobs created since 2000) but addressing its weaknesses (poor implementation, with big differences between EU countries in the speed and depth of reform). The new strategy also reflects changes in the EU’s situation since 2000 – in particular the immediate need to recover from the economic crisis (European Commission, 2013a). Europe 2020 sets out a vision for Europe’s social market economy over the next decade, based on 3 interlocking and mutually reinforcing priority areas:

smart growth, developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

sustainable growth, promoting a low-carbon, resource-efficient and competitive economy.

inclusive growth, fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

Progress towards these objectives will be measured against the following 5 representative headline EU-level targets, which Member States will be asked to translate into national targets reflecting their starting points:

75% of the population aged 20–64 should be employed.

3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in research and development.

the '20/20/20' climate/energy targets should be met.

the share of early school leavers should be under 10%, and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a degree or diploma.

20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty.

To meet the targets, the European Commission proposes a Europe 2020 agenda consisting of a series of flagship initiatives. Implementing these initiatives is a shared priority, and action will be required at all levels: EU-level organisations, Member States and local and regional authorities. In brief, central to the [EU's 2020 strategy](#) is the implementation of a modern organisation of work, a knowledge economy, competitiveness, and more and better jobs (European Commission, 2010b).

Want to know more?