

Policy Context

Equal access to economic resources is not just a matter of women's economic independence but has long been recognised as a prerequisite for the achievement of economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. Encouraging women's participation in the labour market is crucial to GDP, economic growth and, more generally, to ensure that the EU makes full use of available talent and human resources.

The Europe 2020 Strategy

- Emphasises the 'high-employment economy' and its head-line target 'to raise to 75 % the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64'.
- In order to meet this objective, the Strategy introduced a flagship initiative, An agenda for new skills and jobs (2010), that proposes a set of actions to boost inclusive growth, supported by measures, of which some target women.
- Country-specific recommendations that Member States should take into account in their economic, employment, and social policies adopted by the European Commission every year.

Parental Leave Directive (Council Directive 2010/18/EU)

- Changes introduced in 2010 include: longer leave, measures for adoptive parents and parents of children with a disability.
- Provides more incentive for fathers to take parental leave.

Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity (2010/41):

- Replacing Directive 86/613/EEC which was the first Directive on maternity allowance for self-employed workers and their spouses or life partners.

- Extends coverage to all self-employed workers and partners, introduces other measures to prevent discrimination and harassment of those in a self-employed capacity and applies the principle of equal treatment on the grounds of sex.

The strategic objectives of the BPfA and the EU indicators

- F.1.** Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.
- F.2.** Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.
- F.3.** Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women.
- F.4.** Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.
- F.5.** Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.
- F.6.** Promote the harmonisation of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

Women and the economy is one of the most advanced areas of the BPfA. In 2008 and 2011, the Council focused on the issues of work-life balance, and on pay inequalities between women and men in 2010. The Greek Presidency in 2014 set out to review the implementation of the first strategic objective to promote women's economic rights and independence, and identified three additional indicators.

The database, Women and men in the EU — facts and figures, developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality provides the latest data and information on these indicators, available at:

<http://eige.europa.eu/content/women-and-men-in-the-eu-facts-and-figures>



Findings from EU-wide data

Women's employment continues to fall short of the Europe 2020 employment target

Over the long term, women's employment rate in the EU has risen slightly and by 2012 reached an overall rate of 59%. Even so, women's employment remained behind that of men in all Member States. Before the economic crisis, the decline in the gender employment gap was reflected in an upward trend in women's employment, while after 2007 it reflected the downward trend in men's employment. The crisis has primarily hit the areas of employment that have been dominated by men.

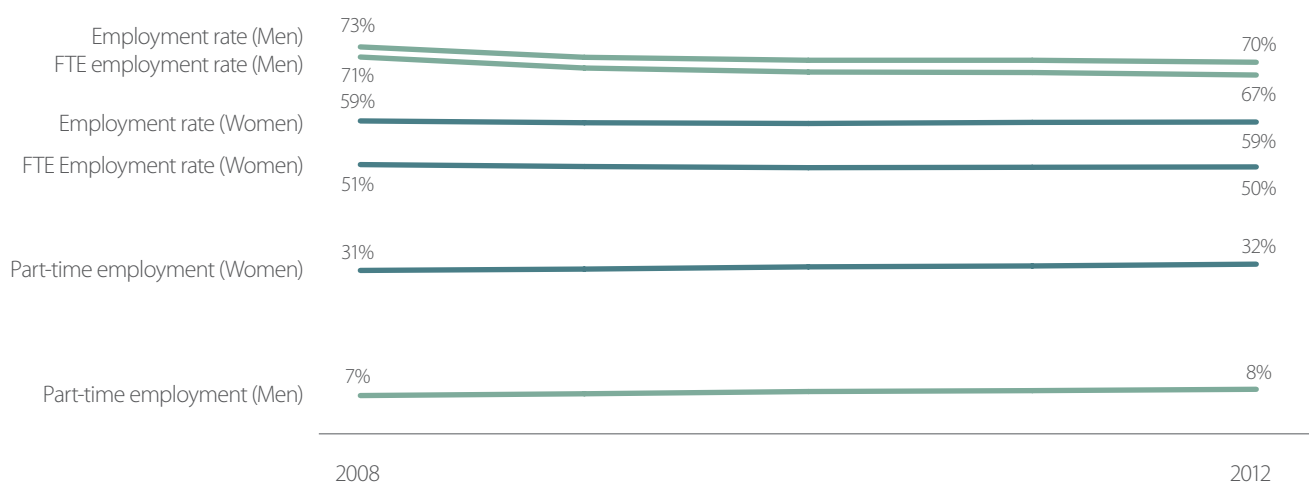
A comparison of employment rates and FTE employment rates is relevant in the context of the employment target of 75 % of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Differences are smaller for men than for women, as part-time employment is much higher among women.

Women continue to outnumber men in part-time work

Part-time employment is much higher among women compared to men: in 2012, the proportion of women working part-time (32 %) was at least four times as great as men's (8 %) in the EU. Part-time working is particularly prevalent in the Netherlands where over three-quarters of employed women work part-time. In four other Member States, women represent approximately 80 % of part-time employees. Less than one in ten employed women worked part-time in six Member States. 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, and unless fathers take a more active role in sharing the responsibility for the care of children and other dependants, the gender imbalances will remain re-enforcing pay inequalities.

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT AND HEADCOUNT EMPLOYMENT RATE IN THE EU-28, MEN AND WOMEN AGED 15-64, 2008 AND 2012



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS

The Barcelona objectives for formal childcare not met by many Member States

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 Barcelona Summit 2002 set targets that childcare systems should provide 33 % coverage for children under three years old (achieved by nine Member States by 2012); and 90 % coverage for those aged three years to compulsory school age (achieved by 11 Member States by 2012). Of these, six Member States have achieved both targets.

Fathers take parental leave more often, but at different levels across the Member States

Parental leave laws can support parents in two complementary ways: by offering job-protected leave and financial support during that leave. Data for 2010 is available for 17 Member States on the proportion of employed men on parental leave (with children younger than eight) and it ranged from 0.5 % (CZ, ES, IT, HU, AT, PL) to 11 % in Sweden. Amongst those who were actually on parental leave in 2010, women accounted for nearly 94 %.



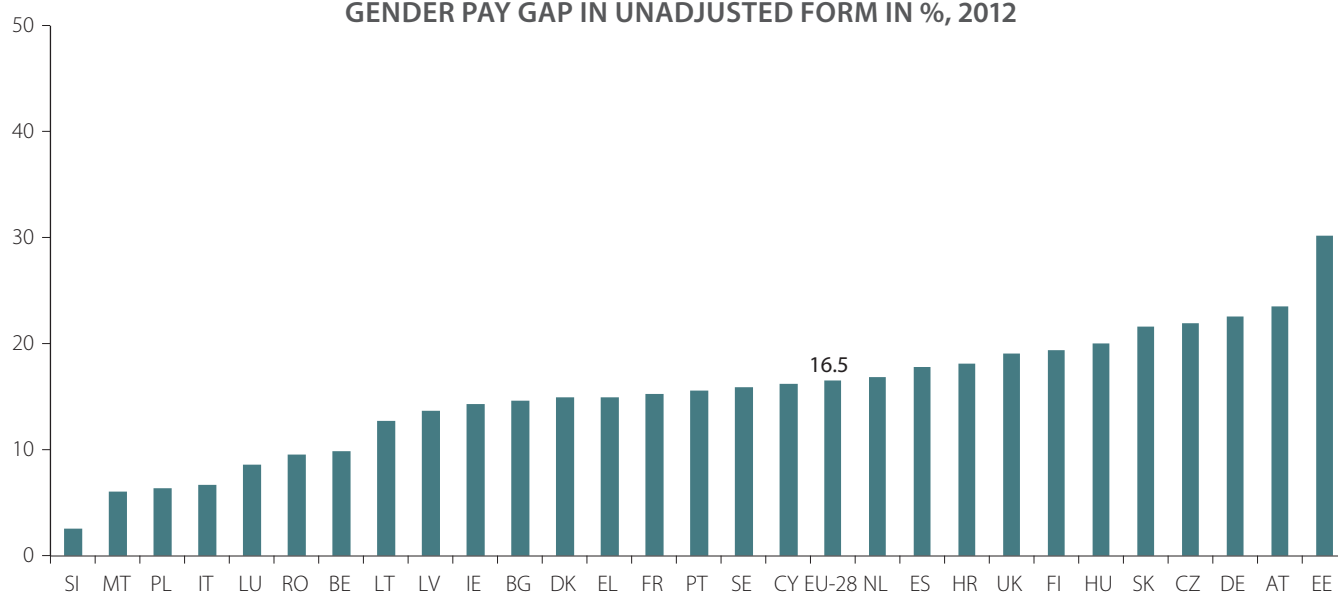
Labour market inequalities and segregation perpetuates gender gaps in pay and employment

Gender segregation, both vertical and horizontal, is evident by sector of employment, and by occupation/work function. The unequal take-up of part-time work between women and men is a key factor in some Member States, linked to women's propensity to combine work with care responsibilities. The skills of women and men therefore may be perceived differently and valued unequally. In 2012, the gender pay gap in the EU was 16.5 %, and, compared with rates from 2007, in most Member States it had dropped.

Rates and characteristics of self-employment differ between women and men

Self-employment has been identified as an employment option which has the potential to support work-life balance, as it can offer increased flexibility and opportunities to work from home and reduce the costs of childcare. Therefore, it might seem surprising that compared to men, fewer women set up their own business across the EU. During 2008-12 the share of self-employed women of total employment was only 10 % compared to 18 % for self-employed men.

GENDER PAY GAP IN UNADJUSTED FORM IN %, 2012



Source: Eurostat, SES

Findings from ELGE's work on good practices

Going for Growth — Ireland

Going for Growth provides structured peer support to women entrepreneurs who are serious about growing their businesses, with mentoring and guidance from lead entrepreneurs who have solid professional experience. Funded by the ESF, the Irish Department of Justice and Equality and Enterprise Ireland, it has been implemented in Ireland since 2008. Six cycles have been held so far and over 400 women entrepreneurs have taken part. Over the six months of the latest cycle to be completed (6th cycle), 71 % of the participants increased their sales by an average of 15 %, employment increased overall by 13 % and the number of exporters in the group increased by 22 %. A total of 88 new employees were hired and 10 new interns engaged, and over 650 existing jobs were strengthened. The 58 participants had a combined turnover of at least EUR 50 million by the end of the cycle.

Family audit certification in Trento, Italy

The Family Audit Certification was initiated in 2008 by the Italian Province of Trento through its Agency for Family, Birth and Youth Policies. The regional project started in 2012. The family audit is based on a well-developed methodology. After carrying out an audit, each organisation develops a three-year Family Work-Life Balance Plan listing actions that the organisation plans to take in six areas (work organisation, work-family balance culture, communication, fringe benefits and services, family district, new technologies). Its implementation is monitored by an external evaluator. So far 111 organisations have been involved in the Family Audit process, (44 public, 67 private), and 88 have been awarded the Family Audit Certificate, benefitting 35 000 workers. It has led to a network of stakeholders (unions, employers, family and social organisations, research organisations etc.) helping to promote awareness. The certificated organisations are listed on the family audit website. The two most notable benefits are better employee well-being and increased productivity.



ADVANCEMENTS AND OBSTACLES IN THE AREA F: WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

ADVANCEMENTS

- The gender employment gap has narrowed across the EU.
- Women's economic activity rates rose despite the global economic crisis.
- The gender pay gap has dropped in most Member States between 2007 and 2012.
- Availability of childcare has increased year-on-year across all Member States.

OBSTACLES

- Gender inequalities and segregation of the labour market persists.
- Women in the EU face a persistent gender pay gap in the labour market, which has both an immediate effect on their 'take home pay' and a long-term effect on their social security and pension entitlements.
- Women are over-represented in part-time employment, they face horizontal gender segregation and they are more exposed to poverty and limited career possibilities.

The way forward for the EU

- The imperative remains to ensure equal participation of women and men in the labour market as well as to tackle horizontal and vertical gender segregation between occupations. Creating more opportunities for women to gain access to full-time employment should be a key priority.
- In general, women with low levels of skills and qualifications need support to improve their position in the labour market. The gender gap in employment is widest for people with no or low qualifications. Policy measures specifically targeting disadvantaged groups of women and those facing multiple disadvantages would help to raise their skill levels.
- Unequal participation in the labour market largely caused by women's over-representation in part-time work and lower activity levels puts the achievement of Europe 2020 employment target at risk. Therefore, ensuring equal participation of women and men in the labour market is crucial.
- The commitment to the Barcelona targets on childcare need to be reinforced as it is strongly linked to gender equality goals.
- Promoting family-friendly policies and implementing transformative measures that can challenge the unequal distribution of caring and domestic tasks between women and men are highly needed.
- Strategies for work-life balance need to be promoted further, especially as economic conditions put increasing pressure on workers. Without new initiatives which support work-life balance, it is unlikely that men will choose to shift the balance of care responsibilities in families.
- The ongoing work to reduce the gender pay gap needs to continue.
- Better data on pay would increase the visibility of differences and contribute to tackling the gender pay gap.
- Governments and social partners need to agree on minimum wage in order to mitigate the impact on women as they are over represented in such jobs.

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policy-makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans and beyond by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

More information: <http://eige.europa.eu>

The Resource and Documentation Centre (RDC) of the European Institute for Gender Equality is an innovative and practical tool developed to assist in locating key resources on gender equality, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge among those with an interest in gender equality policies and practices and to offer an online space for discussion and debate.

More information: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/rdc>



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