



Female (Un)employment and Work-Life Balance

A discussion paper from the Employment Thematic Network

Technical Dossier no. 8

November 2018

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Author: Nathalie Wuiame

Editor: Toby Johnson

Contact:

Nathalie Wuiame

CESEP scrl

+32 477 632659

nathalie.wuiame@skynet.be

Design and layout: Anita Cortés, Daniel Renders

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AEIDL, Chaussée St-Pierre 260, B-1040 Belgium

+32 2 736 1890

esf@aeidl.eu

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1. INTRODUCTION



The ESF Employment Thematic Network meeting in Trento on 8-9 March 2018.

While gender equality is a core value of the European Union (EU), enshrined in the Fundamental Treaties, part of the EU policy agenda – including the European Social Fund and other Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) – gender inequalities in the labour market are still prevailing: lower participation in the labour market, segregation of women in a limited number of sectors, in precarious jobs, pay gap partly unexplained, incomplete careers, sexism and violence, unequal share of caring responsibilities, etc. Despite women's higher educational attainment and although opportunities for women in the EU labour market have been growing, the workforce remains strongly divided along gender lines.¹

During the Trento conference and meeting on female (un)employment and work-life balance held on 7-9 March 2018,² inequalities were once again highlighted and gave the audience a clear sense of *déjà vu*. Why is progress so slow? Why, despite policies promoted for so many years, does gender equality still seem so far from being achieved? What can be done to improve the situation?

The objective of this paper is, after taking a snapshot of the policy context, to first give an updated overview of the different situations of men and women in the labour market, focusing on some key issues: participation (considering the EU target of 75% labour market participation by 2020), conditions of participation, and the possibility of combining work and private responsibilities. Regarding the latter aspect, it should be emphasised that this is not just about

parenting and childcare but all care responsibilities (for elderly, ill or handicapped relatives). The EU is aware of the urgency of adapting the labour market to new demands from workers as well as employers for more flexible forms of work. However, work organisation has not all evolved in this way; the assumption that the “ideal worker” is free from any responsibilities other than work is still current, and women take on the bulk of family-related tasks while still being active in the labour-market. This is why the *A new start to support work-life balance for parents and carers* initiative³ is crucial in addressing the challenges of work-life balance that working parents and families face. Its aim is to change and modernise the legal and policy framework as well as work organisation to allow workers to better balance their care and professional responsibilities.

This paper will also examine what the contribution of the Structural and Investment Funds – and especially the ESF – can be, in terms of both female employment and work-life balance initiatives. It will present some interesting practices financed by the ESF or public authorities, which are addressing key issues relating to a more gender-equal and sensitive labour market, but also highlight some challenges.

The report concludes with some recommendations on how current and future European funds can better support female employment and gender equality through fighting gender stereotypes and gender segregation, changing the prevalent working culture, providing high-quality and affordable care solutions, and supporting women in specific situations such as victims of domestic violence.

¹ European Commission, 2018 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the EU, EC, 2018.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/content/minutes-7th-employment-tn-meeting-8-9-march-2018-trento>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/com-2017-53_en



2. POLICY CONTEXT

This chapter presents gender equality policies first in the EU general context and then within EU Cohesion policies.

2.1 General: gender equality at the core of policies?

Inequality is more and more recognised as the number one challenge, because not only it is a fundamental value to our societies but is also a factor of economic growth and a core issue for social progress.⁴ This is particularly true when gender equality is concerned. This also explains why gender equality is one of the world-wide UN Sustainable Development Goals (no. 5) and applies to all 17 goals.⁵

The importance of female employment has been highlighted in the past as a factor both of gender equality (economic independence) and greater performance of the EU (economic argument). Discussion of work-life balance and childcare support has re-emerged not only in the context of supporting female employment but also concerning child protection,⁶ early education as a way to tackle child poverty and social exclusion, breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and more controversially demography (the higher fertility rate of working women).⁷

Therefore, to support female employment but more importantly to contribute to gender equality, the importance of work-life balance is at the forefront of EU policy initiatives, as illustrated by the recent communication of the Commission to support work-life balance.⁸ Measures promoting the reconciliation of private and family life “are of fundamental significance to the practical realisation of gender equality: not only do they allow women, who disproportionately bear the responsibilities of caring for children and other dependents, to balance those responsibilities with paid labour, but they can also facilitate the transfer of some measure of caring responsibilities onto men, thus advancing gender equality at a more profound level.”⁹

4 K. Pickett & R. Wilkinson, *The Spirit Level: why equality is better for everyone*, London, Penguin, 2010.

5 <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-5-gender-equality.html>

6 European Commission, Recommendation “Investing in children – breaking the cycle of disadvantage”, 20 February 2013, 2013/112/EU.

7 European Parliament, *Demography and family policies from a gender perspective, Study for the FEMM Committee*, 2016.

8 European Commission, Communication “An Initiative to support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers, 2017, COM/2017/0252 final.

9 Aileen McColgan *Measures to address the challenges of work-life balance in the EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway*, 2015.

In the set of non-legislative measures, the Commission insists on making “better use of European Funds to improve long-term and childcare services”.¹⁰

Looking at the current division between paid and unpaid work (see fig. 4), it is a big challenge to address and involve men in care and other unpaid work. Strategies to increase the take-up rate of men when it comes to (child)care leave, are necessary as “it is important to emphasise that even the front-runners as regards gender-equitable labour-market outcomes have labour markets in which women take the lion’s share of parental leave and men appear slow to take even that leave which is available to them alone. Transforming gendered expectations (including the expectations of men and women workers, as distinct from employers and governments) may well be a very slow process.”¹¹ Cultural factors often play a role in this, but it also relates to flexible leave schemes or low replacement rates of benefits.

In the 2013 Social Investment Package, the Commission reiterates the importance of fostering higher participation of women in the labour market, while the European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirms that:

- “Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression” and that both have the right to “equal pay for work of equal value” (principle 2);
- “Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves of absence in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way” (principle 9).

The general EU policy context focuses mainly on average participation of women in the labour market, including the take-up rate of second earners, the availability of high-quality childcare facilities and the gender pay gap. In 2017, the Commission issued a Country-Specific Recommendation on

10 European Commission, Communication “An Initiative to support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers, op. cit

11 Aileen McColgan *Measures to address the challenges of work-life balance in the EU Member States, op. cit*

female labour market participation to ten Member States (AT, CZ, DE, EE, ES, IE, IT, PL, RO and SK). They related in particular to ensuring the availability of high-quality child-care facilities, facilitating the take-up of work for second earners, and reducing the gender pay gap.¹²

However, more attention should be given to the inactivity rate considering differences between women and men (see table 2) in particular for less-qualified workers. Advancing gender equality also requires taking a closer look at precarious employment conditions such as pay, hours and job security (see tables 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d) and participation in different sectors (see table 4), in particular with regard to the jobs of the future, which are important factors of gender pay inequalities, as well as promotion and career development.

2.2. Gender Equality within the European Social Fund

The European Social Fund is the main instrument to support the implementation of employment, education and inclusion policies and is part of the European cohesion policies. The European Commission and EU countries in partnership set the ESF's priorities and how resources are spent in each country.

For the current programming period, ESF priorities expressed as thematic objectives are the following:

- Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility – Thematic Objective 8 (TO8)
- Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination – Thematic Objective 9 (TO9)
- Investing in education, training and lifelong learning – Thematic Objective 10 (TO10)
- Improving the efficiency of public administration – Thematic Objective 11 (TO11)

Under these thematic objectives, the ESF regulation provides for a set of investment priorities. This section will focus on those thematic objectives and particularly investment priorities which are relevant for gender equality. However, it should be noted that none of the thematic objectives are specifically dedicated to gender equality.

The integration of gender equality into the ESF and other European funds was first required in a Council Resolution in

¹² European Commission, 2018 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the EU, op. cit.

1996¹³ and is systematically confirmed in regulations since 2000. Gender equality is a transversal issue that should be present at all policy levels (mainstreaming gender aspects in all policies) alongside specific gender equality measures.

Figure 1 below,¹⁴ developed by the German ESF Gender Agency, illustrates the current global policy framework of cohesion policies and gender equality.

The European Cohesion Policy promotes a dual approach to gender equality: the gender dimension is a horizontal principle in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Europe 2020 Strategy and should be mainstreamed, while a specific strategy and actions are the focus of the European Pact for Gender Equality. The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) are the Union's main financial tool supporting the Europe 2020 strategy.

The Common Provisions Regulation applicable to the ESIFs (Regulation 1303/2013 of 17/12/13), contains provisions concerning the involvement of bodies responsible for gender equality in the partnership and multi-level governance (Article 5 1.c) and the promotion of gender equality and the integration of a gender perspective at all levels and stages of the programming (articles 7, 96 7.c and 111 4.e). Data on indicators will also be broken down by sex (article 125 2.e).

In the current ESIF 2014-2020 programming period, efforts are focused on gender mainstreaming, policy statements and procedure and tools.¹⁵

One of the tools promoted more recently to achieve gender equality is the gender budgeting approach, which is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. "It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality."¹⁶ This approach has been adopted within the MFF:

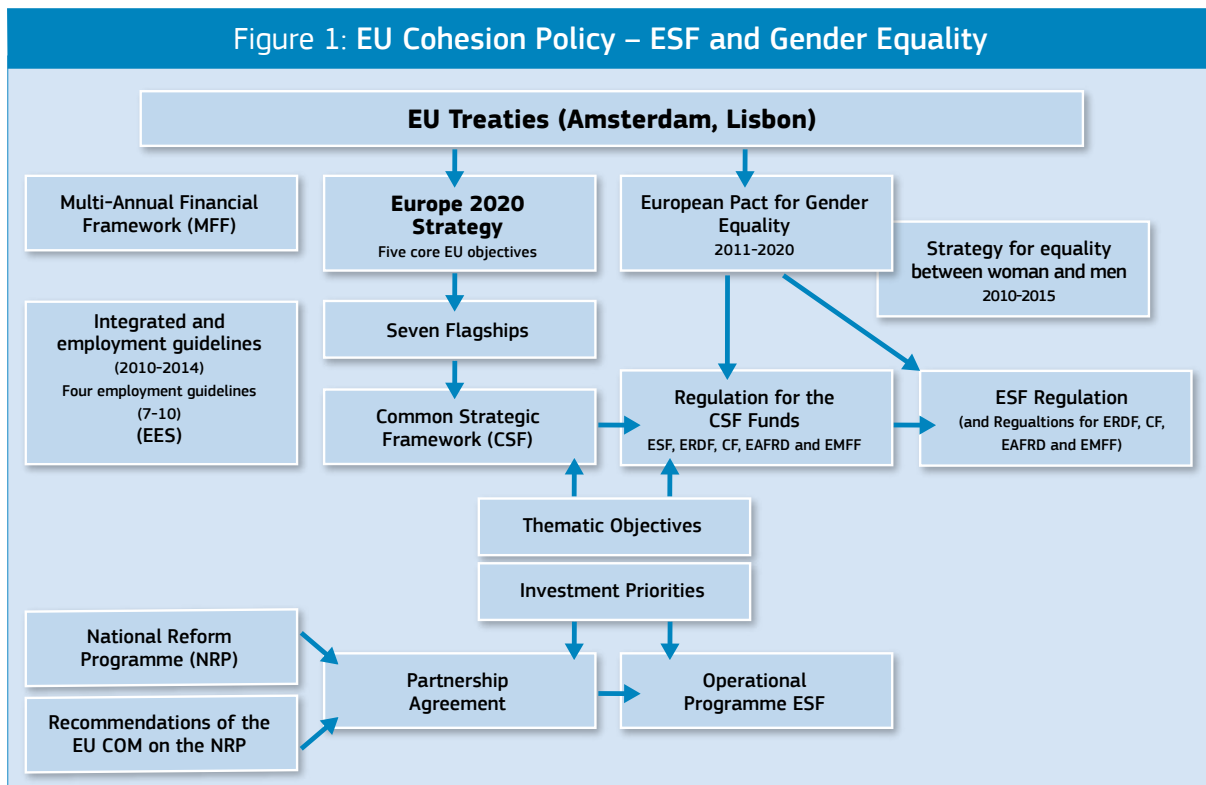
¹³ Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds, 96/C386/01.

¹⁴ European Standards on Gender mainstreaming in the ESF, Available at <http://standard.gendercop.com/european-policy/index.html>, last accessed on 22 April 2018.

¹⁵ European Parliament, The use of funds for gender equality in selected Member States, study for the FEMM Committee, Brussels, 2016, page 10.

¹⁶ Council of Europe, Gender budgeting, Strasbourg, 2005. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/1680596143>, last accessed on 24 April 2018.

Figure 1: EU Cohesion Policy – ESF and Gender Equality



Source: Agency for Gender Equality within the ESF, Germany

“The annual budgetary procedures applied for MFF 2014-2020 will integrate, as appropriate, gender responsive elements, taking into account the ways in which the overall financial framework of the Union contributes to increased gender equality (and ensures gender mainstreaming)” as provided in a joint declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020.¹⁷

However, the MFF mid-term review does note that the lack of gender-differentiated and gender-relevant data on selected actions and on beneficiaries and participants in many Union programmes makes it impossible to assess their gender effects.¹⁸

Considering that gender equality is a key value and mission of the ESF¹⁹ and that the ESIFs are the Union’s main financial tool supporting the Europe 2020 strategy and the most important financial instrument in support of gender equality, this is striking.

¹⁷ Cited in the European Parliament study, *The use of funds for gender equality in selected Member States*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, *Mid-term review/revision of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020: an EU budget focused on results*, COM (2016) 603 final of 14.09.2016.

¹⁹ Article 2 of ESF Regulation no. 1304/2013.

Looking more specifically at the ESF, on top of its mission to promote gender equality, the fund shall support equality between men and women in all areas, including access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life (article 3), provide data and indicators broken down by gender (article 5), involve gender equality partners (article 6) and promote equality between women and men in the entire policy cycle (article 7). However, in this regard, it is very difficult to assess what is being implemented, or how. As highlighted in the Commission working document relating to programme statements of operational expenditure in both 2017 and 2018: *“However, for a bulk of programmes it is not always possible to estimate the amounts that are allocated to gender issues as the actions financed by the programmes include gender equality as transversal objective only.”²⁰*

As previously mentioned, specific gender equality objectives are not specified in the regulation. Out of the four thematic objectives to which ESF resources are allocated, only one investment priority (8 iv) is dedicated to “Equality between women and men in all areas”) under thematic objective 8 relating to “Promoting sustainable and quality

²⁰ Draft General Budget of the European Commission for the financial year 2017, COM (2016)300, June 2016:15.

employment and supporting labour mobility". Actions in favour of gender equality can also fit under the thematic objective of "Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination" (TO9), particularly when they relate to "Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting Equal Opportunities" (9 iii). So the main emphasis in the regulation relating to gender equality is on labour participation and mobility and, to a lesser extent, on social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination (though here gender discrimination is only one dimension among others).

The overall EU funding allocated to gender equality measures in the 2014-2020 period reaches only €6.17 billion, equivalent to around 0.6% of the overall ceiling for commitment appropriations²¹ according to the Commission Staff Working Document for the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019.

The bulk of this sum, €5.3 billion being ESF funds directly addressing the investment priority IV under Thematic Objective 8 concerning "Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work", represents 5.3% of the total 2014-2020 ESF EU fund budget.²²

Information on the use of funds for gender equality is only partial for the moment, but evaluation of previous programming periods is useful to assess policy continuity or change.

In terms of resources allocated to specific gender equality action, an expert report²³ relating to previous programming periods identifies three types of specific actions financed:

- Actions concerning women's capacities (supply side) – 48% of gender equality funds
- Actions concerning firms (demand side) – 19% of gender equality funds
- Actions concerning the institutional service, cultural and organisational context (context) – 33% of gender equality funds

Fostering female entrepreneurship of groups of women who are vulnerable (because of race, parental status,

residence in marginalised areas, etc.) was the main objective pursued by most Member States to increase female participation in the labour market. Additionally, reconciliation between work and family life measures were adopted to foster such labour market participation and not as an objective per se. Projects addressing educational segregation, cultural and social stereotypes, easing of caring duties, domestic and criminal violence, women's empowerment and female poverty were much less widespread, and were often considered for implementation only through pilot or small-scale projects.²⁴

In terms of funding, this report notes a reduction in magnitude in terms of both share and level of resources dedicated to specific gender equality actions in the 2007-2013 programming cycle in comparison to the previous one (2000-2006). At the EU level, while overall resources have increased by almost 17%, programmed resources specifically dedicated to gender equality actions have decreased by 34%.²⁵

This can be explained by the observation that the economic crisis had an effect, at least in some countries, on the priority goals that were set, with economic recovery and job creation dominating the policy focus and reducing the interest in gender equality.²⁶

The cohesion policy and ESI funds represent a crucial financial tool for long-term investment in public care services for both children and other dependents. This is particularly important in a context where the Barcelona targets for the availability of childcare facilities by 2010 (care for 90% of children between 3 years old and mandatory school age, and for 33% of children under 3 years old – see section 2.4) are still not being met by a majority of countries, and that other care challenges are blatant within an ageing population. This explains why the Commission, in its communication relating to work-life balance,²⁷ emphasised the need to make better use of European funds to improve long-term and childcare services.

21 European Parliament, *The use of funds for gender equality in selected Member States*, op. cit.:10.

22 op. cit.:11.

23 GHK and FGB, *Evaluation of the European Social Fund's support to Gender Equality*, European Commission, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 24 January 2011.

24 op. cit.

25 op. cit.

26 EIGE, *Supporting reconciliation of work, family and private life. Good practices*, Luxembourg, POEU, 2015.

27 European Commission, *Communication "An Initiative to support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers"*, op. cit.



3. KEY TRENDS IN FEMALE (UN)EMPLOYMENT

The objective of this section is not to present all data and knowledge on the vast issue of female employment, unemployment and related issue such as caring responsibilities. It is to highlight some key issues to be considered when designing policies and implementing ESF actions in order to reduce gender inequalities.

3.1 Participation in the labour market, looking beyond employment?

Enhancing women's labour market participation is under the Europe 2020 strategy a way to reach the target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty or social exclusion and achieving a 75% employment rate (see table 1).

The importance of the participation rate of women in employment is confirmed by the choice of the gender gap in employment as a headline indicator for gender equality in the European Pillar of Social Rights.²⁸

The current average employment gender gap in the EU-28 is just below 12%. It is critical in Greece (19%), Italy (20%), Malta (28%) and Romania (18%) and is reduced in Latvia (3%), Lithuania (2%) and Finland (4%).

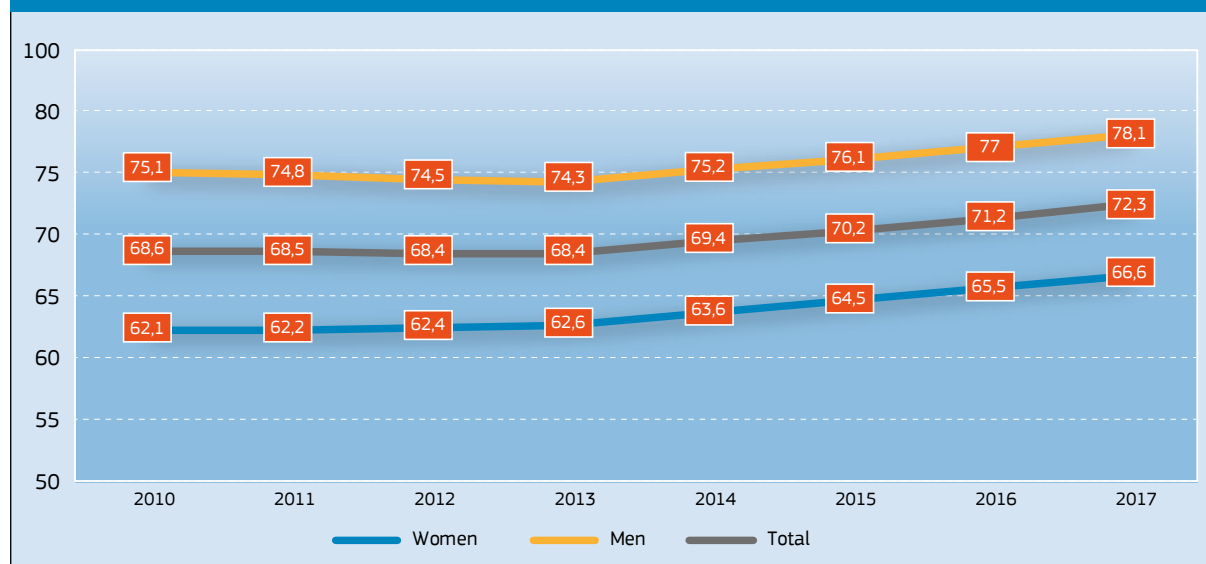
²⁸ European Commission, *Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights, Com (2017) 250 final*.

To reduce this gender gap, specific attention should be given to level of qualification, as we see that for highly-qualified women and men, the participation rate of both sexes is quite high and relatively comparable – the gender gap being 7% – but between women and men with low qualifications it is 17% (see table 2).

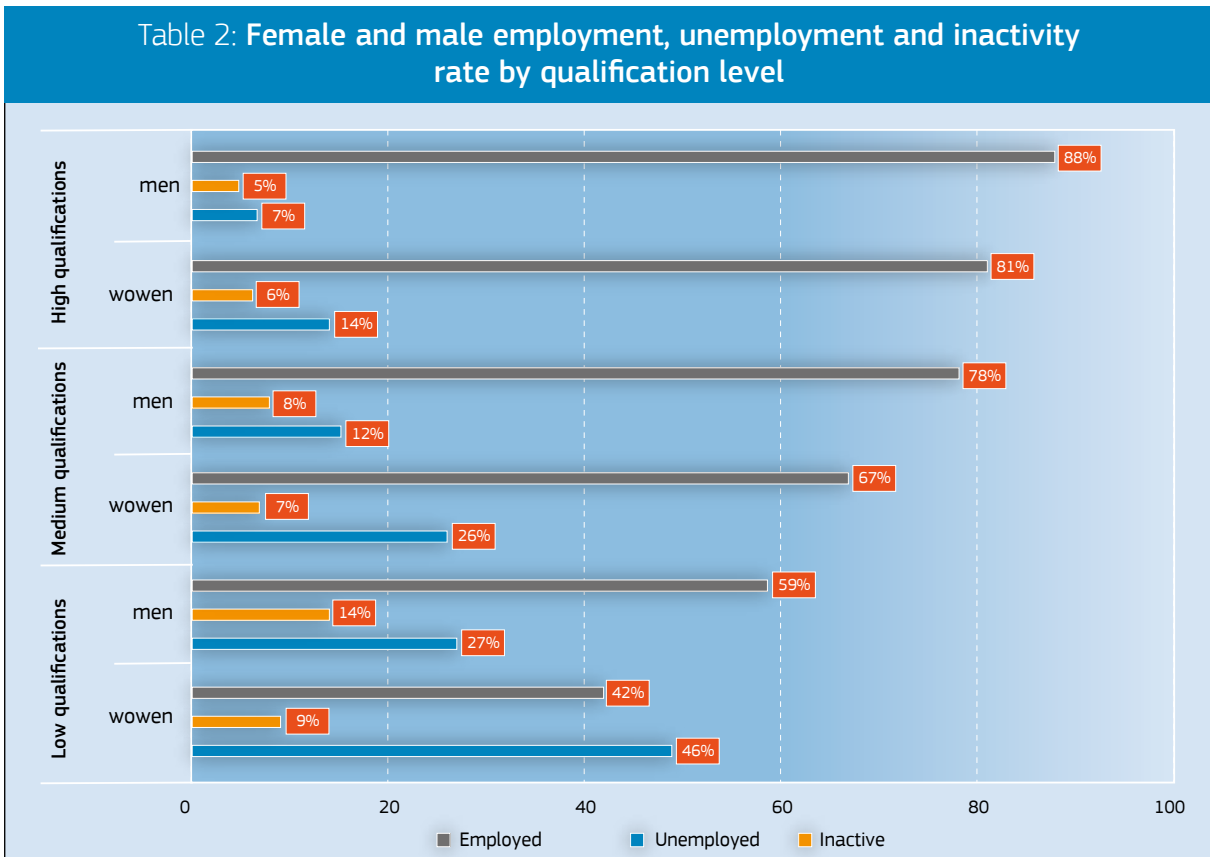
To get more women participating in the labour market, it is also crucial to look at the inactivity rate of men and women, since 49% of low-qualified women are inactive. This can be explained by a number of factors: quality of jobs on offer, taxation systems based on a model of a single-earner family, availability and affordability of care facilities (for children but not only children), etc. If searching for a job or taking it up incurs extra expenses, such as transport or childcare costs, this can impact more on women than men, as studies show that additional costs may have a bigger impact on the employability of secondary earners and main carers, especially if there is more than one child. Affordable childcare facilities support mothers' labour market participation.²⁹

²⁹ Plantega J. & Remery Ch., *"The provision of childcare facilities, a comparative review of 30 European Countries, 2009; Ylenia Brilli, Daniela Del Boca, and Chiara Daniela Pronzato, Does child care availability play a role in maternal employment and children's development? Evidence from Italy, Families and Society, working paper series, (31) 2015.*

Table 1: Employment rate of women and men in the EU



Source: Eurostat statistics, accessed February 2018.

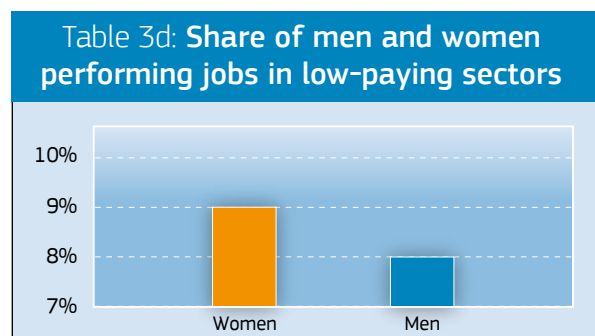
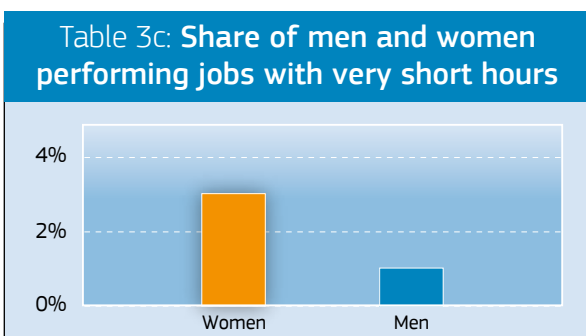
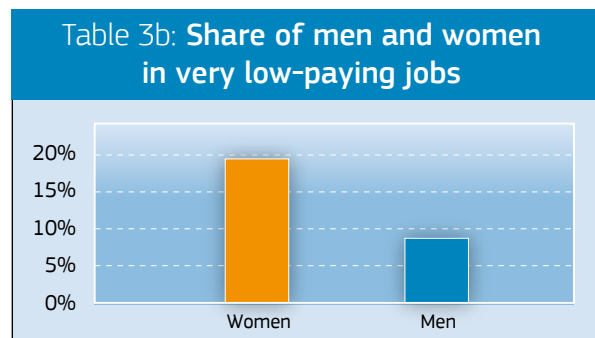
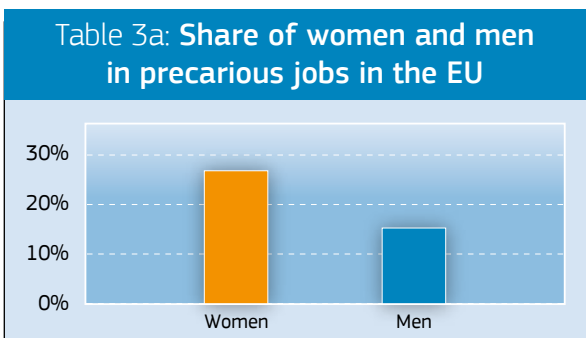


Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender, skills and precarious work in the EU. Research note, 2017

The economic independence of women³⁰ can only be achieved if participation goes hand in hand with good working conditions (sectors, pay, hours). Precarious em-

ployment comprises 3 aspects: pay, hours and security. Currently, women are over-represented in precarious employment (table 3a), engaged in low-paying jobs and working very short hours (table 3b and 3c).

³⁰ Which is one of the objectives of the EU Strategy for equality between women and men.



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender, skills and precarious work in the EU. Research note, 2017

3.2. Gender segregation: women's and men's jobs, still at play!

Gender segregation covers two aspects. It refers first to the fact that women and men are set apart within certain fields of education or occupations in the labour market (horizontal segregation) and secondly to the concentration of one gender in certain levels of the hierarchy or positions of responsibility (vertical segregation). While the anti-discrimination law applied since 1976³¹ makes it illegal to refuse access to men or women to certain training, jobs or positions (with a few exceptions), truly mixed occupations are still the exception. For example, jobs in the construction sectors, in engineering and ICT are mainly occupied by men, while on the contrary the vast majority of jobs in pre-primary education, personal care and domestic work are occupied by women.

This gender divide appears early on, in vocational training and the entry of young workers into the labour market. Choices in vocational education and training as well as career orientation have been explained by different factors: identity theory, socialisation theory and rational choice theory. This unequal distribution explains inequalities to some extent. For example, in some countries like Denmark and France, feminised economic sectors are known for paying lower wages to their employees in comparison with

³¹ Directive 76/207/EEC.

male-dominated economic sectors, even if this is not true in other countries such as the USA. In addition horizontal gender segregation has an important impact on the life courses of men and women: in male-dominated occupations, institutionalised expectations of long hours and less opportunity for flexible working time hinder the work-life balance of men and contribute to the perpetuation of gendered family responsibilities.³²

This horizontal gender segregation has clear costs for individuals by narrowing their life and work choices and subjecting them to discrimination, as well as for society as a whole: it threatens sustainable and inclusive growth by making the labour market less competitive and making it harder for companies to find highly-qualified professionals in growing sectors, such as information and technology.³³

A recent EIGE report also demonstrates that the chance of employment for women graduating in a male-dominated field of education is significantly lower than that of men, while their chance of finding a job matching their education profile is higher for women graduates in education, health and welfare (EHW) than for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) – 30% of women find a job in

³² Indorf Ch., Hegna K, Eberhard V., Doray P., "Educational systems and gender segregation in education: A three-country comparison of Germany, Norway and Canada", in Indorf Ch., Hegna K. & Reisel L. (eds), *Gender Segregation in Vocational Education* (Vol. 32, pp. 83-122), Bingley: Emerald Insight, 2015.

³³ EIGE, *Work in the EU: women and men at opposite ends*, 2017

Table 4: Share of women and men across some most common EU occupations (EU-28; %; 2014)



Source: based on EIGE study, "Work in the EU: women and men at opposite ends", 2017.

STEM compared with 50% of men. The opposite holds true for men graduating in EHW while less starkly (57% of women find a job matching their qualifications against 52% of men).

Very few workers of either sex share the same job title, which makes it difficult to compare the situation of women and men in professions and working conditions.

Boll, Rossen and Wolf³⁴ repeat the findings that gender sectoral segregation is the most important barrier to gender pay equality in European countries.

Action on horizontal gender segregation in the labour market therefore needs to address jointly educational and active employment policies but also to be coordinated with action on improving the quality of work and on addressing low pay, given that, in some countries, these characterise many female-dominated areas of employment.

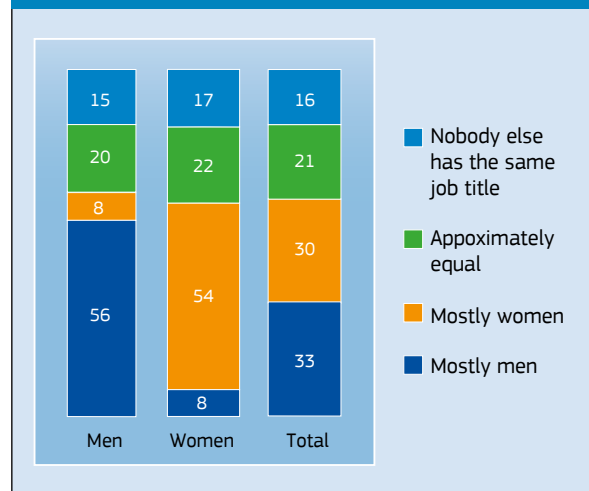
Vertical segregation is also a permanent issue even in a context where now women are more educated than men and more numerous in pursuing tertiary education.

Vertical segregation is fed by a number of factors (e.g. orientation and segregation) and also by unconscious bias, for example, by stereotypes and assumptions relating to the qualities of a good leader, ambition etc. Thomas Chamorro-Premuzic in his essay³⁵ on “Why do so many incompetent men become leaders” opposes qualities of leadership associated with assertiveness, speaking up and pushing forward to those of listening, moderating and giving room. Moreover, while these qualities of assertiveness etc. are associated with good leadership when present in men, these same traits are perceived negatively when exercised by women (bossy, “bitch”).

The recent Eurobarometer (2017) survey³⁶ shows that more than one-third of Europeans believe that men are more ambitious than women (35%), and almost seven in ten respondents think women are more likely than men to make decisions based on their emotions (69%).

Taking steps to counter vertical segregation therefore needs to fix the system and work with in-groups instead of

Figure 2: Sex of co-worker with the same job title, by sex, EU 28



Source: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Overview Report, 6th European Working Conditions Survey, 2016.

focusing on women.³⁷ It is the culture of the organisation, prejudice and stereotypes that should now be the focus after years of actions and projects targeting women and their “lack of”.

3.3. The gender pay gap

Equal pay has been a principle of the European Union since its start in 1957 and has been the object of constant attention since then as it is considered as a key indication of gender equality in the labour market. For example, the extension of the principle of equal pay to work of equal value (Directive 75/117/EEC) permits the questioning of differences in pay beyond the same sectors.

The gender pay gap is used as a key indicator for policies and is unsurprisingly one of the indicators³⁸ of gender equality in the Social Pillar. Its main characteristic is that many differences and inequalities are captured in one figure.

In 2016, women’s gross hourly earnings were on average 16.2% below those of men in the European Union (EU-28).³⁹ However, the gender pay gap varies across Member States ranging from around 5% in Romania, Luxembourg, Italy and Belgium to more than 20% in the United Kingdom, Germany, the Czech Republic and Estonia. However a

³⁴ Christina Boll, Anja Rossen and André Wolf, *The EU Gender Earnings Gap: Job Segregation and Working Time as Driving Factors*, *Journal of Economics and Statistics* 2017; 237(5):407-452

³⁵ *Harvard Business Review*, 2013.

³⁶ *Special Eurobarometer 465(2017), Gender equality 2017*, EBS 465. Cited by the European Commission in its 2018 report on Equality between women and men, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Wittenberg-Cox Avivah, *One Key to Gender Balance, 20-First Century Leadership*, 20-First Publisher, 2016.

³⁸ Indicators for gender equality in the European Social Pillars are: the gender employment gap, gender gap in part-time employment and the gender pay gap in an unadjusted form.

³⁹ This is the unadjusted gender pay gap, meaning not adjusted according to individual characteristics that may explain part of the difference.

smaller gender pay gap does not necessarily mean better gender equality in the labour market. For example in Italy, the small gender pay gap is the result of “selection effects”, whereby for various reasons, only better-qualified female workers tend to remain in the labour force, and therefore artificially increase female median earnings.⁴⁰ Between 2010 and 2016, the gender pay gap remained constant at 16% (16.4 in 2010 and 16.2 in 2016). This reflects a strong contrast considering that proactive policies and actions have been undertaken at Member State level (legislation, gender equal pay day etc.) for years.

The gender pay gap varies according to several different factors, full-time versus part-time, age, sector, etc. An important factor is time women spend on unpaid tasks and the more frequent interruptions of their careers (see section 3.5 below). For example, the gender pay gap is generally much lower for new workers entering the labour market and tends to widen with age. *“However, those differences over age groups can have different patterns across the countries. The gender pay gap might increase with age as a result of the career interruptions women experience during their working life, particularly older women unable to benefit from specific equality measures which did not yet exist when they started to work”.*⁴¹

Studies⁴² on the factors behind the gender pay gap show that a large part of the pay gap cannot be attributed to the differences in average characteristics of working men and women such as: age, education, occupation, industry affiliation, part-time or temporary employment, job tenure, firm size, or employment in private versus public sector. About two-thirds of the pay gap indicator of 16% (or around 10% of wage difference) cannot be explained by those explanatory factors⁴³ and can therefore be considered to be a result of discrimination against women. This is perhaps where stronger action should be taken: to raise the awareness of judicial and non-judicial actors of enforcement initiatives and have them relayed in public media.⁴⁴

40 OECD, LMF1.5: Gender pay gaps for full-time workers and earnings differentials by educational attainment, update 15.12.2017.

41 Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap Statistics in Statistics explained.

42 Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap Statistics in Statistics explained.

43 European Commission, 2018 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the EU, op. cit.

44 Foubert P, The enforcement of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, a legal analysis of the situation in the EU Member States, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway, European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination, 2017.

3.4. Entrepreneurship

The Commission believes that Europe needs more entrepreneurs to bring Europe back to growth and higher levels of employment⁴⁵ and urges Member States to act to support women who represent a large pool of entrepreneurial potential in Europe. Women face more difficulties than men when running a business, mainly in accessing finance, training, networking, and in reconciling business with family. Therefore Member States should implement *“policies enabling women to achieve an adequate work-life balance, by establishing appropriate and affordable care for children and elderly dependents, notably by taking full advantage of support options under the EAFRD, ERDF and ESF”.*⁴⁶

The percentage of women entrepreneurs among total entrepreneurs varies considerably between countries and is higher in countries with a lower percentage of entrepreneurs such as Latvia, Lithuania and Luxembourg, where it was around 40% in 2012.⁴⁷ Interestingly, in Europe, most women and men entrepreneurs are solo entrepreneurs, that is persons who operate their own economic enterprises, or engage independently in a profession or trade and neither hire employees, nor are family workers or volunteers active in their enterprise.⁴⁸

The lower representation of women in entrepreneurship and self-employed activity is a common trend within EU Member States as can be seen below in figure 3. However the presence of women varies according to type of activity and sector: they make up the majority in human health, social work and service activities, whether entrepreneurship is the sole activity or not. The ratio of women who combine entrepreneurship with their main activity as an employee (entrepreneurship as a secondary activity) is slightly higher than for male entrepreneurs.⁴⁹

According to the OECD, the challenges identified by women in starting a business include discouraging

45 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan – Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe. COM/2012/0795 final.

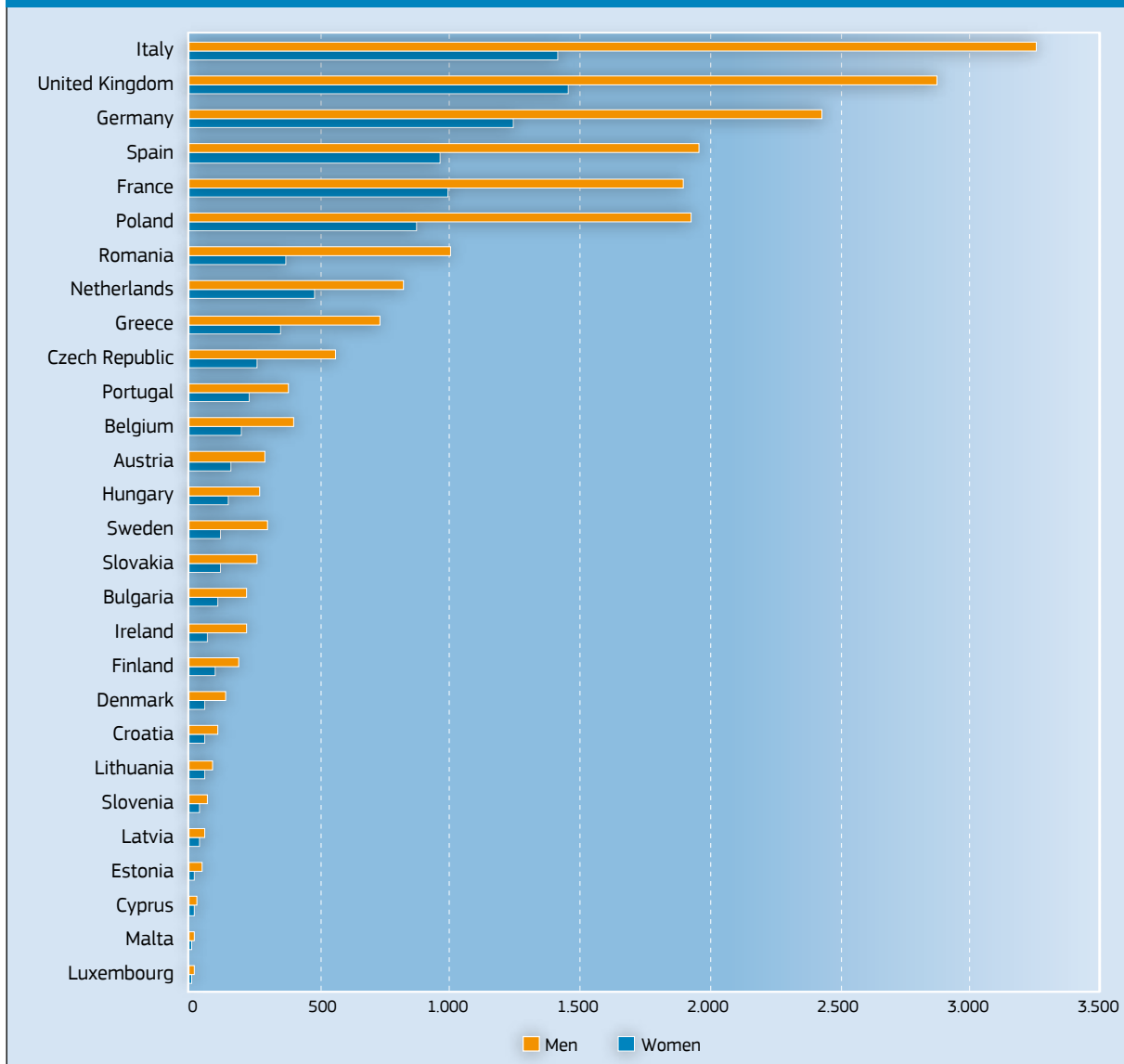
46 Ibid.:23.

47 European Commission, Statistical data on women's entrepreneurs in Europe, 2014:7.

48 Ibid.:9.

49 Ibid.:12.

Figure 3: Number of self-employed persons (with and without employees) in the age range 15-64 years



Source: OECD/EU, Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship

social and cultural attitudes, a lower level of entrepreneurship skills, greater difficulty in accessing start-up financing, a smaller and less effective entrepreneurial network and the policy framework. However, they also face barriers when consolidating their businesses, so comprehensive policies should be in place.⁵⁰ Supporting business opportunities for women is one of the challenges so that business creation is not a response to constraints.⁵¹

⁵⁰ ÖSB, Summary Report, Seminar to discuss policy measures aimed at encouraging female entrepreneurship, United Kingdom, 11-12 September 2014, Mutual Learning Programme on Gender Equality.

⁵¹ Niethammer, C., Women, Entrepreneurship and the Opportunity to Promote Development and Business, the 2013 Brookings Blum Round-table Policy Briefs.

Studies also show that female entrepreneurs tend to operate in different types of business (smaller, non-capital intensive and lower potential for growth) and enter the market for different reasons.⁵²

What are the push and pull factors to entering entrepreneurship? Do women enter by opportunity or by necessity? Some argue that the promise of independence, flexibility and the opportunity to escape barriers encountered in the labour market is an important pull factor, while others

⁵² Niethammer, C., Women, Entrepreneurship and the Opportunity to Promote Development and Business, the 2013 Brookings Blum Round-table Policy Briefs.

consider that it is the restructuring and reduced availability of secure jobs in the public or private sectors that push women into self-employment.

In that respect, interestingly, a study suggests that national-level gender equality is negatively associated with women's self-employment choice compared to men's, suggesting that gender equality in the labour market may cause women to prefer employment over self-employment. This is also the case where a more supportive institutional framework for work-family reconciliation exists. This raises the issue mentioned before of the quality, motivation and type of business opportunities and not only the proportion of women and men.⁵³

Necessity entrepreneurship is likely to be related to an individual's dissatisfaction with his/her previous employment situation and therefore differs from the more voluntary character of opportunity entrepreneurship.⁵⁴ The most important factor in both cases for women is self-confidence, but knowing an entrepreneur and fear of failure show stronger significant relationships to opportunity-driven activities. In terms of policy, this means for Holienka et al. that to foster opportunity-driven activities among women, emphasis should be

put on measures supporting the recognition of opportunity, entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, networking and the reduction of the fear of failure. If, on the contrary, the focus is on entrepreneurship linked to necessity to achieve economic self-sufficiency, then policy-makers should aim to improve business skills, support formal and informal business network formation, and increase failure tolerance.⁵⁵ This should be taken into consideration when the target of promotion activities is unemployed people or more vulnerable groups such as women with a foreign origin or nationality.

3.5. Is family caring responsibility still influencing female employment?

One of the main barriers put forward to explain the lower participation and lower work intensity of women is the fact that they are still the main carer for the family and as such have difficulties in combining a demanding full-time job with such responsibilities. So women with care responsibilities will tend not to participate in the labour market or will lower their work intensity.⁵⁶

- The employment rate of women with a child under 6 years old is 9% lower than the employment rate of all women with children;
- More than 19% of inactive women in the EU are inactive because of care responsibilities;

⁵³ OECD/EU, *Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship*, op. cit.

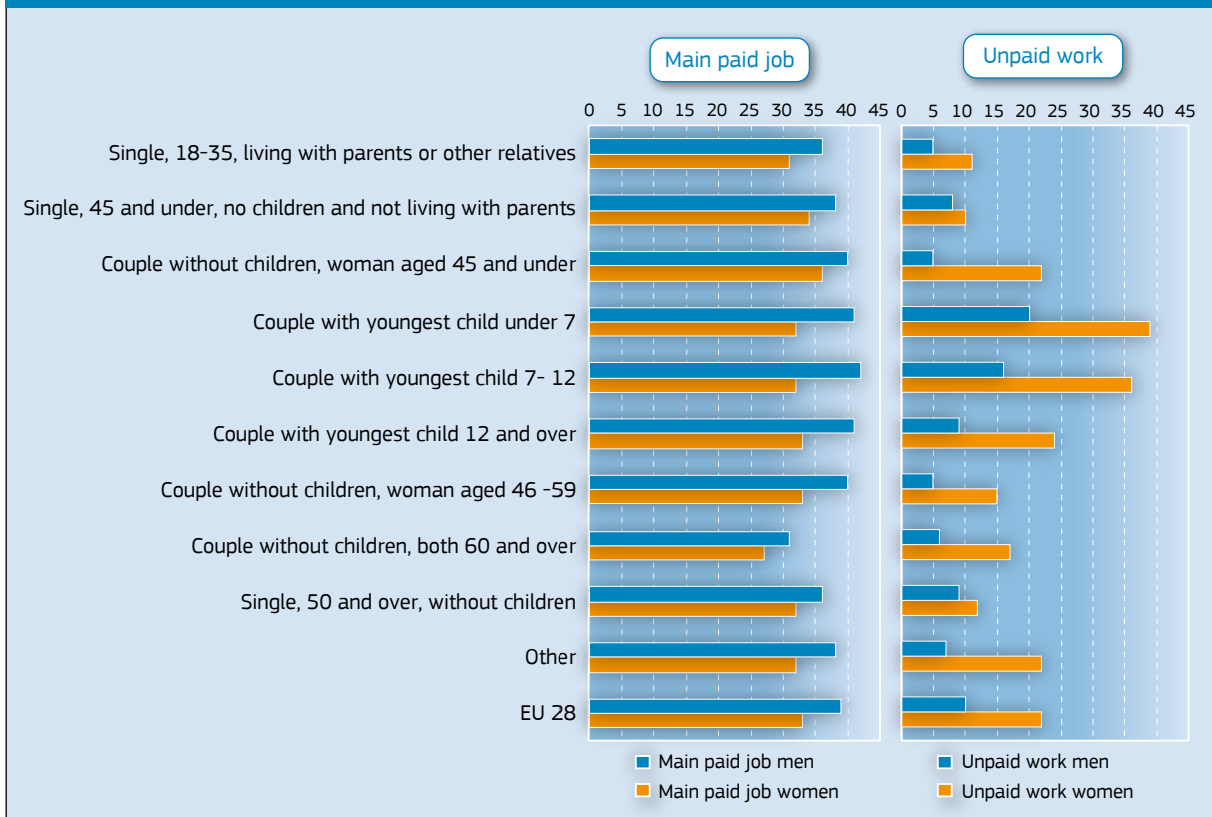
⁵⁴ Holienka M., Jančovičová Z., Kovačičová Z., *Drivers of women entrepreneurship in Visegrad countries: GEM evidence, 19th International Conference Enterprise and Competitive Environment 2016, ECE 2016, 10-11 March 2016, Brno, Czech Republic*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ EC, *2018 report on equality between women and men in the EU*, op. cit.



Figure 4: Paid and unpaid working time, by household composition and gender (hours per week), EU-28



Source: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Overview Report, 6th European Working Conditions Survey, 2016.

- Around 30% of women as compared to 8% of men are working part-time, but with important country difference. By far the highest proportion of part-time workers in 2016 was found in the Netherlands (46.6%), followed by Austria, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark and Ireland, where part-time work accounted in each case for more than a fifth of those in employment. By contrast, part-time employment was relatively uncommon in Bulgaria (1.9% of those in employment) as well as in Hungary, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (between 4.8% and 5.7%).⁵⁷

Shorter working hours, in particular part-time, are frequently presented as a “choice” by women. This “choice” however reflects the everyday process of making decisions within constraints and does not exclude discrimination, since society imposes constraints inconsistent with its commitment to equality.⁵⁸ The facts that care facilities do not exist, or are of poor quality, or are inaccessible (in terms of price, place, opening hours, flexibility etc.) directly influence this “choice” as well as the unequal sharing of

“family tasks”. Non-flexible working arrangements and constraints can also explain such “choices”. Policies now recognise that caring responsibilities are not limited to childcare but increasingly concern all other types of care for elderly, handicapped persons etc., in a context of both increased life expectancies and deinstitutionalisation of care services (e.g. keeping the elderly at home as long as possible).

Women are still the main carers, despite a policy discourse insisting on the crucial role of men and fathers. 44% of Europeans consider that the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family, as is shown in the recent Eurobarometer study, and this percentage can reach 70% in one-third of EU Member States.

On average, European women spend 21 hours more per week on household and caring activities than men.⁵⁹

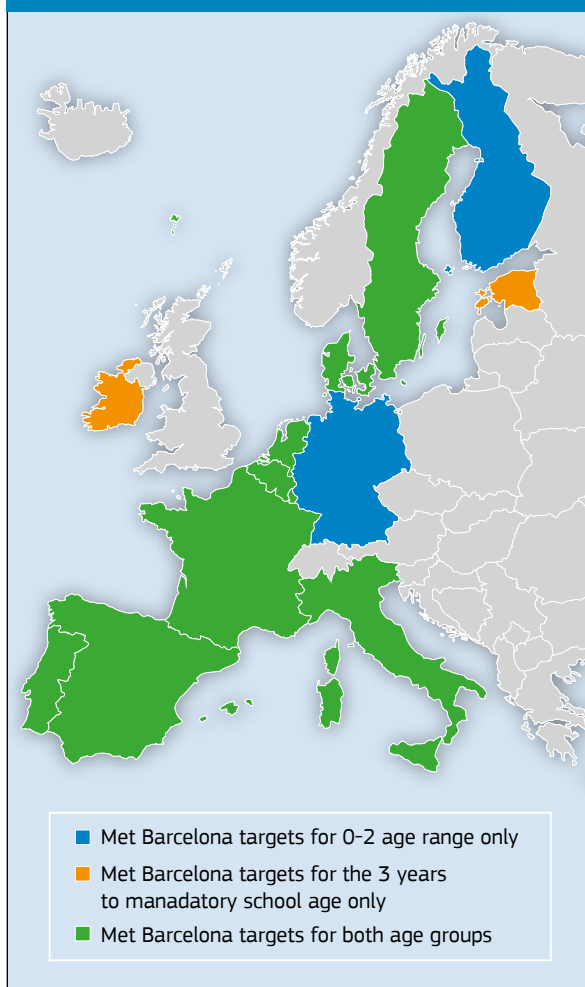
These gender roles are confirmed by studies on time use that show that young couples without care responsibili-

⁵⁷ Eurostat, *Employment Statistics in Statistics explained*.

⁵⁸ Williams, J. *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What To Do About It*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁵⁹ European Commission, *Gender equality 2017. Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Women in Politics, Special Eurobarometer 465, 2017*.

Figure 5: EU Member States which have reached the Barcelona Targets (2016)



Source: based on data from Eurostat extracted on 24.4.18 – EU-SILC – <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database> and inspired by the figure of Harte, Hofman and Sikiaridi* (see annex 1 for data per country).

ties have more comparable paid and unpaid working time (2 hours different per week). For couples with care responsibilities the gender gap is around 15 to 20 unpaid hours per week, and remains unchanged whatever the age of the child. However, the number of unpaid hours decreases with the child's age for both parents.

Considering that father's leave influences the sharing of domestic work by men,⁶⁰ the introduction of a right to father's leave within EU law is of particular importance. The current proposal for a directive on work-life balance for parents and carers would establish a paternity leave of at least 10 working days around the time of the birth and would be compensated at least at the level of sick pay. Currently, 17 Member States already meet this minimum duration and 13 offer a well-paid leave.

⁶⁰ European Commission, *Paternity and parental leave policies across the European Union, Assessment of current provisions, 2018.*

These trends confirm the importance of the EU policy focus on childcare facilities and measures of conciliation.

In 2002, the European Council in Barcelona decided to set targets for the availability of childcare facilities.

Member States agreed to provide childcare by 2010:

- for at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age; and
- for at least 33% of children under 3 years of age.

Interestingly, when looking at progress in reaching such targets, it appears that the situation does not evolve only positively. For example, in 2015, 9 Member States met the target for children under 3 years of age and 9 Member States met the other target. However, in 2010, 10 Member States were complying with the target of 33% children under 3 in formal care and 11 met or surpassed the goal for children between 3 and mandatory school age. Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and France appear to be leading the way and are investing considerable sums of public funds in childcare.⁶¹

As illustrated in figure 5, today 11 countries are meeting the target for children under 3 years old, and 10 the target for children between 3 and mandatory school age. Nine countries are meeting both targets. The Social Pillar is using the indicator of the percentage of children under 3 years of age accessing formal care as an indicator for the objective of work-life balance, confirming its importance.

As mentioned above, the issue is however not only childcare, but all caring responsibilities, and these require to be addressed by policies in terms of support services on one hand and flexible working time on the other hand. Considering the segregation of the labour market, this means that to bring about real change particular efforts should be made in favour of family-friendly work organisation in male-dominated sectors.

The adoption of the proposed directive on work-life balance would also introduce a carer's leave of five days for workers caring for seriously ill or dependent relatives, compensated at least at sick pay level. This would be an important signal for labour market actors.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

* Harte E, Hofman J, Sikiaridi A, *The role of the European Social Fund in supporting childcare provision in the European Union, 2016.*



4. CONTRIBUTION OF ESF TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND GENDER EQUALITY

This section looks more specifically at the type of gender equality projects currently supported by the ESF.

As mentioned earlier, gender equality is one possible investment priority (8 iv) under the thematic objective (TO) 8 relating to “Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility”. The target groups addressed in that TO are the unemployed, enterprises, women, employees, the young unemployed, the long-term unemployed, disadvantaged people, older workers, NEETs, the inactive, employees at risk, and employment services. In this respect, women are considered as a specific disadvantaged target group regarding access to employment. Twelve Member States have selected investment priority (IP) 8 iv: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and the UK. Globally only 1.9% of the EU budget is dedicated to this IP but Greece (5.5%), Austria (7.2%) and the Czech Republic (8.1%) are positive examples.⁶²

In the current programming period, challenges addressed through investment priority 8 iv relate to improving the labour market situation of women, in particular by investing in affordable high-quality childcare and pre-school education, and by ensuring stable funding and qualified staff. Only one country specifically refers to the gender pay gap.⁶³

Women are also one of the target groups addressed by TO9, “Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination”, and IP 9 iii deals with actions supporting the promotion of equal opportunities and fighting all types of discrimination. Types of actions financed under this IP are awareness-raising activities and training programmes for a variety of actors, and services for people who have suffered discrimination such as women who have been victims of abuse or human trafficking (including counselling services and support shelters).

Unfortunately, only a few IPs specifically address actions to reduce gender inequality in the workplace.⁶⁴

Typical actions under TO10 are those promoting the development of individual vocational skills, creating workplace programmes and providing individual career guidance. Italy and Germany are the only Member States placing special emphasis on skills acquisition by women.⁶⁵

4.1. Projects financed by the ESF to support female employment and equality in the labour market

Currently, the main objective pursued by Member States within the ESF programme is to increase women’s participation in the labour market. Enhancing women’s access to employment is an objective in all Member States but Sweden. Women’s entrepreneurship is the second most significant issue considered for support by current OPs.⁶⁶ It is not cited in the Netherlands, Cyprus, Estonia or Malta. In these latter three countries, entrepreneurship is particularly low for both women and men (see figure 1 above).

Other issues, less often considered by Managing Authorities, relate to vertical segregation and horizontal segregation. The fact that the focus is usually to improve the access of women to employment may explain why vertical segregation is not considered to be a key issue. Only a limited number of ESF programmes promote actions for women (potentially) in leadership positions.⁶⁷ However, considering that segregation in employment is still an important feature in Member States and that women are now highly educated, this lack of attention may also be a sign of difficulties in addressing the profound cause of gender inequalities. This is equally reflected in the lack of attempts to systematically tackle horizontal segregation and the limited focus on attracting women into male-dominated professions, while studies reveal that inequalities are grounded in bias in organisational practices more than in

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid.*

66 European Parliament, *Use of Structural Funds for Gender equality*, *op. cit.*

67 European Commission, *Analysis of the outcome of the negotiations*, *op. cit.*

62 European Commission, *The analysis of the outcome of the negotiations concerning the Partnership Agreements programming period 2014-2020; final report: EU 28 analysis*, 2016.

63 *Ibid.*

Table 5: Priorities identified in Member States' Operational Programmes for 2014-2020

| Country | Access to employment | Entrepreneurship | Vertical segregation | Horizontal segregation | Education and training |
|----------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Austria | x | x | x | x | x |
| Belgium | x | x | x | x | x |
| Bulgaria | x | x | - | - | - |
| Croatia | x | x | x | x | x |
| Cyprus | x | - | x | - | x |
| Czech Republic | x | x | x | - | x |
| Denmark | x | x | x | x | - |
| Estonia | x | - | - | - | - |
| Finland | x | x | x | x | x |
| France | x | x | x | - | x |
| Germany | x | x | x | x | x |
| Greece | x | x | x | - | x |
| Hungary | x | x | - | - | - |
| Ireland | x | x | - | - | - |
| Italy | x | x | x | x | x |
| Latvia | x | x | - | x | - |
| Lithuania | x | x | - | - | - |
| Luxembourg | x | x | - | x | - |
| Malta | x | - | x | - | x |
| Netherlands | x | - | - | x | - |
| Poland | x | x | x | x | x |
| Portugal | x | x | x | x | x |
| Romania | x | x | x | x | x |
| Slovakia | x | x | x | x | x |
| Slovenia | x | x | - | - | - |
| Spain | x | x | x | x | x |
| Sweden | - | x | x | x | x |
| United Kingdom | x | x | x | x | x |

Legend: **x = present in OP**, **- = absent**

Source: European Parliament, Use of structural funds for Gender equality in selected Member States, FEMM Committee, 2016.

a lack of individual skills. In those Member States which pay attention to desegregation, changing attitude and fighting stereotypes, actions mainly focus on changing stereotypes about women, while perceptions and stereotypes relating to men are neglected.⁶⁸ This is echoed in education and training activities, which pay more attention to attracting women into vocational training relating to jobs that can enable them to enter the labour market, rather than tackling gender stereotypes in education programmes.⁶⁹

The ESF is generally not used to working enough on gender barriers on the demand side (firms); the focus is still mainly on the supply side (women's capacities). To reach out to gender equality requires a holistic approach involving all stakeholders to reduce gender segregation – vertical and horizontal – in the labour market, and to change organisation culture and working procedures. One aspect that is addressed by ESF is work-life balance, as shown in the next section of this report.

⁶⁸ European Parliament, *Use of Structural Funds for Gender equality*, op. cit.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

4.2. Projects financed by the ESF to support work-life balance

Supporting the provision of high-quality childcare, arrangements at the workplace and change management in organisations are financed under investment priority 8 IV.⁷⁰

Reconciliation between work and family life is one of the second most significant issues considered for support by OPs according to Managing Authorities. It was not mentioned amongst fields receiving support by the Managing Authorities of Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, or the Netherlands.⁷¹ While this is quite understandable for some countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, considering that they have met both Barcelona targets, it is more surprising for Hungary and Austria which are quite far from the objective of providing childcare support for at least 33% of children under 3 years of age, and nor have they achieved the target relating to children between 3 and the mandatory school age (see annex 1).

Employers are generally supported to develop gender-sensitive human resource management, promote company welfare and support a better work-life balance (through financial incentives for employers and individuals, such as vouchers, awareness-raising programmes, networks for knowledge sharing, and awarding/rewarding examples of good practice). Other actions relate to improving the quality and accessibility of childcare facilities and services (and other care services).⁷²

With regard to work-life reconciliation policies, the importance of such policies seems acknowledged according to Managing Authorities contacted during the European Parliament Study. Work-life reconciliation appears to be one of the gender-sensitive issues most funded through ESF. However, the study notes that the understanding of gender equality implications in the design of such measures is not uniform across Member States. It is often seen as a means to increase the participation of women in the labour market and is not applied in all fields of social life. ESF funding has mainly been used to spread childcare services (in line with the Barcelona targets) although there is still room for improvement in many countries, not only in terms of service availability but also in terms of opening times, quality and costs. The effort to provide elderly care services is less

⁷⁰ European Commission, *The analysis of the outcome of the negotiations*, op. cit.

⁷¹ European Parliament, *Use of structural funds for Gender equality*, op. cit.

⁷² Ibid.

intense so there is space for developing new policies, given the growing importance of this issue due to the ageing of the European population.⁷³

The structural funds provide for a number of possible support sources relating to work-life balance and childcare services. A number of interesting practices are highlighted by Harte, Hofman and Sikiaridi.⁷⁴ They are divided into four types of intervention:

- stand-alone childcare provision and/or early childhood education programmes
- childcare provision as an accompanying measure in projects largely focused on labour market integration
- childcare provision as a measure to improve work-life balance, flexible working arrangements and gender equality in the workplace
- other initiatives aiming to improve the capacity and/or quality of childcare

The experts note that to continue to support childcare, local and regional government can play their part by identifying the gaps in childcare provision and encouraging ESF practitioners to apply for funding, while these latter can build appropriate partnerships to create interventions responding to local needs and contexts. In terms of the exchange of 'inspiring practices', additional attention to monitoring and evaluating such projects and initiatives is also crucial for scaling them up.⁷⁵

4.3. Examples of practices

This section presents practices proposed by members of the ESF Employment Thematic Network, all ESF-funded except for one, which were selected for presentation and discussion at the conference and meeting organised in Trento in March 2018. A full description of these projects is presented in annex 2.

Other practices gathered in European studies and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) database are also presented to illustrate possible actions to contribute to a more inclusive and balanced labour market, which addresses inequalities and offers work schedules and organisations that are compatible with family responsibilities. These practices are quite typical of actions supported by European Social Fund in Member States.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Harte et al., op. cit.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

4.3.1. Projects in favour of horizontal desegregation

The first practice addresses the training and qualification of women in a sector composed largely of men. The Women in ICT project (Wallonia) has been supported by the ESF for a number of years with the aim of getting more women into jobs in a sector that offers employment opportunities and generally better pay than in other “more traditional” employment sectors for women (such as caring). The challenge for such practices is to contribute to more diverse professions in terms of gender and to influence mainstream actors in the ICT sector to counter stereotypes and expectations.

GENDER AND ICT – WALLONIA

Since 2004, Interface3.Namur ASBL has been working on promoting access for all to employment in ICT. ICT jobs are jobs of the future and offer a wide range of opportunities that are still unknown.

There are so far very few women in the field of computer science. In the Gender and ICT project, currently running under the ESF 2014-2020 programme, the association is promoting these professions and bringing them into the spotlight to attract more women. It aims to achieve a better gender mix in the IT sector so that women and men can become more than just users.

The actions proposed aim to discover the diversity of computer professions, change clichés of technologies and change the mindset to make these jobs as attractive for women as for men.

The actions proposed are:

- Discovery and awareness of ICT professions
- Animations, debates and conferences in schools, associations, guidance/training centres etc.
- Information and orientation towards ICT training and professions
- Guidance tools:
 - free workshops about gender and technologies
 - free workshops to discover IT jobs
 - more than 30 non-gendered IT job descriptions on the project website
 - creation of guidance tools and a guidance centre to help people who are interested in ICT (what kind of training, what kind of job, etc.)

Practice from the ESF Employment Thematic Network – see annex 2 for a longer description.

On the other hand, projects can also work to encourage men to embrace professions currently occupied by a majority of female workers, and as such contribute to a strategy of desegregation of the labour market. It also offers professional pathways for men in a situation of shrinking industrial sectors and steadily rising unemployment among young and working-class men.⁷⁶

A number of projects to attract more men into the care professions are under way in Europe.⁷⁷

MEN IN CHILDCARE – UK

In Edinburgh the Men in Childcare project began in 1991 as a series of accredited training courses for unemployed men and women who wanted to change their career to work in childcare and related professions. The 16-week introductory course was offered free of charge and in the evening to accommodate men's schedules. It was also important that the course provided students with accreditation that could be used to seek basic employment in childcare or as a basis for further courses and national certification in education and childcare. The programme also included a mentoring component where students were linked with qualified male childcare workers. A number of different methods were used to make the programme known among men, such as flyers, radio spots and newspaper advertisements, all of which bore the messages “men care too” and “children need men too”. Since the start of the project, the number of men employed in childcare has increased significantly (for example from 1% to 10% in Edinburgh). This example proves that successful initiatives to motivate men to take up care work combine different strategies: from affirmative action to extra tailored training courses and awareness-raising and informative campaigns.

Extracted from the European Commission study The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European Strategies and Insights, 2012

4.3.2. Upgrading work opportunities for low qualified women

Another strategy to get women into the labour market, in particular women from more vulnerable groups (low-qualified or far from the labour market) is to provide them

⁷⁶ European Commission, *The role of men in Gender Equality – European strategies and Insights*, 2012:61.

⁷⁷ See for example, Ulla Gerner Wohlgemuth, *Initiatives to promote more male kindergarten pedagogues, discussion paper, the EU Mutual Learning Programme on Gender Equality, Gender segregation in the labour market and education, Denmark 29-30 September 2015.*

with training and jobs in “traditional female jobs”. Getting such jobs upgraded in terms of working conditions and pay is as important as working towards desegregation of occupations.

Two projects presented during the March meeting of the ESF Employment Thematic Network concerned the employment of women in care jobs: service vouchers (Belgium) and Zaželi (‘Wish’, Croatia). Such projects are important to get women out of the informal and underground economy and for society to recognise that such caring jobs are part of the formal economy and should be valued and rewarded. These two projects had an additional objective of contributing to a better work-life balance in families supported in their care responsibilities by the services offered.

However, in the long run, the challenge such projects face is to offer sustainable and non-precarious jobs to these women.

ZAŽELI (‘WISH’) WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME – CROATIA

The main objectives of the project are to enable access to employment and to the labour market for unemployed women members of vulnerable groups (women without a completed secondary education, women over the age of 50, women with disabilities, female victims of trafficking, drug addicts, female victims of domestic violence, homeless women) with an emphasis on hard-to-reach rural areas and islands. Within the entire programme, it is planned to employ 3,000 women to support and care for 12,000 elderly and disadvantaged persons in their communities. On 30 June 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System launched a permanent call for proposals open to local government units and non-profit organisations. The call is intended for the employment of women who are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market, with the purpose of caring for and supporting older and disadvantaged people in their households.

The programme funds the purchase of basic materials (hygiene and household maintenance supplies for persons to whom women will care, up to €27 per month per person) and for additional education and training for women which will facilitate their employment in the local community after the project is completed (up to €947 per person).

The project is funded by the ESF under the Efficient Human Resources Operational Programme 2014-2020, and is

open until 31 December 2020. The total amount of grants is around €54 million.

The innovative aspect of the project is to educate and train women from targeted groups. The women involved in the project will be able to acquire the knowledge and skills needed in the labour market through additional education and training to be more competitive in the labour market by the end of the project.

Practice from the ESF Employment Thematic Network – see annex 2 for a longer description.

SERVICE VOUCHERS – BELGIUM

The Belgian system of service vouchers, started in 2003, is a system funded by the government in which a user can buy service vouchers from the issuing company at a low price (today €9). Each voucher is worth one hour of domestic aid, which can be ordered from a licenced company, which contracts workers whom they pay as agreed in sectorial collective bargaining agreements.

Vouchers can be used for activities inside the user’s house (cleaning, laundry, ironing, occasional sewing and cooking) and outside the user’s house (ironing, occasional sewing, grocery shopping, transporting less mobile people).

Since the start of the system in 2004, the system has grown each year, although in the last couple of years growth has slowed. In 2016 the system employed almost 160,000 people, and 668,000 people were active service voucher customers. Almost 98% of the employees are female, and 90% of the workers work part-time. 50% of the workers have Belgian nationality. Recent studies show more than 60% of employees are low-educated. The unemployment rates for low-educated female workers are at the lowest point in the last 15 years.

The innovation of the project lies in two aspects. It offers a combined solution for three problems: unemployment rates among low-educated females, the struggle for a better-balanced work-life-ratio, and the high levels of undeclared work in the domestic environment. Apart from this, it is also a unique private-public cooperation in which forces have been joined to achieve the objectives.

The system was organised at federal level but following the Sixth State Reform is now managed by the regions.

Practice from the ESF Employment Thematic Network – see annex 2 for a longer description.

MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS ON THE THRESHOLD OF CZECH HOUSEHOLDS, 2012-2014 – CZECH REPUBLIC

The Association for Integration and Migration (SIMI), in cooperation with People in Need, the Oglivy & Mather media agency and the Economic Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, implemented a project to support migrant women working in Czech households. The project advocated equal opportunities for migrant women domestic workers, and the improvement of their working conditions and their often difficult position in society. The project focused on:

- migrant women domestic workers, by providing direct counselling and workshops
- employers, by promoting standards for fair working conditions
- the general public, by raising awareness through communication campaign
- policy-makers, by seeking their support to put in place legal conditions necessary

Research was carried out on the situation and experience of migrant women domestic workers to develop a knowledge base to inform the change needed.

Migrant women domestic workers face various forms of discrimination on grounds of nationality and gender and in relation to their work experiences of unpaid overtime, low wages, and restrictions on personal freedom. Many are undocumented, engaged in unregulated work and lack knowledge about their working or civil rights.

345 migrant women and 34 men were provided with free legal and social counselling including instructional courses and access to a website with practical information and contacts. The awareness of the general public, policy-makers and employers was enhanced. The project promoted the ratification of the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers to create a lasting framework to improve the working conditions of domestic workers and this is now a possibility.

Extracted from the good practice database of EIGE accessible at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/>.

4.3.3. Supporting employment of victims of gender-based violence

A Spanish project supporting the employment of women victims of domestic violence illustrates the necessity to take into consideration gender issues that can explain withdrawal from or difficulties in the labour market experienced by some groups of vulnerable women. The challenge in this type of project is to develop capacities and partnership at local level to offer integrated services (one-stop shop) to support female victims of domestic violence both socially (housing, support services etc.) and in working life.

COORDINATION TO IMPROVE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE VICTIMS' LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION – SPAIN

This project based in Murcia supports women who are victims of gender-based abuse and provides training to improve their chance of getting a job. The project improves coordination between the CAVI centres and the regional PES and ensures more personalised support and a single point of contact for victims. Each woman who enters the project is given a plan tailored to her specific circumstances in order to identify the approaches which best suit her individual needs.

For many women, this will mean signing up to a training programme. In the project, they are given priority access to training and receive grants to cover childcare and transport while they attend the courses. The centres also help them to apply for unemployment benefits and to manage other administrative procedures – to date, 92% of women have benefited from this invaluable support.

This project must be considered as a good example of cooperation between the private (CAVI centres) and public sectors, as well as among Public Employment Services (PESs) and other stakeholders including the employers. In the Murcia context such a partnership is already quite innovative. On top of that, the project also uses up-to-date methodologies, and takes into account the need to train personnel from both the CAVI centres and the PESs, to address properly the particular needs and circumstances of women who have been victims of gender-based violence.

Practice from the ESF Employment Thematic Network – see annex 2 for a longer description.

4.3.4. Employment through entrepreneurship

As indicated in the section dedicated to current ESF support, an important trend regarding supporting female employment is to dedicate funds to support women starting a business. The main target group of such action is unemployed women.

BUSINESS FOR WOMEN – BUSINESS WOMEN

– BELGIUM

This project started in 2006 in Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region and was supported by ESF funds. It aims to support more women, in particular women job-seekers, to start their own business, to guide them in the process of enterprise creation and also to make them aware of gender issues when taking such decision. The idea was not to look at female entrepreneurs from a male point of view, which is generally the approach and which leads to ideas of what women “lack”. Women are willing to start businesses, and they come with good and valuable projects, but approach it with different questions that can also be valuable and transferable to any entrepreneur. For example, every entrepreneur should think about how to approach the question of family and working life to make his/her business sustainable. This issue is now integrated into the guidance of all persons getting support from Crédal.

Women participating in the programme have a business idea which is either at a very preliminary stage or at an advanced stage, but they are not yet clear whether to jump ahead. AFFA works specifically at that preliminary stage, as it is based on the fact that when women decide to start their business, there is a high probability that they will succeed. The crucial point is the decision stage and it is linked to gender issues, which are closely linked to stereotypes about their competences, roles and position in society and in the family. AFFA combines advice on technical aspects of enterprise creation with that on more personal objectives, such as how will I combine family and professional life? How will I establish myself as a female entrepreneur? Another particularity of the programme is the working circle: groups in which a small number of women work together on their projects, sharing their competences and knowledge about each other’s business ideas. Since 2010, six sessions have been organised every year, with 70 to 90 women taking part each year. Around 20% make their project a reality, which is quite good consid-

ering that the programme targets women who are not yet clear about becoming entrepreneurs. In comparison, in the general guidance programme for men and women job-seekers the success rate is on average 35% for people close to setting up an enterprise. The sustainability rate after three years is 80%!

The project supports women to create their own enterprises but also to discuss the relevant social and gender constructs. It gives all necessary guidance to women at an early stage to decrease drop-outs for reasons not connected to the business idea in itself but to gender roles and stereotypes.

Source: interview by N. Wuiame with Crédal for a European study on entrepreneurship, unpublished.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF UNEMPLOYED WOMEN AGED 22-64 – GREECE

The Entrepreneurship of Unemployed Women Aged 22-64 programme was an ESF-supported subsidy programme that ran in Greece from 2010 to 2013. It was carried out by the Hellenic Manpower Organisation (OAED), which acts as the Greek Public Employment Service supported by the Greek Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. It aimed to promote women’s self-employment, entrepreneurship and business activity, especially in response to the new dire labour market conditions created as a result of the economic and financial crisis (which has exacerbated women’s unemployment).

The programme offered a grant of €24,000 over three years, together with training seminars, individualised advice and performance monitoring. Ironically, although it was targeted at businesses with a potential for growth, i.e. those in innovative sectors such as the green economy, in point of fact most applicants planned to set up small personal service enterprises.

The programme’s impact in supporting women entrepreneurship has been considerable. By December 2012, out of the initial target of 4,000 women, it had helped 3,348 unemployed women to start and develop their own businesses.

Extracted from the good practice database of EIGE accessible at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/>.

4.3.5. Practices relating to work-life balance

A number of projects are financed by the ESF either to support female integration in the labour market or change organisational culture.

The development of a model of short breaks for families with caring responsibilities in Poland is interesting as it goes beyond the typical issue of childcare. The challenge for such a project is to have such breaks recognised in the law and promoted all over Poland.

RESPIRE CARE FOR CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES – POLAND

This project aims to develop and implement a model of a short break service to improve the quality of life of families caring for people with disabilities. To date, this form of support is still poorly addressed in Poland. The support is aimed at and provided specifically to the disabled and their carers. The project is still in progress.

135 people (disabled and carers) participate in the programme with the institutions concerned (foundations, associations, public social support institutions). At the beginning 9 of these 15 institutions will test the solution developed. There will also be 9 coordinators and 45 assistants trained for the tasks.

In 2019, an evaluation of this test period will be carried out. The final objective will be to have a legislation adopted to make such short break services accessible for carers throughout Poland.

Practice from the ESF Employment Thematic Network – see annex 2 for a longer description.

Work on organisational change with companies so that they can better accommodate needs of the workers in terms of balancing work and family and solutions for companies is the aim of the Family Audit Certification scheme.

FAMILY AUDIT – 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 commenced in 2012, and has been followed by a national trial.

The family audit is based on a well-developed methodology. A working group is set up with the organisation,

which is advised by an external consultant. 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. The entire family audit process is monitored for a relatively long period of time. A study of the impact of work-life balance plans on a sample of 18 organisations showed the tangible benefits of carrying out family audits; another study showed the positive impact of reconciliation of work and family life within the organisation and across the region. The two most notable benefits are better employee wellbeing and increased productivity. Family audit certification also benefits companies by opening up access to tenders for public contracts and is a tool for organisational improvement.

Practice from the ESF Employment Thematic Network – see annex 2 for a longer description.

PROMOTION OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT – SWEDEN

A key indicator of gender inequality in the Swedish labour market is the difference in working time. There are many more women than men working part-time (30% of women and 11% of men – 20 to 64 years old in 2014). This is not a matter of choice, as not finding a full-time job is the main reason cited by both women and men. In total, there are 207,900 women and 79,400 men working part-time involuntarily. Promoting full-time employment has been high on the agenda since at least 2000. Unions, political parties and women's organisations have pushed for more full-time employment. Investigations have been carried out, commissions have been appointed, projects and campaigns, mostly in the public sector, have been started and evaluated. The employers' organisation for municipalities and county councils (SALAR) emerged as a champion. These different elements combined to create the conditions for change over the period 2008 to 2014 in municipalities and county councils. A 2015 survey showed a significant increase in the number of municipalities, up to 57%, and county councils, up to 66%, which had made some form of political commitment to promote full-time employment or desired working time for their employees. The gains of 5 percentage points in full-time employment were made solely by women employed by these bodies. The initiative has contributed to economic independence for women. The Municipality of Avesta promoted a "full-time project"

between 2011 and 2013, financed by the ESF, and obtained good results with more than 90% of their employees now working full-time. There is valuable learning from this initiative in terms of negotiating change, timetabling work, and managing increased demands on services.

Extracted from the good practice database of EIGE accessible at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/>.

Involving fathers in care responsibilities is needed, but requires first that this applies to all, including top executives – thus ensuring role models for other men – and secondly that the employer ensures that there will be no negative impact on the career advancement of either men or women.

FAMILY-FRIENDLINESS AS PART OF A DIVERSE CULTURE AT BOSCH – GERMANY

The Bosch company, an engineering and electronics multinational based near Stuttgart, employs 280,000 people in 50 countries across the world. It has developed a range of policies and awareness-raising activities on the reconciliation of work and family life: a website, a press release, a supplement to the annual report and guidelines on a flexible and family-friendly company. 'Family time' periods can be used as a basis for career development and promotion.

A specific emphasis is given to executives taking family-friendly working hours, so that they can act as disseminators and role models. For a period of three months executives can try out working flexibly from home or part-time – which helps to create a cultural change in the organisation and leadership around flexible working. After the trial period, executives are free to go back to their full-time posts, but in practice 80% of them decide to continue to work flexibly.

The scheme particularly targets executives from research and development departments and when the scheme was introduced in 2011 over 300 employees applied to take part, so a second round for 650 participants was launched. The company predominantly employs men and there has been a good take-up rate of the initiative amongst men.

Extracted from the good practice database of EIGE accessible at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/>.



Nathalie Wuiame speaks at the Trento meeting.

HANDS-ON FATHERS MAKE BETTER EMPLOYEES – DENMARK

The company TDC, which is the largest telephone, broadband and television company in Denmark, has since 2002 had a generous leave policy for parents – but few fathers took up the leave. The company campaign “A hug from Daddy” aimed to raise awareness amongst fathers and has led to a large increase in fathers taking leave. Fathers get up to ten weeks of paid parental leave, in addition to two weeks of leave after a child is born, brought home from hospital, or adopted. One of the aims when the campaign was launched was to show that taking leave would not interrupt career progression. Information was provided on a website and leaflets, and new fathers received a package containing a bib, rucksack etc. and a letter with information about the parental leave policy. In 2009 the company was awarded the Female Leader Focus equality award. Due to its reconciliation measures the company has received a great deal of media and public interest. Campaign activities were discontinued after a few years, as the idea of fathers taking parental leave has now become ingrained in company culture.

Extracted from the good practice database of EIGE accessible at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/>.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Gender equality in the workplace

ESF intervention should focus more on trying to affect the **socio-cultural environment of work** than addressing women's capacities.

Sources of gender inequalities are much more determined by social and cultural norms and bias, group interactions and collective actions than by individual opportunities. Gender biases affect many dimension of the male/female distinction:⁷⁸ physical (strong, tall and fast) and psychological (for example, risk-prone or adverse; rational versus emotional) features and social roles (technical and care jobs; leaders or human resources management).

The policy focus should be shifted from individual gender differences on the supply side to the way the organisations work, and in particular the persistent biases in organisational practices in selection, hiring and promotion, skill recognition, structuring of career trajectories, job and skills evaluation. Coaching managers of companies in order to change their mindsets should be the priority.

At the same time **stereotypes** should be fought by fostering changes in attitudes, choices and actual competences of men and not only of women.

The ESF should support the cultural change of all actors to overcome stereotypical choices. This includes guidance measures based on talent and potential competences, broadening jobs and training opportunities for all, and including for men in “more traditional” female sectors. TO 10 can be used for that purpose. Actions in schools are of key importance.

Projects addressing educational segregation and stereotypes are still needed but should be part of mainstreamed action instead of conceived as small-scale and pilot projects.

Here as well, specific gender-equality actions should not only target women, but also consider a wider perspective, for instance actions targeting men, key economic and social actors, decision-makers and the general public.

The ESF should promote a **holistic approach** involving

⁷⁸ Origgì G. and Lipinsky A., *Workshop on Implicit Biases*, European Commission, Brussels, 30 May 2017

all stakeholders to reduce gender segregation (vertical and horizontal), and change working procedures and culture.

One aspect that is still very poorly addressed in ESF intervention is the **gender pay gap**. While it is obviously explained partly by gender segregation, we know as well that it is also the result of discriminations. ESF interventions should address the gender pay gap.

Finally, the promotion of female **entrepreneurship** should be an objective in itself and support both opportunity-driven and necessity-driven enterprise. It should also support entrepreneurship at all stages and not just at the start of the activity.

5.2. Work-life balance

Work-life balance should be an **objective in itself** and not seen mainly as a way to support female employment. The aim should be structural and cultural changes in work organisation.

The ESF should work against the assumption that the “ideal worker” is free from any responsibilities other than work, in particular in sectors where the workforce is predominantly masculine.

A holistic approach is necessary and should include men, allowing them to perform as good workers and good carers.

Providing **high-quality and affordable care solutions**: there is room for improvement in many countries regarding service availability (in all regions, for all care needs), opening times, quality and costs. The ESF should continue to support the development of and access to high-quality care solutions, in particular for children in countries which have not yet met the Barcelona targets.

The ESF should also provide other care services than child-care, given the growing importance of this issue due to the ageing of the European population.

The renewed push by the Commission in favour of career breaks, **care services and a better work-life balance** is welcomed. In this respect, it is important to ensure that men and women are supported after a career break to re-enter the labour market and upskill their qualifications to avoid a

negative impact of the break on their career prospects.

The ESF can support more family-friendly work organisation in particular for very small enterprises which have neither the knowledge nor the tools to carry through such managerial changes. The effects on workers should be positive in terms of career progression. Here also actions on the mindset of managers and workers are needed.

5.3. Processes

The EU strategy to enhance gender equality is based on a **dual approach** comprising both specific actions and gender mainstreaming. The primary purposes of specific gender-equality actions and gender mainstreaming should be considered and discussed between the Commission and the Member States in order to make the most of the dual approach strategy to gender equality. Employability can mainly be considered as an object of gender mainstreaming, while specific actions are directed to tackling gender stereotypes and vertical and horizontal work segregation⁷⁹

Gender mainstreaming should be considered as a **specific objective** in the next programmes. As illustrated by the funding allocated to gender equality diminishing during the last programming periods, having a specific gender equality objective will protect gender equality from being overcome by supposedly more pressing priorities.

One thematic objective or priority on gender equality will allow for precise reporting on results in terms of improving gender equality and not just on female participation in employment. This will also support the double approach of gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

⁷⁹ GHK and FGB, *Evaluation of the European Social Fund's support to Gender Equality*, op. cit.

The ESF should also improve its **monitoring system for gender equality**. The approach can be to select a number of key mainstream priorities where data are systematically disaggregated by sex; gender indicators are defined and reporting on gender is systematic at all stages. This will provide results and examples of the gender mainstreaming process. Planning the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the chosen gender mainstreaming strategy and tools is also important in all Member States and at European level.

Reinforcing **capacity building** is still needed. Gender requires real expertise to support profound and sustainable changes. The ESF should provide additional budgets specifically dedicated to such gender actions. If not spent that budget will be lost by the Member State or region.

Starting implementation of gender mainstreaming within the work of **ESF Managing authorities**: gender analysis of each call; develop capacity building and access to expertise; provide project promoters with instruments that support real learning and enable them to address gender in their projects (examples of processes and results).

Support **partnership** with equality bodies and NGOs expert in gender equality. This supposes that time, resources and expertise are available. The next programme should ensure that partnership is not just a formal consultation process.

Gender budgeting can be a powerful instrument to force Member States to identify resources specifically dedicated to gender equality and within mainstreamed practices. It will raise awareness on the current effect of supposedly neutral measures and support the implementation of specific gender equality measures.

More **coordinated policies** with regard to gender equality are needed within the whole ESF programming exercise.

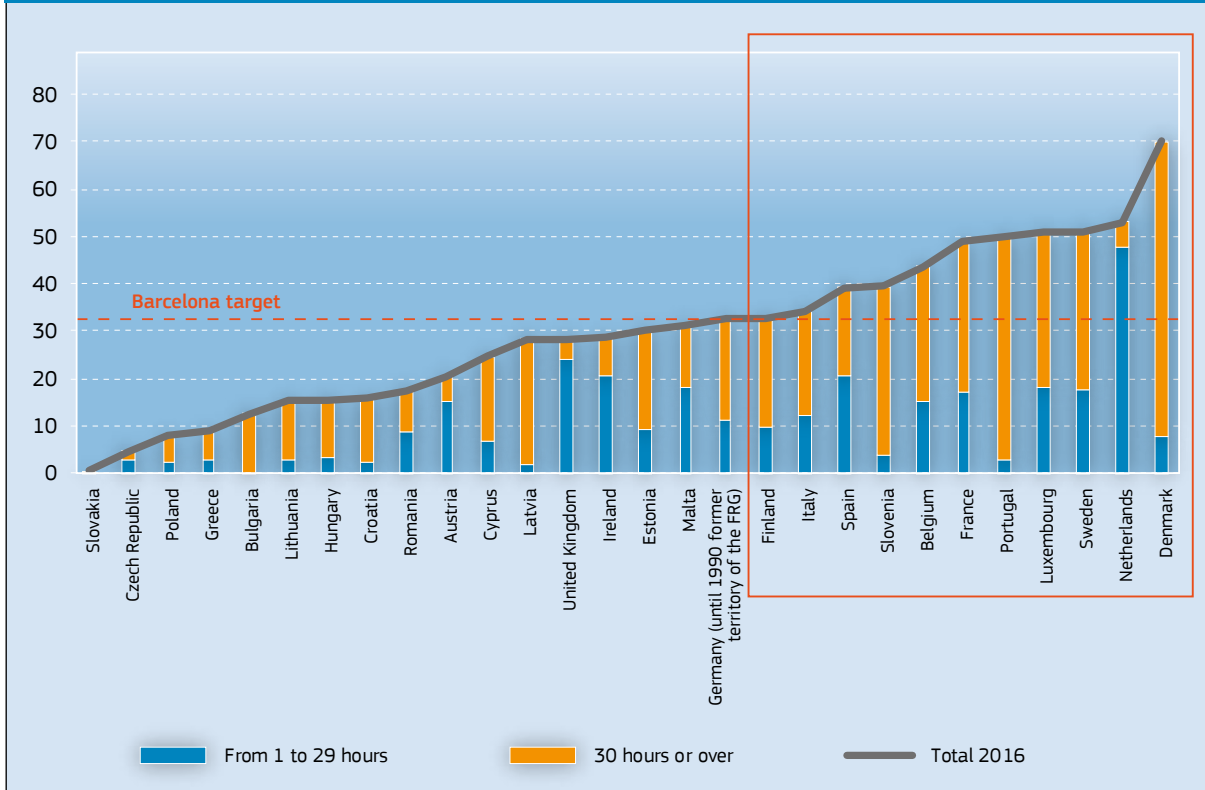
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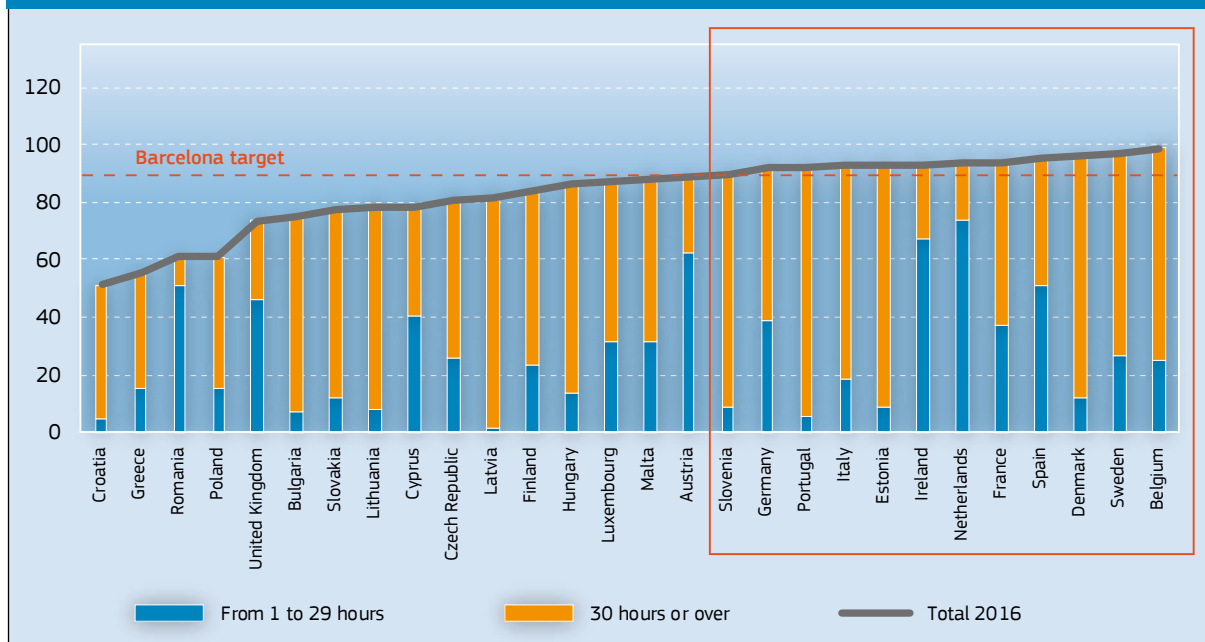
ANNEX 1: BARCELONA TARGETS

Figure 6: Proportion of children in formal child care in the age range 0–2 years (2016)



Source: Based on data from Eurostat – EU-SILC – <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>

Figure 7: Proportion of children in formal child care in the age range 3 years – mandatory school age (2016)



Source: Based on data from Eurostat – EU-SILC – <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>



ANNEX 2: INTERESTING PRACTICES FROM THE EMPLOYMENT THEMATIC NETWORK

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Title | GENDER AND ICT |
| Country | BELGIUM (Wallonia) |
| Objective | <p>Inform women and men about opportunities the ICT sector has to offer;</p> <p>Raise awareness to promote gender diversity in IT and ask/encourage everyone to participate in building a digital society;</p> <p>Guide people in ICT professions and provide opportunities for training;</p> <p>Training in and with ICTs to promote social inclusion and develop skills that allow for professional (re)integration;</p> <p>Document and share resources of all the above.</p> |
| Project description | <p>Since 2004, Interface3.Namur ASBL has been working on promoting access for all to employment in ICT. ICT jobs are jobs of the future and offer a wide range of opportunities that are still unknown.</p> <p>There are to date very few women in the field of computer science. With the Gender and ICT project, currently running under the ESF 2014-2020 programme, the association is promoting these professions and bringing them into the spotlight to attract more women. It aims to achieve a better gender mix in the IT sector so that women and men can become more than just users.</p> <p>The actions proposed in this project aim to discover the diversity of computer professions, change clichés of technologies and change mindsets to make these jobs as attractive for women as for men.</p> <p>The actions proposed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discovery and awareness of ICT professions • animations, debates and conferences in schools, associations, guidance/training centres etc. • information and orientation towards ICT training and professions • guidance tools |
| Achievement and impact | <p>Creation of free workshops about gender and technologies</p> <p>Creation of free workshops to discover IT jobs</p> <p>More than 30 non-gendered IT job descriptions on our website</p> <p>Creation of guidance tools and a guidance centre to help people who are interested in ICT (what kind of training, what kind of job, etc.)</p> |
| Innovative aspects | <p>The project is innovative because of the tools developed and designed to raise awareness about IT and gender in Belgium. Several associations offer workshops on the learning of code and the algorithmic logic but are not addressing the issue of ICT and gender.</p> |
| Sustainability | <p>The project involves the creation of several tools. A ready-to-use kit will be ready in 2019, which will give information to anyone interested in gender stereotypes and ICT jobs. This project can be carried out in the long term, but funding will be required after 2020 to support the use of the tools and continue to develop material.</p> |

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| Title | ZAŽELI (WISH) – WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME |
| Country | CROATIA |
| Objective | The main objectives of the project are to enable access to employment and to the labour market for unemployed women who are members of vulnerable groups (women without a completed secondary education, women over the age of 50, women with disabilities, female victims of trafficking, drug addicts, female victims of domestic violence, homeless women) with an emphasis on hard-to-reach rural areas and islands. Within the entire programme, it is planned to employ 3,000 women to provide support and take care of 12,000 elderly and disadvantaged persons in their communities. |
| Project description | <p>On 30 June 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System launched an open permanent call for proposals for local government units and non-profit organisations. The call is intended for the employment of women who are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market, with the purpose of caring for and providing support to older and disadvantaged people in their households.</p> <p>The programme funds the purchase of basic materials for carrying out activities (hygiene and household maintenance supplies for persons cared for) up to €27 per month per person) and additional education and training for women which will facilitate their employment in the local community after the project is completed (up to €947 per person).</p> <p>The project is funded by the ESF under the Efficient Human Resources Operational Programme 2014-2020. and is open until 31 December 2020. The total amount of grants is €54 million.</p> |
| Achievement and impact | By the 13 September 2017 the ministry had received 175 project proposals worth a total of €84,246,088, and so far 79 contracts have been concluded and their implementation started. The ministry is considering increasing the financial allocation to continue this call, which will reduce the unemployment of women in Croatia. It is also hoped that the project will prevent the early institutionalisation of the elderly, and improve their socialisation and quality of life. But this remains to be seen after the project is completed. |
| Innovative aspects | The innovative aspect of the project is to conduct the education and training of women from targeted groups. The women involved in the project activities will be able to acquire knowledge and skills needed in the labour market through additional education and training to be more competitive in the labour market by the end of the project. |
| Sustainability | Through the implementation of previous active labour market measures, within the <i>Help to Community</i> public works programme, a pilot programme for the activation of women in the local community was conducted. These pilot projects achieved very good results, so the ministry has prepared and launched the call. It is planned to make some of the programme activities part of the regular activities of local government and non-profit organisations. |

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Title | SERVICE VOUCHERS |
| Country | BELGIUM |
| Objective | <p>There were three goals when the Federal Government introduced the scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combat undeclared work • integrate high-risk groups of unemployed people in the labour market • facilitate a better work-life combination for certain groups |
| Project description | <p>The Belgian system of service vouchers finds its origin in the recommendation of the European Commission to invest in local community services. In 1994, the Belgian government decided to answer this call by expanding Local Employment Agencies to all local communities in the country. These agencies' task was to match local unemployment with the needs of local customers. In 2003, this system was transformed into the Service Voucher system – a system funded by the government in which a user can buy service vouchers from the issuing company at a low price rate (today €9). Each voucher is worth one hour of domestic aid, which can be ordered from a licenced company. The company contracts workers whom they pay as agreed in sectorial collective bargaining agreements. For each hour of service the company receives €9 from the user + €13.69 from the government, making a total of €22.69 per voucher.</p> <p>Vouchers can be used for activities inside the user's house (cleaning, laundry, ironing, occasional sewing and cooking) and outside the user's house (ironing, occasional sewing, grocery shopping, transporting less mobile people).</p> |
| Achievement and impact | <p>Since the start of the system in 2004, the system has grown each year, although in the last couple of years the growth has slowed. In 2016 the system employed almost 160,000 people, and had 668,000 active service voucher customers. Almost 98% of the employees are female, and 90% of the workers work part-time. 50% of the workers have Belgian nationality. Recent studies show more than 60% employees are low-educated. The unemployment rates for low-educated female workers are at the lowest point in the last 15 years. They have been decreasing steadily since 2004 (with a hiccup in 2008 when the worldwide financial crisis caused a major loss of jobs).</p> <p>Most recently a study conducted by Professor Friedrich Schneider from the University of Linz in Austria and Bernhard Boockmann of the German think tank IAW showed that undeclared work in Belgium had fallen by a quarter over the last 15 years. Service vouchers are pointed out as one of the main causes of this reduction.</p> <p>The demand for domestic services is increasing every year. Growing senescence and the struggle of second-earners trying to find solutions to maintain or reach a level-headed work-life balance are the main reasons why the demand is hard to keep up with.</p> |
| Innovative aspects | <p>The innovation of the project lies in two aspects. It offers a combined solution for 3 problems: unemployment among low-educated females, the struggle for a better-balanced work-life ratio, and the high levels of undeclared work in the domestic environment. Apart from this, it is also a unique private-public cooperation in which forces were joined to achieve the objectives. For example, this was even taken a step further last year in the cooperation put in place between Dienstenaanhuis (part of Group Daenens) and the local authority of Edegem, in which Dienstenaanhuis meets all demands for domestic aid for the local government controlled care agency.</p> |
| Sustainability | <p>Friends and opponents of service vouchers agree the system works and meets the goals set at the start. Despite this, there is a debate about the cost of meeting these goals. The system is primarily government-funded and therefore under pressure because of its high cost.</p> <p>However, if you take into account the direct gains to the system (lower unemployment benefit spending and increased tax and social insurance contributions by the employees) 50% of the cost is recouped. If you take into account the indirect gains (employment of staff workers, financial empowerment of the workers resulting in increasing economic participation, enabling second-earners to maintain full-time employment, preventing residential care for elderly people etc.) the real cost is significantly lower than the projections made by critics of the system.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there are recommendations that can help to find a compromise to keep the system sustainable, such as for example an income-dependent price for users to reduce the government funding.</p> |

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| Title | COORDINATION TO IMPROVE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE VICTIMS' LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION |
| Country | SPAIN |
| Objective | To empower victims of gender-based violence by giving them the skills they need to become competitive in the jobs market. |
| Project description | A network of centres in the Region of Murcia, Spain, supports female victims of gender-based violence. The regional Employment and Training Service gives similar assistance. It is a project to improve coordination between the centres and the regional PES and to ensure more personalised support and a single point of contact for victims. |
| Achievement and impact | <p>Around 3,356 women in Murcia have so far attended the Regional Network of Gender-Based Violence Intervention Centres (CAVI) and 1,761 protection orders were issued by Murcia's courts in 2016. At the same time, the Regional Employment and Training Service (SEF) reported female unemployment at almost 30%, while the rate for men was 20%.</p> <p>With support from the ESF and the regional government of Murcia, CAVI and SEF joined forces to get this project under way.</p> <p>The women receive the necessary support and counselling when they enter the centres and are encouraged to seek economic independence from their partner by getting a job. Each woman is given a plan tailored to her specific circumstances in order to identify the approaches which best suit her individual needs.</p> <p>For many women, this will mean signing up to the SEF training programmes. Under this project, they are given priority access to the training and receive grants to cover child-care and transport while they attend the courses. The centres also help them to apply for unemployment benefits and manage other administrative procedures – to date 92% of women have benefited from this invaluable support.</p> |
| Innovative aspects | This project must be considered as a good example of cooperation between the private (CAVI centres) and public sectors, as well as among Public Employment Services and other stakeholders including employers. In our context such a partnership is already quite innovative. On top of that, the project also uses up-to-date methodologies, and takes into account the need to train personnel from both the CAVI centres and the PES, to address properly the particular needs and circumstances of women who have been victims of gender-based violence. |
| Sustainability | As of August 2017, total investment in the project was €5,610,000, with the ESF contributing €1,204,000 through the Murcia ESF Operational Programme in the 2014-2020 programming period. This would indicate that it should be sustainable once the ESF support ends. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Title | RESPIRE CARE FOR CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES |
| Country | POLAND |
| Objective | Develop and implement a model of a short break service to improve the quality of life of families caring for people with disabilities. To date, this form of support is still poorly addressed in Poland. |
| Project description | <p>This is a project with an innovative approach to supporting families with disabled members. The support is aimed at and provided specifically to the disabled people and their carers.</p> <p>135 people (disabled and carers) participate in the programme with the institutions concerned (foundations, associations, public social support institutions). At the beginning 9 of these 15 Institutions will test the solution developed. There will also be 9 coordinators and 45 assistants trained for the tasks.</p> <p>There are five stages in this project:</p> <p>Stage 1 – (2017) staff members and institutions involved (Polish project network) prepare to start their own short break programmes. The learning process includes a study visit to the UK, workshops, training for service coordinators, assistants and expert work. The Polish network then elaborates and adapts its own tools and guidelines for the programme.</p> <p>Stage 2 – (2018) is about testing the effectiveness of the programme over a 12-month period. The clients' needs are assessed and individually tailored services are delivered to the main carers and persons concerned.</p> <p>Stage 3 – (2019) an evaluation of this test period will be carried out.</p> <p>Stage 4 – the final product will be elaborated and incorporated into the Polish project network.</p> <p>Stage 5 – final recommendations.</p> |
| Achievement and impact | <p>Project work is still in progress. The first stage was recently completed, during which the following activities were performed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops • study visit to UK • expert work • tools (needs assessment forms, training programs, evaluation and research forms were elaborated) • 9 short break programmes were planned and prepared for implementation (clients were recruited and assessed, and staff trained). |
| Innovative aspects | <p>In the Polish context this is a highly innovative project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solutions and tools – there are very few good practices and standards regarding short break / respite care services. The project is in fact a true pioneer project because there was none before developing a complex approach to short break as a service enhancing the work-life balance of people providing care to their disabled relatives. 2. Target group – the Polish support system puts emphasis on the needs of persons with disabilities, however their carers do not have access to services which could balance their lives and prevent burn-out, so they could be better carers in the long term, as well as active citizens and employees. 3. The concept of short breaks and the rights of carers of persons with disabilities to work-life balance is new and is highlighted for the first time directly through the project's activities. |
| Sustainability | Short break services can be financed to a certain extent by the institutions implementing the project in a long term perspective. However, in order to make short break services accessible to carers all around Poland and ensure a sustainable development of those services, new legislation will be necessary. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Title | FAMILY AUDIT |
| Country | ITALY |
| Objective | <p>The primary objective of the Family Audit is to promote and support a favourable business climate and the well-being of workers by introducing measures that both respond to the needs of employees to reconcile family and work, and offer adequate solutions to companies.</p> <p>The purpose is, through internal surveys, to activate or improve companies' commitment to sound human resource management and to adapt their organisational processes according to the needs of work-life balance of their workers.</p> |
| Project description | <p>The Family Audit was initiated in 2008 by the Italian Province of Trento through its Agency for Family, Birth and Youth Policies. The regional project commenced in 2012 and has been followed by a national trial.</p> <p>The Family Audit is based on a well-developed methodology. A working group is set up with the organisation, which is advised by an external consultant. 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).</p> |
| Achievement and impact | <p>The implementation is monitored by an external evaluator.</p> <p>So far⁸¹ 111 organisations have been involved in the process (44 public and 67 private), and 88 have been awarded the Family Audit Certificate, benefiting 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.</p> <p>The entire family audit process is monitored for a relatively long period of time. A study of the impact of work-life balance plans on a sample of 18 organisations showed the tangible benefits of carrying out family audits; another study showed the positive impact of reconciling work and family life within the organisation and across the region. The two most notable benefits are better employee wellbeing and increased productivity. Family audit certification also benefits companies by opening up access to tenders for public contracts and is a tool for organisational improvement.</p> <p>The main successes of the measure are that family audit certification benefits employees – both men and women – as well as organisations. The two most notable benefits are better employee wellbeing and increased productivity. Family audit certification also benefits companies by opening up access to tenders for public contracts and is a tool for organisational improvement.</p> |
| Innovative aspects | <p>The family audit initiative has a number of innovative aspects: it introduces family-friendly measures in line with the needs and expectations of employees and thus represents a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach; the work-life balance plan and its continuous monitoring stimulate quick changes within organisations; and a common information platform makes the data available in open-source format</p> |
| Sustainability | <p>The organisation bears the cost of the FA certification process which are calibrated according to the size class of the company or organisation. These costs can be partly reduced if you take part in specific calls or take advantage – where possible – of other facilities set up by local public administrations such as regions, provinces or municipalities.</p> <p>The certification process lasts three years and can be reiterated for another three, in the defined maintenance phase. Subsequently, the company can continue in two-year periods in the so-called consolidation phase.</p> |

⁸¹ According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) fiche on Family Audit access – <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/italy/productivity-and-wellbeing-through-family-audit>



ANNEX 3: RECOMMENDATION NOTES

TRENTO MEETING 8 MARCH 2018

Listed by workshop

Which issues should be prioritised in the next programming period regarding the reconciliation of work and family life?

1. Supporting education and training towards a cultural change (from schools since the beginning) and for workers.
Overcome stereotypes
Guidance measures to support the career assessment and entering of young people into the labour market to be done for all jobs and not only for “supposed male or female jobs”. (e.g. white jobs, care, etc.)
Training for men and women to re-enter the labour market after a break
Sharing good practices
2. Digitisation: space and working time; tool for work organisation (organisation of shifts); bottom-up approach
Services: flexible approach; available for non-working people and trainees
Work with “in-groups”/ managers: how to convince, implement WLB. Old approach (presence) against new based on trust (and respect)
Education at schools on stereotypes
3. ESF to look in particular at vulnerable men and women (poverty) who work part-time only
Innovative approach to family policies; think out of the box
Capacity building (still)
Improve indicators to support policy actions/decisions
Company-level: awareness-raising training of CEOs
Talent approach (renaming): reframing the topic differently. Company level and innovative/holistic approach

What needs to be done at EU level to enable a more holistic approach to gender equality?

1. Introducing a specific/thematic programme to enhance (again) gender mainstreaming (not to be considered any more as a horizontal topic as this was a failure – not monitored). Indicator at programme level to be able to evaluate the results
Directives should be adapted
Promote the social dialogue
2. LGBT persons benefiting from current/future initiatives
Support single parents on the labour-market: caring services
Social policies including gender equality at the core of (social pillar) policies
Dedicated axis for gender equality in the OP
Education system at EU wide to be redesigned to cope with new challenges including GE
Systematic recommendation to MS on GE during the semester process
3. Earmarked money for specific issues
Sustainable EU (money) instead on National money on gender mainstreaming and equality
Make work pay, change the political (tax) system, give incentives

What policy frameworks are required to enable practices at local level?

1. Avoid one-off measures that disappear; build a good framework to implement practices at local level
Integrate benefits, individual rights and services together
Promote capacity building
2. MAs should organise calls targeting schools/education system
Go beyond raising awareness; take actions, e.g. ICT sector and care sector
Innovative calls for “presence demanding jobs” to be combine with WLB projects



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Technical dossiers online at <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/library>:

0. TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION in the ESF 2014-2020 – An introductory guide – November 2015

This guide describes the Common Framework for transnationality in the ESF in the 2014-2020 period, including the common themes, calls for proposals, thematic networks, and how the ESF can contribute to Macro-Regional Strategies. It concludes with a list of National Contact Points.

1. THEMATIC NETWORKING – A guide for participants – April 2016

This user guide to the nine thematic networks that support transnational co-operation in the ESF sets out the stakeholders involved, and suggests principles and tools for animating their interaction.

2. ESF TRANSNATIONAL CALLS – Writing and managing calls for proposals – February 2017

A step-by-step guide to designing transnational calls for proposals in the ESF, from added value, institutional capacity and priorities, through design, partner search and the TCA, to assessment.

3. INTEGRATED SERVICES – Early lessons from transnational work in the European Social Fund – October 2017

Drawing on evidence from the employment, inclusion, youth employment, governance and partnership thematic networks, this dossier presents the theoretical and practical arguments for service integration.

4. CO-PRODUCTION – Enhancing the role of citizens in governance and service delivery – May 2018

This dossier articulates the various 'co-trends' and shows how they are being applied in inclusion, migrant integration, social enterprise, community development and social innovation.

5. SYSTEMS THINKING for European Structural and Investment Funds management – May 2018

This handbook explains how to apply the Vanguard Method to improve service quality in managing European funds.

6. Tackling Long-Term Unemployment through RISK PROFILING AND OUTREACH – May 2018

This discussion paper from the Employment Thematic Network reviews approaches to risk profiling and outreach, summarises their benefits and challenges, and gives case examples.

7. REVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT ON PARTNERSHIP (ECCP) – Thematic Network on Partnership – May 2018

The main aims of the review were to assess the usefulness of the ECCP, learn more about the challenges encountered in its implementation, and develop recommendations to embed the partnership principle into the next European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programming period.

8. FEMALE (UN)EMPLOYMENT AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE – November 2018

This paper examines gender equality issues in employment (including segregation, the pay gap, entrepreneurship and care responsibilities), describes ESF projects which address it, and concludes with the ESF Employment Thematic Network's recommendations.

9. Addressing youth unemployment through outreach, activation and service integration – November 2018

This dossier consolidates the three sharing papers published by the Youth Employment Thematic Network on outreach, activation and service integration. It features studies of Ohjaamo in Helsinki, Rubikon Centrum in Prague, So Stay in Gdańsk and MRC Pathways in Glasgow.

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