

MORE ACTION FOR MORE GENDER EQUALITY!

Implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy from a Gender Equality perspective
Country-specific Recommendations from the European Women's Lobby 2013

April 2013

1. Introduction

For the past two years, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) has been closely monitoring and trying to engage in the whole Europe 2020 Strategy. Equality between women and men, in all areas of life including in employment, is key to democracy, social well-being and a condition for growth and recovery. The **absence of an overarching objective** regarding equality between women and men is very problematic as no **guidance, indicators** and **benchmarks** can be set to assess neither how other policy measures are impacting on gender equality nor how gender equality itself as a societal objective is advancing. The EU headline employment target of 75% for both women and men ignores the fact that women and men are not at the same starting point on the labour market, that the situation of women is not homogeneous and that other factors such as race, age, and ability/disability all intersect with sex and determine access to work, training, education, resources, decision-making and general participation in all areas of life. The 75% employment target also needs to be clarified to ensure equality of quality full time equivalent jobs to avoid women becoming (or remaining) *de facto* 'second earners'.

Achieving the employment target of 75% for women and men will not be possible without **acknowledging and addressing the obstacles that prevent all women from fully participating on an equal footing with men**. Such obstacles include:

- Women's higher take-up rate of **caring responsibilities**,
- Absence of real, paid, and effectively **maternity, paternity** and shared **parental leave** measures, including **effective protection for women returning after child birth**,
- Gender segregated labour-markets in which the sectors where women work are undervalued, characterised by **flexible and part-time working patterns**,
- Lower levels of **pay** and genuine barriers to the economic independence of women throughout their lives.
- **Limited career perspectives** and **gender stereotypes** which impact on career choices of women and men as well as discrimination on the labour-market

The absence of an overarching **objective** regarding equality between women and men is a step back and particularly worrying in times of crisis. To complement specific measures on women's employment, **gender mainstreaming** of the country-specific-recommendations (**CSRs**) is vital to ascertain the impact on women and men and make sure they promote gender equality, this requires:

- **gender budgeting**,
- **gender disaggregated data** and
- **gender impact assessments**.

Economic governance is translating into an emphasis on reducing public deficits and resulting in austerity. The CSRs mirror how women are perceived in society: primarily as 'second earners', with a focus on how to increase the "inactive" working age population, of which, women form two thirds of the 65 million classified as such. This type of approach fails to consider the value and necessity of **care**, the majority of which is unpaid, and mostly carried out by women to the detriment of their own economic independence. Care is a societal issue requiring a collective responsibility for which the development of a **holistic life-cycle care economy** is urgent to enable both women and men to be equal earners and equal carers throughout their lives.

Gender equality is a **transversal issue**, not to be side-lined into an economic instrument alone.

2. Background to this report – issues for CSRs in 2013

This report compiles the **EWL's members assessment of the CSRs** produced for their country in 2012 and **proposals for more gender equality sensitive CSRs in 2013**. This is provided for the following countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.¹ The detailed analysis of some of these members is annexed to this report.

There are **common concerns** to all countries which can be summarised as follows:

I. Care

The issue of **care** is mentioned by all, including child-care, out-of-school-hours care, care for the elderly and dependent and vulnerable persons. The equal sharing of care between women and men necessitates closer monitoring and CSRs that address women and men's care responsibilities including monitoring of the transposition and implementation of the **Parental Leave Directive**², and recommendations to ensure that barriers are removed with regards to the take-up rate of men. The **costs of care**, particularly child-care are increasing, mirroring a decrease in public spending in this area, creating insufficient childcare provision across the board. Despite the CSRs issued by the Commission in 2012 (and in 2011) with regards to strengthening in particular child-care facilities, the assessment of the EWL members reveal that has not happened in a systematic way. Implementation of the **Barcelona childcare targets**³, adopted in 2002, requires close monitoring through the European semester process and should be reflected in the CSRs emphasising quality, affordability and accessibility. However, the EU must also go **'beyond Barcelona'** and address **quality care for the elderly**. In nineteen out of the 27 EU member states more than 50% of the elderly receive informal or no care.⁴

¹ Further recommendations are provided by Denmark, Estonia, Poland and Lithuania produced in 2012 but remain relevant for the CSRs 2013

² Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC

³ "Member States should remove disincentives for female labour force participation and strive, in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age"

⁴ EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality)

The issue of **care workers**, who are also a majority of women, and in particular in-home day care providers, their working conditions and pay, has also been highlighted by Germany and the United Kingdom. It is crucial that care provision does not translate into in-work-poverty of care workers and this should be reflected in the CSRs 2013 by ensuring that the pay and conditions of care workers are part of collective bargaining practices in the Member States.

CSRs that call to protect vital **care services** from austerity measures are urgently required. Measures concerning parental leave and other statutory leave measures must be available to men to move towards an equal-earner / equal-carer model to avoid a return to traditional gender roles which would roll back progress achieved on gender equality.

II. Women's diversity

Recognising the **diversity of women** is crucial to ensuring that all women have an equal right and access to economic independence.

The EWL members point out that recommendations to **increase women's working age** have not been accompanied by measures to boost older women's employment rate, particularly in the period prior to official retirement age. This in turn means that many women in the 54-65 age category remain unemployed longer, unleashing a chain of negative consequences on their pension entitlements, further increasing the **gender pension gap**⁵ and expanding the group of older women at-risk of poverty. CSRs that call to align (or increase) women and men's pension age do not acknowledge the gender gaps in pensions. CSRs should address Member States on how they should make their pension systems more gender equal, by recommending the individualisation of pension rights. An **EU-indicator to measure the gender pension gap** is also necessary.

Reform of **welfare systems**, cuts in **child benefit** and **caps on benefits**, including **housing** (such as the *'bedroom tax'* in the United Kingdom) will all impact on women's risk of poverty and is contrary to addressing **child poverty**, which cannot be dissociated from women's poverty.

Members from Austria, France and Malta highlight a number of other issues relating to women's diversity. Barriers for **rural women** are also related to a **lack of public transport**. Removing barriers for **migrant women** requires the recognition of qualifications obtained in third countries, including the use of validation of acquired experience (VAE) and measures to support employment of disabled persons should be developed within a gender equality perspective. **Apprenticeship** and other skills-based programmes, which are not gender sensitive can potentially lead to **gender occupational segregation**.

⁵ In Germany, where an indicator for measuring the gender pension gap has already been developed, **women at the age of 65 receive an individual pension that is almost 60% lower than that of men of the same age.**
Federal ministry of Federal German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth - The Gender Pension Gap (2012)

III. Individualisation of rights: tax and social security

Individualisation of rights with regards to **social security** and **tax policies** includes a recommendation from France for an **overhaul of the tax system** to ensure a proportionate and fair distribution of income regardless of civil status. A similar recommendation is made by the Luxembourg Women's Council. Individualised taxation will also help to address fiscal disincentives which prevent 'second earners' (mainly women) from participating in the labour-market. Only one Member State, namely Germany, received an explicit recommendation to shift from joint taxation to individualised taxation in 2011.

IV. Women's entrepreneurship

While entrepreneurship should not be seen as a replacement for the creation of quality jobs, some members point out that women's entrepreneurship is stalled particularly with regards to access to credit. In the current financial crisis, banks are reluctant to lend and this in turn stagnates entrepreneurship globally and women's entrepreneurship in particular. Member States have a role to play in facilitating guarantees for obtaining credit and for facilitating micro-credits particularly as accessing credit has always been a persistent barrier to the development of women's entrepreneurship. The implementation of EU Directive⁶ on equal treatment between women and men engaged in a self-employed activity should be closely monitored particularly with regards to the provision that allows for **positive action measures**⁷ to promote entrepreneurship among women.

V. The gender pay gap

The **gender pay gap** exists in all Member States yet only one, namely Austria, was issued a recommendation to address this. However, declining gaps should not be understood as a real progress in social justice, but an indication of a decline in men's wages against which the gender pay gap is measured. Recent material produced by the European Commission provides information on strategies to close the gender pay gap at national level which, together with a recommendation to each Member State to reduce by **five percentage point target**, should be streamlined through the European semester process to **reduce the gender pay gap by 2020**. Future European guidance on **gender neutral classification and evaluation systems** should also be monitored. Reducing the gender pay gap will have a long term impact on reducing the gender pension gap.

VI. Stakeholder involvement

EWL Members were asked if they were invited to a **consultation** process prior to the drafting of the National Reform Programmes (NRP); only one EWL member, namely Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations, was invited to a consultation on the NRP 2013. However, no feedback

⁶ Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between women and men engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC, 7 July 2010, Official Journal of the European Union, L 180/1, 15.7.2010

⁷ Ibid, Article 5, Positive action

was provided following the meeting, making it difficult to ascertain whether the issues raised have been taken into account in the NRP. Overall, consultation with civil society (including women's NGOs) needs to be strengthened and meaningful, providing feedback and information on final decisions as well as the possibility of annexing civil society contributions to the National Reform Programmes.

VII. Silencing women's voices?

Finally, the EWL is very concerned as **funding** to women's NGOs and public gender equality institutions is being severely cut in several countries and will have in negative long term consequences. The erosion of public gender equality machinery risks jeopardising progress made in the last decades, by eliminating the institutional backing and tools for implementing gender equality policies and legislation. Cuts to the funding of women's NGOs make women's voices even less heard in society and force NGOs providing vital services to women to reduce their services, at a time when these voices and services are needed more than ever.

VIII. Checklist: Recommendations for the CSRs 2013 to strengthen gender equality in the EU

- ✓ Protect vital services from austerity measures. **Childcare, care services for dependent and elderly persons** should be considered as vital services. Monitor the implementation of the Barcelona targets (2002) on childcare, paying particular attention to quality, affordability and accessibility. Go '**beyond Barcelona**' and address **quality care for the elderly**. Cuts in care services result in transferring these to families, with women taking the main responsibility for care. Privatisation of care services, particularly child care, is resulting in exorbitant costs and an effective barrier to women's equal participation on the labour-market. CSRs should be issued to all Member States and monitored every year. Monitor the implementation of the Parental Leave Directive and the barriers to the take-up-rate of men.
- ✓ Recognise the **diversity of women** and ensure that CSRs address recommendations to ensure effective equality of *inter alia* older women, women in rural areas, women with disabilities, migrant women.
- ✓ Recognise that **young women** face particular barriers accessing the labour-market notably, access to apprenticeships and skills programmes that are gender biased and reinforce occupational gender segregation; young women are perceived as potential pregnant workers; CSRs should call on Member States to adopt **a strong revised maternity leave directive** to protect young women prior to, during leave and on return to work after child birth.
- ✓ Recognise that women in every age group are more likely to live in **poverty** than men. Single mothers, older women and migrant women are particularly vulnerable and should be reflected in the CSRs, notably with regards to *inter alia* fuel poverty and housing.



- ✓ **Monitor** the implementation of the EU Directive⁸ on equal treatment between women and men engaged in a self-employed activity which was due to be transposed by August 2012 and in particular implementation of **positive action measures**⁹ to promote **entrepreneurship initiatives among women**.
- ✓ Recommend to all Member States to reduce the **gender pay gap by five percentage point target** with the aim of eliminating the gap by 2020. Monitor the implementation of European guidance on **gender neutral classification and evaluation systems**.
- ✓ Strengthen **consultation** with civil society, including women's organisations, prior to the drafting of National Reform Programmes, National Stability and Convergence Programmes and assessment in the follow-up to the CSRs. Ensure **meaningful consultation**, providing feedback and information of the whole process.
- ✓ Safeguard the **effective implementation** of women's rights and gender equality by ensuring that public mechanisms are fully effective and ensure that women's NGOs are **funded** to enable them to play their role in voicing women's concerns, informing them of their rights and means of redress, as well as providing vital services to women throughout the EU.
- ✓ Strengthen **gender equality in the overall EU2020 strategy** and processes, including in the European semester. Gender equality is a transversal issue that requires a **dual strategy which includes: specific measures and gender mainstreaming**.

Gender mainstreaming includes: systematic **updated gender desegregated data, gender budgeting and gender impact assessments**, including mechanisms to mitigate and correct potential and real gender inequalities in all policies, including economic policies.

⁸ See footnote 6

⁹ See footnote 7 (Positive actions)

Country-specific Recommendations from the European Women's Lobby members 2013

Austria

1. Remove barriers to women's access to the labour-market by improving transport infrastructure in rural areas and provide additional programmes for early career counselling as well as opportunities for retraining. Follow up and monitor the progress of existing programmes aimed at enhancing the employability of older workers with clearly stated effects of planned measures for women and men respectively. Ensure a transparent labour market and take steps to reduce the 'pink collar ghetto' jobs.
2. Provide secure and continuous social services. Invest in care services and availability of day care, child care and holiday programmes. Provide incentives for equal sharing of care responsibilities between partners; this includes working towards eliminating gender stereotypes.
3. Restructure the public education system so that schools are not only operational in the morning hours.
4. Support European Legislation for women Quotas on Company Boards and where the lists should be in the zip system: woman-man-woman-man

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Czech Republic

1. Set a legislative framework for childcare facilities for children under 3 years and provide sufficient availability of affordable and quality care facilities for children and other dependent family members. Facilitate the procedure of establishing company kindergartens and nurseries.
2. Implement binding quotas for women on corporate boards (30 % in 2016, 40 % in 2020). Support alternative forms of work (flexible, part-time, home-work, co-work etc.) e.g. tax benefits for employers who provide these and reconsider the increase of the reduced VAT rate.
3. Adopt legislation that ensures the payment of alimony by the state
4. Decrease the gender pay gap and gender pension gap (eliminate vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market) and reform the pension system to eliminate its negative impact on women.
5. Reconsider the increase of the reduced VAT rate, which particularly impacts many essential goods such as baby nappies, medicines and food.

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Denmark

1. Full gender equality should be taken into account. It would make a significant contribution to solving the key economic challenges Denmark is facing by enhancing growth prospects and public finances¹⁰. On the whole, the inclusion and a further concretisation of several of the government's 2015 targets for gender equality in the reform programme could help solve many of Denmark's future challenges.
2. The government should use the National Reform Programme to promote Denmark's compliance with EU Treaty provisions on equality between women and men and non-discrimination (article 3 and 5). This could be done amidst the following actions:
 - Monitor and intervene in case of a gender bias in long-term unemployment.
 - Improve quality employment to meet the needs of women and men equally.
 - Apply gender budgeting in the design and implementation of the so-called fiscal consolidation measures to ensure that vital services such as childcare for female and male workers are safeguarded and that they meet the different needs of female and male citizens. At the same time, recent public spending cuts should not limit the opportunities of families with children to be fully active in the labour market.
3. Increase the wage for women to a greater extent than for men – this will reduce the gap in women's and men's lifetime earnings, while competitiveness against other countries can be sustained.
4. Strengthen the gender perspective in the early stages of the education system (kindergarten and primary school), for instance by using role models, to actively break stereotypes of female and male jobs (see the national goals for education). Such measures will contribute to combating labour market segregation by increasing flexibility and diversity in employment.
5. Actively engage a more equal gender-balanced use of maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, child's first sick day, etc. in order not to lose the large and well-educated female potential of women with small children.

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¹⁰ The Ministry of Finance presented a calculation in December 2010 showing that full gender equality (i.e. same rate of employment, the same rate of income transfers, working hours and wages and drain on public services) can lead to an employment contribution of 165,000 people and a strengthening of public finances at 6 ½ per cent of GDP. Also the report "Gender equality, Economic growth and employment" by the Swedish gender ministry in 2009, indicates a high growth potential by working towards full gender equality.



Estonia

1. Elaborate a long-term well-resourced national strategy to reduce the gender segregation of the labour market and the gender pay gap; implement the strategy, monitor and report on progress made, regularly review the strategy, design programmes and measures to overcome gender stereotyping at schools; gender sensitise teacher training, including revision of curriculum content, educational materials and teaching approaches at all levels of education.
2. Design programmes and measures to diversify options for flexible working arrangements that help create work-life balance for both women and men.
3. Sensitise employers to the issue of reconciliation of professional and private life.
4. Adapt social security schemes and the tax system to the increased diversity in working patterns and facilitate a more prompt return of young mothers to the labour market after the fully paid parental leave (currently 18 months).
5. Design positive measures to reduce the number of women facing the risk of poverty; provide measures for lone-parent families which predominantly concerns women.
6. Address domestic violence against women as a human right violation and also as a barrier to work and full employment, provide support to women victims of violence to seek and remain in employment.

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France

1. **Better sharing of family responsibilities**, to ensure **equal sharing of parental leave**. The interest of young fathers in the care and education of their children is a social movement well underway in France; however, it must be confirmed by the **reform of parental leave** to be taken equally by both parents.
2. Apply a **lifecycle** policy approach, to allow a true balance between the professional, personal and social responsibilities and commitments. Significant support to the creation of structures dedicated to early **childhood** and innovative measures for the care of **vulnerable people** and continued funding is required.
3. Female entrepreneurship is a lever in the crisis and therefore it is recommended:
 - Fight against gender stereotyping in the choice of policy and the exercise of trades. Require diversity in the orientation and the exercise of trades.
 - Develop the professional qualifications of women through access to scientific higher education, **mobilizing the validation of acquired experience (VAE)** and secure career paths.
 - Provide better **access to banking loans**.



4. Address the rights of **migrant women in the labour market**: improving the **systems of diploma equivalencies** and also providing French language classes.
5. **Individualise income tax**, while maintaining the consideration of family responsibilities, so that the tax of each person, regardless of their marital status is fair and proportional to their salary. This recommendation requires an overhaul of the French tax system.
6. Liberalization advocated in the fields of energy distribution and transport is of concern. Fuel poverty affects women pensioners, single women and single parent families.

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Germany

1. Address the more **general obstacles** for women as regards **access to the employment market on all levels and in all spheres** (*the debate about women on boards addresses an important issue but one that is still inapplicable to most women who struggle with more general obstacles.*
2. Address the issue of conditions required to access life work achievement **pensions** (Lebensleitungsrente) that cannot be met by many women.
3. Address the ramifications of the **child care subsidy** on perpetuating traditional male dominant family model and its counter-productive effect on women's employment rate.
4. A one percentage decrease (from 23% to 22%) in the gender pay gap is not really an improvement and needs to be addressed.

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Ireland

1. Carry out a Gender Impact Assessment of all measures introduced by Budget 2013 and Gender-proof all proposals to be considered in Budget 2014
2. Maintain the universal element of child benefit as the majority element and at current rate.
3. Incrementally introduce a model of childcare that would combine elements of high quality, universally available, affordable and joined-up early childhood care and education and afterschool care, with generous parental leave, at least a portion of which would be paid. In the immediate term: introduce a second universal free pre-school year and introduce a publicly subsidized system of out of school hour's care using existing school infrastructure.
4. Adopt a gender equality strategy within Intreo, SOLAS and National Employment and Entitlements Services that will introduce innovative welfare to work strategies which have specific gender dimension and account for women's work patterns.

5. Provide supports to women, particularly women with care responsibilities to enable them to access the full range of employment, education and training options.

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Lithuania

1. Apply special measures to support women's entrepreneurship and provide support for women's businesses.
2. Apply measures for promoting women's leadership, including women on boards of the biggest companies.
3. Support projects including awareness-raising and training in order to promote women in male dominated sectors of the economy and men in female dominated areas.
4. Strengthen opportunities to reconcile work and family life, first of all by accessible and qualitative child care facilities and facilities for dependant family members (elderly and disabled).
5. Introduce measures to prevent and combat the feminisation of poverty by improving working conditions and pay both in part time work and also in sectors where women are overrepresented.

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Luxembourg

1. Provide greater support to the development of childcare facilities both for children and for other dependents. Jobs created in the care sector should meet the criteria of equality between women and men, that is to say, stable and quality jobs.
2. With regards to equal pay, the CNFL supports the government's proposal to encourage companies to ensure "an obligation of outcomes" with regards to pay. This recommendation is a reminder of the recommendation of 28 February 2003 that called for the mandatory establishment of a plan of action on equality between women and men in all measures. The CNFL is in favour of maintaining positive actions and welcomes the extension to the public sector.
3. Provide gender disaggregated key employment data, essential to design effective policies and measures. Strengthen the Women's Labour Committee (*Comité du Travail Féminin – CTF*) by providing it with a permanent secretariat.
4. Calls for the individualisation of the social security system with the obligation for all adults to be covered.

5. Calls for an individualised system of taxation for spouses and partners.

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Malta

1. Ensure the **long-term sustainability** of the **pension system**, comprising an increase in the effective retirement age, including through a significant acceleration of the progressive increase in the statutory retirement age compared to current legislation and through a **clear** link between the statutory retirement age and life expectancy, and measures to encourage private pension savings.
2. Take measures to increase the participation of older workers in the labour force and discourage the use of early retirement schemes. The sustainability of the **pension system** needs to be undertaken from a gender perspective because of the high number of women depending on their partner's retirement pension, even when deceased, due to the traditional role of women as home carers.
3. Reduce the high rate of **early school leaving**. Pursue policy efforts in the education system to match the skills required by the labour market.
4. Enhance the provision and affordability of more **childcare** and out-of-school centres, with the aim of reducing the gender employment gap. Extend operational hours of public childcare centres from 16.00hours to that required by working parents. Enact legislation to regulate child care services/centres. Introduce attractive incentives for employers to provide childcare services for their employees. Extend before and after-school programmes providing extra-curricular activities, for all children in all localities; there are currently too few and not effective enough to enable women with young children to remain in the labour market. Provide affordable childcare services of good quality including an increase in subsidies to parents particularly to those with low income and to single mothers
5. Promote flexible working hours, such as tele-working and timetable reductions in the labour market with justification to be given when such requests are refused.
6. Extend the current 3 months (unpaid) parental leave in the private sector to 6 months.
7. Increase maternity leave from 16 to 20 weeks with the State shouldering financial costs and introduce a two weeks paid paternity leave on a 'use or lose' principle.
8. Address the gender pay gap that according to the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality report stands at 23%. Ensure that publicity campaigns to address gender equality are better focused to achieve declared objectives. Implement a job classification system that would study the gender pay gap that urgently needs to be put on the national agenda.
9. Introduce temporary special measures to address the low (3%) percentage of women on boards.

10. Gender mainstream projects offering employment support to persons with disabilities in order to address the low rate of women with disabilities in the labour market.

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Netherlands

1. More attention is needed for inclusiveness in the drafting of the National Reform Programmes and Stability Programmes.
2. On growth and **jobs strategies**: it is strongly advised to use a **gender perspective** to achieve a clear view of effects on men and women.
3. Apply a "**Gender impact analysis** in developing the fiscal measures to **promote growth** and employment so as to examine the effects of planned measures for men and women before they enter into effect.
4. Apply a **gender budget analysis** to all (existing and new) policy, to unearth the extent to which policies effectively and efficiently are achieving objectives of gender equality and clearly state the impact of envisaged measures on women and men.
This also makes it easier to design and regulate subsequent policies and correct any adverse effects. It is also recommended **to monitor and publicly report** annually on the impact of proposed changes on women and men. This also applies to vulnerable low-skilled young people, migrants and returnees to the workforce.
5. **On childcare**: in the case of cuts and / or spending cuts it is strongly advised to first map out the effects of planned measures for men and women. This also applies to vulnerable groups such as low-skilled youth and school drop outs, migrants and the elderly.
6. **On access to Credit**: we urgently advise that the rules surrounding lending which have different effects for women and men are clear, and that clear measures are taken to correct these negative effects.
7. **On elevating the retirement age**: the position of women and men should be clearly examined. Furthermore, if one wishes to work longer than the retirement age, then access for women and men to the labor market needs to be well regulated, ie; even in old age, men and women should be able to find quality paid work.
8. On cuts to **healthcare**: the effects for women and men should be clearly mapped. Special attention needs to be given to not only medical practice, but increasingly in terms of care of relatives (women are especially concerned) and carers (also especially women). A shift should not result in terms of professional to voluntary level. Urgently recommend that the different effects on women and men are thoroughly examined before making such cuts.

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Poland

1. Take specific measures to combat poverty among older women by increasing female labour market participation and paying attention to the gender dimension when reforming the pension system. The new pension law has been introduced on the 1st of January 2013 (the Act establishing the new law was approved in 2012 - May, 11). It will influence the situation of women born after 1953 as they will have to work longer - those born in 1973 until 67 years of age. The law will be introduced gradually. As older women are most likely to be unemployed and given that 84 % of unemployed people in Poland do not receive any financial support from the budget - it could mean an even worse situation for women.
2. Remove obstacles for female and male entrepreneurs setting up businesses.
3. Enhance the efficient use of Structural Funds by simplifying rules and reducing bureaucracy and increasing transparency in programming and implementing EU funded programmes.

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Sweden

1. Gender equality should be promoted in the implementation of the EU2020. As Sweden is often considered as a role model for other countries as regards gender, Sweden should actively promote gender, which is also in accordance with the gender pact.
2. Gender mainstreaming should be more visible in the 2013 National Reform Programme. Concrete measures to eliminate discrimination based on sex and to promote gender equality in all areas covered by the programme should be taken, in accordance with the Treaty.
3. Reintroduce wage surveys (pay audits) every year in work places with more than 10 employees.
4. Reintroduce a "Gender equality ombudsman", the Gender equality law and create a separate Gender Equality authority in accordance with the gender political survey from 2005.
5. Individualise the parental leave provisions in order to make it possible for women and men to share equally family responsibilities.
6. Right to full time work with possibility to reduce working hours should be fixed by law. This is important especially in female dominated sectors.

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United Kingdom

1. Include an equality statement when setting out the budget for 2013/14 and beyond, identifying the differential impact of the budget on women and men, and describing any policy changes made to mitigate the negative impacts on women and men. This will include modelling the impact of 'growth-enhancing expenditure' on women and men's participation in the labour market.
2. Gender-impact assess all recommendations, the welfare reforms and the impact of the UK budgetary cuts both directly and indirectly on women. Commit to monitor the impact of said changes and report annually on the impact on women specifically.
3. Address the gendered barriers to women's full labour market participation, and particularly the labour market participation of single parents. Provide sufficient and good-quality childcare, using a funding model that does not displace out-of-work poverty by increasing the in-work poverty of childcare workers.
4. Improve the employability of young people. Ensure that intermediate skills programmes operating in different countries within the UK aiming to improve the skills of young people, like the Modern Apprenticeship programmes, are militating against gendered occupational segregation, and not entrenching it at a cost to the public purse.
5. Youth unemployment continues to increase faster than for other age groups. The specific programme referenced in the recommendations, the 'Youth Contract,' is only operational in England. Other interventions, and spending programmes, exist in the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. Modern apprenticeships, which are referenced in the recommendations text, and other training programmes, operate in different ways across the four nations of the UK. In all four nations, occupational segregation persists in training programmes.
6. Step up measures to facilitate the labour market integration of people from jobless households. Ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty. Fully implement measures aiming to facilitate access to childcare services.
7. Increase housing supply and alleviate problems of affordability and the need for state subsidisation of housing. Prevent excessive volatility and distortions in the housing market.
8. Investigate the impact of the fiscal measures on the third sector and publically report on and address in order to ensure on-going support for organisations supporting women.
9. Ensure that state-supported non-bank financing for SMEs provides accessible capital to women-owned businesses, and that female entrepreneurs are adequately supported by business support services.
10. Ensure equality of the fiscal measures to support the development of business. Assess the support given to SMEs in relation to gender -i.e. ownership and employment by and of women/men be assessed to ensure fair distribution of support.

Wales:

11. Regarding research and development, increase Wales' share of Research Council's funds from 3.3% to 5%.
12. Continue funding for the implementation of the Arbed programme.
13. Ensure access to Higher Education for all by providing accessible University Fees.
14. Ensure that the Welsh Government's forthcoming Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill covers ALL forms of violence against women and girls, and is rooted in a gender-based human rights perspective.

Northern Ireland:

15. Subject future NRPs to consultation and equality assessment.
16. When drafting the NRP, take account of the tools set out in the Gender Equality Strategy for establishing indicators for measuring success.
17. Set targets across the full spectrum of action on the impact of rebalancing the economy, including training measures, careers advice, parental leave, flexible working and pay audits
18. Include specific socially responsible initiatives across the public sector.
19. Put in place temporary measures to involve women in decision making, especially in economic policy.
20. Ensure that the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Public Sector Contracts is confirmed and maintained.
21. Works should be done by the Northern Ireland Executive to the goal of universal good quality, accessible and affordable childcare for children up to the age of fourteen. A childcare strategy should be brought forward for consultation as a matter of priority and it should include full participation in the labour market and child development as well as the eradication of child poverty as its targets.

Contact details: **UK Joint Committee on Women Ms. Elizabeth Law** :
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Annex

European Women's Lobby - Members original contributions/Alternative Country Specific Recommendations from:

UK Joint Committee on Women (United Kingdom)

Deutscher Frauenrat (Germany)

Coordination française du Lobby européen des femmes – La CLEF (France)

Czech Women's Lobby (Czech Republic)

Conseil National des Femmes du Luxembourg – CNFL (Luxembourg)

Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (Malta)

Nederlandse Vrouwenraad (The Netherlands)

National Women's Council of Ireland (Ireland)



UK Joint Committee on Women response to

European Women's Lobby consultation on 2012 NRP engagement

1.0 Background

UKJCW has been asked to respond to European Women's Lobby to provide retrospective comment on the engagement and outcome with the 2012 National Reform Programme, and to provide comment on the UK's engagement with NGOs around the 2013 National Reform Programme.

This paper answers the questions communicated by European Women's Lobby on 6 February 2013.

2.0 Answers to questions

Question 1: In your view, and on the basis of the proposals your organization submitted last year, have the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) addressed your assessment of the NRP and your subsequent proposals for recommendations?

No. Annex A summarises the recommendations that were included in UKJCW's submissions and which also appear in the CSRs. Of the six recommendations made by the Council, only one is even obliquely gendered. The theme of recommendation four is labour market integration of people from 'jobless households.' It recommends 'fully implement[ing] measures aimed at facilitating access to childcare services.' This, of course, is a gendered issue; women in the UK are disproportionately responsible for childcare, and lack of access to good quality, affordable childcare is a constraint on women's labour market participation.

Within the same recommendation is an exhortation to 'ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty.' This is tangentially related to the recommendation proposed by UKJCW, in that children's poverty is also women's poverty, but neither the recommendation, nor the analysis in the Council's paper, reflects this.

The broad range of recommendations, both process and policy, made by UKJCW are not reflected in either the Commission's recommendation to Council, nor Council's recommendations.

Question 2: On the basis of the CSRs issued by the Commission, is it possible for you to assess whether these were implemented, and what has been the impact on gender equality: in your

view has gendered equality been addressed, if so how, or have the CSRs had a negative impact on gender equality, and if so, how?

UKJCW does not wish to comment on all recommendations, and has no collective view of whether the UK has supported competition within the banking sector, or addressed pressures in transport and energy networks.

With regards to the specific recommendations, we would observe the following.

| Recommendation | Observations |
|---|--|
| 1. Ensure a timely correction of the excessive deficit in a sustainable manner[...] and prioritise growth-enhancing expenditure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKJCW does not believe that the UK's deficit is being reduced in a sustainable manner, with the majority of the impact of austerity measures impacting on women. • 'Growth-enhancing expenditure' is being translated into practice by the UK Government (and in devolved administrations) as capital expenditure. Spending on construction programmes disproportionately benefits male-dominated industries, and economic modelling that recommends it overlooks the benefits to communities and the local economy of spending on services, for example childcare services. |
| 2. Increase housing supply and alleviate problems of affordability and the need for state subsidisation of housing. [...] Prevent excessive volatility and distortions in the housing market. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been no significant programme of house building in 2012/13, and housing remains a significant concern, both with regards to affordability and quality, to communities across the UK. • In addition to its negative impacts on individuals and communities, some specific elements of welfare reform, including the so-called 'bedroom tax'¹¹ and cap on benefits payments¹², may <i>increase</i> the costs of state subsidies for housing, as they push people into short-term emergency accommodation. Women, including lone parents, are more likely to receive benefits. |

¹¹ The 'bedroom tax' is a withdrawal of benefits for each 'spare' bedroom that a recipient of housing benefit has. It has gendered implications, including for care, as a parent who is not the primary carer, and who has a bedroom set aside for the use of a visiting child, will be liable for benefits withdrawal. Avoiding the 'bedroom tax' and remaining in the same local area is impossible for many who will have their benefits withdrawn, as there is insufficient supply of housing with smaller numbers of bedrooms.

¹² There is a 'benefits cap' of £26,000 per household, including housing benefit, reflecting UK Government policy that those in receipt of benefits should not receive more than the average household wage. The cap for single people is £18,200. This is insufficient to afford housing in many areas of London, and some other areas across the UK.



| Recommendation | Observations |
|--|---|
| <p>3. Improve the employability of young people.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth unemployment continues to increase faster than for other age groups. The specific programme referenced in the recommendations, the 'Youth Contract,' is only operational in England. Other interventions, and spending programmes, exist in the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. • Modern apprenticeships, which are referenced in the recommendations text, and other training programmes, operate in different ways across the four nations of the UK. In all four nations, occupational segregation persists in training programmes. |
| <p>4. Step up measures to facilitate the labour market integration of people from jobless households. Ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty. Fully implement measures aiming to facilitate access to childcare services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of job-seekers to available jobs is approximately 4:1. There are significant patterns of underemployment across the UK, with many workers involuntarily working part-time. This echoes the long-term experience of women, who have been prevented from accessing full-time work because of a lack of good-quality, affordable childcare. • Welfare 'reforms' appear to be translating fairly directly into an increase in child poverty, as the incomes of poorer households reduce. The UK Government is consulting on changing the way that child poverty is measured, including measurement of whether children's parents' relationships are 'stable.' This has been criticised by poverty organisations, children's organisations, and UKJCW member organisations. • The UK Government has floated proposals to deregulate childcare in England, which have been criticised by the sector as being unlikely to reduce costs to parents, or increase quality. In Northern Ireland the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is consulting on a paper, <i>Towards a Childcare Strategy</i>. The Scottish Government will be slightly expanding statutory childcare provision as part of its forthcoming Children and Young People Bill. Northern Ireland? None of the developments in childcare are expected to reduce significantly the barriers to women's labour market |

| Recommendation | Observations |
|----------------|--|
| | participation presented by a lack of affordable, good quality childcare. |

The negative gendered impacts of implementation of the CSRs principally arise from the fact that the process of producing the CSRs, and the content of the CSRs, is not gendered. The differential impact on women of pursuing neoliberal economic policies is not considered, either at the framework level, or at individual policy level.

Question 3: What proposals would your organization wish to make for the Commission's CSRs in 2013 and how should these be formulated and argued?

Proposals that UKJCW would wish to make

1. Include an equality statement when setting out the budget for 2013/14 and beyond, identifying the differential impact of the budget on women and men, and describing any policy changes made to mitigate the negative impacts on women and men. This will include modelling the impact of 'growth-enhancing expenditure' on women and men's participation in the labour market.
2. Ensure that intermediate skills programmes operating in different countries within the UK aiming to improve the skills of young people, like the Modern Apprenticeship programmes, are militating against gendered occupational segregation, and not entrenching it at a cost to the public purse.
3. Address the gendered barriers to women's full labour market participation, and particularly the labour market participation of single parents. Provide sufficient and good-quality childcare, using a funding model that does not displace out-of-work poverty by increasing the in-work poverty of childcare workers.
4. Gender-impact assess all recommendations, the welfare reforms and the impact of the UK budgetary cuts both directly and indirectly on women. Commit to monitor the impact of said changes and report annually on the impact on women specifically.
5. Investigate the impact of the fiscal measures on the third sector and publically report on and address in order to ensure on-going support for organisations supporting women.
6. Ensure that state-supported non-bank financing for SMEs provides accessible capital to women-owned businesses, and that female entrepreneurs are adequately supported by business support services.
7. Ensure equality of the fiscal measures to support the development of business. Assess the support given to SMEs in relation to gender -i.e. ownership and employment by and of women/men be assessed to ensure fair distribution of support.

Wales:

8. Regarding research and development, increase Wales' share of Research Council's funds from 3.3% to 5%.

9. Continue funding for the implementation of the Arbed programme.
10. Ensure access to Higher Education for all by providing accessible University Fees.
11. Ensure that the Welsh Government's forthcoming Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill covers ALL forms of violence against women and girls, and is rooted in a gender-based human rights perspective.

Northern Ireland:

Assessment:

The NRP takes little account of persistent gender inequality or the impact of the policies proposed on women or gender equality. While this is in keeping with the Northern Ireland Executive's Economic Strategy, the Economic Strategy at least recognises the need for affordable childcare and that its absence is a barrier to work. A fully gendered approach will require the equal participation of women in decision making whether in politics, in public bodies or on boards as well as the use of tools like gender budgeting.

The commitments and steps taken in the Programme for Government for equality, including the requirement to consider social clauses in all public sector procurement, are notable. However current policy, including rebalancing the economy, has not been subject to a gendered analysis despite its potential impact on public sector employment, part time working and the gender pay gap.

The years between 2003 and 2009 saw a year on year decrease in childcare places in Northern Ireland while provision in the rest of the UK has increased. Both the policy on and the delivery of childcare are fractured. For Northern Ireland, childcare appears in the NRP solely as a social inclusion matter though it is recognised as a major barrier to employment.

Recommendations:

- Put in place temporary measures to involve women in decision making, especially in economic policy.
- Subject future NRPs to consultation and equality assessment.
- When drafting the NRP, take account of the tools set out in the Gender Equality Strategy for establishing indicators for measuring success.
- Set targets across the full spectrum of action on the impact of rebalancing the economy, including training measures, careers advice, parental leave, flexible working and pay audits.
- Include specific socially responsible initiatives across the public sector.
- Ensure that the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Public Sector Contracts is confirmed and maintained.
- Works should be done by the Northern Ireland Executive to the goal of universal good quality, accessible and affordable childcare for children up to the age of fourteen. A childcare strategy should be brought forward for consultation as a matter of priority and it

should include full participation in the labour market and child development as well as the eradication of child poverty as its targets.

How should these be formulated and argued?

UKJCW would welcome the opportunity to provide some analysis and narrative around our recommendations, which would provide context both in terms of the policy areas, but also in terms of the devolution settlements that shape the delivery of the recommendations. Scotland, for example, has its own NRP report, as well as having some policy areas covered by the UK's report. Issues within the competence of the Welsh Assembly Government and Northern Ireland Assembly are covered by the UK report. There are challenges with four-nations delivery and UK reporting.

UKJCW is able to provide such analysis on request, and would welcome early discussions with EWL about the length and content of this.

Question 4: Has your organization been invited to a consultation with government bodies for drafting the NRP for 2013? If yes, what is your assessment of the quality of the consultation?

No.



Annex A - Influence of UKJWC proposals for country-specific recommendations to the UK

| UKJCW proposal for Council Recommendations on the UK's 2012 National Reform Programme | European Commission recommendations for Council Recommendations on the UK's 2012 National Reform Programme | Council of the European Union Recommendation on the UK's National Reform Programme 2012 | Analysis |
|---|--|--|---|
| Provide sufficient and good-quality childcare, using a funding model that does not displace out-of-work poverty by increasing the in-work poverty of childcare workers. | (4) [...] Fully implement measures aiming at facilitating access to childcare services ⁱ . | (4) [...] Fully implement measures aiming to facilitate access to childcare services ⁱⁱ . | Childcare present, in a recommendation about facilitating labour market attachment. |
| Gender-impact assess [...] welfare reforms. | (4) [...] Ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty ⁱⁱⁱ . | (4) [...] Ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty ^{iv 13} . | Not gendered, but related to women's poverty. |

The UK Joint Committee on Women

Organisation

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)

Engender (Scotland)

National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) (England)

Women's Voice (Wales)

¹³ The full text of this European Commission recommendation four is: "Step up measures to facilitate the labour market integration of people from jobless households. Ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty. Fully implement measures aiming at facilitating access to childcare services."

ⁱⁱ The full text of the Council of the European Union recommendation four is: "Step up measures to facilitate the labour market integration of people from jobless households. Ensure that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty. Fully implement measures aiming to facilitate access to childcare services."

ⁱⁱⁱ As (i).

^{iv} As (ii).



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Germany



The National Council of German Women's Organizations (NCGWO – Deutscher Frauenrat) as national coordination for more than 50 German women's organizations presents its assessment of the Country Specific Recommendations on the National Reform Programme 2012 of Germany (CSR) delivered by the Council of the European Union

The NCGWO (Deutscher Frauenrat) considers the CSR to be too broad and general in order to be effective. Many issues like long-term unemployment, fiscal disincentives for second earners and availability of fulltime child-care facilities are mentioned without going into detail.

We would like to underline that the recommendations which the NCGWO has submitted last year are still valid except the few changes we will state hereafter:

Present state: Child care, Gender Pay and Pension Gap

From August 2013 onwards parents will be entitled to child care for under-three-year old children (from 1 – 3 years). However, it is still doubtful whether the entitlement to child care for under-three-year old children can be met because of the lack of funds and qualified employees. .

Another problematic gender aspect in creating entitlements to child care for under-three-year old children is the promotion of in-home day care providers who do not have the possibility to gain sufficient income which would provide for economically secure life conditions.

Following the decision by the German Government in November 2012, parents who chose to taking care of their children at home will receive a monthly child care subsidy (Betreuungsgeld). Initially it was planned to pay an amount of 150 € per month. But this has been reduced to 100 € per month for 2013. This form of child care subsidy is counter-productive to women's employment rate and is based on a traditional male dominated family model.

Actually there is a great debate on reforming the pension system called pension on life work achievement (Lebensleistungsrente). It should be a possibility to improve the pensions of persons who were not in a position to make sufficient contributions to the pension system and therefore are predicted to suffer from poverty in old age. However, the conditions which are set for such a pension on life work achievement cannot be met by many women.



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The gender pay gap continues to be high; it has decreased from 23 % to 22 % which is not really an improvement.

Regarding women in decision-making positions on Boards we would like to state that the application to only the largest publicly quoted companies meant it would apply to very few employers. The discussion does not meet with the situation of many women who are far from being part of boards, who are working under precarious conditions and who do not have access to such high positions on Boards. Therefore questions about general obstacles for women as regards access to the employment market on *all levels* and *in all spheres* should not be neglected.

The National Council of German Women's Organisations has not been invited to a consultation with government bodies responsible for drafting the NRP for 2013.

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La Coordination Française
pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes

France

Stratégie européenne 2020 - Recommandations alternatives émises par la Coordination française pour le Lobby européen des femmes (CLEF).

Première partie : commentaires sur les recommandations émises par le Conseil de l'Union européenne concernant le programme national de réforme de la France pour 2012 et sur l'avis du Conseil relatif au programme de stabilité de la France pour la période 2012-2016.

Recommandation 1 concernant la mise en œuvre de la stratégie budgétaire :

L'effort d'ajustement structurel demandé à la France dans le cadre de l'objectif budgétaire à moyen terme (OMT) retient principalement le critère de réduction de la dette. Ce critère aura forcément un impact négatif sur les services publics, en quantité et qualité, et sur le montant des retraites. Ces conséquences affecteront particulièrement les femmes.

Le taux de fécondité élevé de la France est une exception en Europe alors que le taux d'emploi des femmes est important (taux d'emploi des femmes en France : 59.7%).

Aussi, la Coordination française pour le lobby européen des femmes pense que toute préconisation économique doit nécessairement inclure les conditions nécessaires au développement de la démographie, directement liées au taux d'emploi des femmes, qui bénéficient de services publics de qualité concernant la prise en charge des jeunes enfants ou des personnes vulnérables.

Recommandation 2 concernant la segmentation du travail :

Cette recommandation a pour but de lever les contraintes qui s'exerce sur le monde du travail, en particulier celles concernant la segmentation du travail (pour rappel, la segmentation du travail est le découpage du travail en 2 catégories : le segment primaire emplois stables et bien rémunérés, et le segment secondaire, emplois précaires).

Toutes les enquêtes démontrent qu'une entreprise est plus performante dès lors qu'elle inclut la ressource humaine 'femmes'. Les dernières mesures adoptées par la France favorisent les quotas de femmes dans les conseils d'administration et améliorent sensiblement les conditions d'exercice du temps partiel, exercé à 80% par les femmes, grâce à une durée de travail minimum (20 heures) et une meilleure amplitude horaire.

Recommandation 3 concernant le marché du travail :



Les filles sont de plus en plus diplômées partout en Europe et particulièrement en France où 19,5% des diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur sont des femmes contre 17,5% d'hommes. Cependant, leur place sur le marché du travail est médiocre même si elle tend à s'améliorer. Seuls 39,5% des cadres sont des femmes. 29% des créations d'entreprises sont le fait de femmes et parmi ces femmes, 70% ont créé leur entreprise pour générer leur propre emploi. L'orientation scolaire est encore sexiste, certaines branches restent privilégiées par les filles comme la biologie ou la chimie alors que les garçons choisissent les maths et la physique. 30% des effectifs dans les classes préparatoires scientifiques et les écoles d'ingénieurs sont des femmes contre plus de 70% des effectifs en langues à l'université et en classe préparatoire littéraires.

Selon les chiffres de l'INSEE, la moitié des femmes sont concentrées dans 12 des 87 familles professionnelles. La prise de responsabilité est freinée par des trajectoires personnelles influencées par les stéréotypes et l'organisation sociale des temps de vie.

Afin de parvenir à la mixité dans l'orientation scolaire, les filières de formation et les métiers, la France via son ministère des droits des femmes fait signer aux différentes régions une convention d'engagements intitulée " les territoires de l'excellence en matière d'égalité professionnelle entre les femmes et les hommes". 9 régions sur 22 se sont donc déjà engagées à inclure dans leurs politiques économiques l'intégration systématique de l'égalité femmes/hommes.

L'amélioration de l'emploi des jeunes et des seniors par le contrat génération aura des répercussions positives sur l'emploi féminin. Le contrat de génération vise à accroître les embauches des jeunes en CDI ainsi qu'à mettre fin aux départs anticipés des seniors, permettre la transmission de leurs compétences, et accroître les recrutements des seniors. Le dispositif aura un impact favorable sur l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes. 29% des femmes contre 14% des hommes attendent 65 ans pour liquider leur pension de retraite afin de compenser les effets d'une carrière incomplète et accéder au taux plein pour le calcul de leur pension. Ainsi, les entreprises par le contrat de génération seront amenées à maintenir en emploi plus de femmes que d'hommes.

Par ailleurs, l'insertion diffère entre les femmes et les hommes dans un emploi durable. Parmi l'ensemble des 15 - 29 ans, 29% des femmes sont en CDD contre 24% des hommes. Parmi les jeunes de moins de 26 ans près de 11% des femmes sont en situation de sous-emploi contre 4% des hommes.

Recommandation 4 concernant le système fiscal

La CLEF est en faveur de l'autonomie fiscale des femmes et recommande de mettre fin à l'imposition globale des couples et d'individualiser l'impôt sur le revenu, tout en maintenant la prise en compte des charges de famille, pour que l'impôt de chacun-e, quel que soit son état civil, soit juste et proportionnel à son salaire. Cette recommandation nécessite une refonte du système fiscal français.

Recommandation 5 concernant les restrictions dans les professions et secteurs réglementés :

La libéralisation préconisée dans les domaines de distribution de l'énergie et des transports inquiète la CLEF. La précarité énergétique touche particulièrement les femmes retraitées, les femmes seules et les familles monoparentales.



2° partie - Les recommandations alternatives de la Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes :

La CLEF recommande un meilleur partage des responsabilités familiales, ce qui induit un partage égal du congé parental. L'intérêt des jeunes pères pour les soins et l'éducation de leurs enfants est un mouvement social bien engagé en France cependant il doit être conforté par la réforme du congé parental pris à égalité par les deux parents.

La CLEF recommande également la poursuite des politiques des temps de vie, pour permettre une réelle adéquation entre la vie professionnelle, personnelle et sociale. Apporter un soutien notable à la création de structures dédiées à la petite enfance et à des dispositifs innovants de garde et soins aux personnes vulnérables ainsi que leur financement pérenne est nécessaire. Une politique des transports est aussi à maintenir dans un souci de gains de temps et préservation de l'environnement.

La CLEF estime que l'entrepreneuriat féminin est un levier de sortie de crise et de ce fait recommande de :

Lutter contre les stéréotypes de genre dans le choix des orientations et l'exercice des métiers

Exiger la mixité dans l'orientation et l'exercice des métiers

Développer la qualification professionnelle des femmes par l'accès aux filières scientifiques de l'enseignement supérieur, mobiliser la validation des acquis (VAE) et sécuriser les parcours professionnels.

Permettre un meilleur accès aux services bancaires de prêts.

La CLEF émet également des recommandations concernant la situation des femmes migrantes en France :

Les femmes migrantes représentent plus de 50% de la population migrante. Leurs emplois dans la société d'accueil est trop souvent en deçà de leurs diplômes et capacités professionnelles. La CLEF recommande d'améliorer les systèmes d'équivalence des diplômes et également organiser l'apprentissage du français trop émietté actuellement.

57% des bénéficiaires de la protection subsidiaire sont des femmes. Ce qui les soumet à un statut plus précaire en termes de parcours d'intégration. La nature des violences et des persécutions subies dans leur pays d'origine, comme les maltraitances sexuelles, les mutilations génitales, les crimes d'honneur, les mariages forcés et les traumatismes qui en découlent constituent forcément des freins à leur autonomie. Les migrantes sont plus souvent au chômage. 46% des femmes immigrées sont professionnellement actives contre 60% des femmes non migrantes et 67% des hommes immigrés. Elles sont majoritaires dans les secteurs peu qualifiés et précaires. 11,4% des femmes travaillent dans le secteur des services aux particuliers, ce chiffre passe à 24% pour les femmes immigrées. Malgré l'accord cadre de décembre 2007

entre ministère de l'immigration, la délégation interministérielle à la Ville, la direction générale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle, l'Agence pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances, la promotion des femmes migrantes dans notre société reste à faire en termes d'accès aux droits, de lutte contre les violences, intégration sociale et professionnelle.



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La CLEF recommande de porter une attention particulière aux droits des femmes migrantes dans le monde du travail et à l'apprentissage du français. Cela offrirait une meilleure intégration dans notre société.

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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
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Czech Republic



1. CSRs issued in 2012 against CWL's proposals for 'alternative' CSRs and their coherence with Europe 2020

Only one of the CWL's proposals appears in the CSRs issued by the Council: Recommendation 3: Take additional measures to significantly increase the availability of affordable and quality pre-school childcare.

In order to facilitate earlier return of parents, especially mothers, to labour market, we also suggested the following:

- Setting legislative framework for childcare facilities for children under 3 years (at the moment nurseries for children under the age of three are not anchored in the legislature)
- Supporting alternative forms of work (flexible, part-time, home-work, co-work etc.) e.g. tax benefits for employers who provide these.
- The CWL have also proposed other measures that would increase the number of women on company boards by adopting binding gender quotas. The issue of women in decision making is not mentioned in the CSRs.
- Another important issue that has not been covered in the CSRs is risk of poverty of women. CWL proposed two measures that would help to tackle this problem:
 - Adopting legislation that ensures the payment of maintenance by the state
 - Decreasing gender pay gap and gender pension gap (eliminating vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market)

Several of the other recommendations also lack the gender perspective.

In recommendation 1, the Council suggests the following: avoid across-the-board cuts, safeguard growth-enhancing expenditure and step up efforts to improve the efficiency of public spending.

CWL agrees with this proposal, since across the board cuts have significantly negative impact on women and further increases their risk of poverty. It is important to be aware of the gendered nature of this issue.

In recommendation 2, the Council suggests the following: Introduce further changes to the public pension scheme to ensure its long-term sustainability.

CWL stresses once again the gender aspect of this issue. The changes in public pension system should contribute to closing the gender pension gap.

2. Implementation and impact of the CSRs 2012



Almost none of the CSRs related to gender equality have been adopted by the Czech government. Many of the policies and reforms that have been recently implemented had negative impact on gender equality.

The only step taken was easing the technical requirements for setting up company-based kindergartens which is absolutely insufficient. The problem of lack of quality and affordable pre-school child care facilities remains a serious problem. The legislature related to nurseries for children under the age of three is being changed. At the moment nurseries are not anchored in any law.

Other envisaged measures such as providing tax incentives for a greater take-up of private childcare have not been implemented yet.

No other measures to decrease the unemployment rate of women with small children such as support of alternative forms of work, accessible and quality public childcare system and quotas for women on company boards were adopted. Czech Republic is one of the EU countries that refuse the Directive of European Commission introducing gender quotas from the very beginning.

Other reform measures that have been taken had significantly negative impact on gender equality. This applies especially to across the board cuts, increase of the reduced VAT rate (where many essential goods were listed such as napkins, medicines or food) and reform of pension system. There were several analyses proving the negative impact of the pension reform on women.

3. Proposal by Czech Women's Lobby

1. Setting legislative framework for childcare facilities for children under 3 years
2. Providing sufficient availability of affordable and quality care facilities for children and other dependent family members
3. Facilitate the procedure of establishing company kindergartens and nurseries
4. Supporting alternative forms of work (flexible, part-time, home-work, co-work etc.) e.g. tax benefits for employers who provide these
5. Implementation of binding quotas for women on corporate boards (30 % in 2016, 40 % in 2020)
6. Adopting legislation that ensures the payment of maintenance by the state
7. Decreasing gender pay gap and gender pension gap (eliminating vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market)
8. reconsider the pension system reform to eliminate its negative impact on women
9. reconsider the increase of the reduced VAT rate

4. Stakeholder engagement

There were no consultations with stakeholders from civil society organisations. The NRP was also not consulted with the advisory bodies of the government which deal with gender equality where CWL is represented.

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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
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Luxembourg

Stratégie communautaire Europe 2020 – Contribution 2013 du Conseil National des Femmes du Luxembourg (CNFL)

Introduction

La présente contribution n'a pas l'ambition d'exhaustivité. Elle se concentre sur quelques aspects essentiels en référence au Programme National de Réforme 2012. Le CNFL constate que les recommandations adressées au Luxembourg par le Conseil de l'UE en juillet 2012 ne font aucune référence à la dimension d'égalité entre femmes et hommes.

Programme National de Réforme 2012 (PNR 2012)

Objectif 5.1 « Emploi »

5.5.1 Objectif national

L'objectif du Luxembourg en matière de taux d'emploi à atteindre en 2020 est fixé à 73%. L'objectif visé pour 2015 est de l'ordre de 71,5%.

Constats :

Alors que l'objectif européen précise qu'il vise le taux d'emploi des femmes et des hommes, l'objectif national émet un objectif global. En 2011, le taux d'emploi total de la tranche d'âge entre 20 et 64 ans était de 69,8%. Toutefois, nous notons une importante différence entre le taux d'emploi des hommes et celui des femmes de cette catégorie d'âge. En effet, alors que le taux d'emploi des hommes était de 77,8%, celui des femmes était de 61,7%, soit un écart de 16,1 points de pourcentage. Cet écart s'accroît si on prend en compte le taux d'emploi en équivalent temps plein (ETP). Le PNR 2012 n'ignore pas cette différence entre femmes et hommes et prévoit des mesures spécifiques qui visent à augmenter la participation des femmes dans l'emploi.

Position du CNFL :

Le CNFL ne peut que soutenir le développement de structures d'accueil tant pour enfants que pour les autres personnes dépendantes. Il insiste cependant à ce que les emplois ainsi créés répondent au critère d'égalité entre femmes et hommes, c'est-à-dire, soient des emplois stables et de qualité.

Plus de cinquante années après l'introduction légale du principe de l'égalité de salaire des femmes et des hommes, le Luxembourg continue à accuser un différentiel sexué. Le Gouvernement actuel entend « *inciter les entreprises à une obligation de résultats* ».

Le CNFL est d'avis qu'il convient absolument de prévoir une obligation de résultat. Il rappelle son avis du 28 février 2003 dans lequel il se prononçait pour l'établissement obligatoire d'un plan d'égalité entre femmes et hommes dans toute convention collective. Au titre des mesures incitatives, le CNFL se prononce en faveur du maintien des actions positives et se félicite de leur extension au secteur public.



Le CNFL encourage vivement le Gouvernement à poursuivre l'effort de ventilation par sexe des données clefs de l'emploi, élément essentiel afin de pouvoir concevoir des politiques et des mesures efficaces. Dans le même état d'esprit, il réitère sa demande d'un renforcement du Comité du Travail Féminin (CTF). Le CNFL

est d'avis qu'il est absolument indispensable de doter le CTF d'un secrétariat permanent. Le CTF est un organe consultatif du Gouvernement qui se démarque d'autres entités similaires de par sa composition quadripartite. De ce fait, il constitue une plate-forme idéale au sein de laquelle des échanges constructifs entre les partenaires sociaux, la société civile et les pouvoirs publics se font.

Objectif 5.5 : Inclusion sociale

5.5.1 Objectif national (extraits)

(...) Le gouvernement soutient les conclusions du Conseil européen par l'objectif de favoriser l'inclusion sociale en réduisant la pauvreté par des mesures contribuant à augmenter, notamment le taux d'emploi des femmes et celui des familles monoparentales. (...) En 2010, 46,4% (2009 :52%) de ces ménages ont des revenus se situant en dessous du seuil de pauvreté (...). La personne de référence de 86,4% (2009 : 89,4%) des ménages monoparentaux est une femme.

Constats

La surreprésentation des femmes parmi les personnes rémunérées au Salaire social minimum (SSM), les personnes occupées à temps partiel et les personnes percevant de l'aide sociale permet d'avancer que le risque de pauvreté concerne plus les femmes salariées que les hommes salariés. Cet état des choses se répercute sur toute la durée de vie des concerné-e-s, les femmes percevant des pensions de vieillesse inférieures à celles des hommes par la suite.

Position du CNFL

Le CNFL plaide pour une individualisation du système de sécurité sociale avec obligation de cotiser pour tout adulte. Il est d'avis qu'une individualisation généralisée des droits à pension constitue un élément positif. Il est incontestable que le coût du système actuel comprend une somme appréciable de montants versés sans que ceux-ci ne soient la contrepartie de cotisations, ce qui en soi, ne représenterait pas un problème si ces montants assuraient effectivement les personnes protégées.

D'autre part, l'assurance-pension ne prévoit pas de pension vieillesse pour les personnes dont la carrière est inférieure à 120 mois et ne prévoit pas de mécanisme informant les personnes abandonnant leur affiliation personnelle sur les risques que comporte la désaffiliation.

Le CNFL réitère sa revendication à instaurer un système d'imposition individualisé des époux et des partenaires.

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Malta

Alternative 2020 Country-specific Recommendations

MCWO Recommendations:

- Provide affordable childcare services of good quality including an increase in subsidies to parents particularly to those with low income and to single mothers. *Number of childcare centres has increased.*
- Extend operational hours of public childcare centres from 16.00hours to that required by working parents.

Hours have not been extended.

- Enact legislation to regulate child care services/centres.

Legislation has to date not been enacted.

- Introduce attractive incentives for employers to provide childcare services for their employees.

Some incentives have been introduced but take-up is not very encouraging.

- Extend before and after-school programmes providing extra-curricular activities, for all children in all localities; these are currently too few and not effective enough to enable women with young children to remain in the labour market.

These programmes have been extended though they are still limited to particular localities. The service needs to be provided on a national basis.

- Promote flexible working hours, such as tele-working and timetable reductions in the labour market with justification to be given when such requests are refused.

Flexible working hours are mainly available to public sector employees.

- Increase maternity leave from 16 to 20 weeks with the State shouldering financial costs and introduce a two weeks paid paternity leave on a 'use or lose' principle.

Maternity leave has this year increased to 18 weeks with the State shouldering the salary of the last four weeks at a basic rate equivalent to the minimum wage. No paternity leave has been introduced.

- Extend the current 3 months (unpaid) parental leave in the private sector to 6 months.

No extension has been introduced.



- Address the gender pay gap that according to the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality report that stands at 23%.

Addressing the gender pay gap is not on the national agenda.

- Introduce temporary special measures to address the low (3%) percentage of women on boards.

This has been left to the discretion of the private companies. Government is increasing the number of appointed women on state boards.

- Ensure that publicity campaigns to address gender equality are better focused to achieve declared objectives.

No publicity campaigns have been undertaken.

- Gender mainstream projects offering employment support to persons with disabilities in order to address the low rate of women with disabilities in the labour market.

Projects offering employment support to persons with disabilities have been undertaken but not from a gender perspective.

Malta Council recommendations

Take action, without further delay, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the pension system, comprising an increase in the effective retirement age, including through a significant acceleration of the progressive increase in the statutory retirement age compared to current legislation and through a clear link between the statutory retirement age and life expectancy, and measures to encourage private pension savings. Take measures to increase the participation of older workers in the labour force and discourage the use of early retirement schemes.

The retirement age is being increased over the years from 61 to 65 years. No statutory private pension schemes have been introduced. Older workers continue to receive their pension even when still in employment up to age 65. However public sector employees have to retire at the stipulated retirement age of 61.

The sustainability of the pension system needs to be undertaken from a gender perspective because of the high number of women depending on their partner's retirement pension, even when deceased, due to the traditional role of women as home carers. This situation is changing as the number of women over 34 who remain or return to the labour market is increasing.



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3. Take steps to reduce the high rate of early school leaving. Pursue policy efforts in the education system to match the skills required by the labour market. Enhance the provision and affordability of more childcare and out-of-school centres, with the aim of reducing the gender employment gap.

The rate of early school leaving is on the decrease as more educational opportunities have been introduced to attract youth to continue their studies. Mis-match of skills to labour market needs is still an issue that needs attention.

There is a need to include a gender perspective in tackling the rate of early school leaving as reasons for leaving may be different for boys and girls and thus may need to be addressed differently.

Childcare and after-school centres have increased though waiting lists still exist.

4. Take the necessary further steps to reform, in consultation with social partners and in accordance with national practices, the system of wage bargaining and wage indexation, so as to better reflect developments in labour productivity and reduce the impact of prices of imports on the index.

Discussions are on-going.

There is a need to implement a job classification system that would study the gender pay gap that urgently needs to be put on the national agenda

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The Netherlands

Reactie Nederlandse VrouwenRaad (NVR), maart 2013, op de 'country specific recommendations' National Reform Plan - Nederland 2012, periode 2012-2015

Hieronder de aanbevelingen inzake de 'country specific recommendations' voor Nederland -

National Reform Plan, periode 2012-2015

- In de aanhef van de Aanbeveling van de Raad (Brussel, 30.5.2012 COM(2012) 322 final) over het nationale hervormingsprogramma 2012 **van Nederland worden node gemist** (ook voor empowerment van betrokken burgers / ngo's) een verwijzing naar het TEU artikel 3(3) (*combat exclusion and discrimination and promote social inclusion and gender equality*) en TFEU artikel 8 (*all activities of the EU ... gender equality*) en het European Pact for Gender Equality: gender equality vormt een essentieel onderdeel van de strategie om uit de crisis te komen.

- Meer aandacht is nodig voor inclusiviteit bij het tot stand brengen van de Nat Reform Programma en Stabiliteitsprogramma. Op pag 1 van het Stabiliteitsprogramma Nederland (april 2012 Actualisatie) wordt in de eerste alinea gesproken van 'intensief en constructief overleg met alle betrokken partijen'. Dit zou kunnen gelden voor politieke partijen; zulk overleg is niet hetzelfde als intensief en constructief overleg met alle stake-holders, en is volstrekt **onvoldoende zolang in programma's van politieke partijen en in regeerakkoorden een algemene strategie voor gender mainstreaming ontbreekt.**

-inzake een groei- en werkgelegenheidsstrategie is het dringende advies dit op te stellen vanuit een gender perspectief zodat helder wordt wat precies de effecten ervan zijn op mannen en vrouwen. De praktijk toont dat in Nederland veel vrouwen part-time werken en m.n. aanwezig zijn in de publieke sector, onderwijs, zorg en welzijn - dat geeft sowieso aan dat de Nederlandse werkgelegenheid 'gendered' is. Dit zijn sectoren die momenteel zwaar getroffen worden door de bezuinigen. Houdt hierbij eveneens rekening met de positie van kwetsbare groepen zoals laagopgeleide jongeren en school drop outs, migranten en ouderen.

- Bij het ontwikkelen van fiscale maatregelen om groei en werkgelegenheid te bevorderen, is het dringende advies 'Gender impact analyse' toe te passen en na te gaan wat de effecten zijn van beoogde maatregelen voor mannen en vrouwen alvorens deze in te voeren.

- Op alle (bestaand en nieuw) beleid gender budget analyse toepassen om boven water te krijgen in hoeverre beleid effectief en efficiënt is (geweest) inzake het bereiken van doelstellingen van gender equality en ..helder wordt wat de exacte effecten zijn van beoogde maatregelen voor mannen en vrouwen. Daarmee wordt het eveneens makkelijker aanvullend beleid en regelgeving op te zetten om negatieve effecten te corrigeren. Tevens is het advies de impact van beoogde veranderingen op mannen en vrouwen te monitoren



en jaarlijks hierover publiekelijk te rapporteren. Dat geldt eveneens voor kwetsbare groepen laagopgeleide jongeren, migranten en herintreders.

- Bezuinigingen op kinderopvang o.a. door het verhogen van prijzen, maakt dat ouders, inclusief eenoudergezinnen, hun kinderen noodgedwongen van de opvang halen omdat het te kostbaar wordt. Hierdoor sluiten kinderopvangcentra en staan gekwalificeerde medewerkers op straat, waardoor zij een beroep moeten doen op het sociale vangnet met uitkeringen, huursubsidies etc. Terwijl als ze aan het werk konden blijven dit niet nodig was. Kortom in geval van bezuinigingen en/of ombuigingen is het dringende advies om eerst in kaart te brengen wat de effecten van beoogde maatregelen zijn voor mannen en vrouwen. Dit geldt eveneens voor kwetsbare groepen zoals laagopgeleide jongeren en school drop outs, migranten en ouderen.

- inzake toegang tot kredietverstrekking: steeds meer vrouwen starten (deels noodgedwongen) een eigen onderneming, veelal als zzp-ers. In praktijk is het voor vrouwen nog lastiger als voor hun mannelijke collega-zzp-ers kredieten van banken te verkrijgen. Daarom is het dringende advies de regels rondom kredietverstrekking dusdanig te wijzigen dat de effecten ervan voor vrouwen en mannen helder zijn, en dat helder is welke maatregelen worden genomen om die negatieve effecten te corrigeren.

- inzake verhoging van de pensioengerechtigde leeftijd dient helder in kaart te worden gebracht wat de effecten ervan zijn op de positie van vrouwen en mannen. Verder, als men wenst dat men langer doorwerkt dan dient de toegang voor mannen en vrouwen op de arbeidsmarkt goed geregeld te zijn, d.w.z. ook op hogere leeftijd dienen mannen en vrouwen betaald werk te kunnen vinden.

- inzake bezuinigingen op de zorg dient helder in kaart te worden gebracht wat de effecten ervan zijn voor mannen en vrouwen. In praktijk zullen medische (!) en zorgtaken steeds meer bij familieleden (m.n. vrouwen) en mantelzorgers (ook m.n. vrouwen) terecht komen. Dit betekent niet alleen een verschuiving van het professioneel niveau naar amateurniveau. Het dringende advies is bij het voornemen van bezuinigingen vooraf te onderzoeken wat de effecten ervan zijn voor mannen en vrouwen .

- inzake arbeidsmarktbeleid: er zijn tal van gendered hindernissen waardoor vrouwen nog steeds niet optimaal participeren op de arbeidsmarkt, en specifiek geldt dit voor een oudergezin. Er dient voldoende, kwalitatieve en betaalbare kinderopvang beschikbaar te zijn, waarbij het financieringsmodel dusdanig dient te zijn opgebouwd dat ouders hun kinderen niet van de opvang afhalen van wege de kosten waardoor (neveneffect) kinderopvang medewerkers hun banen kwijt raken, en zonder inkomsten zitten. Kortom in geval van bezuinigingen op zorg/welzijn en onderwijs dient eerst in kaart te worden gebracht wat de effecten ervan zijn op mannen en vrouwen, en op welke wijze deze effecten worden gecorrigeerd door aanvullend beleid.

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IRELAND

Country specific recommendations in support of the European semester process

1. Carry out a Gender Impact Assessment of all measures introduced by Budget 2013
2. Gender-proof all proposals to be considered in Budget 2014.
3. Maintain the universal element of child benefit as the majority element and at current rates.
4. Incrementally introduce a model of childcare that would combine elements of high quality, universally available, affordable and joined-up early childhood care and education and afterschool care, with generous parental leave, at least a portion of which would be paid. In the immediate term:
 - a. Introduce a second universal free pre-school year
 - b. Introduce a publicly subsidized system of out of school hour's care using existing school infrastructure
5. Adoption of a gender equality strategy within Intreo, SOLAS and National Employment and Entitlements Services that will:
 - a. Introduce innovative welfare to work strategies which have specific gender dimension and account for women's work patterns
 - b. Introduce flexible education and training provision on high skill training programmes
 - c. Provide supports to women, particularly women with care responsibilities to enable them to access the full range of employment, education and training options
6. Ensuring that women are supported to achieve economic independence is one of the main strategic goals of the NWCI. A number of elements are considered crucial to this:
 - a. Women in employment
 - b. Early Childhood Education and Care
 - c. Child benefit

Women in employment

Over half (55.4%) of all women of working age are employed in Ireland. Supporting women and mothers to remain in employment is a key concern for the NWCI. According to the EU, in 2011, the employment rate for women in Ireland was 85.7% for a woman with a husband or partner but no children. It plummeted to 51.5% for women whose youngest child was aged between 4-5 years. According to the OECD and the EU supporting women in employment is important from an economic and a gender equality perspective. There



must be focused efforts to support women to remain in employment if Ireland is to reach its targets under the Europe 2020 strategy, including ensuring that activation measures are implemented in a way that supports women to (re)enter good quality employment.

The Gender Pay Gap remains a key concern for the NWCI, with women earning significant less than their male counterparts. Figures from the OECD show that in Ireland the Gender Pay Gap for women with no children is -17% but this increases significantly to 14% for women with at least one child – a jump of 31 percentage points. For the bottom 10% of earners, the Gender Pay Gap in Ireland is 4% but this rises to 24.6% for the top 10% of income earners, suggesting the continued presence of a glass ceiling and indirect discrimination. Specific strategies must be introduced to ensure that the gender pay gap is addressed.

The EU Social Investment Package urges Member States to close the gender pay gap and address other barriers to women's and other underrepresented workers' participation in the labour market, including by encouraging employers to address workplace discrimination. This must be a priority in Ireland.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Early Childhood Education and Care is important from the perspective of the development of the child and to enable parents, particularly mothers, to remain in employment. Public spending on childcare and early education as a percentage of GDP in Ireland is amongst the lowest in the OECD. The average is approximately 0.7% with some countries, such as Iceland, Denmark and Sweden, as high as 1.4%. In Ireland we spend approximately 0.4%. Consequently, childcare costs in Ireland are amongst the most expensive anywhere. In their Gender Brief, the OECD estimate the childcare cost in Ireland is 29% of family net income, more than double the OECD average of 13% and the third most expensive behind the UK and Switzerland. The National Consumer Agency nationwide survey of childcare facilities found that the average cost of full-time care for one child was €181 per week. A survey carried out by the Irish Independent found that a crèche place for one child now costs more than average mortgage repayments.

According to the OECD³⁰ childcare supports are a key factor in the determination of maternal employment behaviour during the early years (p. 141). In its report *Going for Growth: Economic Policy Reforms*, the OECD³¹ highlights the fact that, in Ireland, women's labour market participation rates are well below those of best-performing OECD economies, especially for mothers, and high childcare costs and limited supply are major obstacles to participation.

Childcare provision is insufficient, particularly in the context of changes to the One Parent Family Payment and the activation measures being targeted at those in receipt of the payment. The NWCI welcomes the statement from the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, outlining the fact that she believes that enhanced childcare provision needs to be in place before the age limit of the child is reduced to seven. The NWCI recommendations to build a quality ECCE infrastructure from infancy to school going years³⁴ remain relevant. It is crucial that childcare does not provide a barrier to women accessing or maintaining work.

OPEN, the One Parent Family Network have expressed concerns that, 'working lone parents will have to make a difficult choice between full-time work or full-time welfare'⁴¹. The NWCI, OPEN and Barnardos have combined to campaign against the age limit being reduced to seven (for the youngest child) for eligibility for the OPFA citing, inter alia, the lack of childcare, the lack of job opportunities, lack of supports for those working in a part-time capacity, lack of education and training places, and the likelihood of increasing child



poverty rates. In a further joint campaign, the organisations are calling for the incremental introduction of a model of Early Childhood Education and Care that would combine elements of high quality, universally available, affordable and joined-up early childhood care and education and afterschool care, with generous parental leave, at least a portion of which would be paid. In the immediate term. The EU Social Investment Package urges Member States to make early childhood education and care more visible and available and this must be a priority in Ireland.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit recognises the role that is played by women as care givers and that fact that income may not be distributed equally within the home. Research²⁷ in the UK shows that the vast majority of child benefit is spent either directly (on childcare, clothing, nappies, etc) or indirectly (on household bills that support the household in which the child lives) on children. In the Irish context, child benefit is also seen and used as a key mechanism to counteract the lack of investment and availability of affordable childcare, a fact acknowledged by the Government when they introduced the series of increases to the Child Benefit payment to account for 'increasing childcare costs'.

Child Benefit has been consistently reduced in recent budgets, saving an approximate €210 million to the Exchequer but causing severe hardship for many families. There has been no parallel investment in childcare. At the Department of Social Welfare briefing on the Report of the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare there were calls on the Department to invest savings made in childcare services but there was no guarantee forthcoming on this.

CONSULTATION: none

References:

See From Careless to Careful Activation: Making Activation Work for Women, NWCI & SIPTU 2012

27: See for example the Child Poverty Action Group research, Save Child Benefit: CPAG policy briefing: March 2012 available at <http://www.savechildbenefit.org.uk/images/public/pdf/SaveChildBenefit.pdf>

28: The National Consumer Agency (2011) Childcare Price Survey

30: OECD (2011), Doing Better for Families, Paris: OECD

34: NWCI, An Accessible Model of Childcare in Ireland, 2004, NWCI.

41: <http://oneparent.ie/7-is-too-young>

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