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REPORT ON THE PROGRESS ON EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN
2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Equal economic independence	3
3.	Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value	7
4.	Equality in decision-making	9
5.	Dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence	12
6.	Gender equality beyond the Union	13
7.	Governance	14
8.	Conclusions	15

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In addition, Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states: ‘In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women’. The Commission has reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality by adopting the Women’s Charter¹ and adopting a Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015)².

Achieving gender equality is also vital for the EU’s growth, employment and social cohesion objectives. The Europe 2020 Strategy — the EU’s key document for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth — has a headline target to raise the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 to 75% by 2020. With the employment rate for women currently at 62.5%³, female employment should increase in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

This report is the first annual report presented after the adoption of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Commission’s new Strategy for Equality between Women and Men. It describes recent developments in gender equality in the EU and presents statistics on all areas covered as well as recent new developments in the Member States. It establishes a state of play for the five priority areas of the Women’s Charter and the Strategy, namely: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and gender equality outside the Union. The report will be presented to the EPSCO Council in March 2011 and will be the basis of the discussions at the Gender Equality Dialogue.

2. EQUAL ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Sustained employment participation will strengthen women’s lifelong economic independence and enable them to have adequate pensions. Between 2009 and 2010⁴ the difference between female and male **employment rates** narrowed by 0.4 percentage points (p.p.) from 13.3 to 12.9. At national level, significant differences exist throughout the EU. Malta, Italy and Greece have the lowest rates for women while Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia have the lowest rates for men. Unemployment rates for men and women have increased since 2009 owing to the crisis and are now⁵ equal (9.6% for both women and men).

Still, any positive assessment of the trend in women’s employment is offset by the fact that so many work part-time. In 2009, 31.4% of European women and 8.1% of men worked **part-time**. Significantly, the countries where nearly 75% of women are working (Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden) have among the highest part-time rates.

¹ COM(2010) 78.

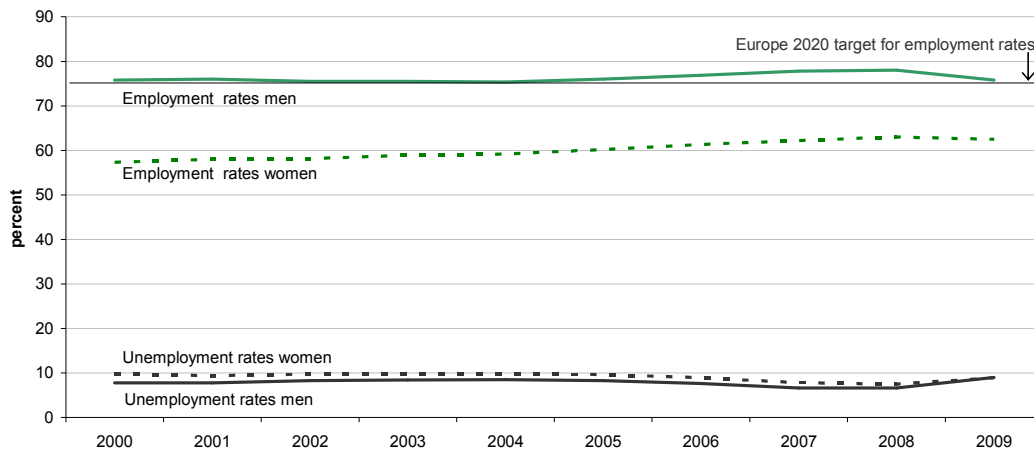
² COM(2010) 491.

³ 20-64 age group, 2009. Data in the report are provided by Eurostat if no other source is mentioned.

⁴ Figures for second quarter 2009 and 2010.

⁵ October 2010.

Employment and unemployment rates (women and men aged 20 - 64) in EU Member States- 2000-2009

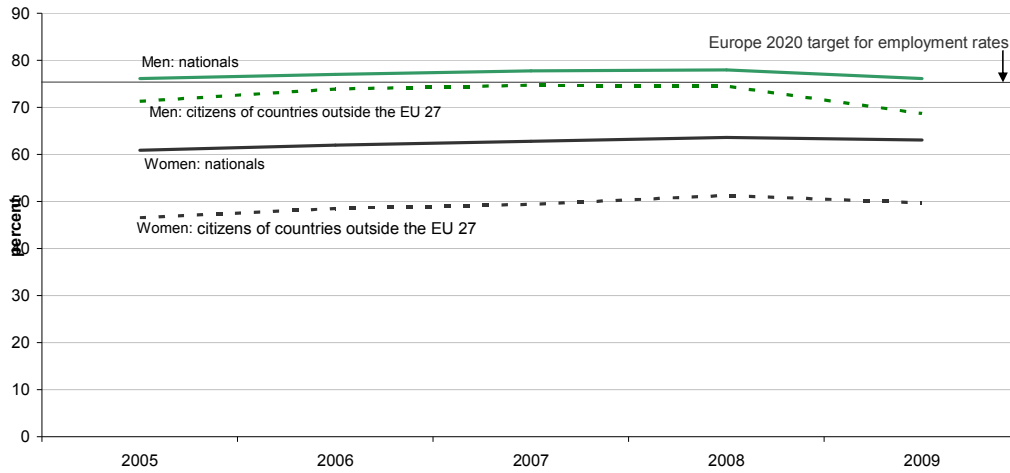


Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS), annual averages.

The Europe 2020 Strategy proposed by the Commission in March 2010 presents a vision for the EU in 10 years time: a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy that delivers high employment, productivity and social cohesion. The current **gap between male and female employment rates** shows clearly the need to foster women’s greater involvement if the EU is to meet the Europe 2020 target of a 75% employment rate. Indeed, the overall employment rate of women in Europe is at 62.5% and some specific groups of women are particularly far from the Europe 2020 targets. The rates for women from non-EU countries, for instance, are below 50%, while Roma women are four times more often unemployed than the general female population⁶.

⁶ Ethnic minority and Roma women in Europe: A case for gender equality? Synthesis report by the expert group on gender equality, social inclusion, health and long-term care, 2010.

Employment rates by nationality (women and men aged 20 - 64) in EU Member States- 2005-2009



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS), annual averages.

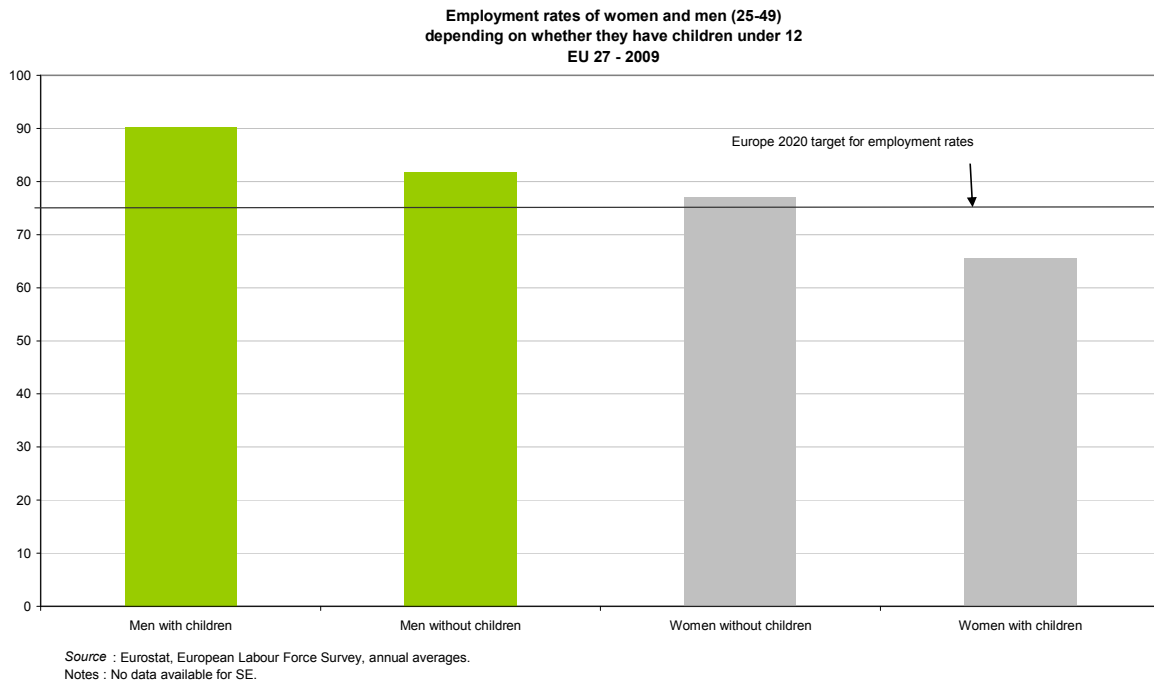
A major reason for women's low employment rates is the challenge of **reconciling work, family and private life**. The labour market participation of mothers is 11.5 p.p. lower than that of women without children, while the rate for fathers is 8.5 p.p. higher than that for men without children. In addition, poorly designed tax and benefit systems, in particular joint taxation, can - in combination with a lack of affordable and high quality childcare facilities - create strong disincentives for second earners to take up work.

The impact of parenthood on the female employment rate is limited in Portugal and Slovenia but is high in Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic. For men's employment, the consequence of having children is positive, ranging from 1.9 p.p. in Denmark to 13.3 p.p. in Lithuania. Some Member States are taking legislative measures to facilitate reconciliation. In Germany, new legislation offers parents flexibility in training assistance: they are free to decide when they wish to raise children, undergo training or work. In Sweden, equality bonuses are paid to encourage mothers and fathers to share their parental leave more equally.

Providing a sufficient number of **high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare** is a vital step in offering parents, and especially women, a genuine choice to work. In Poland, for instance, a draft law on day care is now in the Parliament. However, the 'Barcelona targets', which were set in 2002 and sought to achieve greater childcare provision by 2010, have not been met in most Member States⁷.

⁷

The 2002 European Council in Barcelona agreed to aim to provide childcare for at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age by 2010.



Moreover, **care for the elderly** and disabled is becoming a significant challenge with the ageing of the population, for society as a whole and for women in particular. Mothers often take care of both children and older relatives, sometimes at the same time. In the EU, around 30% of women with care responsibilities say they are inactive or work part-time because of the lack of care services for children and other dependent persons. The figures are below 10% in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden but are higher than 80% in Latvia and Romania.

Implementing an agreement of the European social partners, the revised **Parental Leave Directive**⁸ increases the leave entitlement of each working parent from three months to four months, at least one of which cannot be transferred to the other parent. This means that any month not taken is forfeited, providing a strong incentive for fathers to take their leave entitlement. The year 2010 saw the adoption of the Directive on the application of the principle of **equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity**⁹. This was the first provision at EU level for a maternity allowance for self-employed workers and their spouses or life partners.

Women and poverty is one of the key areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the Europe 2020 Strategy sets a headline target of lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion. Reaching this target will change the life of many men and women: in general men suffer the most from severe housing deprivation but in persons over 65, the at-risk-of-poverty rate is significantly higher for women than for men (21% vs. 16% in 2008). The gap is over 10 p.p. in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland and Sweden and 15 p.p. in Estonia and Lithuania and Slovenia. In relation to ageing, the Commission is developing the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing. Improving the health and quality of life of older people and developing innovative products, devices and services, helps to bring women back to the labour market and generates opportunities for business expansion which leads to enhanced competitiveness and growth.

⁸ Directive 2010/18/EU.

⁹ Directive 2010/41/EU.

2010 was the **European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion** and several activities focused on this topic, including a **Green Paper on Pensions**¹⁰ underlining the importance of addressing gender gaps.

**At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers for older people
(women and men aged 65 years and over) 1998-2008**



Source: Eurostat, Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), annual averages.
1998-2004: EU 25, 2005-2008: EU 27
No data available for 2002

Women belonging to **ethnic minorities and Roma women**, in particular, are more vulnerable to the risk of poverty than other women. The Communication ‘The social and economic integration of Roma in Europe’¹¹ underlines the joint responsibility of the EU and the Member States for the social inclusion of Roma and stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming.

3. EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK AND WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

More than 50 years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which affirmed the principle of **equal pay for men and women** for the same work or work of equal value, women across the EU earn 17.5% less on average than men and there has been no reduction of the gender pay gap in the last few years. It varies from nearly 31% in Estonia to below 5% in Italy. In the scientific research area, it stands in average¹² at 25% in the EU. A narrow gender pay gap may be explained by the fact that the female employment rate is low, and that those who are working earn higher salaries (level of education, profession)¹³. Member States have fully transposed the **EU legislation** on equal pay but the pay gap is unlikely to be solved by legal means alone. The underlying causes remain numerous and complex, not only reflecting discrimination on the grounds of sex but also inequalities linked to education, the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market, the difficulty of reconciling work, family and

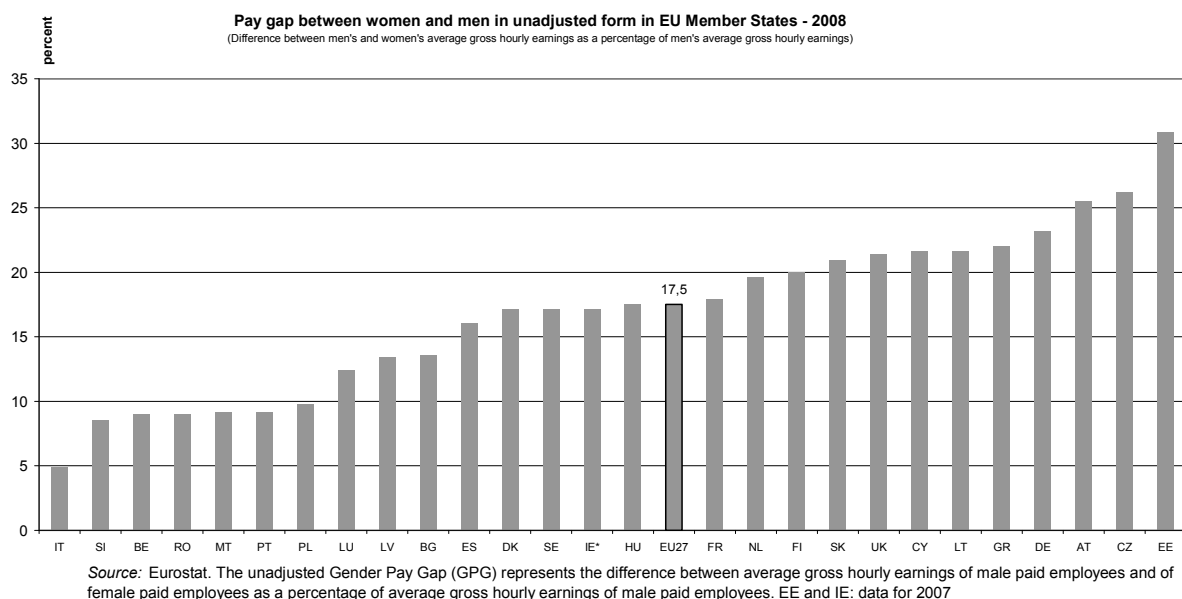
¹⁰ COM(2010) 365

¹¹ COM(2010) 133

¹² European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, ‘She Figures 2009. Statistics and Indicators on Gender Equality in Science’

¹³ The gender pay gap in the Member States of the European Union: quantitative and qualitative indicators, Belgian Presidency report 2010.

private life, the unequal distribution of family and domestic responsibilities, the lack of pay transparency and the impact of gender roles influencing the choice of education and vocational training courses. The Council conclusions adopted under the Belgian Council Presidency on the gender pay gap are thus an important step¹⁴.

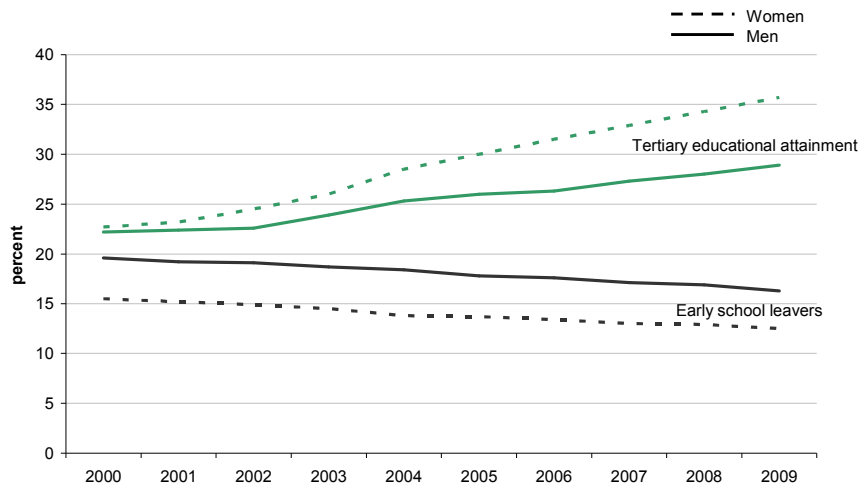


The Commission wants to develop **awareness** of the causes of the persisting gender pay gap and of ways of tackling it. The EU's 2010 gender pay gap campaign was advertised in public transport systems in the EU's 27 capitals and in local and national newspapers. Nearly 300 contacts¹⁵ in the 27 Member States act as multipliers for the campaign. A gender pay gap calculator has also been designed. Building on the campaign, and inspired by many Member States which have successfully established days to increase awareness of how much longer women need to work than men to earn the same, the Commission will hold the first European **Equal Pay Day** in spring 2011.

¹⁴ In its conclusions, the Council invites Member States to adopt or pursue a comprehensive set of measures to tackle the full range of causes of the gender pay gap linked to the labour market inequalities between women and men.

¹⁵ These include social partners, Employment/Social Affairs/Equality Ministries, NGOs in the field of gender equality and both private and public recruitment agencies.

**Early leavers from education and training and tertiary educational attainment
EU 27 - 2000-2009**



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS), annual averages.

One of the main reasons for unequal pay is women’s and men’s educational and professional choices¹⁶. The Europe 2020 Strategy sets targets of at least 40% of the younger generation having a tertiary degree, and of cutting the share of early school leavers to under 10%. Currently, more boys leave school early while young women record higher educational attainment than men in almost all Member States. In 2009, 35.7% of women and 28.9% men aged 30-34 had successfully completed tertiary-level education. 60% of new university graduates are women. Nevertheless, women are concentrated in often lower-paid sectors (health and care services, education, etc.) while more than 64% of graduates in computing and engineering are men. Consequently, the segregation in professional occupations is still high. Some Member States have implemented policies to fight gender segregation but only a few are focusing on the study choices of boys and men. In Germany, for instance a programme aims at increasing the number of qualified male personnel in child day-care facilities¹⁷.

4. EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING

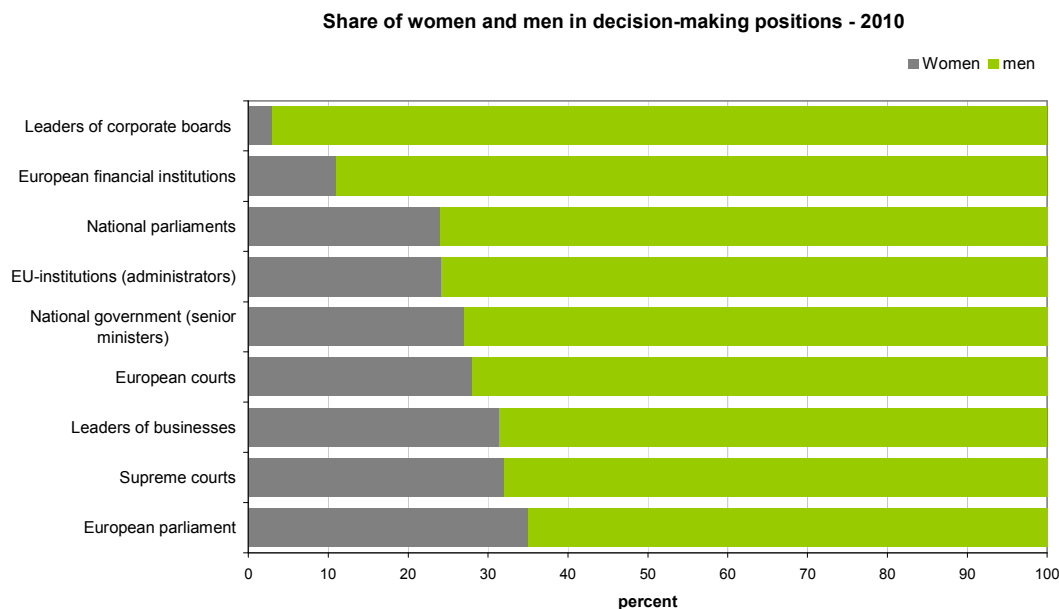
The higher up the hierarchy, the fewer women there are. The percentage of women in key political and economic positions is roughly unchanged from last year. In 2010, the governments of three EU Member States (Germany, Finland and Slovakia) were led by women, while the average number of female members of national parliaments (single/lower houses) was 24%, one p.p. higher than in 2005. The percentage is above 40% in the Netherlands and Sweden and below 10% in Malta and Hungary. Among senior ministers of national governments¹⁸, the share of women increased from 22% in 2005 to 27% in 2010. As it is still low, countries are starting to act. For example, the Oireachtas (Irish Houses of Parliament) Joint Committee on the Constitution has recently recommended that political

¹⁶ See footnote 13

¹⁷ See other measures in ‘Gender Differences in Education Outcomes’ (www.eurydice.org)

¹⁸ Ministers with a seat in the cabinet.

parties pursue positive measures to promote gender equality in its membership, including in the selection of candidates for election. Greece organised an information and awareness campaign on women in politics before recent regional and municipal elections. Poland and Spain have compulsory balanced representation on electoral lists.



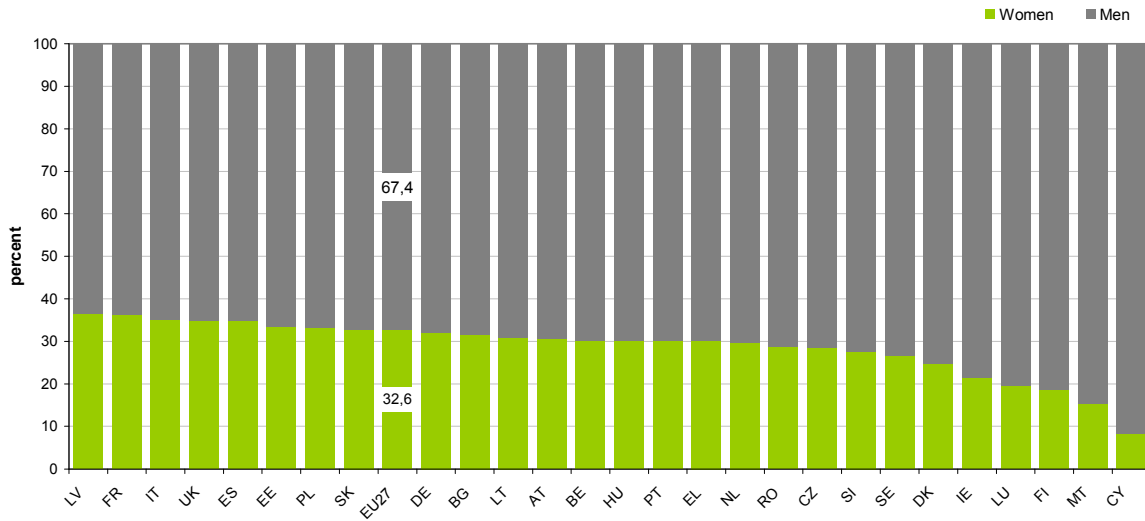
Source: Eurostat and European Commission's database on women and men in decision making
 NB: leaders of businesses covers ISCO (International Standard Classification of Occupations) categories 121 (Directors and chief executives) and 13 (Managers of small enterprises).

In the economic field too, gender equality is still lacking. With greater participation of women in the labour market and in education, one would expect a corresponding improvement in terms of using women's talents effectively. But still only 3% of the largest publicly quoted companies¹⁹ have a woman chairing the highest decision-making body. There are also considerable variations across Europe: in Sweden and Finland, more than 25% of board members are female, while in Luxembourg, Cyprus, Italy and Malta, this share is under 5%. In terms of companies not listed on the stock market, women still represent only one-third of leaders of EU businesses²⁰, and the share is much lower in many countries.

¹⁹ Data collected in summer 2010 concerning companies that are the domestic constituents (nationally registered according to ISIN code) of the blue-chip index maintained by the stock exchange in each country.

²⁰ Directors and chief executives and managers of small enterprises.

Sex distribution of leaders of businesses, in 2009

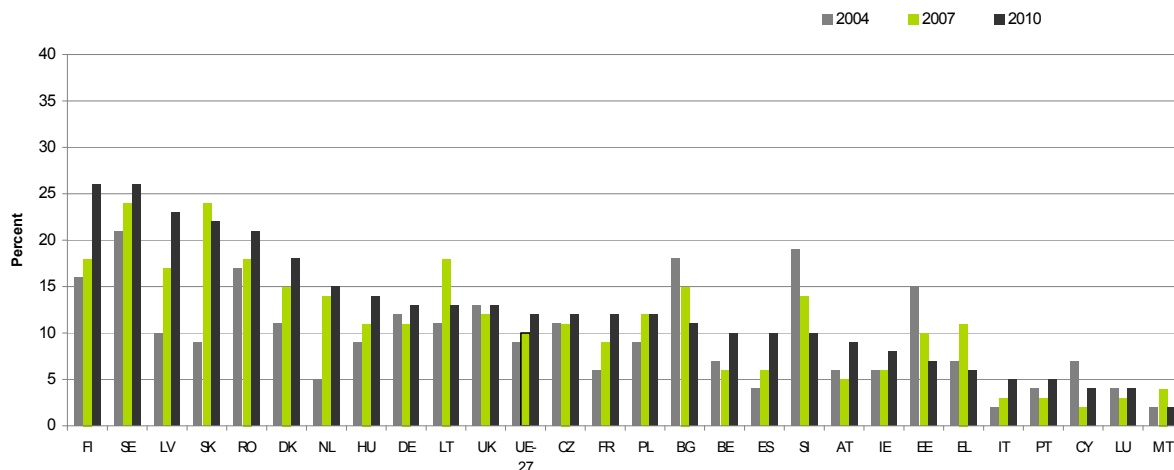


Source: Eurostat, EU LFS. NB: leaders of businesses covers ISCO (International Standard Classification of Occupations) categories 121 (Directors and chief executives) and 13 (Managers of small enterprises). For MT and CY: data lack reliability due to small sample size. FR: the figures exclude Directors and CEOs.

Yet the majority of the population are women and their participation in decision-making can make for more targeted policies and stronger and more prosperous democracies. The business case for having women in senior positions has been boosted by independent research²¹ suggesting a correlation between companies with women in decision-making positions and good performance. It also seems that gender diversity brings a number of vital benefits to boardrooms, such as higher returns, better overall performance, better risk management and greater employment of female talents.

²¹ 'Does Female Leadership Boost Firm Profitability?' Kotiranta, Kovalainen and Rouvinen, 2007, 'The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards', Catalyst 2007, 'Why Women Mean Business, Understanding the Emergence of our next economic revolution', Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland 2007, The Business Case for Diversity: How Companies Benefit from Re-evaluating the Male Competitive Model, Sylvia Ann Hewlett 2007.

Share of women members of the highest decision-making body of the largest companies in each country, 2004-2010



Source: European Commission, DG EMPL, Database on women and men. The largest publicly listed companies in each country are taken to be the nationally registered constituents (max.50) of the primary blue-chip index of the stock exchange in each country. Blue-chip indices cover the largest companies by market capitalisation and/or market trades. LT, CZ, PL, MT: no data available for 2003.

As many companies have been slow to redress gender imbalances, some governments in Europe have legislated to force change. The first quota for gender parity in the boardroom was introduced in Norway in 2006. As a direct consequence of the quota legislation, the representation of women on the boards of Norwegian large companies has risen from 22% in 2004 to 42% in 2009. Recently, Spain has followed suit and introduced legislation on the balanced presence of women and men in corporate boards and a law is under discussion in France. These two countries have already seen improvements in their gender ratios since 2004, showing that discussion around gender balanced boards has an effect in itself. Some countries also have corporate governance codes stressing the importance of diversity and gender equality. Corporate codes sometimes contain special transparency rules on the composition of the board. Generally speaking, countries that have introduced these types of codes also have a higher proportion of women at board level — for instance Sweden and Finland.

Other measures to improve gender balance include voluntary commitments. Denmark and the Netherlands have charters to promote women in management. The United Kingdom is undertaking a review on how obstacles can be removed to allow women to make it to the boards. The Commission will establish a direct dialogue with industry and urges private companies to make special efforts to address persistent imbalances in decision-making positions.

5. DIGNITY, INTEGRITY AND AN END TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Life expectancy has increased over the past 20 years and European children born in 2007 can expect to live almost 80 years. Nonetheless, gender-based **health inequalities** are widespread in the EU. 40% of inactive men between 25 and 49 give their own illness or disability as the main reason for not seeking employment. The share is up to 63% in Estonia and Slovakia and less than 20% in the Czech Republic, Italy and Romania. Only 13% of inactive women in the EU give the same reason for not seeking employment. However, in the great majority of Member States, more women than men consider that they have health problems. Women also use health services more than men. Still, life expectancy is six years shorter for men than for women. Women can expect to live more than ten years longer than men in Lithuania, Estonia

and Latvia, and four years in Sweden, United Kingdom, Cyprus, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Sex-specific information on health is insufficient at EU level. A report published by the Commission²² recommends ‘to implement standardised gendered data collection and to improve data quality in areas where current data is either non-existent or non-sex-specific, including access to health care, health care expenditures and costs, specific eating disorders, pain and migraine, alcohol use, smoking habits, and abuse and misuse of legal medications.’

Fighting against all forms of **violence against women** is one of the top priorities of the current Trio of presidencies (Spain, Belgium, Hungary) and of the European Commission but there is still a **lack of timely, reliable, accurate and comparable data** at both national and EU level. There are several reasons why data are scarce. First, the phenomena are, by definition, hidden; second, only a few Member States collect these data; and lastly, there are disparities in data collection methodology across the EU.

A recent Eurobarometer survey²³ appears to reveal the widespread nature of domestic violence across the EU: one out of every four respondents claims to know a woman among friends or in the family circle who has been a victim of domestic violence, and one in five knows of someone among friends or in the family circle who commits domestic violence. In 2010, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Sweden, Portugal and Cyprus have launched new strategies or plans of action on violence while Poland amended its domestic violence law.

During the ‘Women Ministers Summit on violence against women’ organised by the Belgian Presidency, a declaration was signed in order to encourage and support further appropriate action at EU level. The Commission will in 2011 propose an ambitious but realistic package of legislative and practical measures aimed at changing attitudes towards victims and bringing them into the heart of the criminal justice system. This ‘victims’ package’ will also include measures to combat gender-based violence more effectively.

6. GENDER EQUALITY BEYOND THE UNION

The European Union’s commitment to gender equality extends beyond its borders thanks to the inclusion of gender equality in the EU’s external policies and to Member States’ targeted actions. For instance, taking Chairmanship to the Community of Democracies, Lithuania initiated in April 2010 the establishment of a permanent Gender equality working group, co-chaired by the USA and Lithuania. The main goal is to facilitate bilateral and multilateral projects for developing countries as well as for countries in post conflict situations

As part of the enlargement process the Commission will continue to monitor the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation in the gender equality area in the candidate countries and potential candidates in 2011. Gender equality is also addressed in the accession negotiations on social policy and employment with Turkey and Iceland.

In March 2010, the EU and the Member States celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) during the Commission of the Status of women of the UN. 2010

²² European Commission, ‘Data and information on women’s health in the EU’.

²³ Special Eurobarometer 344 / Wave 73.2 Domestic Violence against Women (2010).

marked also the 10th anniversary of the Millennium Declaration and of UN Security Council **Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security**. The EU and Belgium organised events in Geneva, New York and Brussels to identify proposals to be put to the Security Council to commemorate Resolution 1325, and 17 indicators were adopted to help monitor the implementation of the ‘EU Comprehensive Approach on Women, Peace and Security’. Cooperation with, and the support of, civil society organisations and women’s networks working in this area remains a key objective of EU policy. Several Member States also have action plans to implement Resolution 1325.

In 2010, more than 130 EU delegations in non-EU countries were actively involved in the implementation of the 2008 EU Guidelines on violence against women and girls and the combating of all forms of discrimination against them. Gender equality issues were also discussed in several human rights dialogues and consultations.

UN WOMEN, the new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, became operational in January 2011 when several bodies merged to form a new, stronger gender entity, marking a milestone in UN reform. UN WOMEN amalgamates the UN’s policies and practical work in this area and will improve the promotion of effective system-wide gender mainstreaming in the UN. Cooperation between the EU and UN WOMEN boosts the promotion of gender equality outside the Union.

As part of the Commission strategy to meet the **Millennium Development Goals (MDG)**, it adopted a Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development for the period up to 2015. The Action Plan’s overarching objective is to meet the MDG more quickly and in particular MDG 3 (‘Promoting gender equality and empowering women’) and MDG 5 (‘Improving maternal health’). It also aims to meet the goals set in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the BPfA and the Cairo Program of Action. With its operational framework of specific actions, indicators and timetables for each objective, the Action Plan calls for the EU Member States to put more effort into improving their action and making it more effective.

7. GOVERNANCE

The new Strategy for Equality between Men and Women sets out the Commission’s work programme for incorporating gender equality into all its work and taking specific action to promote equality between women and men. It lays the foundations for cooperation with the EU institutions and the Member States. Partnership with all stakeholders at EU level has proved to be the key to progress in achieving gender equality. In line with the European Parliament’s proposal, the Strategy seeks to strengthen the partnership by holding an annual top-level **Gender Equality Dialogue**²⁴. Council conclusions on the new Strategy were adopted under the Belgian Presidency²⁵.

²⁴ The Gender Equality Dialogue will each year take stock of progress made in implementing the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men. It will involve the European Parliament, the Council Presidencies and key stakeholders such as the European social partners and civil society.

²⁵ In its conclusion, the Council welcomes the adoption of the new Strategy and reaffirms the importance of maintaining a close link between the gender equality Strategy and the Europe 2020 Strategy. It also invites Member States to improve the follow-up of the European Pact for Gender Equality.

The official opening of the **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** in Vilnius in June 2010 was a big step forward. Its task is to support the EU institutions and the Member States in their efforts to promote gender equality. It will do this by providing objective, reliable, comparable information and data on equality between women and men. By collecting, analysing and disseminating such information, the Institute will help the EU institutions and the Member States to take evidence-based policy decisions. It will also help to improve the visibility of gender equality issues by setting up a documentation centre where policy-makers and citizens can consult and research publications and best practice.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This report takes stock of the situation for gender equality in the European Union in five significant areas in the first year of the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015). It points out that despite a general trend towards more equality in society and on the labour market, progress in eliminating gender inequalities remains slow. Meeting the employment targets in the Europe 2020 Strategy will be a challenge, and this report highlights the importance of gender equality for reaching those targets.

Most Member States do have ongoing gender equality plans or strategies, which both support gender mainstreaming and initiate specific actions. In previous years, gender equality policies everywhere in the EU have not only improved the situation and rights of women, but have significantly contributed to economic growth and social welfare. By launching its new Strategy, the European Commission reiterates its commitment to promoting gender equality in all its policies. Each year, this report will describe the state of gender equality in Europe and highlight good practices in Member States. Starting from next year, each report will focus on a particular theme. Equality will also be addressed in the Annual Report on the application of the Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU.