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Equality between Men/Women, Action against discrimination, Civil Society  
Equality between Men/Women

**MANUAL FOR  
GENDER MAINSTREAMING  
OF EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Gender equality is a fundamental right, a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion. One of the main challenges for the EU is to increase women's employment, to improve women's situation on the labour market and eliminate gender gaps.

Over the last few years, important progress have been realised as regards the employment situation of women. Women's employment rate has risen sharply (from 51.4 % in 1997 to 57.1 % in 2006) and is now closer to the Lisbon target (60 % in 2010). This progress should not obscure the clearly unfavourable situation of women on the labour market, where major gaps in relation to men persist.

The gap in employment rates between women and men at EU level was still close to 15 percentage points in 2006. Moreover, labour market segregation and inequalities in working arrangements are proving to be persistent, and this is reflected in a significant and stable gender pay gap. Women are often obliged to choose between having children or a career, due to the lack of care services, of flexible working arrangements, the persistence of gender stereotypes and an unequal share of family responsibilities with men. Progress made by women, including in key areas of the Lisbon Strategy such as education and research, are not fully reflected in women's position on the labour market. This is a waste of human capital that the EU cannot afford.

Gender equality has been a fundamental goal of the European employment strategy since its beginning. It is also seen as instrumental for progress towards the Lisbon objectives of growth and employment. The Employment Guidelines used during the Lisbon cycle 2005-08 underline that gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality should be ensured in all actions taken. The need for specific actions to increase female participation and reduce gender gaps in employment, unemployment, and pay is also stressed.

This dual-track approach (specific actions and gender mainstreaming) has been reinforced in the European Pact for Gender Equality adopted by the European Council of March 2006. The Pact encourages Member States:

- to promote women's employment, reduce gender gaps and asks them to consider how to make welfare system more women's employment friendly;
- to adopt measures to promote a better work-life balance for all (Barcelona targets in childcare, care facilities for other dependents, promotion of parental leave);
- to reinforce governance through gender mainstreaming, notably by encouraging the Member States to include a perspective of gender equality in their National Reform Programmes.

However, the issues of gender equality and gender mainstreaming were not very visible in the National Reform Programmes 2005 and 2006 and the recognition of role and visibility of women's employment and gender equality seems to be declining.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the 2007 Joint employment report states that: "through the European Pact

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<sup>1</sup> Rubery, J. D. Grimshaw, M. Smith & R. Donnelly (2006). *The National Reform Programmes and the gender aspects of the European Employment Strategy*. The coordinator synthesis report prepared for the Equality Unit, European Commission. University of Manchester.

for Gender Equality, Member States were asked to include a perspective of gender equality when reporting on implementation. In spite of this, the promotion of female employment and systematic gender mainstreaming of policies are rarely emphasised"<sup>2</sup>.

It also appears that some positive developments regarding gender equality are not reported by the Member States in their National Reform Programmes. It is therefore crucial, both for the Commission and the Member States, to revamp the gender equality perspective in the Lisbon Strategy, in compliance with the Treaty and EU political commitments.

In its Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-10), the European Commission set as key priorities the economic independence of women and men and the reconciliation between work, private and family life. To this end, the European Commission committed to monitor and strengthen the gender aspect in the Strategy for growth and jobs, to adopt a communication to tackle the gender pay gap, to promote female entrepreneurship, to support Member States efforts to improve care services, etc.

In particular, the Commission planned to **"prepare in 2007 gender equality manuals for actors involved" in the Lisbon process.** The objective is to provide a methodological support to Member States and to help them to better include gender equality issues in their National Reform Programmes.

This manual has been prepared on the basis of a report by the Expert group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment (EGGSIE) which provides external expertise to the European Commission on gender issues. The report (still to be finalised) analyses the state of play of gender mainstreaming in the field of employment policies<sup>3</sup> and aims to present concrete examples of gender mainstreaming implemented over the last few years in the thirty countries covered (EU-27 and the EEA-EFTA countries). It shows that the European countries have undertaken a variety of initiatives, which are extremely valuable from a gender equality point of view. At the same time, it also stresses that gender mainstreaming is a long-term process and it is still at an initial stage. The Manual aims to be a step for a better implementation of the gender mainstreaming principle in Employment Policies and thus in the Lisbon strategy.

After a definition of the concept of gender mainstreaming, this manual proposes a four-step method (getting organised, learning about gender differences, assessing the policy impact and redesigning policy) to be implemented in every relevant policy. This method is then applied to four main fields that have been chosen in order to cover broadly all types of employment policies and all Employment guidelines: active labour market policies, pay and career policies, reconciliation (between work, private and family life) policies and flexicurity policies.

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<sup>2</sup> JER (2007). Joint Employment Report 2006/2007. Council of the European Union, Brussels

<sup>3</sup> "Gender mainstreaming of employment policies - A comparative review of thirty European countries" by the EU expert group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment (EGGSIE), Commissioned by the European Commission (DG EMPL - Unit Equality between women and men), 2007, to be published.

## **2. DEFINING GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Gender mainstreaming is often seen as an innovative concept, encompassing much more than ‘traditional’ equal opportunities policy.

The European Commission adopted the gender mainstreaming approach in 1996, not as a replacement for equal opportunities policy but as additional to it. It is thus an integrated approach: “Gender mainstreaming involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them”<sup>4</sup>.

According to the Council of Europe, gender mainstreaming may be described as “the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy making”<sup>5</sup>.

Another interesting way to define gender mainstreaming is to distinguish between three types of gender equality strategies: tinkering, tailoring and transforming<sup>6</sup> :

- Tinkering refers to measures aimed at establishing formal equality between men and women, such as equal treatment legislation and mechanisms to ensure law enforcement. Examples at the EU level are the directives regarding equal pay and equal treatment in access to employment, training, promotion and working conditions. Tinkering is in fact one of the oldest strategies for promoting equal opportunities.
- The second strategy is tailoring. As equal treatment does not automatically lead to equal outcomes, specific measures and facilities for women may be necessary. Examples are positive action programmes for women and the provision of childcare. Under this tailoring approach women are supposed to assimilate into the status quo, which is in itself not under discussion.
- The third strategy 'transforming' goes a step further by questioning the status quo (the mainstream) and assuming that a transformation of institutions and/or organisations may be necessary to establish gender equality. Thus, gender mainstreaming would result in adding this potential for transformation to the established gender equality policies of formal equality and positive action.

In terms of employment policy, gender mainstreaming implies that the policy takes the unequal position of men and women in the labour market explicitly into account.

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission (1996), Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities COM(1996) 67 final.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe (1998), Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Strasbourg.

<sup>6</sup> Rees (1998). See also Stevens and Van Lamoen 2001.

### **3. THE FOUR STEPS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Over recent years a variety of manuals ‘how to gender mainstream’ have been developed, often focusing at specific areas and/or directed at certain target groups. An example at the European level is the EQUAL Guide on gender mainstreaming that is written for those involved in national EQUAL programmes<sup>7</sup>. Another more recent example is the Gender Mainstreaming Manual, which is developed by the Swedish Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee<sup>8</sup>. Most manuals provide a framework or distinguish certain stages. For example, a useful framework for applying gender mainstreaming is provided in a manual for gender mainstreaming at universities<sup>9</sup>. They distinguish four toolkits or sets of instruments: 1) measurement and monitoring, 2) implementation and organisation, 3) building awareness and ownership and 4) gender proofing and evaluation. In addition, useful information may be found in guides which describe the different stages of a gender impact assessment process<sup>10</sup>. Based on the literature and taking the specific area and stakeholders into account, a checklist for gender mainstreaming of employment policies is developed, consisting of four steps, see box 1.

#### *Box 1 The four steps of gender mainstreaming*

**Getting organized.** The central focus in this first step is on implementation and organization, and building awareness and ownership.

**Learning about gender differences.** The aim of the second step is to describe gender inequality with regard to participation, resources, norms and values and rights, and to evaluate trends without policy intervention.

**Assessing the policy impact.** The third step is to analyse the potential gender impact of the policy with reference to participation, resources, norms and values and rights.

**Redesigning policy.** The fourth step is to identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality.

The sections below provide some details on the above-mentioned four steps. The concrete examples given are stemming from the application (in the above-mentioned expert report) of this method to four different types of employment policies: active labour market policies, pay and career policies, reconciliation policies and flexicurity policies.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2004). *EQUAL Guide on Gender Mainstreaming*. Brussels: European Commission. Downloadable at: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/data/document/gendermain\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/gendermain_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Jämstöd (2007). *Gender mainstreaming manual*. Swedish Government Official Reports SOU 2007:15. Stockholm: Edita Sverige AB. Downloadable at: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/08/19/82/3532cd34.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Stevens, I., & I. van Lamoen (2001). *Manual on Gender Mainstreaming at Universities. Equal Opportunities at Universities. Towards a Gender Mainstreaming Approach*. Leuven/Apeldoorn: Garant-Uitgevers

<sup>10</sup> See for instance: Rubery, J. & C. Fagan (2000). *Gender impact assessment and European Employment Policy*. Downloadable at: [http://www.mbs.ac.uk/research/europeanemployment/projects/gendersocial/documents/GIA\\_Report.pdf](http://www.mbs.ac.uk/research/europeanemployment/projects/gendersocial/documents/GIA_Report.pdf)

## **Step 1: Getting organised**

Implementation and organisation, and building awareness and ownership may be regarded as important preconditions of successful gender mainstreaming. Implementation and organisation of gender mainstreaming refers to the process of providing a structural and cultural basis for equal opportunities<sup>11</sup>. This includes formulation of objectives and targets, making a plan, drawing up a budget and defining responsibilities and accountability of the different actors involved. With regard to the budget, sufficient resources for implementation need to be made available. Moreover, the use of special (external) expertise might be considered. In addition, gender mainstreaming implies that all stakeholders involved in employment policy should take equal opportunities of men and women into account. In order to create a certain degree of gender awareness and expertise, training is essential. In addition, stakeholders should consider gender mainstreaming as part of their tasks and responsibilities. It is therefore important 'to build ownership' but different strategies may be adopted. In some cases all the team may be expected to take 'ownership' but where awareness levels are low it may be necessary initially to have a nominated person with specific knowledge and awareness within the policy making team or unit.

## **Step 2: Learning about gender differences**

A next step in the process of gender mainstreaming is the collection of relevant data on the position of women and men. A description of the actual situation is essential in order to assess actual gender (in)equality and to prioritise areas for attention. In addition, monitoring of the situation over time provides information on the trends in gender (in)equality. The European Commission<sup>12</sup> has identified in 1998 four dimensions to the assessment of gender inequality: participation, resources, norms and values and rights<sup>13</sup>. It is important to consider the initial situation from a dynamic and not solely a static perspective.

### **Participation**

Participation refers to the gender composition of the target group/population of the policy and implies the need to gather basic information such as the share of men and women in unemployment, among the disabled or among those with flexible contracts. Where policy measures specify particular groups of vulnerable persons, the possible differential impact on men and women should also be taken into account. Over recent years considerable progress has been made in improving the availability of gender segregated statistics, a development which facilitates this first step. Though statistics seem straightforward, it is also important to take measurement issues into account. For example, unemployment may be measured in several ways. Depending on the method, gender differences might vary from rather low to quite high.

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<sup>11</sup> Stevens, I., & I. van Lamoen (2001). Manual on Gender Mainstreaming at Universities. Equal Opportunities at Universities. Towards a Gender Mainstreaming Approach. Leuven/Apeldoorn: Garant-Uitgevers, p.52

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (1998) *A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg

<sup>13</sup> Rubery, J. & C. Fagan (2000). Gender impact assessment and European Employment Policy. Downloadable at: [http://www.mbs.ac.uk/research/europeanemployment/projects/gendersocial/documents/GIA\\_Report.pdf](http://www.mbs.ac.uk/research/europeanemployment/projects/gendersocial/documents/GIA_Report.pdf)

## *Resources*

Gender differences may also occur regarding the access to/distribution of resources such as time, space, information and money, political and economic power, qualifications, transport, use of public services etc. In particular the unequal division of care responsibilities has a major impact on the distribution of resources. For example, with respect to active labour market policies, the fact that women bear the main responsibility for raising children should be taken into account. Availability of childcare is, therefore, very important to enable, in particular, women to be participants in the programmes. In the field of reconciliation policies a relevant issue is whether leave arrangements are paid or unpaid. Women are also more likely to be concentrated in the area of the labour market most influenced by national minimum wages and are therefore disproportionately affected by decisions to raise the national minimum by more or by less than the average rate of growth in earnings.

## *Norms and values*

Norms and values influence gender roles and the gender division of labour, and the attitudes and behaviour of women and men. They also account in part for the inequalities in the value attached to men and women or to masculine and feminine characteristics. It is essential to identify the role of policy measures in reinforcing social norms and values that maintain gender inequality. Tax and benefit policies are, for example, often based on the principle of a male breadwinner household model. The move towards more individualized models may, regardless of the impact on participation rates, have an important symbolic value. Along the same line, policy focusing on a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work - with men explicitly in a role of carer - might also contribute to a more equal set of norms and values.

## *Rights*

Rights pertain to direct or indirect sex discrimination, human rights, and access to justice in the legal, political or socio-economic environment. For example, are active labour market schemes open to the inactive (returners, not just benefit claimants) as well as to the unemployed who are entitled to benefits? If not then women may be less able than men to claim support for re-entering employment. In this respect it should also taken into account that even where women have formal rights on the same basis as men, lack of facilities may restrict women's ability to exercise their rights to take up these opportunities. Similarly formal rights for men to participate in reconciliation measures will not necessarily be sufficient to promote gender equality in care work.

## ***Step 3: Assessing the policy impact***

The third step requires an assessment of the potential gender impact of the policy with reference to participation, resources, norms and values and rights. An important issue regarding participation is that both quantitative as well as qualitative aspects should be taken into account. For example, programmes to

create jobs may in particular concern women. This may be assessed as positive from a gender equality point of view. When, however, the job quality is problematic (e.g. in terms of working hours and pay), such programmes might reinforce gender inequality. With respect to access to resources, it is critical to take into account not only the impact on household resources but also the impact on individual resources. On the level of social norms and values, reconciliation policies should address men's involvement in domestic labour. If only women make use of reconciliation policies the traditional unequal division of unpaid work between men and women will be reinforced, thereby potentially reinforcing social norms in this respect. With regard to rights it is relevant to include the right to care as well as to undertake employment.

When assessing the impact of policy, it may be important to differentiate between particular groups of men and women such as ethnic minority groups, parents versus the childless, age groups, educational groups, regional groups etc. While measures to increase the participation rate might, for example, be effective for women from the dominant group, women from ethnic minority groups may require specific measures. In addition, a sound policy assessment should include indirect effects. Changes to gender relations outside as well as inside work may be one of the indirect effects to be looked for. A strong focus on part-time work could, for example, have the long term effect of reinforcing gender divisions of labour both in and outside work as women become more concentrated in sectors offering flexible employment. This example also illustrates the importance of distinguishing between short-term and long-term effects.

#### ***Step 4: Redesigning policy***

Where the policy is assessed to have a negative impact on gender equality or to be broadly gender neutral, it is essential to identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality. The need for redesign is particularly strong where initial gender differences are high and have major impacts on women's life chances. Redesign does not necessarily imply fundamental changes. For example, regarding active labour market policies a rather simple but effective measure is to extend eligibility to all inactives. Providing facilities to support working parents also seems not too complicated. Other areas may be more complex. For example, reducing vertical and horizontal segregation calls for more extensive policies. Redesign may also require a multi-pronged approach involving more than one policy area or department. For example the public employment service may need to cooperate actively with the department responsible for the provision of childcare if women seeking employment are to have access to childcare to facilitate job search. Gender mainstreaming calls for a more joined up approach to policy design where employment policy is not developed in isolation from welfare provision and childcare services on the one hand or tax and benefit policies on the other hand.

## **4. GENDER MAINSTREAMING OF EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**

In order to provide concrete examples, the four-step method explained above has been applied to four types of employment policies: active labour market policies, pay and career policies, reconciliation policies and flexicurity policies. These four types of policies have been chosen in order to cover all employment policies though some specific policies might be covered in several of these fields. These fields are normally broad enough to be applied to the employment guidelines, whatever the extent of the possible changes in the future.

In the sections below, each of the policy fields is defined, its possible impact in terms of gender equality is discussed and a specific box contains a list of relevant questions to consider in the process of gender mainstreaming.

The boxes and analysis presented below have been developed in the above-mentioned expert report on gender mainstreaming of employment policies<sup>14</sup>. This report also provides some concrete examples of gender mainstreaming in the four policy fields developed in the Member States or in EEA-EFTA countries. The reader is therefore invited to consult this report for a more extensive presentation on the interactions between each policy fields and gender equality. It has to be noted that some of the steps (especially the last one which highly depend on the results of the three first steps) are sometimes similar from one policy field to another.

### **4.1 Active labour market policies**

As a result of the European Employment Strategy, Member States have intensified their efforts to improve the position of groups and individuals at the margins of the labour market. Active labour market policies are an important instrument in this respect. As defined in Employment in Europe 2006<sup>15</sup>, labour market policies are public interventions targeted towards *particular groups* in the labour market and, as such, may be distinguished from general employment policies such as measures that lower labour costs. Active labour market policies aim to increase the likelihood of employment or improve income prospects for the unemployed persons/groups who find it difficult to enter the labour market (ibid). Public employment services play an important role in this respect by facilitating the integration of the unemployed and other job seekers in the labour market (e.g. placement, counselling and advice). In addition, active measures include training, job rotation and job sharing, employment incentives, integration of specific groups, direct job creation and start-up incentives<sup>16</sup>.

In order to promote gender equality, equal opportunities principles should be embedded within the operation of the public employment service (PES). An effective method in this respect is the appointment of a specific equal opportunities officer, who has the necessary expertise. Essential seems also that PES employees are informed on the issue of gender mainstreaming and receive

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<sup>14</sup> "Gender mainstreaming of employment policies - A comparative review of thirty European countries" by the EU expert group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment (EGGSIE), Commissioned by the European Commission (DG EMPL - Unit Equality between women and men), 2007, to be published

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2006)b, Employment in Europe - 2006, p.120

<sup>16</sup> European Commission (2006)b, Employment in Europe - 2006, p.120

training in how to incorporate this in their work. Another important aspect of gender mainstreaming of public employment services is that active labour market programmes are open to all inactive persons and not restricted only to benefit claimants and that men and women have equitable access to active labour market policies. This also implies that the specific needs of disadvantaged groups need to be addressed. See box 2 for a checklist on gender mainstreaming of active labour market policies.

*Box 2 Gender mainstreaming of active labour market policies*

**Step 1. Getting organized**

- Are there any guidelines or targets set with regard to equal opportunities?
- Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the gender equality issues?
- Is there a clear structure of responsibilities?
- Are training facilities in gender equality issues available and/or is it possible to make use of external expertise?

**Step 2. Learning about gender differences**

- Are all relevant statistics differentiated by gender?
- What is the gender division of the target groups?
- What is the gender division of specific disadvantaged groups like school drop out, lone parents, persons on long term leave, long term unemployed, ethnic minorities?
- What are the relevant trends in this respect?

**Step 3. Assessing the policy impact**

- Do men and women have equitable access to active labour market policies, including training?
- Are measures available to the inactive as well as the unemployed?
- Are there measures addressing the needs of specific groups, like lone parents (by providing child care services), disabled (by providing social services and technical aid), or women returners after long term care (by offering training facilities)?
- Do active labour market policies promote the entry of women into high quality, non-traditional jobs?
- Do men and women benefit in equal terms from initiatives to start up businesses or any other services provided by Public employment services?

**Step 4. Redesigning policy**

- Given the results of step 1, 2 and 3 identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality. Take into account that gender mainstreaming calls for a more joined up approach, which may involve more than one policy area or department.

## **4.2 Pay and career policies**

Gender equality cannot be achieved without both equality in pay and in opportunities but in practice prospects for closing the gender pay gap are also closely intertwined with issues of segregation and continuity of careers. Reducing the gender pay gap is an important topic on the European political agenda. Since 1999 it has been part of the European Employment Strategy and policy efforts have intensified over the years. In 2003 Member States were called on to formulate targets in this respect in order “to achieve by 2010 a substantial reduction in the gender pay gap in each Member State through a multi-faceted approach addressing the underlying factors of the gender pay gap including sectoral and occupational segregation, education and training, job classifications and pay systems, awareness raising and transparency” (Council Decision 2003 L197/20). Eliminating the gender pay gap is also an important objective of the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men, 2006-2010. The persistence of the gender pay gap, according to the Roadmap, results from direct discrimination against women and structural inequalities, such as segregation in sectors, occupations, and work patterns, access to education and training, biased evaluation and pay systems and stereotypes.

Given the complexity of the causes of the gender pay gap and in line with the suggested multi-faceted approach, the gender mainstreaming of pay policies would imply the need for a variety of measures. Firstly, countries may implement an equal pay policy aiming at tackling direct or indirect gender wage discrimination. Examples include (additional) legislation, availability and dissemination of information and initiatives with respect to job evaluation. Relevant in this respect is also the development of an appropriate infrastructure. Secondly, equal opportunities policy may contribute to a reduction of the gender pay gap. Given that an uninterrupted career is still a significant factor in explaining the overall gender pay gap, it is extremely important to enable women to have more continuous employment patterns. Relevant measures in this respect are childcare and leave facilities and measures aimed at desegregation of the labour market, horizontally as well as vertically. As policy with regard to reconciliation is covered by the following policy field, we will in this section concentrate on policies focussing on de-segregating employment patterns. A third line refers to gender mainstreaming of ‘general’ wage policies aiming at reducing wage inequality and improving the remuneration of low-paid and/or female-dominated jobs. A complicating factor regarding equal pay issues is that in most countries wage setting is seen as the primary responsibility of social partners. Governments may therefore be rather reluctant to interfere. The above-mentioned expert report therefore also addresses good practices at the level of social partners. See box 3 for a checklist on gender mainstreaming of pay and career policies.

### **Box 3 Gender mainstreaming of pay and career policies**

#### **Step 1. Getting organized**

- Are there any guidelines or targets set with regard to equal pay and career policies?
- Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the gender equality issues?
- Is there a clear structure of responsibilities?
- Are training facilities in gender equality issues available and/or is it possible to make use of external expertise?

#### **Step 2. Learning about gender differences**

- Are all relevant statistics differentiated by gender?
- What is the distribution of male and female employees over the wage structure?
- Are women overrepresented among the low paid?
- What are the relevant trends in this respect?

#### **Step 3. Assessing the policy impact**

- Is the equal pay legislation effective at lowering the gender pay gap?
- Is there (additional) legislation that obliges social partners to bargain over equal pay?
- Are companies required to survey and analyse pay practices on a regular basis?
- Are job evaluation measures used on a regular basis?
- Do women returners have access to training?
- Do policies promote (horizontal and vertical) desegregation of occupations and workplaces?
- Are wage policies aimed at reducing wage inequality and improving the remuneration of low-paid and/or female-dominated jobs?

#### **Step 4. Redesigning policy**

- Given the results of step 1, 2 and 3 identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality. Take into account that gender mainstreaming calls for a more joined up approach, which may involve more than one policy area or department.

### **4.3 Reconciliation policies**

In the Roadmap for equality between women and men, the reconciliation of work, private and family life is presented as one of the six priority areas of action for gender equality : "services and structures are adapting too slowly to a situation where both women and men work. Few men take parental leave or work part-time (7.4% compared to 32.6% for women); women remain the main carers of children and other dependants. Men should be encouraged to take up family responsibilities, in particular through incentives to take parental and paternity leaves and to share leave entitlements with women". Reconciliation policy not only serves to improve gender equality; it is also a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion. In fact, the need to create a flexible economy, using the full potential of the work force, the changing family forms and the demographic pressure from an ageing population have made the reconciliation of work and family one of the major topics on the European social agenda.

Reconciliation policies can be defined as policies that directly support the combination of professional family and private life. As such they may refer to a wide variety of policies ranging from childcare services, leave facilities, flexible working arrangements and other reconciliation policies such as financial allowances for working partners<sup>17</sup>. A gender mainstreaming perspective in the domain of reconciliation is to a certain extent established in so far as most European governments recognise the impact of care responsibilities on women's employment. Yet countries differ in their policy responses and in their implicit or explicit focus on gender equality. Some countries encourage the supply of public and private services, others improve the opportunities to work part-time hours. Some still consider reconciliation a woman's affair, whereas others recognise the role of men in care and family responsibilities (mainly encouraging taking up or improving paternity leave schemes). See box 4 for a checklist of gender mainstreaming of reconciliation policies.

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<sup>17</sup> Plantenga, J. & C. Remery (2005) *Reconciliation of work and private life*. A comparative review of thirty European countries. European Commission. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p.25

#### **Box 4 Gender mainstreaming of reconciliation policies**

##### **Step 1. Getting organized**

- Are there any guidelines or targets set with regard to reconciliation policies?
- Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the gender equality issues?
- Is there a clear structure of responsibilities?
- Are training facilities in gender equality issues available and/or is it possible to make use of external expertise?

##### **Step 2. Learning about gender differences**

- Are all relevant statistics differentiated by gender?
- Are there leave provisions to cope with care of elderly adults?
- What is the take up of leave facilities by gender?
- What is the coverage rate of childcare facilities by age group?
- What are the trends in this respect?

##### **Step 3. Assessing the policy impact**

- What is the impact of leave in terms of labour market behaviour?
- Do leave arrangements for parents promote or discourage attachment to the labour market?
- Do policies promote equal sharing of care responsibilities?
- Is there evidence of commitment to meet childcare coverage targets and to provide affordable, high quality childcare?
- Are opening hours for childcare compatible with full time employment?
- Are there childcare facilities for those engaged in lifelong learning?

##### **Step 4. Redesigning policy**

- Given the results of step 1, 2 and 3 identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality. Take into account that gender mainstreaming calls for a more joined up approach, which may involve more than one policy area or department.

#### 4.4 Flexicurity policies

Flexicurity has become an important frame of reference in the debate about modernizing the European labour markets. The concept of flexicurity gained momentum after the publication in 2003 of the report by the European Employment Task Force, chaired by Wim Kok, on creating more employment in Europe<sup>18</sup>. The report states that in order to boost employment and productivity, Europe needs to increase the adaptability of workers and enterprises. A more responsive organisation of work is especially necessary in order to prevent the emergence of a two-tier labour market where ‘insiders’ benefit from high level of employment protection, while an increasing number of ‘outsiders’ are recruited under alternative forms of contracts with lower protection. In June 2007, the Commission adopted a Communication on flexicurity which will help reform efforts at the level of the Member States<sup>19</sup>.

It is important to note that flexicurity does not involve entirely new policy measures; rather its novelty lies in the combination of simultaneously introduced measures in the field of both flexibility and security. Wilthagen (rapporteur of the "European Expert Group on Flexicurity") provides the following definition: "A policy strategy that attempts, synchronically and in a deliberate way, to enhance the flexibility of labour markets, the work organization and labour relations on the one hand, and to enhance security - employment security and social security - notably for weaker groups in and outside the labour market on the other hand"<sup>20</sup>. This definition makes clear that a fully integrated approach to flexicurity goes beyond narrowly defined policies on labour market flexibility and employees security. Also included are active labour market policies, with active job search, job availability, and life long learning as important ingredients. The central focus is on finding a balance of policies with the aim of increasing the adaptability of workers and the work place. As such, the flexicurity approach implies a shift from a job security paradigm (having the same job all your life) to an employment security paradigm (having employment possibilities and abilities all your life)<sup>21</sup>.

Given the relations between flexicurity and gender and the different positions taken within the current debate, a gender mainstreaming of flexicurity policies is of utmost importance. In this respect, gender mainstreaming implies the need to recognize the tension between the goal of promoting flexibility and the goal of employment security and the pivotal role of gender in determining the outcomes on the labour market. More in particular a gender mainstream approach to policies in the area of flexicurity<sup>22</sup> :

- would recognize the role of gender in reinforcing inequalities associated with flexible working and in shaping flexible working patterns;

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission (2003). *Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. Creating more employment in Europe*. Report of the Employment Taskforce, headed by Wim Kok

<sup>19</sup> European Commission (2007), *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security*, SEC(2007) 861

<sup>20</sup> Wilthagen, T & F. Tros (2004). The concept of flexicurity: a new approach to regulating employment and labour market. In: *Flexicurity: conceptual issues and political implementation in Europe*. Transfer, European Review of labour and research, 10(2).

<sup>21</sup> EMCO (2006). *Flexicurity*. EMCO Working Group on flexicurity. May 2006

<sup>22</sup> Rubery, J. D. Grimshaw, M. Smith & R. Donnelly (2006). *The National Reform Programmes and the gender aspects of the European Employment Strategy*. The coordinator synthesis report prepared for the Equality Unit, European Commission. University of Manchester, p.214.

- address the reconciliation needs of employees with care commitments while recognizing the risks of extending working hours or unsocial hours scheduling;
- supports pathways out of non-standard work and working times to avoid the risks of long term traps and segmentation of women in-to disadvantaged employment forms.

See box 5 for a checklist on gender mainstreaming of flexicurity policies

*Box 5 Gender mainstreaming of flexicurity policies*

**Step 1. Getting organized**

- Are there any guidelines or targets set with regard to flexicurity policies?
- Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the gender equality issues?
- Is there a clear structure of responsibilities?
- Are training facilities in gender equality issues available and/or is it possible to make use of external expertise?

**Step 2. Learning about gender differences**

- Are all relevant statistics differentiated by gender?
- What is the gender division of typical and a-typical contract?
- What is the gender division of fulltime and part-time working hours?
- What are the trends in this respect?

**Step 3. Assessing the policy impact**

- Are flexible time arrangements compatible with women's needs?
- Is the development of flexible working time compatible or incompatible with domestic care responsibilities?
- Are the programmes / policies aimed at men as well as women?
- Do those on flexible contracts have access to training?
- Are there measures to reduce the risk of segregation associated with flexible and part-time working (for example rights to return to full-time work)?
- Are adaptability policies compatible with promoting the closure of the gender gaps (including gender pay gaps)?

**Step 4. Redesigning policy**

- Given the results of step 1, 2 and 3 identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality. Take into account that gender mainstreaming calls for a more joined up approach, which may involve more than one policy area or department.

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