



Gender equality – the key to a sustainable, smart and inclusive society:

Thematic report – new skills and jobs and gender in the ESF



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The European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming (2010-2014) was a community dedicated to integrating the gender dimension into the European Social Fund (ESF) programmes (2014-2020) in relation to the EU 2020 strategy. The goal was that gender mainstreaming shall be an integral part of future ESF management – from planning, programming, implementing to monitoring and evaluation. The network was funded by the European Commission. Find out more on www.gendercop.eu

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1. Introduction

In 2010 the European Council adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy. It is a continuation of the Lisbon Strategy implemented between 2000 and 2010 and constitutes the strategic framework for the next Structural Funds programming period.

In 2010 an “agenda for new skills and jobs” (henceforth the “Agenda”) was launched by the European Commission (EC). The initiative is one of seven “Flagships” designed to implement the EU 2020 strategy (COM(2008)868final, SEC 2008/3058 final). In the Agenda the EC has outlined a number of measures to meet the EU2020 employment target, namely for 75% of the working-age population (20–64 years) to be in work in 2020. This target cannot be achieved without a marked increase in women’s labour market participation, as has been acknowledged both in the new EU Employment Strategy (Strasbourg, 18.4.2012 COM(2012) 173 final) and by the European Council. In addition the Agenda should also contribute to achieving the EU’s targets to reduce the early school-leaving rate to below 10%; for more young people to be in higher education or equivalent vocational education (at least 40%); and for there to be at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020.

Four main areas of policy response have been outlined in the Agenda:

- Better functioning labour markets.
 - A more skilled workforce, capable of contributing to and adapting to technological change with new patterns of work organisation.
 - Better job quality and working conditions.
 - Stronger policies to promote job creation and demand for labour.
- (COM(2010) 682 final)

The European Commission identified 13 key actions to reach these objectives. The potential role of EU financial instruments – the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Rural Development Fund (EARDF), and the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) – is also highlighted (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012).

In this report the different topics of the Agenda are discussed from a gender perspective and with the specific framework of the European Social Fund (ESF) in mind. The main aim of the report is to discuss the “anchoring” of a gender perspective in relation to the Agenda, and specifically concerning the role of the ESF in fulfilling the EU 2020 strategy *and* the Gender Equality Strategy (<http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/>) as well as the Pact for Gender Equality (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/119630.pdf). It is asked what the main gender equality requirements are and how they have been taken on board in documents that outline policy

implementation, if there are any gender gaps or gender aspects not addressed in the Agenda, and if this is so, what could further be integrated into the analysis and policy responses to strengthen the gender perspective in the implementation of the initiatives following the Agenda. In writing this report, the documents outlining the Agenda have been assessed and complemented by prior research that has studied related topics from a gender perspective. The analysis has been inspired by Carol Bacchi's "What's the problem?" approach (Bacchi 1999). Bacchi argues that what is conceived as a policy problem and a policy response is in part dependent on one's own understanding of what one sees as problematic and needing to change. She asks us to think about whether there are alternative ways to think about a problem, what has been left unproblematic, and what the silences are. She wants us to consider whether the "problem" can be conceived differently, and also what effects are produced by different ways of thinking about the "problem"? (ibid.)

In order to analyse the problems to be addressed by the proposed solutions and see whether there are any "gender silences" or areas left unproblematised, it is necessary to discuss the central themes or "problems" that are dealt with in the Agenda. This means to discuss employment and unemployment, internal and external flexibility, skills matching and employment based security, working conditions and vocational training – all from a gender perspective. Some aspects of this can be found in the policies, regulations and common agreements on gender equality in the EU.

In this report the main objectives and requirements will first be outlined, followed by a discussion of how they have or have not been translated into mainstream policies with a specific focus on the EU 2020, the Agenda and the ESF. The next section discusses gender disparities relevant to the Agenda, what they are and why they are important. There will be a specific focus on alternative understandings of the problems that an analysis with a gender perspective makes visible. The final section contains reflections on what should be done to address them.

2. Gender equality, EU2020 and the ESF – main requirements and policy responses

Gender equality has been an objective of EU policies for a long time. As early as 1957 the Treaty of Rome included a provision for equal pay for equal work (Article 119). Gender equality is often characterized as 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. The common gender equality policy of the EU today consists of three main areas: gender equality legislation; soft regulations, including financial contributions; and the general notion of integrating a gender perspective into all EU policy areas, referred to as the dual gender-equality approach, which includes the gender mainstreaming strategy and specific actions to benefit women or men in their diversity. In recent years several important policies of importance for the ESF have been put into place.

In 2010, the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010–2015) was adopted. The strategy has six priority areas similar to those of the previous Roadmap: equal economic independence; equal pay; equality in decision-making; an end to gender-based violence; equality in external actions; and horizontal issues. The strategy outlines the common work with gender equality in the EU. Besides the strategy, the European Pact for Gender Equality of the Council (2011–2020) has the intention of strengthening binding obligations for the member states.

The Pact states that three areas are of greater relevance to gender equality: employment, education and social inclusion, which is why it considers that these objectives can only be fulfilled by including them in ... the EU 2020. Moreover, the Pact also considers that the promotion and evaluation of the EU2020 integrated Guidelines and flagship initiatives with a gender perspective are essential to strengthen gender national policies. In other words, gender equality is considered a part of the solution for exiting the crisis. (Brodolini et al. 2012)

When it comes to the European Structural and Investment Funds, and the ESF in particular, several important regulations (the Common Provisions Regulation and the ESF regulation) clearly state that the dual approach should be applied at all levels of implementation from 2014.

“Head counts” and equal opportunity (de jure) perspectives are most common

An overall assessment of the adoption and coherence of different policies in EU initiatives has been undertaken by EPEC (European Policy Evaluation Consortium) in association with COWI for the European Commission (REF). Their comparison of key messages and policy themes in ESF, Social OMC, Europe 2020 and the integrated employment guidelines shows that the adoption of the gender equality perspective has a lower coherence than that of the equal opportunity

perspectives (Annex 3, p. 179). This means that the anti-discrimination perspective has a higher degree of implementation in the policies that have been compared. Anti-discrimination and equal opportunity are important components of gender equality strategies, but they primarily address formal, or de jure equality principles, e.g. equal pay. To be effective, these strategies need to be complemented with actions directed towards equality of outcome, e.g. paid and unpaid work issues, gender segregation in the labour market, etc. (Rees 2005, Woodward 2003, Stratigaki 2004, 2005).

Gender in the EU 2020 and the ESF 2014+

The Europe 2020 Strategy is translated into action in part through the Integrated Guidelines and the Employment Guidelines. Whereas Part I of the guidelines on economic policy does not refer to gender equality and the dual gender equality approach at all, the 2010–2014 employment guidelines of October 2010 stipulate: *“A visible gender equality perspective, integrated into all relevant policy areas, is therefore crucial for the implementation of all aspects of the guidelines in the Member States.”* (p. 10).

From the perspective of gender equality policy, the guidelines for Member States' employment policies provide for an increase in labour market participation of women and men (guideline 7), combating segregation of the labour market, inactivity and gender inequality (guideline 7), equal pay (guideline 7), work–life balance (guideline 7), overcoming gender stereotypes (guideline 8), support for women in scientific, mathematical and technological fields (guideline 8), and promotion of social inclusion and combating poverty with special attention to women (guideline 10).

Compared to the prior ESF funding period (2007–2013), requirements regarding coherent gender equality integration have been strengthened in the ESF Regulation for the funding period 2014–2020: *“The Member States and the Commission shall promote equality between men and women through mainstreaming as referred to in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No [CPR] throughout the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. Through the ESF, they shall also support specific targeted actions within any of the investment priorities as referred to in Article 3, and in particular Article 3 (1)(a)(iv), with the aim of increasing the sustainable participation and progress of women in employment, thus combating the feminisation of poverty, reducing gender-based segregation and combating gender stereotypes in the labour market and in education and training, promoting reconciliation of work and personal life for all and equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women.”* [ESF Regulation](#)

3. Agenda for new skills and jobs: Gender issues, their causes and why they need to be addressed

What then do we know about gender in relation to the thematic priorities in the Agenda and how they have been taken on board? Previous studies have shown that there is a lot to be gained from making a gender analysis, not only in terms of how different policies impact on women and men but also because a gender perspective is relevant for the possibility to reach growth targets. Löfström writes that “...based on the assumptions made here – that labour market equality means women and men working to the same extent in paid jobs, having an equal share of part-time work and self-employment – everything suggests that there are major benefits to be gained from enhancing gender equality. Calculation of a maximum value of these gains shows that there is a potential for increased GDP of between 15 and 45 per cent in the EU member states” (Löfström p. 5). Cutting back gender equality policies in times of crisis is, from this perspective, counterproductive. It is an expression of an economic understanding where gender equality initiatives are seen as an “extra” cost. An alternative viewpoint instead makes an “economic case” for gender equality. Compared to the business case, the economic case for gender equality has a wider scope, since it is not limited to the boundaries of a single organisation. It goes beyond simply counting the evidence of gains for individual organisations or companies. Needless to say, there is a great deal of evidence pointing to positive outcomes on an organisational level, and of course for individuals, but they are often measured and analysed only in the short-term. An economic case for gender equality focuses on the relevance of gender equality policies at a more aggregated level. It provides a perspective that is long-term and not short-term (Smith and Bettio 2008). In order to make such an analysis, a gender perspective must be present when discussing how to deal with current and future challenges in the labour market.

The Agenda is built on an analysis of current trends and prognoses and sets out policy measures in response to what are understood as the major challenges. The Agenda presents a set of concrete actions that will help:

- Step up reforms to improve flexibility and security in the labour market, i.e. flexicurity
- Equip people with the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow
- Improve the quality of jobs and ensure better working conditions
- Improve the conditions for job creation

These aspects will be discussed from a gender perspective below.

A gender perspective on the EU labour market

In recent decades, women have entered the labour market in great numbers. However, inequalities persist, and furthermore, many of the gender gaps in the labour markets across Europe have a similar pattern. They can be summarized as unequal participation of women and men in the labour market due to unequal conditions for doing so, and a negative impact on women in terms of their wages and possibilities for economic independence, career development, working conditions, decision-making and ultimately their pension. For men it restricts their possibilities to pursue non-traditional careers and to be parents on equal terms as mothers, and it adversely affects their workload and health.

The gendered aspects are clearly visible in the gender segregation in the labour markets, both horizontal and vertical, as seen for instance in high levels of part-time for women and low levels of parental leave for men, difficulties combining work with having children or with taking care of elderly relatives, a large gender pay gap and pension gap, and work-related health issues. Still, almost half the women in the EU are employed in health and social services, retailing, education and public administration (Kurian 2010). And many women still do not work at all or do so only to a very small extent. In 2011, the EU launched the first European Semester and adopted its first Annual Growth Survey, anchored in the Europe 2020 Strategy. It highlighted the worryingly low labour market participation rates of second earners (the spouse who earns less in two-earner couples). In many Member States, financial disincentives such as tax and benefit systems combined with excessive childcare costs make it more attractive for the spouse with relatively lower earnings (who tends in general to be a woman) to choose between either inactivity or limited activity. The labour supply of spouses is interconnected, and married women's decisions to enter the labour market are often influenced by the total income of the household. As a result, women may enter or leave the workforce depending on family income needs. They are consequently more sensitive to policies affecting their participation in the labour market than policies addressing hours of work. When pension systems were initially developed, men spent a lifetime in the labour market and women mostly stayed home. The resulting inequality in pension incomes was addressed by allowing wives to draw on their husbands' contributions.

The current crisis, but also the measures to deal with it, have also impacted the situation of women and men differently. One example is that men's employment rates went down at the beginning of the crisis but women were initially protected because of their higher rates of employment in the public sector. However the budget cuts to handle the crisis meant that women are now in greater danger of unemployment. This is sometimes referred to as a shift from "he-cession" to "sh(e) austerity" (Karamessini and Rubery 2014, Périvier 2014). Furthermore, general indicators used to measure employment rates can be elusive. This is shown by the fact that the reported closing of the gender gaps in employment that can be observed as a result of the crisis is not due to women's situation having become better, but that men's situation has become worse. The role of

indicators has been discussed by several researchers. (See for example Bettio and Verashchagina, 2013.) There is furthermore reason to believe that the progress that has been made in changing the prevailing gender regimes in many Member States (Villa and Smith 2013), often with a male breadwinner model, underdeveloped care systems and a limited female employment, will be affected by the crisis. It is believed that the progress towards greater gender equality will be adversely affected by the crisis and that the differences between countries will widen. Precarious jobs will increase for both women and men, and working conditions will become worse, one explanation being the specific austerity measures put into place in many countries (Karamessini and Rubery, 2014, Rubery, 2014b). Villa and Smith (2014) discuss four major reasons why cuts in the public sector will affect women more than men: (1) the majority of public-sector workers are women and thus more women are subject to pay freezes, job cuts and reduced pension entitlement; (2) women use public services more than men to meet their own needs and to help manage care responsibilities; (3) women are more likely than men to pick up the extra unpaid work resulting from cuts in public services; and finally (4) women have a greater dependency on benefits due to their higher participation in unpaid care work and lower earnings (Villa and Smith 2014 p. 110 with reference to WBG 2010).

The consequences of not supporting working women and men may ultimately result in fewer women being able to work at all. As Villa and Smith write: *“The de-prioritisation of policies to support working women – for example, childcare policies – implicitly treats women as a reserve army on the labour market, and it may result in reduced female participation in the context of low demand”* (Villa and Smith 2014, p. 91).

Country variations

	<i>Family provider/earner model</i>	<i>Gender role model</i>	<i>Individual regime</i>
Ideology	Division of labour Husband = provider Wife = care giver	Division of labour Husband=provider Mother=care giver	Shared responsibility Father= provider and care giver Mother= provider and care giver Dual earner and care giver
Benefits	Unequal between spouses	Separate through gender roles	Equal
Benefit principle	Provider model	Family responsibilities	Citizenship or permanent residency
Beneficiary	Head of household Additional benefits for economically dependent wife	Men as family provider Women as care givers	Individuals
Tax system	Joint taxation Deduction for economically dependent wife	Joint taxation Deduction for both spouses and single mothers	Separate (individual) taxation Equal deductions
Employment and wage policies	Priority for men	Priority for men	Directed toward both women and men
Care system	Mainly private	Mainly private	Strong government responsibility
Care work	Unpaid	Partly paid to care giver in the household	Partly paid to care giver in the household and beyond

Table 1. Different gender regimes (Sainsbury 1999, 2008)

There are, of course, also many differences in gender segregation of the labour market in different Member States, depending on a number of different factors including scale of women's employment, the division of work in households, cultural differences, etc. One example is levels of part time work. In 2010 the share of part-time among working women was higher than that among men in all countries, but especially in continental and northern European countries and in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The highest share of part-time work among women was recorded by the Netherlands (76%), while in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway it was about 40%. The shares of people working part-time jobs are low in many eastern European and Baltic countries, both for women and men. Overall, part-time employment maintained its upward trend in 2010. Part-time employment as a percentage of total employment reached 18.5% in the EU, up by 0.4 p.p. from 2009. Among EU countries it was highest in the Netherlands (48.3%) and lowest in Bulgaria (2.2%) and Slovakia (3.8%) (Eurostat). When assessing the potential of different initiatives in line with the Agenda to solve these problems it is important to take into account country variations and the prevailing "gender regimes" of different EU Member States as discussed by Sainsbury (Sainsbury 1999, 2011). One example is the contrast between Sweden and Germany. Sweden exhibits many

features of the individual regime, while Germany mainly resembles a modified family provider model. In Germany separate taxation is optional, and in practice most couples end up choosing joint taxation because it is more favourable. Of the 14 countries compared by Sainsbury in 2011, the tax system in Germany “punishes” married women who work the most.

The different tax regulations in Sweden and Germany provide different incentives for women and men to work, and influence differences in wages between women and men. They also affect the number of women who work part time. In Sweden 77.7% of women work and the part-time figure is 19%. The corresponding figures for Germany are 68.5% and 39.1% respectively. (Sainsbury 2011). Other differences can be seen in how benefits for the elderly are provided; for married women in Germany, these benefits are based on their husband’s rights (ibid). In recent years the care system for children has been reformed in Germany, and Sweden has tested cash-for-care policies, making the two countries to some extent more similar, but the main differences remain.

The above differences are important to bear in mind when comparing and assessing the effects of different initiatives following the Agenda.

Gender in the Agenda for new skills and jobs

In the following an account is provided of what is understood as the main problem and how it should be solved in the Agenda. This is followed by a discussion of what might have been left un-problematised and what alternative gendered perspectives on the major challenges for the EU labour market could look like.

Better functioning labour markets and flexicurity

In the Agenda, the problem and the solution are described as follows. Structural, chronically high unemployment rates represent an unacceptable loss of human capital; they discourage workers and lead to premature withdrawal from the labour market and to social exclusion. Flexicurity policies are believed to be the best instrument to modernise labour markets. They must furthermore be revised and adapted to the post-crisis context, in order to accelerate the pace of reform, reduce labour market segmentation, support gender equality and make job-transitions pay.

What is not being discussed is that non-employment, part time employment, precarious jobs and poor working conditions, and the possibility for women to be economically independent are all affected by unequal sharing of family responsibilities and the gender segregated labour market. Flexicurity policies might not be the best way to modernise labour markets, since they risk worsening the situation of women. It might serve to promote flexibility for women but with no increased security to counteract the potential negative effects. Villa and Smith (2014) write *“most of the labour market reforms carried out in Member States over the last decade, and accelerated as a result of the crisis, have focused on further increasing the flexibility of workers, with little effort made to increase security. These policies have often had a detrimental impact upon women, who*

are identified as ‘beneficiaries’ of flexible jobs, in order to reconcile work and family life” (Villa and Smith 2014, p. 112).

The reason for women working part time is an unequal division of unpaid work. The levels of part-time work differ significantly between men and women. Just under one third (32.1%) of women aged 15–64 who were employed in the EU-28 worked on a part-time basis in 2013, a much higher proportion than the corresponding share for men (8.8%). The highest proportions of part-time work are found among women with children, probably because part-time work is considered a way to reconcile work and family life. In 2011 in the EU27, almost a third (32%) of employed women aged 25 to 54 with one child less than six years old worked part-time, while for employed women with three children or more, the youngest aged six years or less, half (50%) worked part-time. For employed men, the rates were significantly lower (5% and 7% respectively). It is important to point out that, while the proportion of women working part-time increases when they have children and also with the number of children, the proportion of men remains relatively stable (Eurostat). Earlier research has furthermore shown that men tend to manage transitions from (1) non-employment to employment, (2) temporary to permanent jobs and (3) low pay to higher pay better than women (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012). Research from the LoWER network (2010) discusses the negative impact of transitioning from full-time to part-time work, which mainly affects women. This is not caused by the need to reduce hours for parents in general, but rather by the unequal share of family responsibilities. Only a few women manage to return to full-time, and those that do often suffer a large set-back in wages. Addressing policy-makers, LoWER write: “It is very important to consider the mutual, reinforcing linkages between female employment, part-time employment, low-wage and low-quality employment, and to no longer advocate the stimulus of part-time jobs regardless of their characteristics and effects.” (LoWER 2010, p.11). Another research study, from the project Workcare, has found that flexicurity policies often provide both flexibility and security for men, but only flexibility for women. According to the study, women change their labour market status in connection with three life course stages: before a child is born, in relation to a pre-school age child, and when the youngest child is at school. These are associated with an increase in part-time work and non-employment. The research also shows that women’s preferences for how they want to work are seldom met and that there is a gap between what they want and what they end up doing. In all Member States, women clearly prefer having a full-time job prior to having their first child. When the child enters pre-school the preference changes to part-time. The situation is similar when the youngest child is at school. The figures vary in different Member States; however, very few women prefer not to be active in the labour market at all during this period.

Research shows that the “preferences” of women, but also the consequence of the long-term penalties associated with part-time work in terms of the gender pay gap, career progression and ultimately pension entitlement, have not yet properly

been taken into account by policymakers (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012, p. 20).

The right skills for the right jobs

The problem description and the solution, as suggested in the Agenda, centre around the rapidly changing skills that are needed, and the persistent skills mismatches in EU labour markets. Investments in education and training systems, anticipation of skills needed, and matching and guidance services are believed to be the keys to raising productivity, competitiveness, economic growth and ultimately employment. The solution focuses on improving education levels by reducing dropout rates to 10% or less, and increasing completion of tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40% by 2020. The potentials of intra-EU mobility and third-country migrant inflows are said to be not fully utilised and insufficiently targeted to meet labour market needs, despite the substantial contribution of migrants to employment and growth.

What is not being discussed is that women are not always getting jobs that correspond to their formal education and job qualifications. The dropout rates of boys are furthermore higher than those of girls – a problem that can be seen across the EU. The conditions for intra-mobility of EU citizens are gendered, as is the employment situation for immigrants. The problem furthermore focuses on individuals, or the demand side. This leads to efforts aiming to “equip” the target groups to compete better rather than addressing the structural mechanisms that make it difficult for different groups to enter and stay in employment because they do not fit with the majority norms and culture.

The differences in employment rates between low and high educated persons across the EU are very high (around 30 percentage points), varying between 53% and 83% for low and high educated people respectively. Furthermore, these gaps seem to be growing. The working age population will also start to decline from 2013 onwards despite increasing numbers of students in higher education. Furthermore, globalisation is increasing competition. In a situation with comparatively high wage levels and technological change, the acquisition of new and higher skills is thought to be the proper response to remain competitive (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012). The European research project JobMobFam has shown, however, that mobility can be found more often among (young) men, with or without children, and childless women, than among mothers, who are rarely mobile. Training is believed to be an adequate solution, however it is seldom discussed. As Fayolle writes (2010), *“Those least equipped to start with are not naturally those who tend to benefit from additional training during their working lives, and discrimination all too often affects women and migrants.”* (p. 100) Unemployment figures, furthermore, do not always show the full extent of the female labour supply, because women who lose their jobs or want to work may not always show up in the measurements. This is because in certain socio-economic contexts, women may declare themselves inactive rather than unemployed (Berthoud, 2009, Villa and Smith 2014).

The major problem that creates labour market and skill mismatches, i.e. the gender segregated labour market, is seldom discussed. It is a consequence of, and serves to continuously uphold the idea that women and men should work with different types of jobs and different tasks/functions/responsibilities within

different sectors and occupations. The prevailing gender stereotypes not only create a rigid and inflexible labour market, they are also harmful for work-places that want to introduce internal flexibility (Abrahamsson 2000) and also, not least, are harmful for individuals in the sense that they are hindered not so much by formal rules as by the mindset of policy-makers acting upon prevailing stereotypical norms. These stereotypes are often unreflectively and implicitly present in the behaviours of employers and co-workers, as well as often in the gendered identity of individuals (Acker 1992, Martin 2006). This does not mean that people should not be “allowed” to pursue their own individual life goals, but rather that the conception of what is commonly and implicitly understood as women’s or men’s work should continuously be challenged and questioned so that individual options can be broadened.

Better job quality and working conditions

As suggested in the Agenda, the problem is that there is really no trade-off between quality and quantity of employment; high levels of job quality in the EU are instead believed to be associated with equally high labour productivity and employment participation. It is said that working conditions and workers’ physical and mental health need to be taken into account in order to address the demands of today’s career paths, which are characterised by more transitions between more intense and demanding jobs and by new forms of work organisation.

What is not being discussed is how working conditions and workers’ physical and mental health are clearly gendered, and that the growth of certain types of jobs, such as mini-jobs and precarious work, happens to the detriment of decent working conditions and, not least, a salary that you can live on. It is not being discussed that European employment growth has not been shaped only by increased knowledge and upgraded skills, and that employment growth does not automatically generate “better jobs” with satisfactory wages, autonomy, learning opportunities, secure careers and participation in the workplace (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012). High participation rates of women do not automatically imply gender equality in the labour market. Occupational segregation and labour market segmentation (horizontal and vertical) have instead tended to disproportionately place women in the low-paying categories of work often associated with more vulnerable terms. Studies of working conditions have shown that typical women’s jobs are associated with low pay, precarious job status, poor working conditions, inadequate social coverage and limited possibilities for promotion and upward mobility (Kurian 2010).

Furthermore, different findings might emerge depending on who determines what can be understood as “good” working conditions. The European research project RECWOWE stresses that work generates not only income but also various social rewards (especially recognition). Subjective quality measures (income security, life satisfaction drawn from work, career-oriented as well as life-course-oriented transition options) have been shown to play an increasing role in the understanding of job quality. Different age groups also stress different aspects when they reason about job quality, which indicates the need for age-based

analysis and responses (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012). Intersectional perspectives are needed in the analysis.

From a gender perspective, women's qualification levels are rising at a faster pace than those of men. In terms of labour supply, women's qualification levels are now almost equal to men's (Fayolle 2010). At the same time, as mentioned above, statistics show that a high level of qualifications does not automatically protect against low qualified work or bad working conditions. Currently the situation is such that education and previous work experience "pay off" to a lower degree for women than for men.

Creating jobs

As described in the Agenda, it is not enough to ensure that people remain active and acquire the right skills to get a job; the economic recovery must also be based on job-creating growth. It is said that the right conditions to create more jobs must be put in place, including in companies operating with high skills and R&D intensive business models. Selective reductions of non-wage labour costs, or well-targeted employment subsidies, are believed to be an incentive for employers to recruit the long-term unemployed and other workers drifting away from the labour market. Policies to exploit key sources of job creation and to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment are understood as essential to increasing employment rates (COM(2010) 682 final).

What is not being discussed is that a gender perspective is important in all strategies for job creation. The situation for women in entrepreneurship and self employment looks very different than that for men, and many strategies to increase the number of companies are built on a male norm (Tillmar 2007). The gender-specific dynamics of the labour market discussed above must also be taken into account in policies developed to create jobs to understand both the pre-conditions and the potential impact of policies in terms of gender equality. If the gendered implications are not taken into account there is a risk that existing gender gaps will be reinforced or, even worse, widened. There is also a risk that employment patterns in "new" types of jobs, such as "green jobs" and "white jobs" will show similar patterns of gender segregation as seen before, with men concentrated in high-skilled technological work and women in low-skilled, low-paid care work.

To be able to apply a gender perspective in initiatives to create new jobs it is important to build the capacity to do so on an organisational level and in the implementation process (Callerstig 2014). Lut Mergaert, in a study on the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the European Commission, discusses four conditions for effective gender mainstreaming based on her own and previous research:

- The willingness of the organisation to question and effectively address the deeply rooted structures of power, gender hierarchies, values and frames that exist within the organisation;

- Tackling gender mainstreaming implementation as a phased process, consisting of the following stages: thorough analysis and questioning of existing structures precedes the planning and definition of actions and of structural provisions. This is followed by the careful and comprehensive equipping of all actors (with tools and resources) and duly monitored implementation;
- Consultation with and involvement of civil society and/or experts during the policy process;
- Accountability structures and systems or “hard incentives”: holding people responsible for actions undertaken and their results (Mergaert 2012, p. 55).

Gender mainstreaming (but also specific actions) needs coherence to be effective, and to achieve this it is important to secure the mechanisms that will enable systematic work across different steps of policy implementation. (See the Standard on gender mainstreaming of the GenderCop - <http://standard.gendercop.com/>)

4. An Agenda for persisting gender stereotypes? Or gender well-integrated in the ESF 2014–2020?

What should be done then in order to promote change? Below some of the aspects that have been discussed above are summarised and translated into seven recommendations.

1. Take into account existing gender gaps and inequalities and perform impact assessments in all policies and initiatives

In all measures to promote change towards better functioning labour markets, a more skilled workforce, and better job quality and working conditions, and in efforts to create stronger policies to promote job creation and demand for labour, there is a need to take into account:

- The prevailing gender segregation of the labour market;
- Flexicurity and its different implications for women and men, and especially the question of whether initiatives are creating flexibility for women and security for men;
- The correlation of the gender pay gap and pension gap with precarious jobs;
- Family responsibilities, paid and un-paid work, and working conditions;
- The gender differences in women's and men's participation in training activities;
- Economic independence/autonomy and job quality;
- Gender inequality in the labour market and the impact of other grounds of discrimination like ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation.

In reviewing these issues it is necessary to bear in mind how many of today's problems have gendered roots. The discussion must also include the larger objective to create a situation of equal and just participation for women and men in the labour market, work that enables economic independence, and how to counter the feminisation of poverty and the rise of precarious jobs. A gender impact analysis and gender disaggregated data must be required in all initiatives developed within the broad area covered by the Agenda. Take into account intersectional aspects in the analysis (see Gender CoP Standard: Short studies and fact sheets on gender aspects in thematic issues/gender gaps and ESF target groups from a gender perspective:

<http://standard.gendercop.com/implementation/analysis/>).

2. Pay special attention to gendered aspects of crisis-related policies

The current crisis must be taken into account, and it is necessary to make a holistic analysis that considers the interaction between the recession's impact on men's and women's labour market patterns and the gendered impact of the policy responses adopted.

The expert analysis by EGGE (Villa and Smith 2009) recommends considering gender issues in crisis-related policies, including the following points:

- Activities to keep people in work need to recognise the impact of gender segregation of sectors and occupations on the allocation and use of public funds to support threatened jobs; women are underrepresented among beneficiaries and there is a risk of reinforcing lines of segmentation between women and men.
- Flexicurity policies need to be gender mainstreamed to avoid reinforcing the disadvantaged status of some groups and further segmenting the labour market along gender lines.
- Policies towards people with international origin need to recognise that non-nationals – both women and men – have been disproportionately impacted upon by the crisis.
- Policies directed to low-wage earners can help address overall gender inequalities since women are overrepresented among the low paid.
- Activation policies for the unemployed risk focusing on those who have recently lost jobs at the expense of considering the wider non-employed working-age population and taking a holistic view of potential labour supply. Similarly, policies to activate people through education and training are also affected by, and risk reinforcing, the gender segregation of employment opportunities.

3. Not just a job – but a decent job!

The future discussion must be centred on how to create decent working conditions including putting an end to sexual harassment in the workplace and gender-based discrimination. Working life needs to be better attuned to individual situations and responsibilities, and it is important to discuss the mechanisms that can support such a development, such as the availability of child care facilities. Employment growth cannot be termed “inclusive” if it means that women will be trapped in low-paid dead-end jobs with bad working conditions.

4. Changing processes that create inequality instead of “equipping” marginalised groups

It is evident that an imbalance remains in many Member States, where the main object of change is the individuals within various target groups rather than discriminatory structures and practices in workplaces and labour market and educational systems. “Instrumental strategies still privilege a supply-side approach – addressing ‘women’s capacities to compete in the labour market’ – much more than trying to affect the socio-cultural environment that both shape the behaviour of critical decision-makers and determine the range of opportunities for women.” (EC Evaluation p. 9) The mechanisms that make the

labour market inclusive only for those who fit within certain (male) norms must be highlighted and initiatives to deal with them must become more common.

5. A gender problem, not a “women’s problem”

It is furthermore central to understand how the problems underlying existing gender gaps call for an analysis of the complexity and interdependence of the issues encountered. It is not only a “women’s problem”. There are other layers of social categorisation, such as age, ethnicity etc., that, once they are brought into the analysis, give a fuller picture. The different “systems” and country based variations across the EU are also important to bear in mind. Some initiatives that target only women or frame the analysing and solving of problems as a task for women should be examined in order to understand gender relations. For example, in policies to reconcile work and family life, part-time work and the need for flexible solutions only for *mothers* can instead be analysed in terms of the need for equal sharing of unpaid work, care for children and reconciliation measures for both *parents*. Measures to include and address men in gender equality initiatives must be strengthened.

6. A life course perspective with appropriate monitoring systems

As the variability of employment contracts and the number of job-to-job transitions increase, the need for better monitoring of job transitions for women in terms of both individual careers over the life course and job quality becomes obvious. The information infrastructure to do this, however, is underdeveloped at national and EU levels, which gives reason to recommend a renewed initiative of the European Commission to improve this infrastructure as a prerequisite to successfully managing job-to-job transitions (New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment, EC, DG Research 2012, p.20f). Gender impact assessments need to take on board a whole-life perspective in order to understand long-term effects both for individuals and the labour market systems in general (see German gender equality report from a life course perspective: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/gleichstellung,did=126762.html>).

7. Create the necessary conditions for effective gender mainstreaming

The lack of understanding of gender problems, its causes and its consequences, and also the lack of know-how about how to address them clearly indicate the need to continue the work with the dual gender-equality approach, especially with gender mainstreaming in many areas. Gender expertise is an essential

prerequisite and part of the infrastructure for such work. In the ESF permanent gender mainstreaming support structures (e.g. the German Agency for Gender Equality in the ESF - <http://www.esf-gleichstellung.de/>) are good instruments to ensure sustainable and coherent implementation. A structured approach such as the one developed in the GenderCoP Gender Mainstreaming Standard can further strengthen the day-to-day work.

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