

# Equality between women and men in the European Union

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**PURPOSE** : to present the second annual report on equality between women and men.

**CONTENT** : as requested by heads of state and government at the Spring European Council, in March 2003, this report is the first to cover the enlarged EU of 25 Member States. This report shows main developments of the relative situation of women and men in education, employment and social life. It focuses on immigrant women and men and addresses challenges for the further promotion of equality between women and men.

In terms of EU legislation, a recent success has been the extension of the Community acquis beyond the field of employment. In December 2004 the Council adopted the Directive on the principle of equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services based on Article 13 of the EC Treaty. The Directive applies to goods and services available to the public, which fall outside the area of private and family life. It lays down the principle that sex based actuarial factors should be eliminated.

The Commission has also adopted the recast proposal aiming at clarifying the principle of equal treatment between men and women in matters of employment and occupation by bringing together five existing directives in a single text. The Directive on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings was adopted in April 2004, as requested in last year's report on equality between women and men. It calls for granting residence permits to victims who co-operate in the fight against trafficking in human beings or against action to facilitate illegal immigration.

The report gives the following figures on gender gaps:

- there is a positive trend towards closing gender gaps remains in education and employment in the enlarged EU 25, while the pay gap between women and men remains almost unchanged;
- women still outnumber men in education. The percentage of women graduates increased to 58 % in 2003, due to the higher level of education in the new Member States. Women now also represent 41 % of PhD graduates;
- the gender gap in employment decreased by 0.5 percentage points to 15.8 % between 2002 and 2003 in the EU-25. With the female employment rate at 55.1 %, the intermediate target of women's employment rate (57 % in 2005) still remains within reach. Apart from younger women aged 15-24, women's employment rates continued to increase for all age groups and particularly so for older women (by 1.5 p.p. to reach 30.7 % in 2003);
- the share of part-time employment is on average 30.4 % for women compared to only 6.6 % for men and the gap has slightly increased since 1998. This is one among many factors, which explains the gender pay gap. The new Member States have a much lower proportion of part-time jobs, partly due to labour market rigidity and partly due to the lower wage level, which makes this option less available;
- unemployment has slightly increased in 2004 but the gender gap is still significant as it remains the same as in 2003. Unemployment rates are 10 % for women and 8.3 % for men;

- reconciliation between work and family life remains a challenge for both women and men. Women with small children continue to show employment rates 13.6 % lower than women without children while men with small children show 10 p.p. higher employment rates than men without children.
- there is little evidence of progress in closing the gender pay gap, which remains stable in the EU-15 at approximately 16 %. The estimated figure for EU-25 is slightly lower, 15 %, when the pay gap in the new Member States has been taken into account;
- the gender gaps in overall poverty risks appear limited. Nevertheless, elderly women still have higher risks of poverty than elderly men. Furthermore, single parents, mostly women, tend to suffer from cumulative disadvantages and are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion;
- pension systems differ widely across the EU. In most countries they are designed to replace earnings from work in exchange for life-long contributions, rather than awarding benefits to all elderly people on the basis of residence. Women's entitlements are significantly lower than men's due to their reduced labour market participation. However, some countries are adapting their systems by awarding pension rights for periods of care for children, dependent elderly or disabled persons.

On immigrant men and women, the report gives the following figures:

- in 2003, immigration contributed to more than 80 % of the total population growth in the EU-15. Recent inflows were dominated by families reuniting and asylum-seekers in most Member States;
- the unemployment rate was more than twice as high among non-EU nationals compared to EU nationals. Immigrant men and women have similar unemployment rates, except for the high skilled where women tend to be unemployed more often than men. Women migrants are concentrated in low paid industries and occupations. The information available on wages shows that immigrant women are at a particular disadvantage. -In 2000, while women in the EU on average had 16 % lower pay than EU men, immigrant women (non EU nationals) earned 10 % less than EU national women. For men the pay gap between EU nationals and non-EU nationals was 4 %.

The report makes a series of recommendations to Member States under the following policy areas:

- strengthening the position of women in the labour market;
- increasing care facilities for children and other dependants;
- addressing men in achieving gender equality;
- integrating the gender perspective into immigration and integration policies;
- monitoring developments towards gender equality.

It also makes a series of recommendations to the European Council, concerning the avoidance of gender segregation in the labour market and increasing women's labour market participation.