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WOMEN ON THE LABOUR MARKET

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

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ΕΒΡΟΠΕΪΣΚΙ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤΟ ΕΥΡΟΠΕΟ ΕΥΡΟΠΣΚΪ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΕΥΡΟΠΑ-ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤΕΤ
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**Directorate-General for Internal Policies
Policy Department C
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Women on the labour market

Specific weaknesses in eight countries representative of the European Union

Final report

November 2008

Executive Summary

This report sets out a detailed analysis of the specific weaknesses typical of women's working lives in Europe. In order to give an overview of the situation in all 27 EU Member States, eight countries have been selected in the light of the conclusions reached by the comparative literature on welfare states and their socio-economic characteristics. Each country is deemed to represent a form of societal organisation and a labour market system which typifies a subset of Member States. The eight countries examined are Germany, Sweden, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Hungary.

The position of women on the labour market in these eight countries is analysed from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view based on a battery of indicators. The data used derive mainly from Eurostat (the Labour Force Surveys - LFS), Eurobarometer and the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC). Data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have been drawn on to complement the analysis on certain specific points.

It emerges that, despite the considerable progress achieved during recent decades, the gender gaps on labour markets everywhere in Europe still remain significant. Women are less active and, in certain countries, more affected by unemployment than men. It is worth pointing out that the ways in which unemployment is normally measured make it impossible to assess accurately the nature and magnitude of unemployment among women (in terms of under-unemployment, discouraged workers, availability etc.), which restricts the reliability of international comparisons. The gender gap in employment widens when working time is taken into consideration, since the majority of part-time workers are women. In some countries, this form of employment is a vehicle for the integration of women in the labour market. In others, however, the growth in part-time work reflects a withdrawal from employment on the part of women who previously worked full-time. Women's working time has served as a labour market adjustment tool at times of mass unemployment, and also as a means of facilitating the reconciliation of working life and private life.

Consequently, two forms of part-time work coexist in Europe: one associated with jobs whose quality is identical to that of full-time jobs (as regards hourly wages, economic sector, occupation, type of contract etc.), and the other associated with low-skilled jobs of mediocre quality from the

point of view of both pay and economic sector. Such jobs are synonymous with insecure, unstable employment and little opportunity for advancement (e.g. limited access to vocational training) and are often characterised by atypical, unpredictable working hours which complicate the work/life balance of the women occupying them.

The factors explaining these unfavourable aspects of women's economic participation are many and varied. Gender inequality on the labour market stems from family formation. Indeed, throughout Europe, motherhood still remains today the major curb on women's integration into the world of work on an equal footing with men. Whereas fatherhood stimulates employment among men, motherhood causes women to withdraw into the family sphere. This is directly related to the gendered division of social roles: women are expected to prioritise looking after the family and men to provide for its financial requirements through work. Gender stereotypes are still alive and kicking in European society: girls and boys are assigned specific roles from a very early age, which is reflected in their choices of school subjects. Girls are better represented in arts disciplines, boys in science and mathematics. This segregation in initial education results in strong occupational and sectoral segmentation on the labour market. These specific weaknesses, combined with sexual discrimination, result in an ongoing pay gap between women and men everywhere in Europe.

Depending on the country, the institutional environment either exacerbates or attenuates the gendered division of roles. Economic participation by women in couples is hampered by tax disincentives in certain countries which, along with a shortage of childcare facilities, reinforce the “male breadwinner” model. Elsewhere, taxation is gender-neutral and childcare provision more extensive and affordable, which in practice encourages mothers to go out to work. Similarly, the form and nature of parental leave (duration, amount of financial compensation, flexibility, possibility of sharing between both parents) impacts substantially the working lives of women with children.

In conclusion, motherhood constitutes the major specific curb on the integration of women in the labour market. Establishing a couple and having children are very time-consuming activities, the onus of which falls on women for the most part. Inadequate support from partners, combined with overly timid public policies on assistance for working parents, is disadvantageous to economic participation by mothers. Women suffer unfavourable treatment in the world of

work since they are perceived as mothers or potential mothers, and this discrimination on the labour market ultimately spreads to include all women.

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Introduction

This report provides a detailed analysis of the employment-specific weaknesses of women in Europe. Women are less engaged in economic activity than men in all European Union countries. Since they are less active, they are more involved in part-time work. They less commonly hold responsible positions and are confronted by a segmented labour market where they are confined to occupations very often akin to the tasks they traditionally perform within the family: childcare, education, social work etc. Lastly, women's earnings are lower than men's throughout Europe.

In all EU countries, these gender inequalities on the labour market are linked to family formation, from establishing a couple to the arrival of children. Even nowadays, therefore, actual or future motherhood is a major curb on the integration of women into the world of work. The traditional vision of a gender-based sharing of duties is still apposite, despite the considerable progress made in recent decades.

Although this state of affairs applies in all EU countries, it varies in scale and nature from one country to another. On the one hand, individual countries offer different historical and cultural contexts and, on the other, the realisation of this phenomenon dawned earlier, and the public policy responses to it have been more proactive, in some countries than others.

A typology has been drawn up to give an overview of the specific factors hampering the progression of economic participation by women. Eight European countries have been selected on the basis of this classification: Germany, Sweden, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Hungary. Our diagnosis results from an examination of a battery of indicators enabling us to describe and analyse, for each country, the situation of women on the labour market from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view.

The report comprises four parts and some annexes. Part I describes the methodology used to select the eight countries studied. These countries had to be as representative as possible of all the EU Member States so as to provide an image of the overall position of women on the labour market in Europe. Part II takes stock of women's labour market participation and employment, and also looks at qualitative aspects of jobs occupied by women. It emerges at this stage of the report that mothers are significantly less present in the world of work than men and childless women. Part III therefore focuses on the impact of the family and the cultural context, both of which conspire to preserve the traditional vision of the woman's role. Lastly, Part IV analyses the

institutional context. Particular attention is devoted to family policies, which can strongly curb the growth in female economic participation in certain countries, as well as to the reconciliation of family and working life. Policies aimed at facilitating this reconciliation form the core of welfare state measures to ease the constraints on working women. The annexes contain the graphs and tables referred to in the body of the report, as well as the bibliographical references and some explanatory text boxes describing the methodological and statistical problems encountered during the course of this study.

I. A typology of welfare states in Europe

In order to take stock of the curbs on women's labour market participation in Europe, we have established a typology of the different European nations based on the work of Esping-Andersen (1999) and Wall (2007). These classifications provide a frame of reference suited to the European Union, where countries differ from one another in terms of both women's position in society and government support for working parents.

1. The typologies used

Esping-Andersen (1990) paved the way, with his book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, for a body of research aimed at conceptualising in a specific analytical framework the different forms of social contract governing modern democracies. His methodology, together with the limitations of his classification, lies behind most of the alternative typologies devised by other researchers (Lewis and Ostner, 1994; Gornick *et al.*, 1997; Letablier, 1998; Forssén and Hakovirta, 2000; Korpi, 2000; Walby, 2001; Pfau-Effinger, 2000). This typology is an inescapable tool when one attempts to compare the functioning of Europe's constituent societies. It has nevertheless been much criticised: some deem the typology simplistic as it cannot accommodate all countries (for example Portugal). What is more, the fact that the author masks the gender dimension has prompted feminist criticism of his classification (Sainsbury, 1999; O'Connor *et al.*, 1999; Daly and Lewis, 2000; Gottfried and O'Reilly, 2002; Mutari and Figart, 2001). Hence, the classification of nations according to ideal-types has been enriched by several other analyses. We favour the one put forward by Wall (2007), who stresses the trade-offs made by countries in terms of policies to facilitate a balance between family and working life, which represents a key issue as concerns women's labour market inclusion. Thus our methodology is based on the crossing of a typology derived from the work of Esping-Andersen and that devised by Wall (2007).

The four major ideal-types inspired by the work of Esping-Andersen are as follows:

- liberal or residual welfare states
- conservative or corporatist welfare states
- Mediterranean or clientelist welfare states
- social-democratic or universalist welfare states.

Feminist criticism of Esping-Andersen's work was our point of departure for reflecting on different gender regimes, a broader concept than the welfare state, which therefore provides a

suitable analytical framework for tackling the question of socio-economic inequality between the sexes. These recent analyses of gender regimes are closely related to the issue of reconciling private life and working life, in that family formation is a major explanatory factor of gender inequality. Three dimensions are highlighted. The first has to do with expectations and practices around the division of market work and domestic work. The second concerns the need to take into account the social construct of motherhood. A third important dimension is the cultural construct of the relationship between working parents and the welfare state.

Within this conceptual framework, Wall (2007) has drawn up a typology of six policy models concerning the interplay between private life and working life Europe:

- M1: model based on one year of parental leave and geared to gender equality.
- M2: model based on free parental choice as to the method of caring for a young child and the mother's economic participation.
- M3: model based on the mother staying at home owing to long parental leave.
- M 4: model based on short parental leave and the mother working part-time.
- M5: "male breadwinner" model offering short parental leave.
- M6: model based on an early return to full-time work (relates to Portugal alone).

2. The selection of representative countries

By crossing these two typologies, we find eight countries which enable us to cover the following matrix (Table 1).

Table 1**Matrix of ideal-types of welfare state**

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Liberal				UK	
Conservative		France	Germany		
Social-democratic	Sweden				
Mediterranean					Italy
Unclassified			Poland Hungary	Netherlands	

Sweden typifies the social-democratic welfare state and also corresponds to Wall's model M1. The Swedish government grants a well-paid period of parental leave when a child is born (80% of pay for 13 months). Parental leave has been devised with a view to gender equality: 2 months of the leave period are reserved for the father. These measures are part of a broader set of proactive policies to help working parents; they go hand-in-hand with extensive childcare provision as from the child's second year of life. The "male breadwinner" model, where only the man works, is no longer the dominant model it was until the 1960s: it now represents just 13% of couples with children (Eurostat, 2002). The female activity rate is high: 76% in 2005 (European Commission, 2006) and the proportion of part-time work among women is rather low: 38% (European Commission, 2006). Moreover, the employment rates of women with and without children aged under six are similar (Deven and Moss, 2005).

The conservative welfare states group together some very different countries in terms of the balance between family and working life. For example, both France and Germany are classed as conservative welfare states, but they differ from the point of view of Wall's classification.

France is the archetype of Wall's model M2, in that the overriding idea is freedom to choose the method of childcare and freedom for the mother to decide whether or not to work. Thus France combines a relatively extensive system of childcare with long parental leave, which encourages low-skilled mothers to withdraw from the labour market. The proportion of childcare provision is fairly high, benefiting 32% of children aged between 0 and 2 years (EU-SILC, 2005). What is more, France (unlike Sweden) provides day nurseries for babies under a year old, thereby enabling women to return to work rapidly after the birth of a child. Admittedly the number of

places is insufficient to meet the demand, and in reality the method of childcare is determined by how much the parents earn and where they live. Gender equality has progressed but is still much weaker, and less explicit, than in the case of Sweden. Paid paternity leave has, importantly, been extended to 11 days, yet the traditional model still accounts for 36% of couples (Eurostat, 2002) even though the female employment rate is high. Part-time work is fairly widespread among women (31%). Lastly, contrary to the Swedish model there is a wide gap between the employment rates of mothers and women without children aged under six (10 percentage points, Wall 2007).

Germany, for its part, corresponds to Wall's model M3, as do Poland and Hungary. Under this model, mothers have to look after their own small children. They stop work when a baby is born and only return gradually once the child starts school. A long, relatively poorly paid leave period targeted at mothers promotes this model in these three countries. It is considered that women must take responsibility for looking after their children, especially when they are small, whereas men must be the main providers of income for the family. Paid paternity leave does not exist in either Germany or Poland, and is short (5 days) in Hungary. A reform was recently passed in Germany to correct the prejudicial effects of this situation on mothers' economic participation. It constitutes a transition towards a system offering a shorter, better-paid leave period (cf. model M1, as in Sweden). Childcare and educational services for infants aged under three are rare: unlike in France, parental leave and day nurseries are regarded not as complementary but as substitutes. The rate of coverage for this age group is therefore very low: 16% in Germany, 7% in Hungary and 2% in Poland (EU-SILC, 2005). Women's activity rates are generally not very high: 67% in Germany, 58% in Poland and 55% in Hungary (European Commission, 2006). What is particularly significant, however, is the gap in employment rates for women with and without children aged under six: 35 percentage points in Hungary (Wall, 2007). The "male breadwinner" model is predominant in couples with children: in Germany it accounts for 40% of couples with children, and in a third of such couples the man works full-time and the woman part-time; egalitarian couples make up just a quarter of all couples with children (Eurostat, 2002). The proportion of couples with children aged under twelve who apply the "male breadwinner" logic is 35% in Poland but exceeds 45% in Hungary (Aliaga, 2005).

The United Kingdom is emblematic in Europe of Esping-Andersen's liberal model, with a low level of "decommodification" and a high level of "defamilialisation": hence families outsource a significant share of their domestic chores by taking up services offered by the market. The UK is

likewise representative of Wall's model M4, as is the Netherlands, a country difficult to classify in Esping-Andersen's typology even though it is sometimes regarded as a social-democratic state. Model M4 reflects what some authors have dubbed an updated version of the "male breadwinner" model (Pfau-Effinger, 1999). It is typical of these two countries. As under model M1, women and men work equal amounts while there are no children in the household. Once children come along, rather than encouraging mothers to take a long period of leave and stay at home full-time as under model M3, here they combine motherhood and employment by working part-time. Childcare is provided by both the family and the market. Public provision of childcare and educational facilities for infants is little-developed, as is parental leave. Only one kind of leave exists in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, namely short, non-transferable and well-paid maternity leave (16 weeks at 100% of previous earnings in the Netherlands; 6 weeks at 90% in the UK). Neither country offers any flexibility with respect to the sharing of maternity leave between the two parents (although a proposal to this effect has been made in the UK). Mothers are expected to work part-time. Both countries have sought to raise women's labour market participation, with a view to limiting family poverty, and to this end nursery services for small children have been considerably expanded in recent years. Currently the coverage rates for infants aged between 0 and 2 years stand at 30% in the United Kingdom and 40% in the Netherlands (EU-SILC, 2005). By comparison with the previous model, the leave system and childcare facilities are complementary to a certain extent, and there are more ways for people with young children to combine their private life and working life. Female activity rates are high (69% in the UK and 70% in the Netherlands), as are the rates of part-time work. There are differences between the employment rates of women with and without children aged under six: the gap is rather narrow in the Netherlands but wide in the United Kingdom (Wall, 2007). The model where the father works full-time and the mother part-time is dominant, to the detriment of the traditional model where the woman is inactive. In the Netherlands, 53% of couples with children fall into this group, as against 33% where only the man works and 11% where both parents are employed full-time. In the United Kingdom these proportions are 40, 30 and 29% respectively (Eurostat, 2002).

Last of all, Italy is representative of the Mediterranean welfare state. Esping-Andersen has always regarded the southern European countries as immature versions of the conservative system, but authors such as Ebbinghaus (1998), Leibfried (1991), Bonoli (1997) and Trifiletti (1998) have grouped them together in a separate category. Italy furthermore corresponds to Wall's model M5. This model is based on the traditional family set-up where the man works and the woman is

responsible for family matters, not just during phases of active motherhood but throughout married life, irrespective of the presence of children. Expectations and attitudes concerning the role of the two sexes are of course evolving rapidly in all the southern European countries (Wall, 2007), but the "male breadwinner" model still accounts for more than half of all couples (54%) in Italy. The gap in employment rates for women with and without children aged under six is low, owing to the high proportion of women - both with and without children - who do not participate in the labour market. Female activity rates still remain the lowest in Europe, even though they have risen over the past decade. Paid maternity leave exists (21 weeks), but paternity leave does not. The transition towards a poorly paid parental leave period (30% of previous earnings) has begun. The right to this parental leave is individual (6 months per parent) but with a maximum leave entitlement of 10 months per couple. There are as yet no data quantifying the take-up of this leave. Overall, childcare and educational facilities for under three-year-olds are scarce in Italy. The percentage of infants covered by registered childcare services is low (25%; EU-SILC, 2005), as is likewise the case for model M3 where the mother stays at home.

The model M6, which comprises just one European country: Portugal, was not included. Since Portugal constitutes a unique case, its inclusion in our sample would not have added any useful information by way of extrapolation to other countries, and would therefore not have helped to explain the general situation in the European Union.

II. Women's participation in the labour market

In this part we have carried out a comparative analysis between women's and men's participation in the labour market. The statistical sources used in this section are the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) and the *Statistics on Income and Living Conditions* (EU-SILC), both compiled by Eurostat. The data from the LFS provide long series which enable one to assess the differences between countries in historical terms; they are supplemented, where necessary, by OECD data. The aim is to highlight the particular evolution of each country as regards the volume of activity, employment and unemployment amongst women.

The data taken from the European surveys also permit a very close-grain analysis. An accurate picture can therefore be put together, for each country, of working women and, in contrast, the elements contributing to an initial diagnosis of the curbs - associated in particular with the family and levels of employability - which limit their participation in the labour market (activity rates by number of children, age of the youngest child and level of qualifications, for example).

1. Activity, unemployment and employment: broad trends

1.1. *The volume of female activity*

This section analyses changes in women's participation in the labour market, whether the women are in work or seeking work. The first indicator used is the "proportion of women present in the labour market", which enables women's share in the total labour force to be measured (Table 2). The second indicator is the "rate of activity", the ratio between the number of women in the labour force and the number of women of working age, allowing an analysis of the proportion of women who put themselves on the labour market (Graph 1). Female participation in market work is compared with that of men, on the basis of the gap between the sexes in rates of activity (Graph 13 in annex).

Table 2

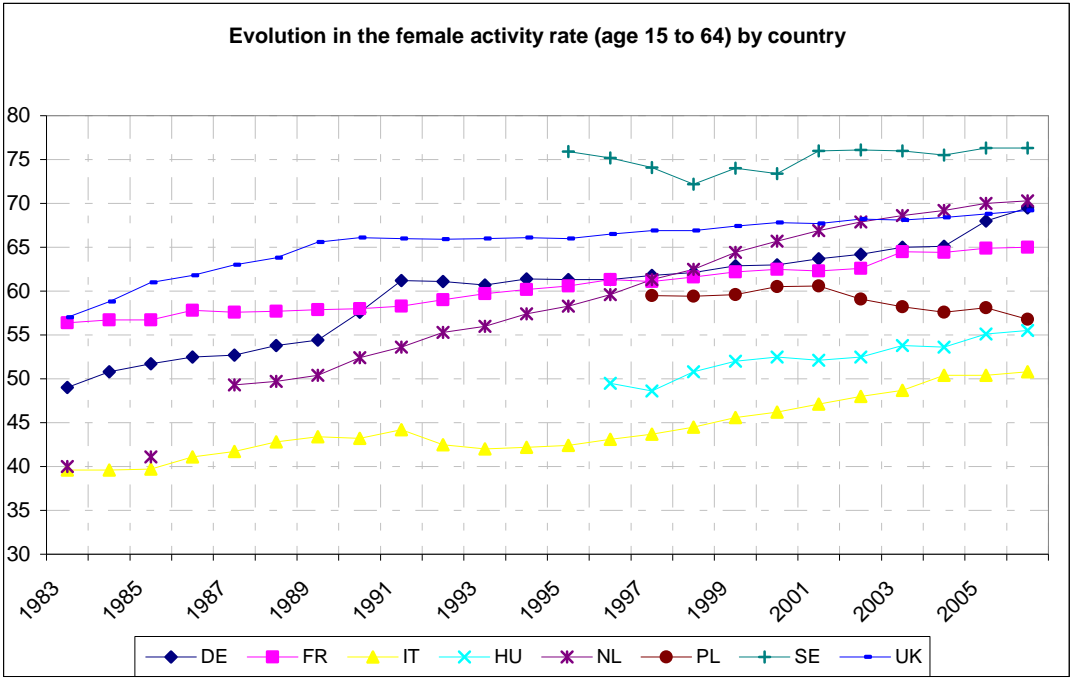
Women's share in the labour force in 2006

(in %)

EU27	DE	FR	IT	HU	NL	PL	SE	UK
44.9	45.7	47.2	40.2	45.6	45.5	45.2	47.5	46.3

Source: Eurostat, 2007.

Graph 1



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Women represent more than 4 in 10 members of the workforce in Europe overall. However, there are wide disparities between the countries representing the 27 EU Member States.

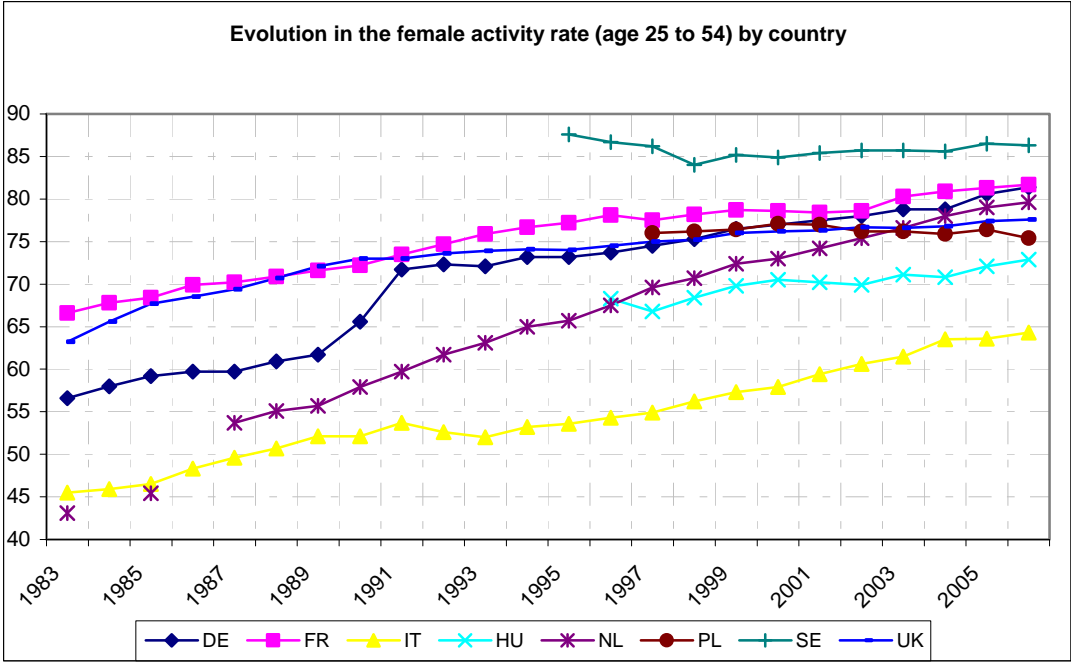
Three groups of countries emerge from Table 2. In the first, parity in the labour market has almost been achieved, to the extent that women comprise nearly half the members of the labour force (more than 46%): Sweden, France and the United Kingdom. The second group includes those countries where that proportion is in the region of 45%: Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland. The last group consists of Italy, which has a particularly low proportion of women in the labour force: around 40%.

In Europe as a whole the activity rates of women aged between 15 and 64 have increased over recent decades, with a tendency to level off and even fall at the end of the period (in terms of the EU 27, the activity rate of women aged between 15 and 64 was 63.3% in 2007). Amongst the eight countries studied, Sweden has always been, and remains, the country where women are the most active, and Italy that in which they are the least active. France and Germany both occupy a median position. Until the end of the 1980s few Dutch women went out to work, their entry into the world of work occurring late, but spectacularly, with their activity rate increasing by almost 10 points between 1983 (40%) and 1987 (49.3%). In Poland and Hungary, rates of female activity have tended to fall since the beginning of the 1990s, as liberalisation of those economies has

gone hand-in-hand with a significant fall-back in female activity (Graph A-1 in annex), more markedly so in Hungary than Poland. The decline in Hungary seems to have ended in 1997, since when the activity rate of Hungarian women has again started to climb, whilst that of Polish women, having stabilised in the late 1990s, has seen the beginning of a downwards trend since 2000.

The same trends are apparent in a smaller population: women aged 25 to 54 (Graph 2; Text box 1). When one disregards employment amongst older and younger workers, the rate of female activity in France has exceeded that in the United Kingdom (since the late 1980s). In the EU 27, the rate of activity by women between 25 and 54 is 76.9%.

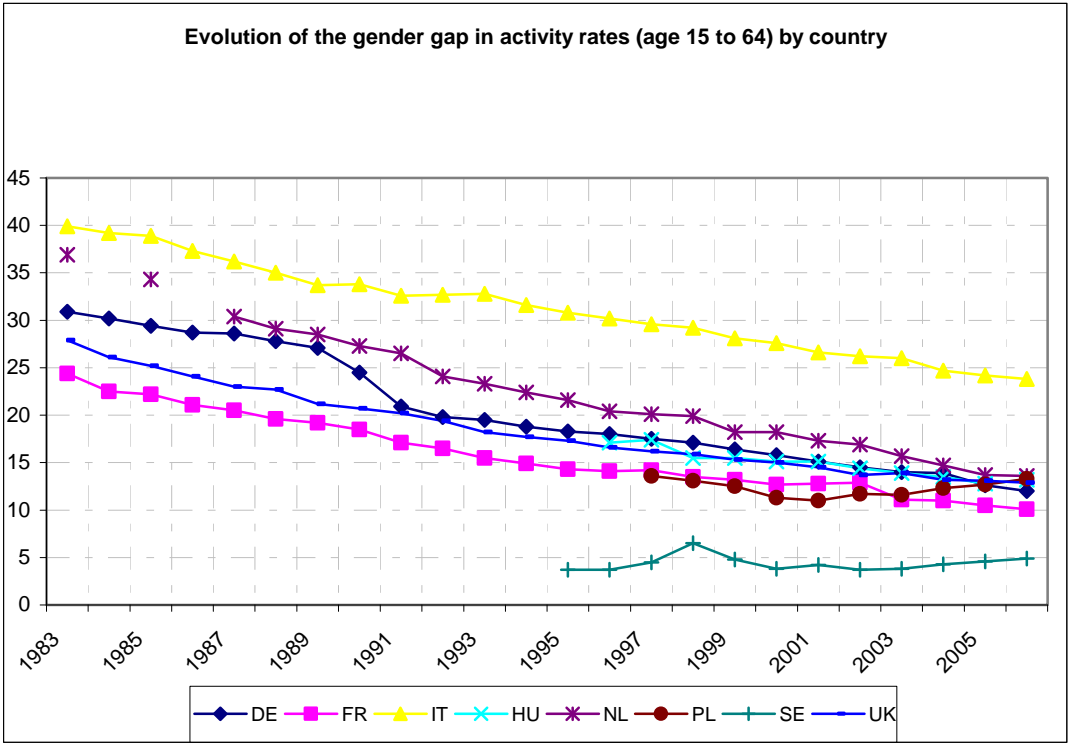
Graph 2



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

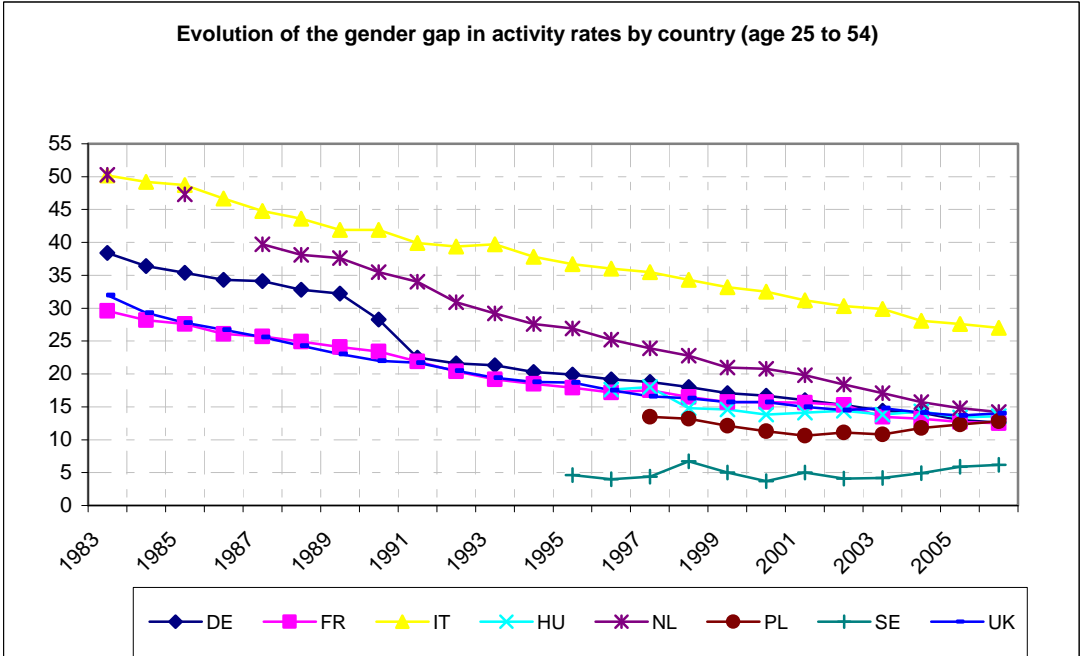
In most countries, the downward trend, or levelling-off, in activity rates applies to both men and women. This represents more a change in the functioning of the labour market than a progression in inequality between the sexes (Graphs 3 and 4). The gender gaps in activity rates are stabilising and not increasing in all countries except Poland and, less markedly, Sweden. In Hungary, labour market adjustments have affected men in the same proportions as women, producing stability in the activity rate gap between the sexes, whereas in Poland the sharp fall in the rate of activity by women has been perceptibly less apparent for men, leading to a net widening of the gender gap in activity rates.

Graph 3



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graph 4

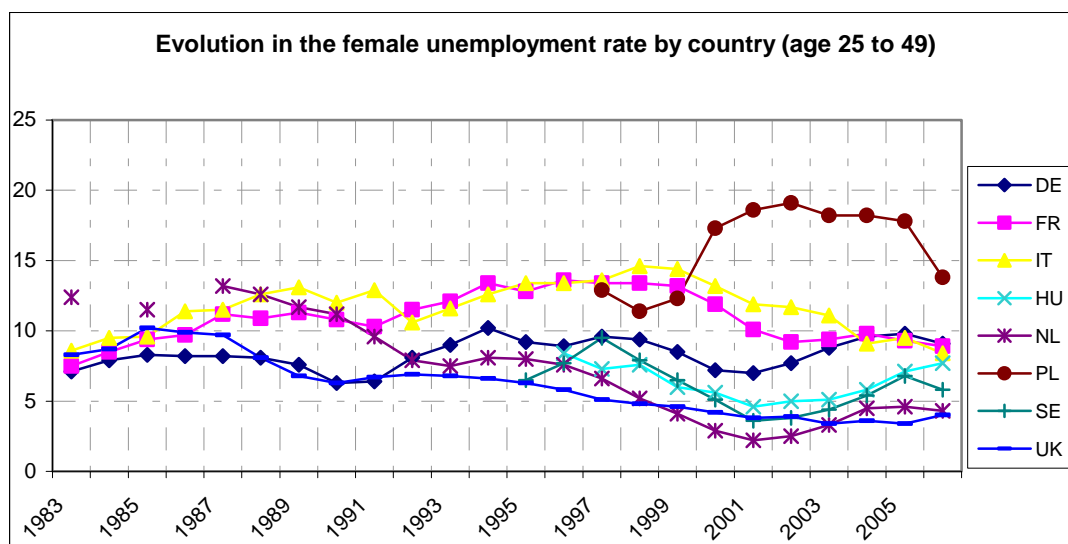


Source: Eurostat (LFS)

1.2. Female unemployment

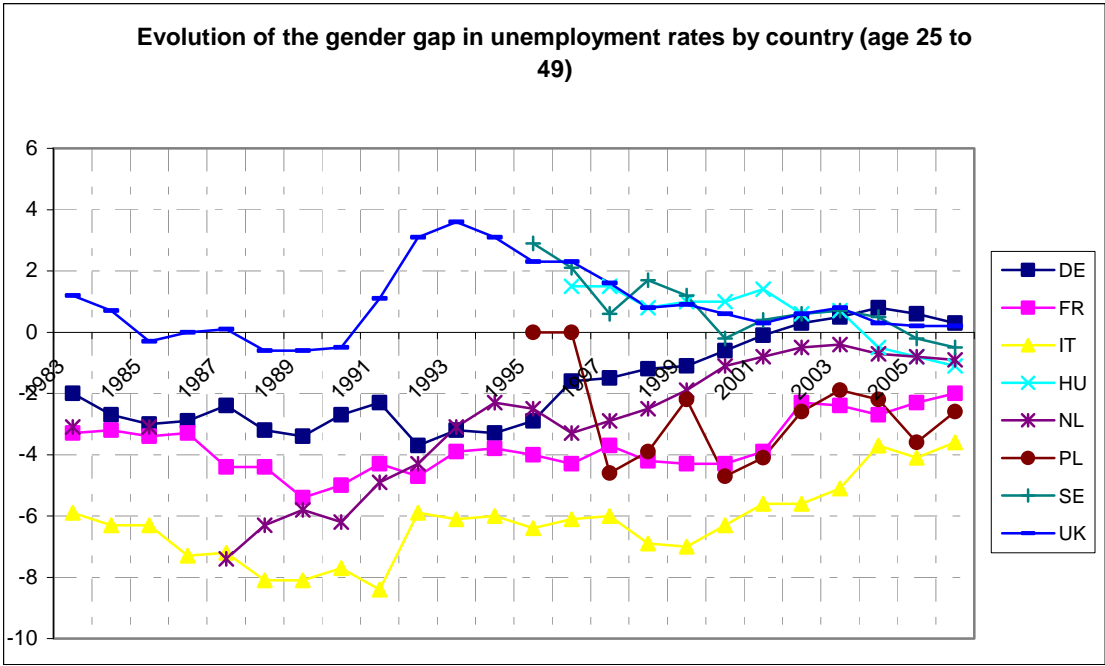
Unemployment in Europe affects both women and men but in different proportions depending on the country, and with significant changes over recent decades (Graph 5). In terms of the EU 27, the rate of male unemployment (6.6%) was lower than the female rate (7.8%) in 2007. One can distinguish three groups of countries. The first includes those where the female unemployment rate is the lowest, close to 5%. These are the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Sweden. The second group brings together countries where the female unemployment rate is high, at between 7 and 9%. These are Germany, France, Italy and Hungary. Lastly, Poland is in a league of its own, with the female unemployment rate remaining very high, at close to 14%.

Graph 5



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graph 6

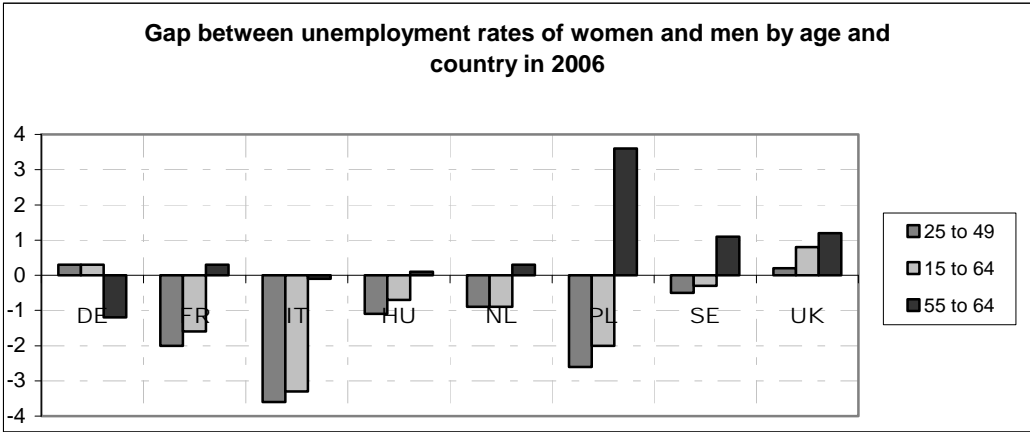


Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Attention should be paid to the problems of data measurement and comparability posed by unemployment (Text box 2). The data from which unemployment rates can be established are self-reported. In some countries women will tend to self-identify as non-working rather than unemployed if they do not have a job (the United Kingdom), whereas in other countries they will be counted as unemployed because they will more readily self-report as unemployed (France).

The unemployment gap between women and men in the eight countries examined seems to be narrowing, with a downward tendency almost everywhere (Graph 6). It is worth noting the catching-up which took place in the Netherlands, where the gender unemployment gap narrowed from almost 8 points in 1988 to less than one point in 2006. Here again, one can identify three groups of countries (Graph 7). The first brings together those in which women are appreciably more affected by unemployment than men, with a gap of between 2 and 3.6 points. These are France, Italy and Poland. The second group consists of countries where women experience more unemployment than men but with a narrow gap, of less than one point. These are the Netherlands, Hungary and Sweden. The last group consists of countries where women seem to be less affected by unemployment than men, namely the United Kingdom and Germany.

Graph 7

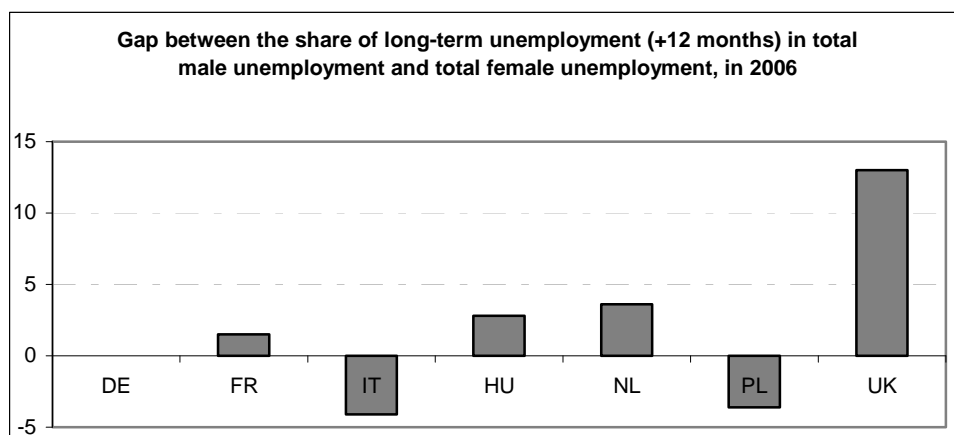


Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Measurement of the unemployment gap between the sexes remains far from perfect, however, since the indicator used does not take into account the phenomenon of discouraged workers, the majority of whom are women; this distorts the unemployment differentials with men (Text box on unemployment).

In Europe overall, long-term unemployment represents - to within a few points - as significant a share of female as of male unemployment (at EU 27 level, long-term unemployment accounts for 43.1% of male unemployment compared with 42.5% of female unemployment), with the exception of the United Kingdom, where the proportion of long-term unemployed men in the total male unemployed population is perceptibly higher than for unemployed women (12 points higher). Graph 9 highlights those inter-country differences. This may reflect a problem in measuring unemployment in the United Kingdom. It appears that British women are less inclined than their European counterparts to identify themselves as unemployed when they do not have a job, and are therefore counted as inactive, a phenomenon which increases with the duration of the unemployment, and would seem to explain the higher share of long-term unemployment amongst British men and the low share of long-term unemployment amongst women. The same applies, although to a lesser extent, in France, the Netherlands and Hungary. In Italy and Poland, unemployment in general and long-term unemployment are a women's issue, although the difference is less significant in the case of long-term unemployment than it is for unemployment in general.

Graph 8



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

1.3. Part-time work

Women's working time is a distinguishing feature in all European countries. Depending on the country under analysis, the origin and nature of reductions in working time differ, and must therefore be examined with caution¹. In some countries, part-time work in general, and thus women's part-time work in particular, is little-developed. In Eastern Europe the proportion of women in part-time work is still low (Graph 9). The same holds true for Italy where the low level of part-time work can be explained both in terms of demand, with the trade unions fiercely opposed to the advance of this kind of employment, and in terms of supply, since few Italian women, in particular those who have children, go out to work; thus they are not yet seeking a means of reconciling work and family life owing to an institutional environment unfavourable to working mothers (a lack of childcare facilities, for example). Against that unfavourable background, motherhood leads them to give up economic activity completely, and where they work out of necessity they forego having children (low fertility rate). However, part-time work as a proportion of female employment has increased perceptibly in Italy in the latter years of the period studied.

In other countries, part-time work has developed after women's entrance into the labour market. Part-time working was encouraged in order to reduce unemployment. France is a case in point. Indeed, in France, during the 1990s, strong incentives towards hiring workers on a part-time

¹ The statistics given here relate only to employed work. Agricultural work and self-employment in fact pose problems with respect to the measurement of working time which could distort the analysis and comparability of results. Similarly, the most appropriate age band is 25 to 49, since this means that part-time work by students and the early-retired can be excluded. Those two factors, which can be significant and vary considerably from country to country, could distort the analysis of statistics in terms of gender.

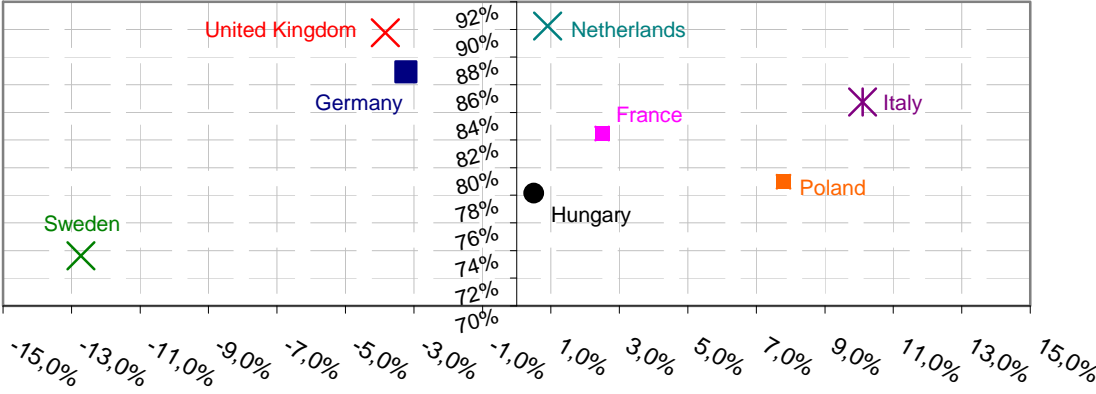
basis were introduced in order to translate economic growth into more jobs². These individual reductions in working time essentially concerned women and the least qualified workers. The position of women in the labour market has thereby been weakened, and in this case part-time work is a curb on female economic participation. Conversely, in other countries, where there was traditionally very little economic activity by women, part-time work has been a means for women to enter the world of work. Here it is not a curb on, but rather a driver of, female economic participation. This scenario fits Sweden and the UK. In the United Kingdom, for example, 45% of women are working part-time at any given point in time, and two thirds of women go through a period of part-time employment during their working life (Connolly and Gregory, 2007). In the Netherlands, part-time work developed later. Indeed, Dutch women have been gaining access to employment via part-time work since the 1980s. Whereas at the beginning of the 1970s Dutch women were the least active women in Europe, by the end of the 1990s they were more active than the European average. The growth in part-time work has made the Netherlands the European leader in this kind of employment, overtaking Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom (Yerkes and Visser, 2005). In 2007, part-time workers represented 18.2% of total employment in the EU 27: 7.7% for men and 31.2% for women. The growth in part-time work in the Netherlands has gone hand-in-hand with the development of services, personal services in particular. More than one woman in two now works part-time there. The predominant household model is a man who works full-time and a woman who works part-time. That model is twice as common in the Netherlands as elsewhere in Europe (Visser, 2002). Although part-time work essentially affects women, the Netherlands is also the forerunner as regards male part-time work.

In 2007, part-time workers represented 18.2% of total employment at the level of the EU-27 (7.7% for men and 31.2% for women). As regards the evolution of part-time work, whereas Sweden has evolved in the direction of a more equal distribution of working time between the sexes, the Italian dynamic seems still to be unfavourable to female employment: it combines a high rate of feminisation of part-time work with a rate of growth in that feminisation of close to 10% in ten years (Graph 9). The Netherlands, which has the highest rate of feminisation, with women accounting for 90% of part-time employment, has stabilised its position.

² These incentives took the form of reductions in employers' social security contributions. They were abolished by the introduction of the 35 hour work week in 2000. Nevertheless, part-time work stalled at a high level.

Graph 9

Rate of feminisation of part-time work in 2006 and its evolution between 1996 and 2006 (persons aged 25 to 54)



A comparison between the volume of female and male employment, based on traditional employment rates, is skewed by part-time work; all the more so since part-time work varies greatly from one country to another, both in terms of the prevalence of the phenomenon and the duration of working time. Taking part-time work into account in calculating employment rates (employment rates in full-time equivalent, FTE) changes the picture quite appreciably (Table 3 and Graph 10). Accordingly, whilst the Netherlands had a rate of female employment which put it in third place, the inclusion of part-time work relegates it to bottom of the list (Table 3). In full-time equivalent, employment rates plummet in those countries where part-time work has been the driver of growth in female employment, e.g. the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, two countries which have attained the 70% target.

As a consequence, the evaluation of a country according to its progress in achieving the Lisbon objectives for per capita employment cannot but be different, therefore, if employment rates are analysed in full-time equivalent. When they are, there is no longer any country which meets the 70% target for overall employment. As regards female employment, in full-time equivalent, only Sweden reaches 60%.

Graph 10



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Table 3

Female employment rates in Europe, and gap with men in 2006
(Persons aged 15 to 64)

	Employment rate		Employment rate in FTE		Gap with men in employment rate in FTE	
	Rate	Ranking	Rate	Ranking	Gap	Ranking
DE	62.4	4	43.6	7	5.3	7
FR	58.8	5	45.9	4	3.4	4
IT	46.3	8	46.5	3	3.0	3
HU	51.1	6	49.3	1	0.4	1
NL	66.7	2	38.6	8	8.5	8
PL	48.2	7	48.4	2	0.8	2
SE	70.7	1	44.5	5	4.1	5
UK	65.8	3	44.2	6	4.7	6
UE27	57.3	-	45.8	-	3.3	-

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2006

2. The quality of jobs held by women

2.1. The nature of part-time work

Depending on the country, part-time work is more or less widespread, more or less long-standing and more or less embedded in the structure of the labour market, as shown in the first part of this report. However, the nature of these jobs also differs markedly from country to country.

In the United Kingdom, part-time work consists essentially of poorly-paid, low-skilled and highly segmented jobs. Women "fall" into part-time work mainly for family reasons. It affords them the only means of adjusting to the constraints they face. When they resume full-time work they find their occupational situation has deteriorated in comparison with their position before going part-time (Blackwell, 2001).

In Germany, part-time work is not limited to unskilled employment. There, it is disproportionately an industrial phenomenon and is used as an alternative to redundancy (Addabbo, 1997). It is also useful to differentiate between developments in the two former Germanys. In West Germany, part-time work was a means for women to enter the labour force; the 1980s saw part-time work grow in skilled jobs, particularly in the public services (Blossfeld and Rohwer, 1997). In East Germany, by contrast, it normally corresponded to involuntary part-time work and therefore to under-employment. However, new legislation in the first decade of this century has brought about an improvement in the quality of part-time jobs in terms of pay and social security entitlement³ (Yerkes and Visser, 2005).

In Sweden, part-time work is found equally at all skill levels (Sundström, 1997), which is a function of the long tradition in the Swedish labour market of entitling working parents to reduce their working time. Part-time hours in Sweden are longer than in other countries, coming very close to full-time. It is rather more a case of reduced working time for family reasons.

In the Netherlands, part-time work is largely a "choice", given a socio-cultural context which encourages women to "choose" to reduce their working time. Although more prevalent in the least skilled occupations, it applies to two out of every five women managers and engineers. These are not atypical or especially flexible jobs; most part-time workers are covered by a collective agreement and have permanent contracts. In fact, since the advent of part-time working in the early 1980s, the trade unions have striven to ensure that the same rights are granted to part-time as to full-time workers. Nevertheless, the hourly rate of pay of part-time workers represents only 69.8% of that of full-time workers for men and 93.1% for women, the difference being attributable essentially to an age effect (especially for men) (Visser, 2002). The development of part-time work in the Netherlands results from married women wanting to work. Given the total absence of support from society, they see part-time work as the only means of

³ The rule authorising the earning of a wage up to € 400 without social security contributions has been abolished, for example.

reconciling their role as mothers with having a job (Wierink, 2001; Visser, 2002). This is therefore relative progress, particularly since the Netherlands has managed to limit the emergence of marginal jobs (very short hours and job insecurity). Interestingly, although women go part-time when a child is born, in contrast to UK mothers they do not return to full-time work once the child starts school (Yerkes and Visser, 2005).

In Germany, where women had entered the labour market full-time, the development of part-time work was intended to stimulate job creation. As a result, it largely concerned women. From the point of view of equality at work, therefore, a regression has occurred. Similarly, in France where part-time jobs are most frequently associated with poor working conditions and job insecurity (Bué, 2004), the emergence of part-time work cannot be interpreted as progress in terms of gender equality.

The employment rate is generally low in Hungary, but where women do work, they work full-time. In Poland, as in Hungary, part-time work is rare. 70% of part-time workers are in reality partners helping out in the agricultural sector. The kinds of jobs done part-time require only a low level of skills and are largely held by older and younger workers. Part-time employment is not a tool for reconciling private and working life (Grotkowska *et al.*, 2005; Kotowska, 2006). In Hungary, part-time work is rare and seems to be the preserve of white-collar workers. A number of companies, particularly in the telecommunications and information technology sectors, have introduced more flexibility in employees' working hours with the aim of increasing their motivation (Nagy, 2005).

In all countries, albeit less markedly in Sweden, the structure of part-time work is different from that of full-time work. For example, hourly rates of pay are not the same as the prevailing rates for full-time jobs. The reasons for these divergences vary from country to country. A recent study by Bardasi and Gornick (2008) drew attention to the factors explaining the gap in hourly rates of pay between part-time and full-time employment. Table 4 shows the principal findings (the study does not cover all the countries analysed in this report).

Table 4

Breakdown of hourly pay gap between part-time and full-time female employment by country in the mid-1990s (%)

(Women aged 25 to 59)

	Gross differential	Weight of characteristics*	Unexplained element	Adjusted differential
DE	-8.4	-8.9	-91.1	-7.7
FR	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
HU	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
IT	-22.1	-35	-65	-15
NL	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	7**
PL	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
UK	-15.1	-92.8	-7.3	-1.1
SE	+1.1	-151.5	+251.5	+2.8

Source: Bardasi and Gornick, 2008 (*Luxembourg Income Survey*).

* Age, education, sector of the job held, work experience.

** Visser, 2002, this figure is valid for 1996.

How to read table: in Germany, the hourly rate of pay for a part-time job is 8.4 percentage points lower than for full-time; 8.9% of this difference is explained by the characteristics of the people holding that type of job, and 91.1% of the gap is unexplained. The gap corrected by the differences in characteristics results in a disadvantage of 7.7 percentage points for part-time work.

Although the results of this study are particularly instructive as regards the nature of part-time jobs, they do need qualifying in terms of the difficulty of defining part-time work (see Text box 3). The authors in fact emphasise that they used the definition specific to each country, with the exception of Sweden for which - since it has no national definition - they opted for the OECD definition ("usual working hours under 30 per week"). In any event, Table 4 shows the nature of part-time work in the United Kingdom to be at the opposite end of the spectrum from that prevailing in Sweden. Germany and Italy are in an intermediate position. In the United Kingdom, the characteristics of the people and jobs involved account for most of the pay gap, which shows that part-time jobs demand low skill levels. This gap is often treated as a "fair" gap, an approach which the authors criticise because the predominance of women in such poor-quality part-time jobs is the outcome of policies dating from the 1960s which have pushed women towards those jobs. Part-time work in the United Kingdom is synonymous with downgrading: a quarter of women who move from a full-time to a part-time job find themselves in a post where the level of skills is lower than that of the post they held previously (Connolly and Gregory, 2008). Women

move to part-time work with the arrival of their first child, when they are about 30 years of age. Whilst before having children 90% of women work full-time (with working hours marginally lower than those of men), after the birth of children female part-time work rises from a very low level to more than 30% of women's paid employment. Women stay in part-time work for over ten years, which has an adverse effect on their careers. Those who find another full-time job experience a lasting deterioration in their pay: five years after their return to full-time work, they earn 40% less than they would have done if they had not spent ten years working part-time (Connolly and Gregory, 2007). Similar work has been done by Manning and Petrongolo (2008) on the wage penalty associated, for women only, with part-time work. Their findings show an hourly pay gap of 26% less for part-time work using the *Labour Force Survey* for 2001 and 22% with a different survey (*New Earnings Survey*) based on a definition comparable to that of the OECD. The authors reveal a deterioration since the mid-1990s in hourly remuneration for women working part-time compared with those in full-time work. In Germany and Italy most of the pay gap is unexplained, which may be due either to a form of pay discrimination against female part-time employees or to non-observable factors (such as motivation, aptitude or commitment to the job, which are supposedly lower in part-time female workers). Sweden is a case apart, since part-time female employees are paid better hourly rates than those working full-time. The pay gap is very slight, however, with the characteristics having if anything a negative effect, as in other countries, but with an unexplained effect which more than offsets it.

In Europe on average, part-time work⁴ is concentrated primarily in the health and social work sectors, education and the wholesale and retail trade. These sectors account for between 15 and 23% of part-time female employment.

These trends are the same in all countries, with the exception of Germany where the commercial sector employs the highest number of people working part-time. In Europe in general it seems that part-time work is concentrated above all in occupations comprising office staff, unskilled services and sales employees, and personal services workers. The occupations which employ most women are also those which account for a higher share of part-time female employment. They also include the occupations most often held by women when they have children.

2.2. *The degree of labour market segmentation*

In all European countries the labour market is segmented according to gender. Thus there are some occupations (vertical segregation) and sectors (horizontal segregation) occupied mostly by

⁴ Defined as any work where the number of hours is less than 30 per week.

women and other occupations and sectors by men. Women have moreover tended to reinforce their predominance in certain sectors (Franco, 2007). Out of a total of 17 sectors (NACE 1 nomenclature), three contribute to sectoral segmentation in Europe. The main one is the social work sector, which accounts for between 20 and 45% of differentials in the incidence of female and male employment, whilst one third derives from the construction and industrial sectors. Similarly, only a few occupations lie behind occupational segmentation: office work, construction work, personal services, teaching and driving jobs.

Horizontal segregation

Women are over-represented in the personal services, health and social work sectors, where they account for more than 70% of the labour force. They are also in a majority in the education sector (60%). Women with children have a greater presence in those sectors than childless women, but this tendency is declining since the proportion of women without children is constantly increasing in those sectors. The sectors occupying the majority of female workers are as follows:

- The health sector accounts for between 10 and 35% of total female employment, the highest share being found in the Netherlands. In general, this sector is particularly significant in northern and central European countries, whilst it is less representative of female employment in the southern European countries and the new Member States;
- Manufacturing industry accounts for between 10 and 27% of total female employment, save in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In general, this sector accounts for a greater share of female employment in the new Member States and in Italy;
- The education sector accounts for between 10 and 19% of total female employment, save in Germany, with the highest shares being found in Italy and the United Kingdom;
- The commercial sector accounts for between 10 and 19% of total female employment;
- The public administration sector employs between 5 and almost 15% of female labour.

Conversely, women are under-represented in the following sectors: construction, mining, fisheries and electricity, gas and water generation and distribution. They represent less than 20% of employees in these sectors. These sectors employ between 0 and 2% of female labour, unlike agriculture which remains a major sector in the southern European countries and the new Member States. That finding is not surprising since these sectors include ones traditionally regarded as typically male and a number of sectors which generally account for fewer jobs, such as primary sector activities.

Maron and Meulders (2008) have calculated the dissimilarity index, which is a composite indicator allowing the level of segregation to be compared readily from one country to another. In terms of the total population (aged between 25 and 54, see the first two columns of Table 5), segregation amounts to between 31 and 38% depending on the country: that is to say, in order to achieve a uniform distribution of workers across all sectors it would be necessary to redeploy more or less one third of them.

Table 5

Gender and parenthood dissimilarity indices, NACE 1-digit activity sectors⁵, in 2005

	gender indices							parenthood indices			
	entire population aged 25 to 54		non-fathers and non-mothers aged 25 to 54		fathers and mothers aged 25 to 54		parenthood variation	mothers and non-mothers aged 25 to 54		fathers and non-fathers aged 25 to 54	
	DI	Rank	DI	Rank	DI	Rank		DI	Rank	DI	Rank
DE	34.16	3	32.13	2	37.41	5	14.12%	5.01	4	3.51	3
FR	30.92	1	29.45	1	32.15	1	8.40%	5.42	6	5.12	4
HU	32.88	2	33.3	4	33.91	2	1.80%	3.98	2	5.8	5
IT	34.54	5	34.72	5	34.88	3	0.45%	5.03	5	5.86	6
NL	38.41	6	37.36	6	39.19	6	4.69%	2.9	1	3.46	2
UK	34.38	4	32.76	3	36.28	4	9.72%	4.59	3	2.85	1

Source: Maron and Meulders (2008)

Note: no data for Sweden and Poland are available in this study.

Segregation is the lowest (in ascending order) in France, Hungary and Germany, while it is highest in the United Kingdom, Italy and the Netherlands.

When a distinction is drawn between the population of parents and the rest of the population, horizontal segregation between men and women in all countries is most marked where they have children. The level of gender segregation increases proportionally more in Germany and the United Kingdom. When comparing countries' rankings according to parenthood status (see the fourth and sixth columns of Table 5), Germany and the United Kingdom display greater gender segregation between parents compared with non-parents.

Sectoral segregation operates first and foremost along gender lines (since women are more concentrated in certain sectors than men), then according to motherhood status (mothers being more affected by this phenomenon than women without children). In France, Italy and Germany mothers are more segregated than elsewhere. Segregation between fathers and men without children is greater than between mothers and women without children. This might be explained by the fact that segregation is already high for women and the presence of children has

⁵ NACE 1-digit is a statistical classification of economic activity sectors. It is a standard indicator most frequently used in economic and social statistics.

proportionally less influence on the degree of segregation in comparison with men, for whom the initial level of segregation is low.

Vertical segregation

The sectoral segregation described above goes hand-in-hand with occupational segmentation on the European labour market. Women's employment is spread predominantly over the following occupational categories:

- office staff: this occupation accounts for between 10 and almost 25% of total female employment, with the highest share found in the United Kingdom. This occupational category includes secretaries, shorthand typists, library staff, etc.;
- unskilled services and commercial employees: in general this sector accounts for between 10 and 20% of total female employment in Europe. In Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, however, the proportion is less than 10%. This category includes in particular street vendors and the like, as well as domestic and other helpers, and cleaners and laundry workers;
- direct personal services workers and guards and security staff: this group accounts for between 10 and 20% of total female employment⁶;
- teaching professionals: this group employs between 10 and 15% of female labour. The percentage is below 10% in Germany and Italy.
- other intermediate occupations: this category accounts for between 10 and over 15% of female employment with the exception of the United Kingdom. This is particularly true for Germany and to a lesser extent France. This group of occupations includes amongst others travel and insurance agents, administrative secretaries, intermediate occupations comparable with administrative management and social work, etc.

On the other hand - and this applies to all countries and whether or not a woman has one or more children - women are systematically less present in the following occupations:

- the armed forces;
- members of the executive and the legislature and senior public servants;
- company directors, except in France, the United Kingdom and Hungary;
- directors and managers of small businesses.

⁶ Jobs such as travel attendants, conductors and guides, childcare workers, care assistants in establishments and at home, hairdressers and beauticians and related workers belong to this occupational category.

This under-representation of women in positions of responsibility reflects the "glass ceiling" or "sticky floor" phenomenon, which explains why women have more difficulty than men in reaching the top of the job - and hence pay - hierarchy. For example, women in Europe are less often found at the head of companies than men, and this trend is stable (Franco, 2007).

Just as they did for sectoral segregation, Maron and Meulders (2008) have evaluated the degree of vertical segregation using the dissimilarity index to obtain a composite indicator facilitating a straightforward comparison of the level of vertical segregation between countries (Table 6).

Table 6

Gender and parenthood dissimilarity indices, (ISCO 2-digit⁷), in 2005

	gender indices							parenthood indices			
	entire population aged 25 to 54		non-fathers and non-mothers aged 25 to 54		fathers and mothers aged 25 to 54		parenthood variation	mothers and non-mothers aged 25 to 54		fathers and non-fathers aged 25 to 54	
	DI	Rank	DI	Rank	DI	Rank		DI	Rank	DI	Rank
DE	51.58	5	48.91	4	54.9	6	10.91%	7.35	4	5.2	3
FR	50.98	4	49.68	5	51.91	3	4.31%	6.1	2	4.96	2
HU	53.18	6	54.45	6	52.25	4	-4.20%	9.08	6	7.23	6
IT	42.08	1	41.71	1	42.77	1	2.49%	6.97	3	6.71	5
NL	48.27	2	46.14	2	49.86	2	7.46%	4.8	1	3.26	1
UK	50.07	3	46.89	3	53.14	5	11.77%	8.6	5	5.72	4

Source: Maron and Meulders (2008)

Note: no data for Sweden and Poland are available in this study.

2.3 Employment contracts and access to vocational training

Labour market integration is of varying stability. The nature of the employment contract is an indicator of the level of job stability. A permanent contract offers a less insecure working life and one more under the control of the employee. By the same token, access to vocational training is a means of stimulating a career and placing oneself on an upward career path. Gender differences according to the type of employment contract and access to vocational training are therefore indicators of the degree to which women are integrated into the labour market compared to men. Globally in Europe, the occupational situation of women is more insecure and uncertain than that of men.

For Europe in total, Table 7 shows that around 15% of employed women hold fixed-term jobs (14% for men). In relation to the number of people of each sex at work in Europe, more women than men have fixed-term contracts. The gender differences are striking in Italy, Sweden and the

⁷ ISCO 2-digit refers to the international classification of occupations published by the International Labour Office (ILO, Geneva, 1990).

Netherlands. However, the opposite can be seen in Poland and Hungary and to a lesser extent in Germany. Overall, in most countries, women have a higher probability of holding a fixed-term job than men.

Half of all employed workers, both women and men, under fixed-term contracts are in that situation because they are unable to find permanent employment. Women are more likely than men to be in a fixed-term job involuntarily, since 7.5% of female employees as compared with 6.7% of male employees hold such contracts in the EU 25, with the exception of Poland and Hungary, where men are more affected than women by involuntary fixed-term employment.

Table 7

Fixed-term jobs as a percentage of paid employment by sex, and fixed-term jobs held involuntarily as a share of all fixed-term jobs in Europe, in 2005

	Fixed-term jobs		Share of fixed-term jobs held involuntarily	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
DE	13.6	14	16%	14%
FR	14.2	12.5	65%	54%
IT	14.8	10.6	69%	61%
HU	6.5	7.8	46%	50%
NL	16.7	13.8	26%	30%
PL	24.6	26.3	49%	52%
SE	17.9	14.6	64%	55%
UK	5.9	5.2	20%	30%
UE25	14.9	13.9	50%	48%

Source: LFS, *Statistics in Focus*, No 98, 2007, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-098/FR/KS-SF-07-098-FR.PDF

How to read table: in Germany, 13.6% of employed women hold fixed-term jobs and 16% of them hold that type of job involuntarily.

Women are more affected by involuntary fixed-term employment in all economic sectors. The sectors where this type of job is particularly prevalent are agriculture and personal services. 19% of employees in the latter sector are employed involuntarily for fixed terms; the hotel and catering sector follows with 11%. The manner in which the personal services sector, in which women are over-represented, has grown is therefore a major factor prone to weaken women's position in the labour market. Access to lifelong vocational training is a crucial element in career

progression. In Europe as a whole, women participate more than men in continuing training programmes (Table 8).

Table 8

**Participation in continuing training by men and women in work, aged 25 to 64, in 2003
(in %)**

	Total		Level of education low		Level of education medium		Level of education high	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
DE	16.9	15.8	4.9	3.9	13.7	12.2	31.9	25.9
FR	25.4	24.4	13.8	15.6	23.1	23.2	40.4	37.6
IT	9	6.4	3.3	2.7	10.7	8.1	16.2	15.6
HU	6.8	4.7	n/a	2.4	6.7	4.2	12.2	8.6
NL	13.7	12.3	7.3	7.8	13.5	13.5	19.2	14.1
PL	15.7	13.7	0	0	10.4	11.3	39.1	33.7
SE	58	48.8	35	32.2	54.7	46	71.6	68
UK	46	39.6	17	13.7	41.4	34.7	64.5	56.3
UE25	23.3	19.3	8.6	7.6	20.9	18.5	40.1	33.4

Source: Eurostat, ad hoc LFS module on lifelong learning, *Statistics in Focus*, No 130, 2007.

3. Weak points of women's economic participation

3.1. Motherhood and family responsibilities

In Europe as a whole, the presence of children has a negative effect on female rates of activity whereas it stimulates those of men (Table 9). Whilst women with children everywhere have lower activity rates than men with children and childless women, fathers are more active than mothers and men without children. In fact, in many countries, men only have children once in stable employment, and with the arrival of a child they work more. Sweden stands out as a special case since fathers there are less active than men without children, suggesting that men adjust their working time upon the arrival of children.

Table 9: Activity rate of mothers, and gap in activity rates between parents and non-parents

(Persons aged 25 to 39)

	<i>Women with children</i>	<i>Men with children – Women with children</i>	<i>Men without children – Men with children</i>	<i>Women without children – Women with children</i>
DE	71.5	4.2	-0.95	2.82
FR	74.6	3.6	-2.4	1.01
IT	65.2	6	-2.1	2.39
HU	69.2	3.1	-1.9	1.02
NL	84.7	4.2	-1.4	2.42
PL	69	2.5	-2.5	0.12
SE	81.4	0	2.1	0.51
UK	78	3.8	-1.2	2.24

Source: LFS, 2005

How to read table: in Germany, the activity rate of women with children is 71.5%. The activity rate of fathers is higher than that of mothers by 4.2 percentage points. The activity rate of men without children is lower than that of fathers by 0.95 percentage points, and the activity rate of women without children is 2.82 points higher than that of mothers.

Although the presence of children generally affects women's economic participation, that effect increases with the number of children in their care, and this applies to all countries. Whereas women with a just one child go out to work almost as often as women with no children, the arrival of a second and above all a third child lowers mothers' activity rates considerably. The rates fall by an average of 25 percentage points between the first child and the third, and subsequent, children. In Hungary the transition from a single child to three children, or more, entails a drop of more than 45 percentage points in the activity rate of mothers, bringing that rate to less than 25% (Table 10).

Table 10**Female employment rate by number of children in 2004**

	<i>1 child</i>	<i>2 children</i>	<i>3 or more children</i>
DE	76.7	65.3	45.8
FR	82.3	75.8	52.4
IT	63.5	57.5	44.3
HU	69.5	59.2	23.6
NL	81.5	80.0	69.4
PL	79.1	73.7	64.0
SE	n/a	n/a	n/a
UK	77.4	71.3	49.6

Source: LFS, 2005

n/a: not available

The age of the youngest child is also a significant determinant in women's economic participation. The younger the child, the lower the mothers' activity rate, a phenomenon which applies to all countries (Table 11).

Table 11**Female employment rate by age of youngest child, in 2004**

	<i>0-4 years</i>	<i>5-9 years</i>	<i>10-14 years</i>
DE	54.3	75.3	82.1
FR	67.4	81.3	82.8
IT	58.0	61.6	60.6
HU	32.1	69.4	81.3
NL	78.3	78.5	80.3
PL	64.1	81.3	84.2
SE	n/a	n/a	n/a
UK	62.4	73.5	79.3

Source: LFS, 2005

n/a: not available

In Europe, therefore, the presence of children in a family is a curb on women's integration into the labour market. This intensifies with the number of children and throughout Europe there is a significant threshold beyond three children and where the youngest is less than six years old. The

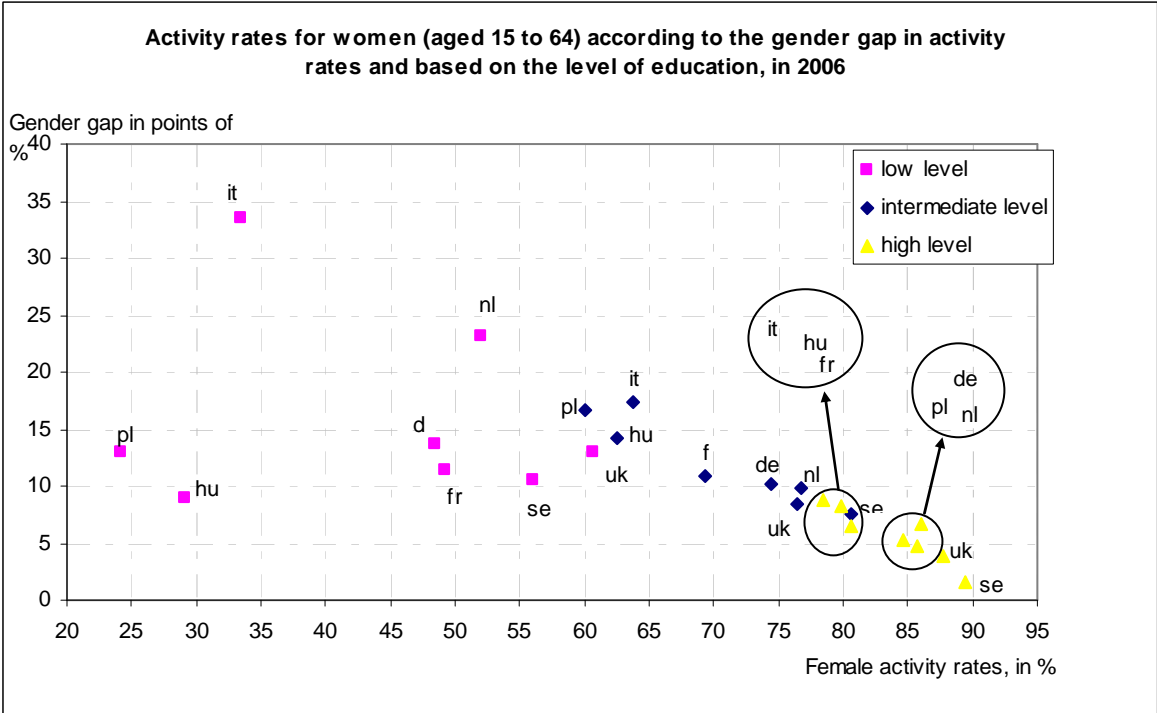
average gap between the activity rate of mothers whose youngest child is aged between 0 and 4 years and that of mothers whose youngest child is between 10 and 14 years old is 25 points: before children begin school, mothers have difficulty in finding childcare which allows them to remain on the labour market. This is particularly pronounced in Hungary and Germany. In Italy, the activity rate of mothers seems not to be affected by the age of youngest child, but the levels of mothers' activity rates are very low in that country, suggesting that once children are born mothers do not resume work irrespective of the age of their children.

3.2. Skills, generation and life-cycle

The level of female economic participation is linked at one and the same time to women's levels of skill, the generation to which they belong (older generations are less active than younger ones, Graph 12) and the stage in their life-cycle. Women's working lives are mapped out by the major stages in family formation, as explored above.

The least-skilled women are also those who participate least in the labour market in Europe. Their activity rate is appreciably lower than that of more highly skilled women. Added to this is the fact that the lower the level of skills, the wider the gap in activity rates between the sexes (Graph 11). This is true in all the countries studied.

Graph 11

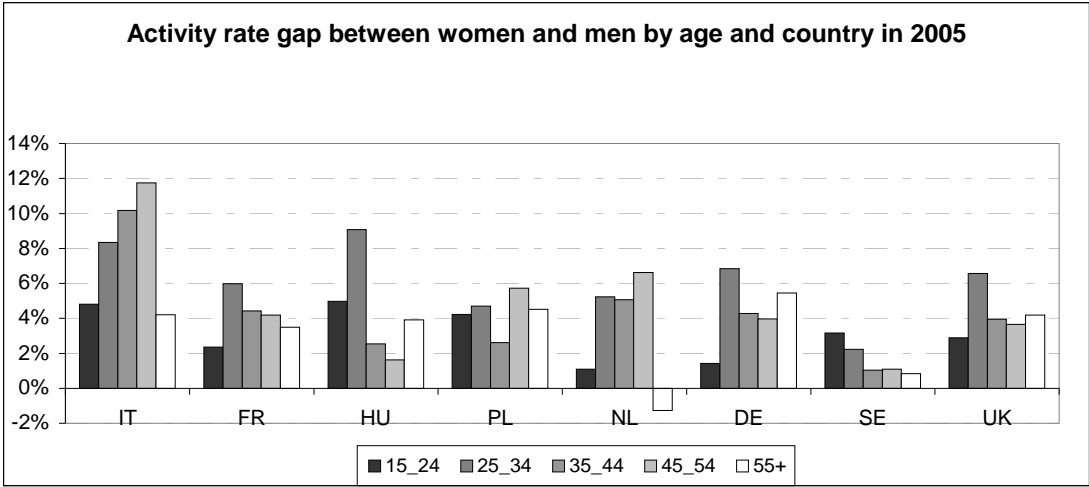


Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Initial education and training therefore play a decisive role in women’s economic participation, and a lack of skills exacerbates gender inequality. The effect of the number of children on activity rates and the effect associated with the age of the youngest child are all the greater where the mother has poor skills (Graphs A-8 in annex).

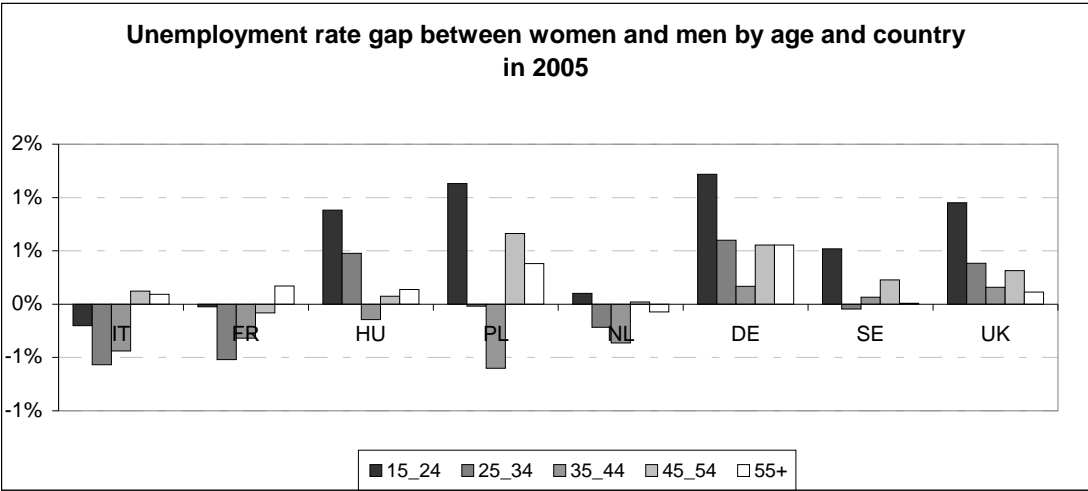
The integration of European women in the labour market differs considerably according to their age (Graphs 12 and 13). Two factors explain the age-related differences in female rates of activity. First of all, one finds a generational effect, with women now aged over 55 having grown up in a different socio-cultural and institutional context from that in which young women today begin their working lives. Secondly, the life-cycle factor plays a particularly important role when it comes to examining women’s activity according to their age. Family commitments become more onerous between the ages of 30 and 45. This intermediate age band is most frequently the one in which a family is brought up, which is therefore likely to affect economic participation by those women.

Graph 12



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graph 13



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Two groups of countries can be distinguished as regards the differences in activity rates and the differential with the men’s activity rates based on age: those where the 25-34 age group displays the largest activity gap between the sexes compared with all other age groups (Hungary, France, Germany and the United Kingdom) and those where this applies to the 45-54 age group (Italy, Poland and the Netherlands). For the first group, this finding can be interpreted as the effect of women taking a career break during phases of motherhood, followed by a resumption as soon as their children grow up. For the second group it is, rather, a generational effect which dictates today’s low rates of activity by women aged 45 to 54.

Sweden belongs to neither of these two groups. Here the male/female difference in economic participation is more pronounced amongst young people (aged 15 to 24).

3.3. Women are under-represented in employment policies

The preceding sections have highlighted the difficulties encountered by women on the labour market. As in the case of men, a low level of skills implies lower activity rates, higher unemployment and a more insecure employment position, but these effects are more marked for women than for men. For women there is the additional burden of motherhood, which gives rise to career breaks and a return to work sometimes compromised by the absence of any specific support. All European countries have a set of labour market policies intended to motivate and support the unemployed and those disadvantaged in the labour market. In Europe overall, women are under-represented in these schemes even though they encounter clearly identified difficulties in entering the labour market, all the more so where they are unskilled.

Table 12**Share of women and men in employment policies, in 2004**

	<i>Active measures</i>		<i>Passive measures</i>	
	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %
DE	40.7	59.3	39.6	60.4
FR	45	55	48.5	51.5
IT	n/a	n/a	42.7	57.3
HU	54	46	50.4	49.6
NL	n/a	n/a	49.1	50.9
PL	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SE	42.2	57.8	55	45
UK	35.8	64.2	25.9	74.1
UE-25	35.8	64.2	25.9	74.1

Source: Eurostat, Labour Market Policy database, *Statistics in Focus*, No 66, 2007.

Notes: (1) active measures are vocational training, job rotation or job sharing; employment incentives; occupational integration of disabled persons; direct job creation; support for business start-ups; (2) passive measures are income maintenance and support in the event of joblessness; early retirement.

How to read table: in Germany, women represent 40.7% of participants in activation measures under type 1 employment policies.

The imbalance in women's disfavour prevails in both passive and active measures, but is more pronounced in the former. Table 12 shows that the position varies from country to country. Women are particularly absent from these programmes in the United Kingdom, and to a lesser degree in Germany and Sweden, whereas the situation is more balanced in Hungary and Poland. This is explained partly by the fact that certain criteria for eligibility to the programmes may restrict involvement by women. In most countries such measures are in fact targeted especially at the registered unemployed.

Table 13**Share of women and men in the population of registered unemployed, in 2004**

	Women %	Men %
DE	44.1	55.9
FR	51.4	48.6
IT	n/a	n/a
HU	51.4	48.6
NL	48.5	51.5
PL	n/a	n/a
SE	43.5	56.5
UK	25.9	74.1
UE-25	48.5	51.5

Source: Eurostat, Labour Market Policy database *Statistics in Focus*, No 66, 2007.

In certain countries there is a very significant gender imbalance, as is the case in the United Kingdom where women are broadly under-represented amongst the registered unemployed (Table 13). This is indicative of the problems - associated with self-reported data - of measuring female unemployment. In the United Kingdom, when women have no job they do not for the most part register with the employment services, are not counted in unemployment figures and participate less in employment policy activation programmes. In the United Kingdom the registered unemployed are people in receipt of JSA (Jobseeker's Allowance). Eligibility is based on the period of payment of contributions but also on a household means test, added to which is the fact that an unemployed person whose partner works more than 24 hours a week is not entitled to benefits, which excludes many women in couples. Thus women seeking a job after stopping work to look after their children and who have not paid sufficient contributions or who have a working partner cannot receive JSA, and will not be counted amongst the registered unemployed. They cannot take advantage of active or passive employment support programmes; their difficulties in entering the labour market are therefore greater than those of men.

4. Pay gaps and parenthood

4.1. The gender pay gap

The characteristics of the jobs held by women - in terms both of working time, occupations and economic sectors - impact on the earnings to which women can aspire. Throughout Europe, with the exception of Poland, women's pay is on average lower than that of men.

Table 14

Pay gaps between women and men, in 2005

	<i>Men's gross average hourly pay (euros)</i>	<i>Women's gross average hourly pay (euros)</i>	<i>Gross pay gap between the sexes</i>	<i>Explained part</i>	<i>Price effect</i>
PL	2.48	2.49	-1%	-35.4%**	135.4%***
IT	12.54	11.38	10.2%	30%***	69.9%***
FR	15.57	13.67	13.9%	22.8%**	77.1%***
HU	3.06	2.67	14.8%	16.7%*	83.3%***
NL	22.31	18.16	22.8%	73.3%***	26.7%
UK	19.25	15.65	23%	36.2%***	63.8%***
DE	19.77	15.98	23.7%	63.8%***	36.2%*
SE	17.37	13.74	26.4%	21.4%	78.6%

Source: O'Dorchai (2008)

Notes: (1) For the countries in bold, gross hourly pay is measured based on the "gross monthly income" variable; for the others, the "employee cash or near cash income" variable has been used. (2) Both couples and single people have been taken into account but only those in employment, not the self-employed or family carers. (3) * statistically significant at a threshold of 10%; ** at 5%; *** at 1%.

For the eight countries, the gross hourly pay gap varies between 10% of women's earnings in Italy and 26% in Sweden. The gender pay gap is relatively narrow in France and Hungary and wide in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany (Table 14).

Part of the gross pay gap is explained by differences in the observable characteristics which distinguish women and men (such as marital status, age, level of educational attainment, work experience, sector of activity, occupation and size of the undertaking); the other part is attributable to different pay for identical characteristics or to unobserved heterogeneity. That second part is often referred to as the price effect or discrimination. The magnitude of this effect varies appreciably from country to country. Furthermore, there seems to be no correlation between the magnitude of the gross pay gap between women and men and the magnitude of the price effect. For example, whereas Germany and the Netherlands are both countries where the gross gap is wide, the price effect is low in those countries (36% and 27% respectively). In other words, roughly two thirds of the gross pay differential between women and men is explained by differences in observable characteristics between the sexes in those countries (women having less

work experience, being less often home owners⁸, holding fewer positions of responsibility, more often occupying jobs in sectors with low average wage levels, and more frequently having fixed-term contracts). In contrast to the position in Germany and the Netherlands, the price effect is pronounced in Hungary. There, the observed characteristics play only a small role in explaining the pay gap between women and men.

4.2. The pay gap between mothers and women without children

Women are penalised in the pay they receive, either because they have characteristics associated with lower potential earnings, or because they are victims of outright discrimination by employers, or else as result of the overall regulation of the labour market. This may be linked to the fact that women are, or soon will be, mothers. The gross gap between mothers and women without children is far lower than the pay gap between the sexes (Table 15).

Table 15

Pay gaps - mothers and women without children in 2005

	<i>Gross average hourly pay of women without children (euros)</i>	<i>Gross average hourly pay of mothers (euros)</i>	<i>Gross pay gap</i>	<i>Explained part</i>	<i>Price effect</i>
UK	15.46	15.99	-3.3%	-360.1%	460.1%
NL	18.07	18.59	-2.8%	-3.6%	103.6%
IT	11.33	11.62	-2.5%	-87.4%***	187.4%**
HU	2.69	2.73	-1.5%	664.4%***	-564.3%
PL	2.49	2.5	-0.6%	171.4%***	-71.4%
FR	13.71	13.55	1.2%	29.3%*	70.7%
DE	16.07	15.58	3.2%	102.4%***	-2.4%
SE	13.85	13.29	4.2%	45.6%	54.4%

Source: O'Dorchaí (2008)

Notes: (1) For the countries in bold, gross hourly pay is measured based on the "gross monthly income" variable; for the others, the "employee cash or near cash income" variable has been used. (2) Both couples and single people have been taken into account but only those in employment, not the self-employed or family carers. (3) * statistically significant at a threshold of 10%; ** at 5%; *** at 1%.

Discrimination therefore affects all women, since they are actually, or potentially, mothers. The pay gap between mothers and women without children is not merely slight; in certain countries there is even a gross wage *gain* for mothers. This is the case in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary and Poland. In these countries the wage gain for mothers varies from 1% of mothers' average pay in Hungary and Poland, to 3% in the United Kingdom. With the

⁸ Being a home owner can indicate a certain socio-economic standing which has been associated empirically with greater earning potential.

exception of Hungary and Poland, observed characteristics have no part to play in explaining the gross pay gap between mothers and women without children in those countries. Everywhere else there is a wage penalty on motherhood: in France (1%), in Germany (3%) and in Sweden (4%). In these countries women's pay is under downward pressure as a result of both gender and motherhood. Once again, there is no correlation between the magnitude of the gross gap between mothers and non-mothers and the magnitude of the price effect. The price effect is again significant in all countries, with a few exceptions. In Hungary, Poland and Germany, the entire wage gain or penalty is explained by the fact that mothers have different characteristics from women without children. In those countries mothers tend to be younger, to have less human capital and to be victims - even more than other women - of segregation in all its forms. Thus discrimination in fact operates on the basis of gender, with the result that all women are affected as mothers whether they already have a child or not.

4.3. The pay gap between fathers and mothers

In some countries, parenthood reduces the gender pay gap. This occurs in Italy and the Netherlands (Table 16). In both these countries motherhood is associated with a wage gain. In general, however the pay gap between mothers and fathers is more pronounced than that between the sexes, because motherhood tends to affect women's earnings adversely whereas fatherhood tends to have a positive effect on men's earnings. Accordingly, in most countries, parenthood widens the gender pay gap. That is the case in the United Kingdom, Hungary, France, Germany and Sweden. This finding is surprising for Hungary and the United Kingdom, since there motherhood was found to be associated with a wage gain. Fatherhood therefore gives rise to a large pay advantage in those countries.

In only three countries do the differences in characteristics between fathers and mothers explain a large part of the gross pay gap: Poland, Germany and the United Kingdom. For these countries, descriptive statistics indicate that fathers are more often home owners than mothers and have a higher level of educational attainment. Fathers and mothers are more or less the same age in these countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom. However, fathers generally have more work experience than mothers and on average work in larger undertakings. In the United Kingdom, fathers more often have permanent employment contracts. Nevertheless, the major difference between fathers and mothers lies in their distribution between economic sectors. Horizontal segregation is particularly pronounced in the United Kingdom. In all other countries the price effect is predominant, and hence discrimination is what explains the pay gap.

Table 16

Pay gaps between mothers and fathers in 2005

	<i>Gross average hourly pay of fathers (euros)</i>	<i>Gross average hourly pay of mothers (euros)</i>	<i>Gross pay gap</i>	<i>Explained part</i>	<i>Price effect</i>
PL	2.32	2.5	-7.5%	160.4%***	-60.4%
IT	12.42	11.62	6.9%	5.4%	94.6%***
NL	22.42	18.59	20.6%	35.6%	64.4%
FR	16.66	13.55	22.9%	40.4%**	59.6%**
DE	19.61	15.58	25.9%	66.5%***	33.4%***
SE	16.96	13.29	27.6%	29.2%	70.8%
HU	3.62	2.73	32.5%	-15.9%	115.9%***
UK	21.28	15.99	33%	62.7%***	37.3%**

Source: O'Dorchai (2008)

Notes: (1) For the countries in bold, gross hourly pay is measured based on the "gross monthly income" variable; for the others, the "employee cash or near cash income" variable has been used. (2) Both couples and single people have been taken into account but only those in employment, not the self-employed or family carers. (3) * statistically significant at a threshold of 10%; ** at 5%; *** at 1%.

III. The family sphere and the cultural environment

1. The impact of the family

1.1. Demographic trends: fertility rates and single parents

As demonstrated by the previous sections, family formation has a bearing on women's labour market participation. More specifically, motherhood constitutes a major curb on growth in female employment and on the reduction of labour market gender inequalities. When confronted with the difficulty of combining motherhood and employment, women adjust their behaviour. In countries where the institutional and cultural environment - to be explored in the next section - allow them to do so, they remain at work, cutting back their working hours once children come along and reconciling their family life with their working life. In countries which have not - or have insufficiently - adapted their public policies to the upsurge in female economic participation over the past few decades, women have decided to forego motherhood in order to concentrate on their careers. Fertility trends are therefore linked to trends in women's economic participation. Although fertility rates are low in Europe as a whole, there are significantly different trends from one country to another (Table 19). Two groups of countries can be distinguished. The first comprises those where the fertility rate is going up and stands above 1.7. Among the eight countries studied in our report, this group with rising fertility consists of France, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The second group includes countries where fertility has stabilised at a lower level, below 1.4; Italy, Poland, Hungary and Germany represent this category.

The mean child-bearing age in Europe is almost 30, and on average European women have their first child around the age of 29, which is fairly late in their fertile life (Table 17). Only Polish and Hungarian women give birth to their first child at an earlier age (approx. 26). The generation of women born in 1963 has borne under two children each, with the exception of Swedish and French women who have borne more than two on average, and German women who have borne considerably fewer than their European sisters: 1.6 children each.

Table 17**Indicators on family formation in eight European countries in 2006**

	Fertility rate ⁹	Mean age at childbearing	Mean age at first birth	Completed fertility 1963 gen. ¹⁰
FR	2	29.72	28.61	2.01*
DE	1.32	29.56	29.14	1.59
HU	1.34	28.70	26.67	1.99
IT	n/a	30.87**	n/a	1.88
NL	1.7	30.58	28.91	1.81
PL	1.27	28.34	25.79	n/a
SE	1.85	30.53	28.65	2.02
UK	1.84	29.17	29.84	n/a

Source: Eurostat

* women born in 1967, source INED

(http://www.ined.fr/en/pop_figures/france/births_fertility/fertility_generations/)

** for 2005

Shifting family structures, population ageing and behavioural changes in respect of fertility have led to a rise in the proportion of childless households, a decline in average family size and an increase in single-parent families (Table 18).

⁹ The mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the fertility rates by age of a given year. It is therefore the completed fertility of a hypothetical generation, computed by adding the fertility rates by age for women in a given year (the number of women at each age is assumed to be the same). The total fertility rate is also used to indicate the replacement level fertility; in more developed countries, a rate of 2.1 is considered to be replacement level.

¹⁰ The mean number of children born to women of a given generation at the end of their childbearing years. This is calculated by adding the fertility rates by age of the mother observed for successive years, when the cohort has reached the age in question (in general, only ages between 15 and 49 years are considered). In practice, the fertility rates for older women can be estimated using the rates observed for previous generations, without waiting for the cohort to reach the end of the reproductive period..

Table 18

Households by number of children, 2005
(as a % of total number of households)

	No children	With 1 child	With 2 children	With 3 or more children	Sole-parent households as a proportion of all households with children
DE	75	13	9	3	16
FR	66	14	14	6	14
HU	64	17	14	5	11
IT	68	17	13	3	6
NL	69	12	14	6	13
PL	53	22	18	8	9
UK	68	14	12	5	24
SE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: OECD, *Babies and Bosses*, 2007

Changes in the working environment, as well as in living conditions and lifestyles, have caused men and women to postpone their fertility decisions and to have fewer children than previous generations. The gap between desired and observed fertility has widened in most countries in recent decades (d'Addio and d'Ercole, 2005).

Family life and the nature of relationships between adults have altered in most countries. Marriage as an institution has lost ground, while divorce rates have risen sharply. These trends have led to an increase in the number of single-parent families and in the number of children living in reconstituted families (Table 19). Single-parent families most often affect women, since the head of household is a woman in 90% of cases (Table 20).

The United Kingdom and the Nordic countries experience the highest rates of single-parent families, with the lowest rates existing in Italy, a southern European country (Sissoko, 2007). This split implies various sets of opposing factors: northern/southern countries, rich/poor countries and Catholic/Protestant tendencies (Rowlingson, 2001).

Table 19**Marital status of parents aged 25-54, in 2004 (in %)**

	single	couple
DE	n/a	n/a
FR	9.00	91.00
IT	3.98	96.02
HU	8.58	91.42
NL	5.70	94.30
PL	8.79	91.21
SE	n/a	n/a
UK	15.69	84.31

Source: LFS, 2005

Table 20**Proportion of women among single parents aged 25-54, in 2004 (in %)**

DE	n/a
FR	89.00
IT	90.65
HU	89.63
NL	90.39
PL	86.92
SE	n/a
UK	90.70

Source: LFS, 2005

Single mothers are less active than mothers who are part of a couple in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Poland, whereas in France, Hungary, Germany and above all Italy their labour market participation is higher than that of other women with children.

Whatever their activity rate, single mothers less frequently have jobs than those living in couples. Their employment rate is lower than that of other women. Moreover, with the exception of Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom, lone mothers more often work full-time than mothers living in couples. The ratio between the full-time employment rate of single mothers and that of mothers living in couples is lowest in the United Kingdom, at 0:8, and highest in Italy, at 1:35 (Sissoko, 2007).

The low employment rate of single mothers can be explained by several factors:

- a lack of financially affordable care facilities for young children;
- high unemployment;

- a cultural environment unfavourable to working mothers (Blundell *et al.*, 2000; Brewer *et al.*, 2003; Gregg *et al.*, 2003; Francesconi *et al.*, 2004; Gutiérrez-Domènech, 2005; Bingley *et al.*, 1995; Jenkins *et al.*, 2001 and Cleveland *et al.*, 1996).

It is difficult to determine which factors are more relevant than others. Similarly, there are various reasons why single mothers are less well paid. The adverse impact of the presence of children on mothers' earnings affects lone mothers more than those living in couples, because they are subject to even greater time constraints (domestic work/market work). In all countries, according to Sissoko (2007), the fact of being a single mother with small children reinforces the wage penalty associated with motherhood in general. This trend is particularly marked in Italy, where the higher ones climbs up the pay hierarchy, the greater the wage penalty suffered by lone mothers.

1.2. The sharing of domestic and parental duties¹¹

In Europe, women's total daily working time (counting the time devoted to market work, domestic work and studying) is generally longer than that of men. Among women, those who are in a couple and have a child are the ones who work most, particularly if they have a child aged between 0 and 6 (with the exception of Hungary and Sweden, where women with a child between 7 and 17 years old work longer hours than those with a child aged between 0 and 6). On average in Europe, women with a child of pre-school age work 50 minutes more per day than women as a whole. The time supplement amounts to 27 minutes for mothers whose youngest child is aged between 7 and 17. Single women with a child work an average of 19 minutes per day more than women as a whole. Finally, women devote less time to work overall, in other words both paid and domestic work, when they have no children; women in couples spend more time on these activities than singletons. This hierarchy is valid in most countries and applies equally to men.

Women without children spend the most time in paid work; this is the case in most countries. They work 11 minutes more per day on average than women as a whole when they are single and 9 minutes more per day when part of a couple. The presence of a child reduces women's investment in the labour market and the younger the children the truer this is; the paid working time of women with a pre-school child is lower than that of others. This trend is found in all countries, with the difference amounting to more than 40 minutes per day on average in Europe. Among mothers, single women devote more time to paid work than those in couples in most

¹¹ This section draws substantially on Maron and Meulders (2007).

countries, apart from the United Kingdom where mothers whose youngest child is between 7 and 17 years old spend more time on the labour market than lone mothers. Thus British women simultaneously undertake work and family commitments to a greater extent than others, while coping with a heavy burden of domestic work.

The reduction in the time devoted to paid work, owing to the presence of a child in the household, does not offset the increase in time devoted to domestic and family duties. The presence of a child in the home has a twofold effect and whereas women who have a child reduce the time they devote to paid employment for the sake of the domestic environment, they do so to an extent which does not compensate for the increased amount of time allocated to household chores. This phenomenon is evident everywhere. The domestic and parental work carried out by mothers is greatest when the youngest child is under 7 years old, and mothers in couples spend more time on it than lone mothers. The unequal distribution of tasks within the couple limits the time available to the woman for paid work and/or leisure activities. The fact that lone mothers spend less time on domestic duties than mothers in couples can be explained by the fact that they are more heavily involved in paid work, and have a greater need to participate in the labour market, since their earnings constitute the household's sole source of income. Whatever the country, the presence of a child reinforces the unequal time distribution between work and the family, since the gap observed between men and women in Europe increases on average by 69 minutes (130%) for work and 59 minutes (66%) for domestic chores. A specialisation of tasks normally occurs once a child enters the family circle, whereby women take on more domestic jobs at the expense of the labour market while men do the opposite. The disparities between the sexes and countries can be explained in particular by the incidence of part-time work - more widespread among women with children in certain countries - and by the fact that parental leave is more often taken by women than men.

The gap between the time allocated by women and men to their work is above the European average in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Hungary and Germany, since the male/female difference in working time is one hour 40 minutes more than in the case of a couple without children. As far as domestic activities are concerned, the gender gap lies above the European average in the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden. These are countries where the presence of a child also implies a larger disparity in the amount of time devoted to paid work than the European average. In these three countries, women whose youngest child is of pre-school age take on a larger share of the domestic chores and are less active on the labour market. In almost

all countries, men in couples with a child aged between 0 and 6 take on more domestic chores than men in couples without children. Conversely, they all step up their paid working time, with the exception of French fathers who work a little less than men in childless couples.

The presence of a small child may have the effect of narrowing the gap in leisure time between men and women, as is the case in many countries such as Hungary, Sweden and Germany. Thus both parents reduce their leisure time in the presence of children, but women do so proportionally less than men. Men cut back their leisure time so as to increase the time spent on paid employment, while women do so to look after the children. By contrast, French parents behave quite differently in respect of the amount of time they devote to leisure activities in the presence of a child, in that there is a widening of the gap observed, with women reducing their leisure time proportionally more than men. In the United Kingdom, as well as for the European average, the fact that the youngest child is aged between 0 and 6 does not significantly alter the leisure-time gap between men and women since they reduce their leisure time in a similar fashion.

2. The cultural environment

2.1. How public opinion views the role of women in society

The socio-cultural context is a significant factor which can curb or encourage women's access to the labour market. For example, the mass entry of Dutch women into employment is directly connected with a transformation in social norms concerning economic participation and motherhood. This behavioural change is in turn connected with a decline in church-going and in the influence of the church and the "Christian party". Whereas in 1965, 84% of the population disapproved of mothers of small children going out to work, only 44% did so in 1970 and 18% in 1997 (Visser, 2002). This opinion shift predated policies geared to improving the conditions for reconciling family life and working life. Where does public opinion stand in Europe? The Eurobarometer surveys show that public opinion has evolved considerably and would like a more harmonious role-sharing between the sexes (Table 21); the majority of European people think the roles of women and men within the family should be evenly balanced. 80% of Europeans believe that both men and women should contribute to the household income through work, and 60% disagree with the idea that the woman should stay at home to look after the children while the man goes out to work. However, these figures likewise reveal the persistence in European society of cultural obstacles to women's integration in the labour market on an equal footing with men. This has a major bearing on the opinions expressed by interviewees: 50% agree with the idea that family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job and that children are more likely to suffer

if their mother works. Previous generations (people aged 40 to 65 in 2006) give fairly similar responses, although they reveal an even more conservative view of society.

Table 21

**Percentage of people agreeing with the following statements by sex, in 2006
(people aged 15 to 39)**

(the figures in bold type represent women's responses, the others those of men)

	FR	DE	IT	HU	NL	PL	SE	UK
A working mother can establish just as warm a relationship with her children as a non-working mother	40 47	42 55	16 21	29 33	34 48	24 39	46 63	28 38
A pre-school child is more likely to suffer if his/her mother works	12 14	12 18	17 19	39 44	31 23	10 15	9 9	12 10
All in all family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job	8 13	24 23	17 24	42 57	31 26	7 14	12 13	12 16
Both men and women should contribute to the household income	50 52	34 36	32 42	47 45	29 45	36 51	76 75	40 44
Ideally, the woman should stay at home to look after the children	6 8	13 15	14 13	43 44	18 11	23 28	7 3	12 14
Family life suffers when men concentrate too much on their work	33 31	14 21	22 32	24 35	35 37	22 31	38 41	29 31

Source: Special Eurobarometer 253, *Childrearing Preferences and Family Issues in Europe*, 2006.

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_253_en.pdf

How to read table: in France, 40% of the men questioned, and 47% of the women, think a working mother can establish just as warm a relationship with her children as a non-working mother.

The overall tendency is for public opinion to be in favour of women going out to work (Table 21) and inclined to endorse a more egalitarian family model. The model of the stay-at-home wife is disappearing in almost all countries, with few interviewees presenting it as the ideal model, except in Hungary where almost half of all respondents approve of this family configuration. Hungary, where half of the population asserts that family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job, is one of the most conservative countries from the point of view of public opinion. At the other end of the spectrum, Sweden provides response rates which are particularly indicative of a desire for gender equality, since three quarters of people state that both members of the couple should contribute to the household income.

2.2. Girls and boys in the education system

In Europe as a whole, girls have caught up in the education stakes. Indeed, they are now better qualified than boys: in 2006, more than eight out of ten European women aged 20 to 24 held a

secondary school certificate, as opposed to just 75% of boys. For the generation born 40 years earlier, these percentages were 49% for girls and 59% for boys. The catching-up process has been particularly striking in southern European countries such as Italy. The same trend applies to the acquisition of tertiary diplomas: women are now in a majority in higher education, except at doctoral level where girls account for only 45% of graduates in Europe on average. Although girls are more successful students than boys, they nevertheless remain absent from certain disciplines and concentrated in others. In particular, girls are under-represented in the disciplines of mathematics, science and technology, representing just a third of graduates in these disciplines on average in the European Union (Table 22).

Table 22
Graduates in mathematics, science and technology in 2005 by sex

	Number of graduates for every 1000 20-29 year-olds	Share of female graduates
DE	9.7	24.4
FR	22.5	28.4
IT	13.3	37.1
HU	5.1	30
NL	8.6	20.3
UK	18.4	30.8
PL	11.1	36.6
SE	14.4	33.8
EU-27	14.4	33.8

Source: Rosenwald, 2008

Moreover, girls are over-represented in the tertiary education disciplines of "humanities and the arts", "education" and "health". 60% of students in "life sciences" disciplines are female on average in Europe (Table 23).

Table 23

Percentage of tertiary diplomas awarded to women, by type of programme and field of study (2005)

	Health and welfare		Life sciences, physical sciences & agriculture		Mathematics and computer science		Humanities, arts and education		Social sciences, business, law and services		Engineering, manufacturing and construction	
	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A
FR	85	56	37	50	15	26	65	74	68	60	16	26
DE	83	62	14	48	13	26	85	70	56	49	6	22
HU	89	77	54	52	49	31	49	75	75	64	19	26
IT	a	64	a	55	a	42	58	81	a	56	a	29
NL	a	76	a	46	a	12	a	74	a	53	a	16
PL	a	69	a	66	a	32	85	78	a	68	a	30
SE	90	83	66	58	17	36	50	78	66	61	24	30
UK	86	75	49	50	28	26	68	67	58	56	15	21

Source: *Education at a Glance*, OECD, 2007.

A: Theory-based higher education diploma, and high-level research programmes (*International Standard Classification of Education: ISCED 5A*).

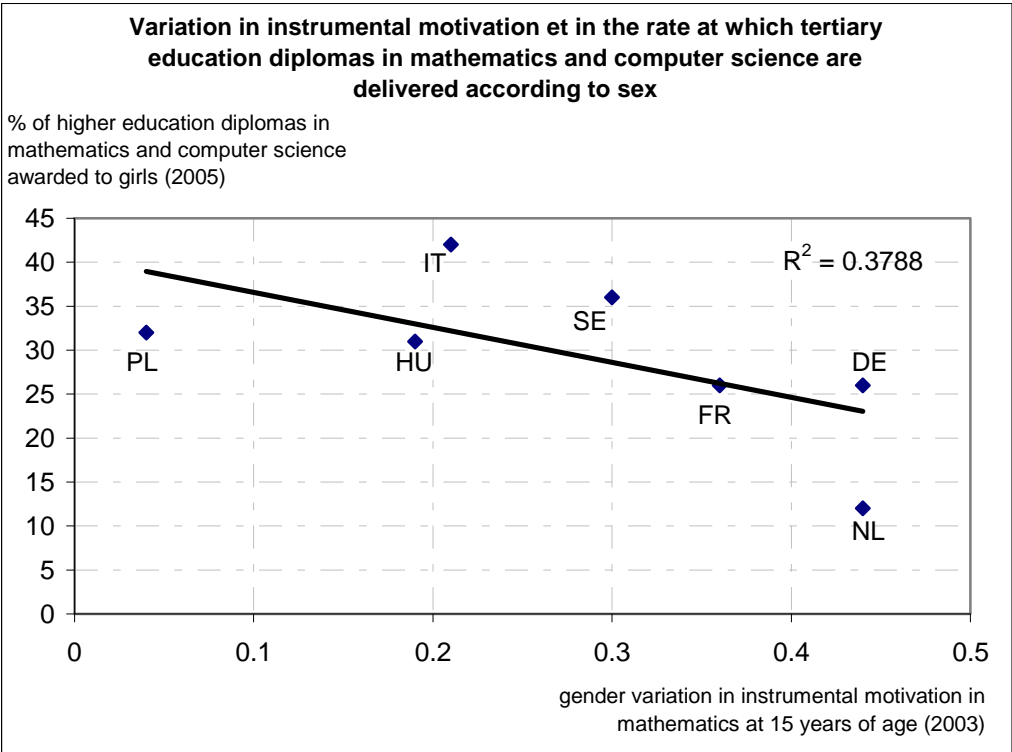
B: Tertiary type B education: ISCED 5B: Short higher education diplomas oriented towards practical, technical or occupational skills for direct entry into the labour market.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/7/35325710.pdf>

a: category not applicable to the education system of the country concerned

The gender gap as concerns the index of instrumental motivation in mathematics measures the difference in motivation to use mathematics between girls and boys at the age of 15 (variable calculated on the basis of teenagers' own statements). The wider the gap, the less motivated girls are compared with boys; in France, Germany and the Netherlands, the gap is particularly wide and the proportion of mathematics and computer science diplomas awarded to girls is very low (respectively 26%, 26% and 12%). The more motivated girls are to use mathematics at the age of 15, the higher the percentage of mathematics and computer science diplomas awarded to girls (graph 14): in Poland, Italy and Hungary, the motivation gap is rather small and the proportion of such diplomas delivered to girls is above 30%. From this point of view, Sweden holds an intermediate position (no data are available for the United Kingdom). The specific subject choices made by girls subsequently impact on the types of occupations they take up once they enter the labour market. These choices lie at the origin of the labour market segmentation described in Part II of this report.

Graph 14



Source: *Education at a Glance*, OECD, 2007.

IV. The institutional environment

The institutional environment surrounding women is a determining factor in their integration into the labour market. Fiscal and social policies, in particular, may discourage women in couples from seeking employment. In addition, given the influence of family commitments on women's decisions regarding economic participation, policies on childcare provision constitute a key element which in some cases enable women to work but, in others, compel them to stay at home. The institutional differences between European countries are considerable and lie at the heart of welfare state classifications. These differences originate from a combination of complex socio-historical factors. Each country has its own vision of gender roles within society, resulting in its own specific public policy arrangements. We have identified three main public policy types for analysis in terms of the curbs on women's employment: first, the effective tax burden imposed on the earnings of the secondary worker, most often the woman; second, childcare facilities enabling parents of young children to work; and third, parental leave periods enabling them to spend time with their children.

1. Taxation of the secondary worker

Fiscal and social systems play an important role in parents' decisions on economic participation, especially those of mothers living in couples, whom the economic literature has shown to be most responsive to financial incentives. The woman's earnings are in fact added to the family income and lead to an increase in the amount of tax to be paid by the family, given the progressive nature of tax rates. Moreover, this increase in family resources may imply a reduction in certain means-tested welfare benefits. Couples assess their situation at least partially according to the financial advantages the household will gain from the woman's earnings if she works. This effect is significant in an environment where the woman is still culturally regarded as the second earner, and where women often earn less than their partners. Of course, this element is not always decisive and very often nowadays women opt to work irrespective of purely monetary considerations. It can nevertheless determine whether women with a modest income decide to work, all the more so if they have small children. Childcare is expensive in most countries, which affects parents' choices (this will be elucidated in the next section).

The OECD harmonised data present a complete overview of the effective marginal tax rates levied on women's work (Table 24). In most European countries, married women¹² are taxed

¹² When they are the second earner, i.e. when they are on a lower wage than their partner, which is usually the case.

more heavily than men or single women, while women in couples are more responsive to financial incentives than either men, single women or lone mothers. Unlike the other two groups of women, they can adjust their level of economic participation provided that their partner has a stable job and can be considered the main earner. Taxation has an even greater impact on whether or not women in couples decide to work when they have small children, since the couple has to take on board the cost of childcare if the mother works. This short-term trade-off enables certain households to maximise their income, but these decisions are prejudicial to women's careers. Thus taxation can reinforce the factors encouraging mothers in couples to take a career break. This effect is more marked in some countries than others. As the table shows, taxation is neutral in Hungary and Sweden: it does not distort married women's choices. In Germany and Italy, by contrast, the tax rate is particularly high: the pay of a married woman who is the second earner, equivalent to two thirds of the average manual wage, is taxed at 1.5 times that of a single woman, with the gap narrowing as earnings rise in both of these countries (Table 24). In the other countries the taxation of couples is slightly unfavourable to married women.

Table 24

Comparison of marginal net tax rates for the second earner in a couple and for a single person in 2000-2001

	Women earning 67% of the average PW wage		Women earning 100% of the average PW wage		Type of income tax
	2 nd earner	Ratio 2 nd earner/singleton	2 nd earner	Ratio 2 nd earner/singleton	
DE	50%	1.5	53%	1.3	Joint
FR	26%	1.2	26%	1	Joint
IT	38%	1.6	39	1.4	Separate
HU	29%	1	n/a	n/a	Separate
NL	33%	1.2	41	1.1	Separate
PL	39	1.3	37	1.2	Joint optional
SE	30	1	28	0.9	Separate
UK	24	1.3	26	1.1	Separate

Source: Jaumotte, 2003

Hypothesis: in couples, it is assumed that the man earns 100% of the average manual wage

Notes: PW: production worker

The marginal tax rate corresponds to the average rate of tax applied to the wage of the woman in a couple, defined by Jaumotte as the proportion of this wage serving to finance the additional tax owed by the household. The tax rate takes into account income tax, employee social security contributions and universal benefits in kind.

Theoretically, separate taxation is more favourable to labour market participation by married women, but this is not always the case. For instance, France does not tax the earnings of married women any more heavily than the United Kingdom, even though the norm is joint taxation in France and separate taxation in the UK. Some countries include allowances for the non-working

partner in this kind of taxation, which makes going out to work a less attractive option for women in couples. Whereas taxation has a bearing on whether or not married women decide to work, it is by no means the sole criterion. The key factor enabling a mother to work is the opportunity to have her child well looked after before it starts school. Added to this, there are the organisational difficulties associated with this kind of childcare: for example if it is located far away from the parents' home or from the workplace of one member of the couple. Heavy marginal taxation of the secondary worker's earnings merely reinforces this effect.

2. Childcare and schooling

2.1. The range of childcare services

Part II of our report demonstrated that the younger their children, the greater are the specific difficulties mothers encounter in their working lives. They are responsible, in practice, for the bulk of domestic and family duties and have to adjust their working time and career to the requirements associated with the arrival of children. A lack of support from her partner is a factor which inevitably has an adverse effect on a woman's economic participation, especially because the man normally makes the opposite decision and increases his workload after the birth of children. Furthermore, in order to enable both parents to work on an equal footing, childcare facilities for young children have to be available and affordable; otherwise mothers will be inclined to look after their children themselves.

Table 25

Types of childcare in Europe

Age of child	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
DE	Krippen (crèche)			Kindergarten (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
FR	Crèche and assistants maternelles (<i>full-time</i>)			Ecole maternelle (pre-school) (<i>full-time</i>)			Compulsory schooling	
IT	Asili nidi (crèche)			Scuola dell'infanzia (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
HU	Bolcsode (crèche)			Ovoda (kindergarten)		Compulsory schooling		
NL	Gastouderopvang and kinderopvang (crèche)				Pre-school		Compulsory schooling	
PL	Nurseries			Pre-school /nursery schools				Compulsory schooling
SE	Forskola (pre-school) and Familiedaghem (in rural areas)						Forskole-klass Pre-school	Compulsory schooling
UK	Nurseries, child minders and playgroups			Playgroups and nurseries	Pre-school		Compulsory schooling	

Source: OECD, Babies and Bosses, 2007.

Table 26

Operation of childcare facilities in Europe, in 2004

	Coverage rate 0-3 years	Staff** 0-3 years	Cost to parents of looking after a child aged 0 to 3* Type A (in % of income)	Cost to parents* Type B (in % of income)	Coverage rate 3-5 years	Staff** 3-5 years	Public spending on childcare facilities as a % of GDP***
DE	18%	n/a	8.4%	6.6%	80%	15	0.4
FR	30%	6	11.3%	8.8%	100%	20	1.2
IT	10%	7	n/a	n/a	100%	13	0.58
HU	10%	6	6.5%	0%	90%	11	0.9
NL	28%	5	11.5%	3%	70%	16	0.52
PL	3%	n/a	4.6%	12.7%	37%	n/a	0.5
SE	40%	5	6.2%	4.8%	88%	12	1.3
UK	30%	5	32.7%	14.4%	80%	16	0.6

Source: OECD, Babies and Bosses, 2007.

Notes: Type A family: dual-earner couple whose wage income equals 167% of the average wage;

Type B family: single parent whose wage income equals 67% of the average wage.

* Cost of childcare to parents, net of public benefits they receive in the form of either tax relief or transfers.

** Number of children per member of staff.

*** Amount of public spending devoted to funding childcare facilities and nursery schools as a % of GDP.

How to read table: in France, 30% of children aged 0 to 3 are looked after in collective establishments, where one adult looks after 6 children on average.

In Europe, despite the adoption of the Barcelona objectives¹³, childcare provision for infants under the age of 3 is on the whole insufficient to meet families' needs, but the shortage varies considerably in scale from one country to another. According to the EU-SILC 2005 data, only Denmark manages a rate of coverage higher than 60% for pre-school infants aged between 0 and 3. Few other countries achieve a coverage rate of more than 40%. This lack of childcare facilities for very small children, and the absence of all-day schooling for older children, significantly qualifies the idea that part-time work is freely chosen and much-liked in the Netherlands, for example (Yerkes and Visser, 2005). A shortage of childcare provision is partly responsible for the falling birth rates in many European countries and for women's postponement of their first pregnancy (see above, demographic trends).

In France and the United Kingdom, the coverage rate for 0 to 3 year-olds is roughly 30%. It is lower in Germany (18%), and likewise in Italy and Hungary (at just 10%). Finally, coverage is particularly low in Poland, with formal provision available for just 3% of infants (Table 26). The rate of coverage alone does not permit an assessment of the level of care provided; another important element crucial for the working hours of parents and especially mothers is the time schedule. In most countries, formal care facilities for infants (0 to 2 years) have relatively long opening hours: between 10 and 12 hours per day, as is the case in Sweden (Löfström, 2005; Nyberg, 2008). Similarly, in Hungary as well as France and the United Kingdom, childcare establishments open early in the morning (at around 7 a.m.) and close in the late afternoon (at around 6 p.m.) (Nagy, 2005; Fazekas and Ozsvald, 2008; Fagan, Donnelly and Rubery, 2005). In Germany, on the other hand, most childcare services, in particular *kindergartens*, operate only part-time, sometimes just in the mornings and sometimes with a break for lunch, which complicates the working day for parents. *Kindergartens* run by private firms for their own employees make it easier to reconcile working and family life, thereby avoiding conflicts of interest between employers and employees (Maier, 2005).

Some countries are more flexible than others when it comes to the way in which parents may use the childcare facilities available to them. In France, for example, nurseries are open all day long but parents cannot use them part-time (Silvera, 2005, 2008), while in the Netherlands parents may pay by the half-day. Since the cost of a nursery place in the Netherlands is relatively high, many parents use these services on a part-time basis and work part-time. But the options for

¹³ Objectives relating to the availability of childcare facilities: for 90% of children between three years and school age, and for 33% of under-three-year-olds.

adapting childcare time schedules vary. There is little flexibility during the day: normally the arrival and departure times are fixed (Plantenga, 2005). In Sweden, most municipalities leave parents free to choose whether to use day nurseries on a part-time or full-time basis (Löfström, 2005; Nyberg, 2008).

Whereas the care provided for under two-year-olds is insufficient in Europe, it is more plentiful and increasing appreciably in most EU Member States for children aged from 3 to 6, when compulsory schooling begins in most countries. All children in this age band are provided for in France and Italy, while coverage in the other countries lies between 80% and 90%. Poland, where fewer than four in every ten children between the ages of 3 and 6 are in the education system, constitutes an exception. The French school system (nursery and primary schools) is remarkable in terms of the service provided for three to six-year-olds. It not only offers free childcare for all children from the age of 3, but does so for the entire day (Silvera, 2005, 2008). A typical day lasts from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. After-hours services (normally housed in schools) then take over for the period from 4.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. What is more, they take in children on Wednesdays (the day when schools are closed) and during school holidays. Nursery schools in Italy function in a fairly similar manner to those in France (Villa, 2005). In most of the other countries, the opening hours of establishments for children between the ages of 3 and the age when compulsory schooling begins are less generous than those for infants aged from 0 to 2. The pre-school provision recently introduced in the United Kingdom, for example, offers part-time places for three to six-year-olds in state primary schools. These places are free but cover the morning or afternoon only and there is no provision during school holidays. Moreover, parents rarely have a choice between morning or afternoon care (Fagan, Donnelly and Rubery, 2005).

2.2. The cost of care and quality of provision

The cost of childcare for young children has a major bearing on whether or not mothers of infants decide to go out to work. If it is too high, mothers whose potential earnings are low may not find it economically beneficial to work. The question of cost arises for parents with higher earnings too, albeit in a different sense: the main issues for them have to do with flexibility and the duration of nursery opening hours. Childcare provision is normally priced according to its institutional nature. Private services are generally more expensive than public services, which are often subsidised. Various methods are used to subsidise the cost of childcare facilities:

1. public subsidies make it possible to part-finance establishments' running costs, so that the cost for parents is reduced to below the market rate;

2. social transfers may be used to lower or reimburse care costs, depending on the household income, and depending on the child's age or the number of children;
3. the cost may be lowered through the payment of more generous allowances for pre-school children than for those of school age;
4. the market cost of childcare may be reduced by means of tax relief.

Parents in all countries have to pay for the care of children aged under 3 (the exception being lone parents on low incomes in Hungary, for whom care is free of charge). Generally speaking, the financial contribution demanded of parents increases in line with their income. In the United Kingdom, childcare costs represent a significant portion of family budgets, amounting to almost a third of the income of a dual-earner couple taking home 167% of the average wage. In all countries, the required contribution is reduced for a single-parent family with an income corresponding to two-thirds of the average wage but still remains high - 15% of earnings - with the exception of Poland, where the share of a single-parent family's income devoted to care costs is 13%, as opposed to 5% for a dual-earner couple with a higher income (Table 24). In Sweden, for example, parents contribute around 6% of their net income; childcare is funded out of municipal taxes, government contributions and - to a more limited extent - by parents and special public funds (Löfström, 2005; Nyberg, 2008). In Italy, parents pay a very different amount for childcare depending on whether their children are under or over three years of age. Care for infants is only partly subsidised, and the charge to parents is determined at municipal level according to household income and the total number of children. For the next age band up, care is free of charge and parents pay only for the cost of meals (Villa, 2005).

The quality of childcare services can be gauged by the number of children per employee at the establishment. Most countries have adopted high standards as concerns the maximum number of children for whom a single adult may be responsible. The consensus in the specialist literature is that the ideal child-to-staff ratio stands at 3 or 4 infants (aged 0 to 2) per adult in a centre (nursery or child-minding centre) (Fiene, 2002). The ratio rises to 8 children per adult/teacher for children in the next age group, which is considerably lower than the maximum authorised in most European countries. Everywhere in Europe, the number of children per adult is twice as low for the 0-3 age band as for the 3 to 6 age band. For the very youngest (0 to 2 years), the lowest child-to-staff ratio is found in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Sweden. By contrast, the United Kingdom has one of the highest ratios for children between the age of 3 and compulsory schooling, with only France operating a higher ratio: an average of 20 children per adult in

nursery schools. The organisation and funding of childcare facilities vary enormously, not merely between countries but also from one region to another of a given country. Depending on where parents live, therefore, they have to bear appreciably different care costs, which impacts on the difficulties experienced by mothers in going out to work.

3. Parental leave

Parental leave is a major component of the European strategy aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of private and working life. Indeed, in 1996, a European directive (96/34/EC) was issued calling upon the Member States to grant all employees at least three months of parental leave following the birth of a child, in addition to the minimum of 14 weeks' maternity leave. This forms an integral part of the directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 concerning the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of women and men in terms of access to employment, to professional training and promotion as in terms of employment conditions. The European Commission allows Member States a good deal of leeway to implement their own rules and regulations. These measures therefore vary considerably from country to country, so much so that they have markedly different effects on mothers' economic participation. In certain cases the measures encourage mothers to withdraw into the family sphere; in others they constitute a tool enabling women to manage their careers once children arrive. Various studies (Pérvier, 2004; Méda and Pérvier, 2007) have shown that a long parental leave period which is poorly paid at a flat rate and allocated to the family encourages mothers of young children to stay at home. At the opposite end of the scale, a short period of parental leave shared between both parents and remunerated on an earnings-related basis can help to minimise the unequal sharing of family commitments which adversely affects women's working lives, and can help mothers return to work. The past couple of years have seen the introduction of significant reforms in this area in many European countries, with a view to making parental leave more favourable to mothers' economic participation. In the main, these reforms have three objectives: to increase the scope of entitlement to parental leave, to raise the leave entitlement of fathers and to permit greater flexibility in the operation of parental leave (Moss and Wall, 2007). In Germany, for example, paid parental leave has been shortened, the financial compensation has been increased and fathers have been encouraged to avail themselves of it. Some countries have opted for leave based on individual saving schemes, whilst others prefer to fund it out of taxation or social security contributions. The Netherlands is an example of the former method, Germany of the latter. The duration of parental leave varies substantially from country to country: from the minimum of three months per parent, required under the European directive (the Netherlands

and the UK) to leave periods lasting until the child's third birthday (Germany, France, Hungary and Poland).

Table 27

**Parental leave in Europe
in 2005-2006**

	Date of introduction	Duration in months	Payment	Age limit of child	Quota reserved for fathers	Flexibility	Take-up rate (at least partial)
DE	1986	36	From 300 to 450 euros/month	3 years	no	no	90% of mothers (2001) 2% of fathers
FR	1977	36	520 euros/month	3 years	no	part-time	33% of mothers 1% of fathers
IT	1977	11	30% of pay for 6 months maximum	8 years	no	no	n/a
HU	n/a	24	70% of pay (ceiling: 1.5 times the minimum wage)	2 years	no	no	1% of fathers
NL	1991	3 per parent	0 euros unless covered by a collective agreement: 75% of pay)	8 years	no	Leave must be taken in one-month blocks	40% of mothers 13% of fathers
PL	n/a	36	100 euros / month, means-tested	4 years	no	May be taken 4 times at most	50% of mothers 2.5% of fathers
SE	1974	16	80% of pay for one year	8 years	60 days	Total flexibility of use	95% of mothers 78% of fathers
UK	1999	3	0 euros	5 years	no	no	11% of mothers 8% of fathers

Sources: OECD, *Babies and Bosses*, 2007; Moss and Wall, 2007; Silvera, 2007; Périvier, 2004.

3.1. Methods of implementing parental leave

Leave entitlement may be individual (Netherlands, UK) or allocated to the family (Poland, Germany). Where it is individual, each parent is entitled to a leave period which is not transferable to the other parent. In other words, if a parent does not use his or her entitlement, this leave is lost to the family. Where leave is an entitlement granted to the family, both parents may share it according to rules which are more flexible in some countries than others. In some countries the measures are a combination of individual and family entitlement. In Hungary, for example, the leave entitlement is individual but the financial compensation is a family entitlement: if the mother takes leave and receives the childcare allowance, then the father's leave entitlement is confined to unpaid leave. In Italy, each parent has a right to six months of parental leave but with a maximum of ten months per family. However, if the father takes at least three months, he is entitled to an additional month, which takes the maximum leave period granted to him to seven months. But the right to financial compensation falls to the family and lasts a maximum of six months only. In France, both parents may take parental leave but only part-time. In Sweden, the entitlement to parental leave belongs to the family but is accompanied by individual quotas for each parent.

The amount of financial compensation payable is a crucial element in the trade-offs parents make about childcare. Parental leave is less attractive when it is unpaid, especially when a parent's earnings are high and alternative childcare options are inexpensive. Flat-rate allowances make leave attractive for parents on low incomes, for whom this payment offsets the loss of earnings suffered by stopping work; the higher the cost of other methods of childcare, the more this is the case. Given that women in couples normally earn less than their partners, they are strongly encouraged to take this sort of leave. Finally, the payment may be proportional to former earnings: the higher the replacement rate, the greater the incentive for people on high wages and, consequently, the likelier it is that fathers will find the scheme attractive. No replacement income at all is paid in certain countries (such as the Netherlands, although company collective agreements can make provision for earnings-related compensation, and the UK). In other countries the payment is a smaller, flat-rate sum (France, Hungary and Poland) lying below the average national female wage. An income-related payment, as in Germany and Sweden, helps to reduce the effect of the pay differential between women and men. The Italian scheme follows this logic but the replacement rate there is much lower, even though it results in pay-outs which are often more generous than in many other countries where the financial compensation is a flat-rate sum. The issue of the pay gap between partners is closely linked to that of the gender pay

gap in general. Although the former gap at least partly explains why more women than men take parental leave, their more frequent career breaks constitute a major reason for the latter gap, thus reinforcing the choice of the mother as beneficiary of parental leave (and leading to the imbalance in take-up by the two parents, Table 27). In Germany, only the first year of leave (parental leave lasts three years in total) attracts a replacement income. This encourages parents to take a shorter period of leave, but childcare facilities are still insufficiently developed to look after children in the subsequent years. Lastly, the financial compensation for parental leave may be degressive over time (e.g. in Sweden).

Several factors determine how flexibly parental leave can be used:

1. Parental leave is more flexible if the upper age limit of the child for whom leave can be taken is high;
2. Parental leave is more flexible if it can be divided up;
3. Parental leave is more flexible if it can be taken part-time, enabling the parents to reduce their working time

The use of parental leave is not very flexible in either Hungary or France: it must be taken immediately after a birth. In Poland, the 36 months of parental leave must be taken before the child's fourth birthday. The age limit is much higher in other countries: up to 8 years in Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany (Table 25).

In most cases it is possible to divide up parental leave (into several periods within the overall time limit), but to very different degrees depending on the country. For example, the minimum duration of leave is one year in France; nine months in Poland; one month in the Netherlands, Germany and Hungary; one week in the UK, whereas in Sweden the leave period can be taken in fractions of a day. In the Netherlands, the right to divide up parental leave is a conditional right requiring the employer's agreement.

Parental leave may be taken on a part-time basis in most countries, the sole exception being Hungary. This possibility of taking part-time leave is justified by the desire to prevent parents from losing all contact with the labour market. However, here too the degree of flexibility varies considerably from country to country. In Sweden it is possible to reduce one's working hours to 3/4, 1/2, 1/4 or 1/8, with a corresponding pay-out. Flexible arrangements of this kind likewise exist in France and Germany.

The European directive stipulates that an employment guarantee must accompany the entitlement to parental leave, meaning that there is a right to return to the company in either the same post or a post equivalent to the one held prior to the leave period. This aspect is crucial once a leave beneficiary returns to work. The fact that the contract of employment is suspended enables the person on parental leave to resume his or her job at the end of the leave period. Moreover, social security contributions may be paid by the government during the parental leave, in order that employment-related social rights (e.g. pension entitlements) are maintained. National legislation in most countries makes provision for such employee protection. The situation is more complex in France, in that unpaid parental leave where the return to work is guaranteed (enshrined in the Labour Code) coexists with paid parental leave (the “supplement for free choice of activity”, CLCA¹⁴) where the return to work is not guaranteed. Some people combine the two but others do not. In the Netherlands, employment protection and the associated social rights are not guaranteed by law but left to the employer's discretion.

Eligibility under some schemes depends on a person's terms of employment and length of service. The conditions laid down in Germany and Italy are not very stringent, demanding merely that the person be in employment. In France, the qualification conditions for the flat-rate parental leave payment become less stringent as the number of children rises: a parent must have been “active” during two of the five years preceding the birth if there are three children or more, during two of the four years preceding the birth if there are two children, and for both of the two years preceding the birth if there is just one child (in which case the leave period lasts only six months). Furthermore, the definition of “activity” is quite broad, covering all the following circumstances: employment, unemployment, training and even parental leave for the previous child. Thus some female beneficiaries of parental leave in France have not been in employment for several years, which compromises their chances of returning to work.

3.2. The take-up of parental leave

As several studies have shown, many eligible mothers make use of their parental leave entitlement in all countries (De Henau *et al.*, 2007; Plantenga and Remery, 2005). Yet a widespread feature of these schemes is the profound imbalance between parents in taking leave: mothers are the main, indeed virtually the only, users of parental leave (Table 27). The proportion of eligible fathers who actually avail themselves of parental leave is very low in France and Germany. Traditional

¹⁴ In 2004 the CLCA replaced the “parental education allowance” (APE) which had existed since 1986, but the two schemes are similar.

family values are still strict in these countries, and parental leave reinforces the traditional role-sharing between parents. It remains a matter for women. Moreover, the leave period is long in those countries and has to be taken before the child's third birthday, which means that parents are offered no flexibility in taking leave (except the third year of leave in Germany). The flat-rate payment also discourages men from availing themselves of such leave.

The purpose of the 2007 reform in Germany was to increase the involvement of fathers in bringing up their children by introducing two months of leave reserved for the father and by raising the level of compensation paid so as to reduce the financial opportunity costs associated with taking parental leave. No sufficiently reliable data are available as yet. Preliminary reports, however, indicate that the two months reserved for fathers are being taken more often than expected in the rich southern *Länder*, with a take-up rate by fathers of 12 to 15%, compared with 5% in the less prosperous north-east. Before the reform, less than 5% of fathers used their entitlement to parental leave. In France, the few fathers who benefit from the CLCA are mostly employees in stable jobs. Compared with fathers who do not take parental leave, they more often work in female-dominated economic sectors and their partner often has a higher level of educational attainment, professional status and income (De Henau *et al.*, 2007; Moss and Wall, 2007; Boyer and Renouard, 2003). In Italy, even though parental leave is short and intended as an individual entitlement, the payment is allocated to the family, and it is low (30% of previous earnings). This partly explains why few eligible fathers take parental leave, even though it is short. Men in Hungary represented at most 1% of people who took parental leave in 2002 (Moss and Wall, 2007). Of those eligible in Poland, almost half of mothers but only 2.5% of fathers took it. This low male take-up rate can be explained by the low level of financial compensation and the fact that it is means-tested. In Sweden, a larger number of men engage at least partially in parental leave: it is taken by roughly three quarters of eligible fathers (representing 42% of all users in 2002), but on average they take only one month (28 days) which corresponds to just 16% of the total number of leave days; mothers take 109 days on average (De Henau *et al.*, 2007; Moss and Wall, 2007). This proportion rose to 19.5% in 2005 and 20.6% in 2006. Whereas it is possible to take parental leave until the child's eighth birthday, most parents take the bulk of it before the infant reaches the age of two. Childcare facilities are fairly widely available and affordable once the child reaches 18 months (every infant is entitled to a place from the age of 12 months). Consequently, parents manage by combining the paid and unpaid leave arrangements until that age. Men generally take parental leave when their child is between 13 and 15 months old, and they do so on a part-time basis more frequently than women (e.g. one day a week). On average,

the take-up of parental leave is lower in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom than in the Nordic countries, even among mothers. They are deterred by the absence of statutory rules on earnings compensation and job protection, as well as by the discretionary power of employers in organising parental leave. In the Netherlands, only 44% of eligible mothers and just 19% of eligible fathers took parental leave in 2005. Fathers take an average of 8 hours per week over an 11 month-period, while mothers take 11 hours per week spread over 8 months. In the United Kingdom, parental leave is not often taken, particularly during the first 18 months of the child's life, and take-up periods are generally short. In 2005, 11% of mothers and 8% of fathers took at least part of their parental leave after the end of the maternity leave. Two thirds of mothers and three quarters of fathers took one week or less. Women in both countries have a weak and discontinuous relationship with employment; a large proportion of their work is part-time (with short hours) and they take several career breaks when raising a family.

Depending on the rules governing its implementation, parental leave can be an efficient tool for reconciling family and working life, in that it enables parents to spend time with their children, encourages fathers to participate in family life and ensures continuity in mothers' working lives. This tends to be the case under the Nordic systems, where leave is short, well-paid and shared between the two parents, even though there is still a strong bias against mothers. Parental leave can, alternatively, prove to be a mechanism which encourages women to retreat into the family sphere once they become mothers, thereby reinforcing the traditional division of roles between the sexes. In that case it leads to women taking lengthy career breaks which are prejudicial to their situation on the labour market.

Conclusion

The data set compiled in this report demonstrates that major disparities still persist between women and men on the labour market everywhere in Europe. Women are less active and, in some countries, more affected by unemployment than men. They constitute the majority of part-time workers, operate on a segmented labour market and still suffer significant wage discrimination. The report highlights the fundamental role played by motherhood in the specific nature of female economic participation. Our conclusion to the report outlines the methodological difficulties we encountered and makes suggestions for future research needed in order to gain a deeper understanding of the weaknesses identified here.

From a purely statistical point of view, harmonised databases do not lend themselves to a more in-depth study of the subject, in that certain variables are not available for all countries, such as, for example, those concerning children for the Nordic countries.

Detailed research should be devoted to the nature of female unemployment and its measurement. International comparisons are rendered difficult by the subjective way in which unemployment is defined: it has to be measured on the basis of statements by individuals. Women may be more inclined to describe themselves spontaneously as inactive in some countries than others when they are out of work, and this will minimise their unemployment rate. Women are particularly likely to be discouraged workers, hence not featuring in official statistics. This specific point would merit a study in its own right (see Box 2).

A good deal of research has been carried out into female part-time work, something that is still often regarded as a positive solution to the work/life balance for women, whereas it exacerbates occupational inequality between the sexes and limits women's career prospects. The cost of part-time work to women should be the subject of a specific study. Moreover, certain forms of part-time work constitute more of a hindrance than a help in reconciling working and family life; for example, the atypical, unpredictable working hours in large supermarkets heighten the time constraints suffered by women employed in this sector. The precise nature of this kind of part-time work and its effects on daily schedules should be explored further.

Finally, the report reveals the importance of the cultural environment, which strongly influences the school subjects chosen by girls and boys, thereby contributing to labour market segmentation

and confining women to particular occupations and sectors. A qualitative study analysing decision-making processes and the socio-cultural environment leading to these gendered choices would be very useful. The way in which these differences are reflected on the labour market could, moreover, be examined. Last of all, the data on occupational and sectoral segmentation are not sufficiently disaggregated to permit a detailed analysis of this phenomenon.

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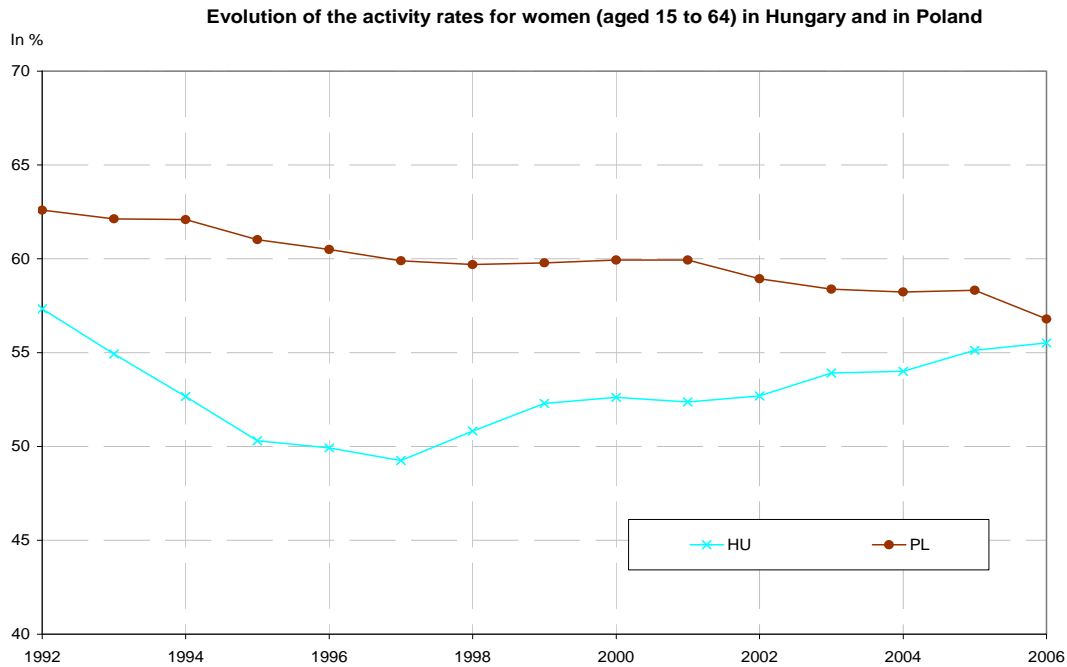
Annexes

Women on the labour market

Specific weaknesses in eight European Union countries

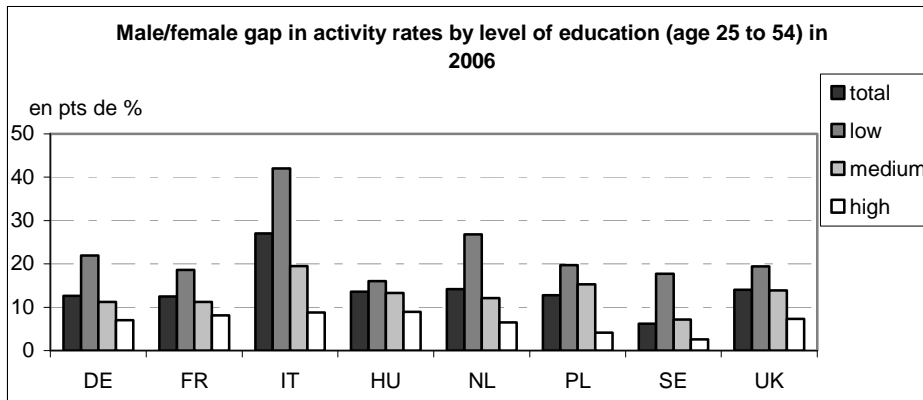
I. Additional graphs

Graph A-1



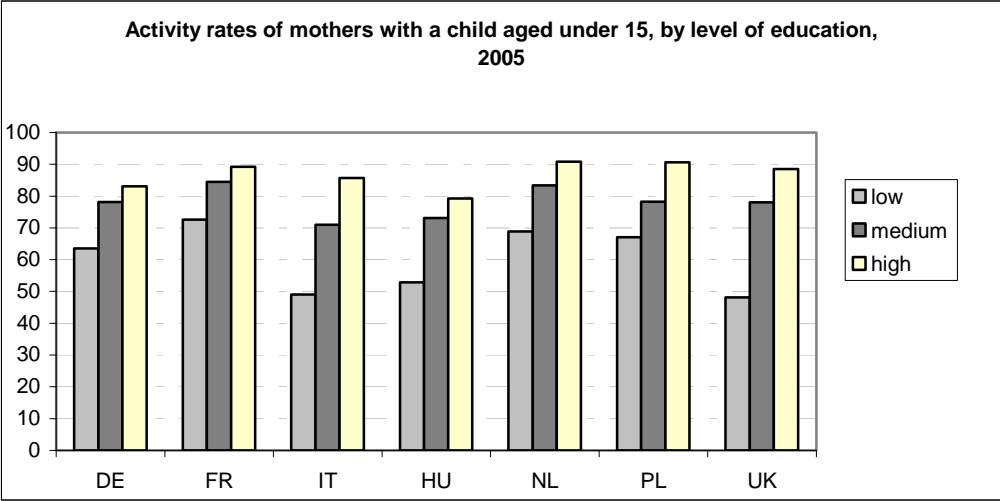
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Graph A-2



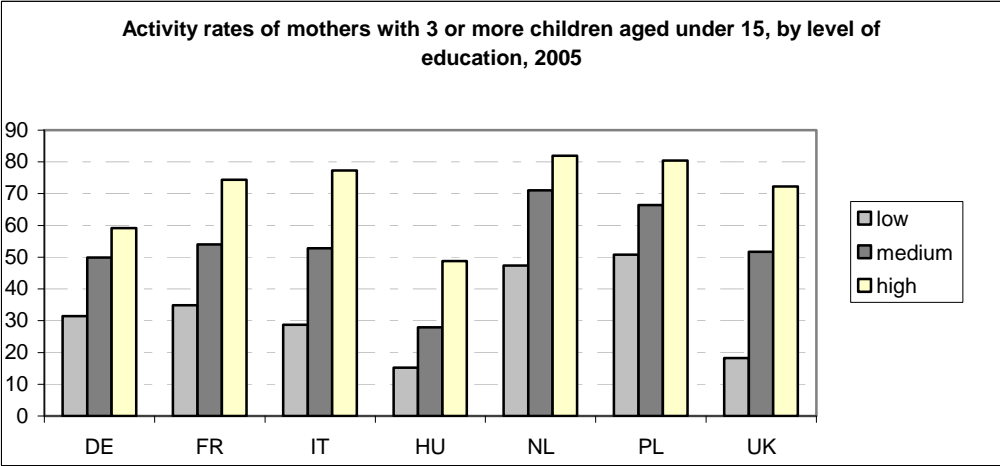
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Graph A-3



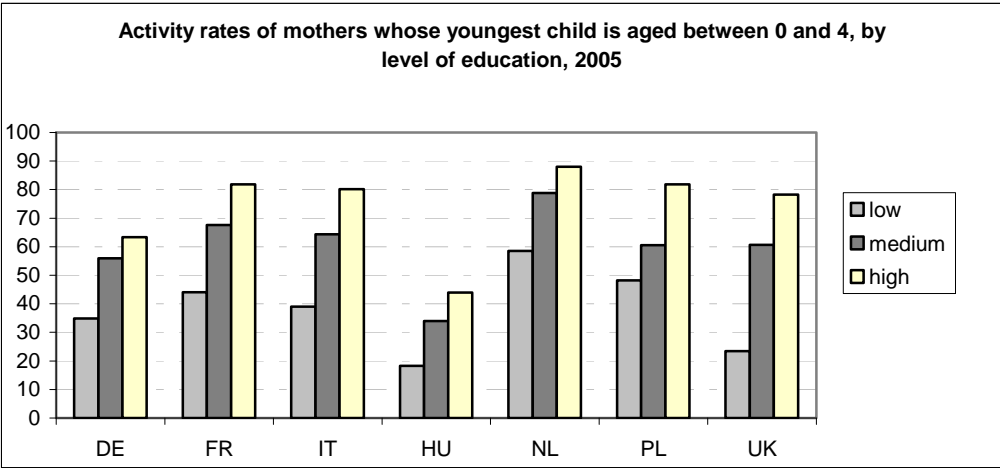
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Graph A-4



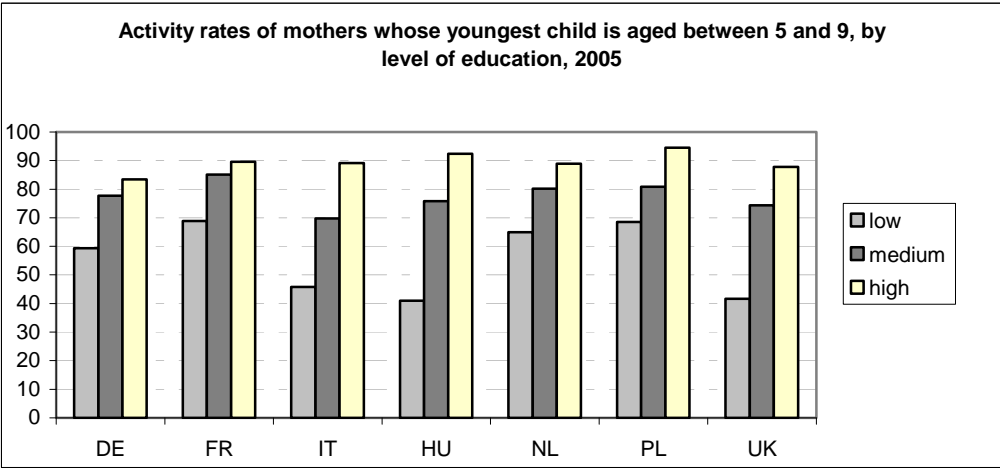
Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graph A-5



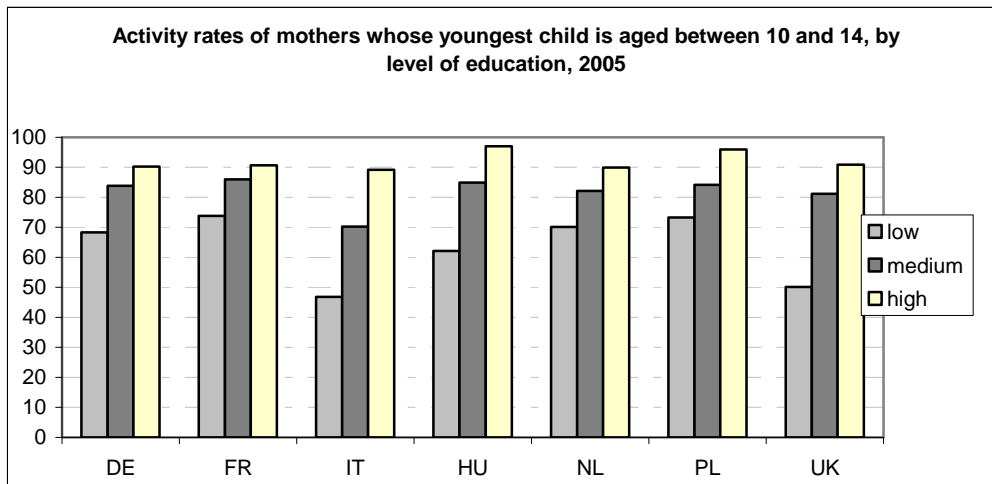
Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graph A-6



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graph A-7



Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Graphs A-8

Life-cycle employment rates of women and men, 2005

Household categories used to track the life-cycle:

Type 0: single people without children, aged under 35

Type 1: couple without children in which the woman is aged under 40

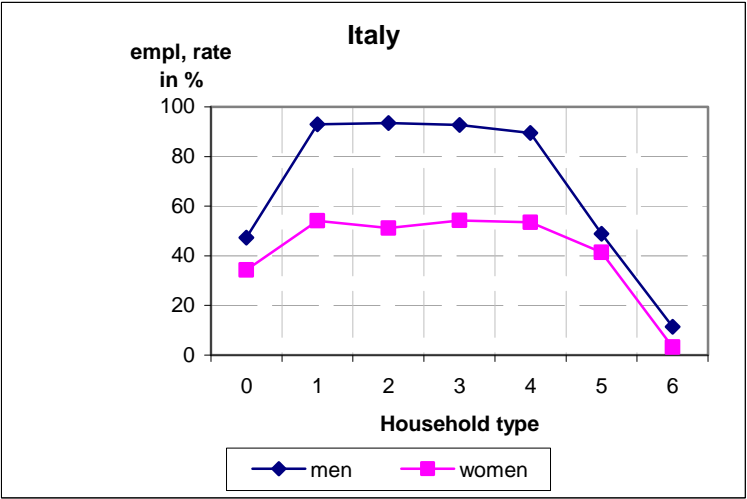
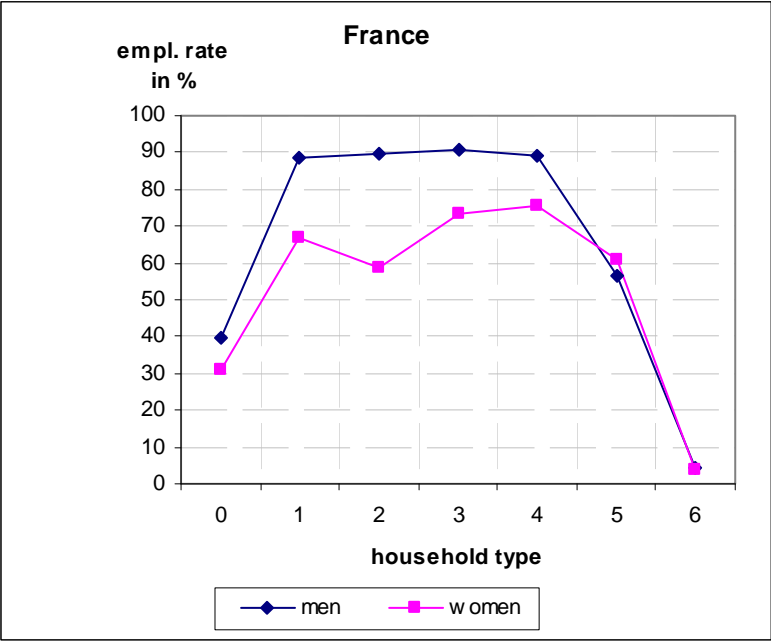
Type 2: couple whose youngest child is between 0 and 4 years old

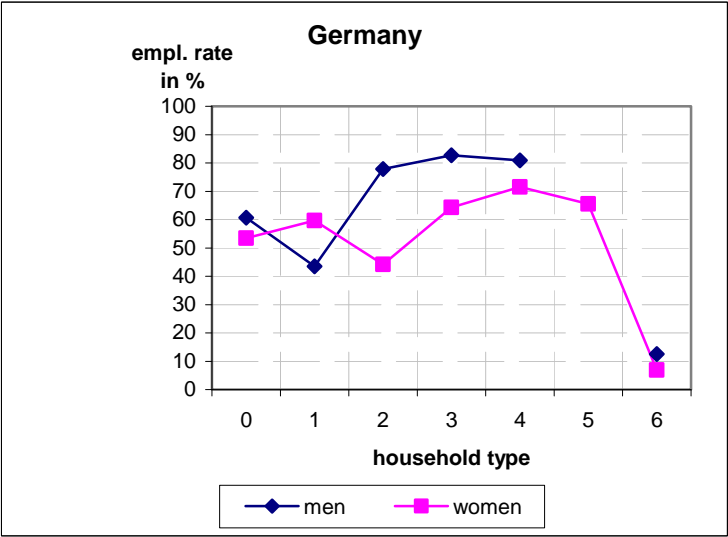
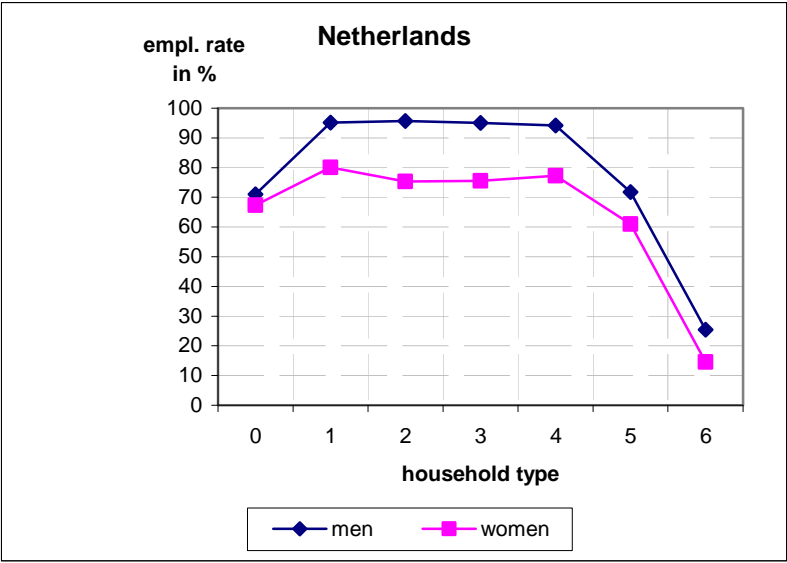
Type 3: couple whose youngest child is between 5 and 9 years old

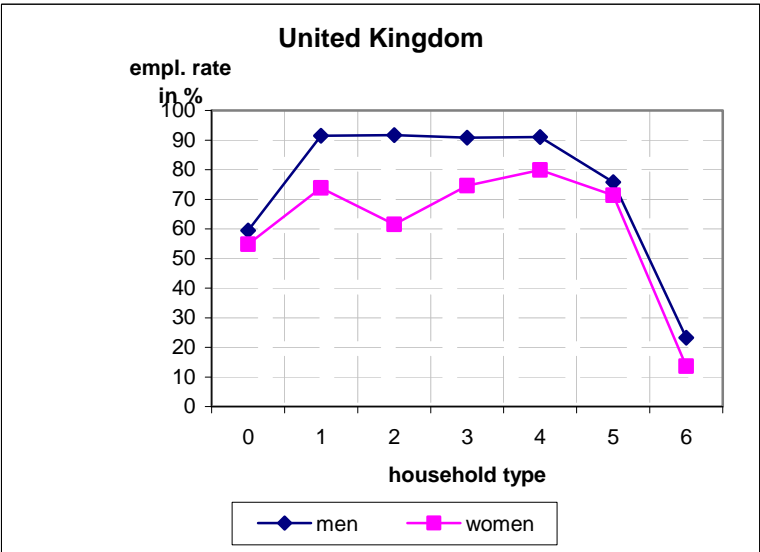
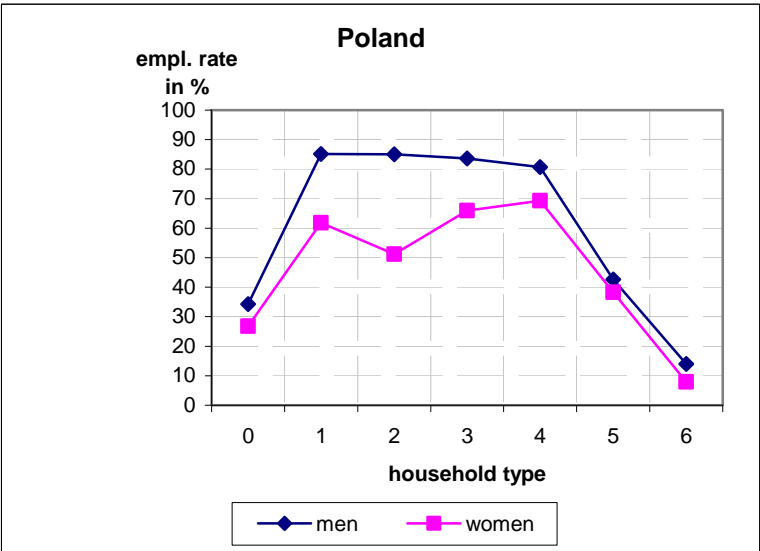
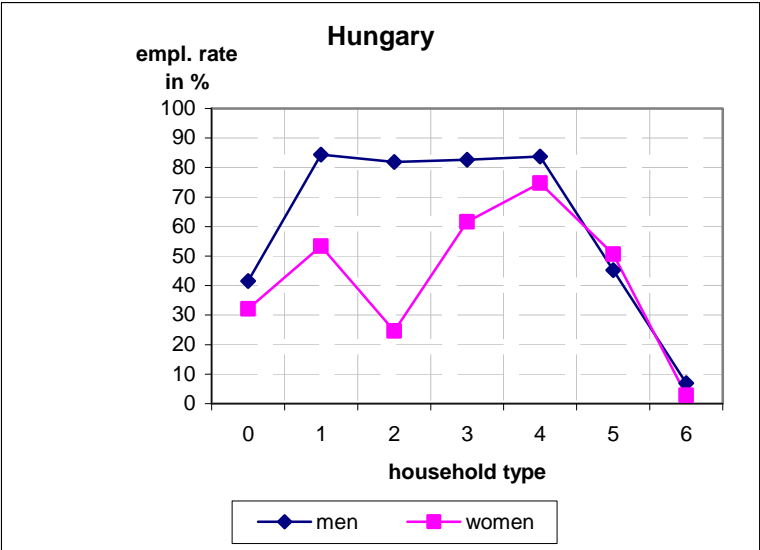
Type 4: couple whose youngest child is between 10 and 14 years old

Type 5: middle-aged couple in which the woman is aged between 40 and 59 with no dependent children

Type 6: couple in which both members are over 60 years old.







II. Methodological text boxes

Box 1: Activity rates and age of the population considered

When comparing the level of women's activity rates between countries, one must pay attention to the age group of the population considered, since differences may reflect specific elements not directly related to the issue of female economic participation. In particular, the activity levels of young people (aged 15-24) and older workers (aged 55-64) can vary markedly from one country to another for institutional reasons (e.g. early retirement or education costs) and for sociological reasons, without there being any differential effects between women and men. The table below gives activity rates for women in four age groups in the eight countries examined, as well as the gap between the activity rates of men and women. The countries are classified according to the situation of women in respect of economic participation.

It emerges from these data, first of all, that comparing activity rates for women between the ages of 15 and 64 in Europe distorts the information on women's investment in the labour market. For instance, France comes fifth as concerns the activity rate of women aged 15 to 64 but rises to second place for 25 to 54 year-olds. In actual fact, older workers and especially young people have much lower activity rates in France than elsewhere, and the gender gap in activity rates for these age groups is quite small. The low activity rate of younger and older workers affects men just as much as women (indeed, the gap is far smaller for these age groups than for the 25-54 band). The table likewise reveals that Sweden consistently has the highest activity rates and Italy the lowest. The Netherlands demonstrates particularly high youth activity rates, with a very narrow gap between girls and boys. Germany occupies a median position. The United Kingdom has fairly high activity rates for older and younger workers compared with other countries, but women belonging to the intermediate age group - 25 to 54 years old - are rather less active than other European women: this can partly be explained by their withdrawal from the labour market once they become mothers.

In conclusion, care should be taken when interpreting statistics on women's economic participation in Europe to focus on the age group under consideration so as to avoid misguided comments. Certain countries have particularly low activity rates for young people, both women and men, as is the case in France and Germany.

Table for Box 1:

Female activity rates and disparity with male activity rates for certain age groups in 2006 in Europe

	Female activity rate				Male activity rate – Female activity rate			
	<i>Age 15-64</i>	<i>Age 15-24</i>	<i>Age 55-64</i>	<i>Age 25-54</i>	<i>Age 15-64</i>	<i>Age 15-24</i>	<i>Age 55-64</i>	<i>Age 25-54</i>
Germany	68.5 <i>(4)</i>	47.3 <i>(4)</i>	46.5 <i>(3)</i>	80.3 <i>(3)</i>	12.8 <i>(4)</i>	6.6 <i>(4)</i>	17.4 <i>(4)</i>	13.5 <i>(5)</i>
France	64 <i>(5)</i>	29.2 <i>(6)</i>	40.5 <i>(4)</i>	81.2 <i>(2)</i>	10.3 <i>(2)</i>	7.9 <i>(7)</i>	6.3 <i>(1)</i>	12.7 <i>(2)</i>
Hungary	55.5 <i>(7)</i>	23.4 <i>(8)</i>	28.2 <i>(6)</i>	72.9 <i>(7)</i>	13.2 <i>(6)</i>	6.7 <i>(5)</i>	14.9 <i>(3)</i>	13.6 <i>(6)</i>
Italy	50.8 <i>(8)</i>	26.9 <i>(7)</i>	22.5 <i>(7)</i>	64.3 <i>(8)</i>	23.8 <i>(8)</i>	10.9 <i>(8)</i>	22.5 <i>(8)</i>	27 <i>(8)</i>
Netherlands	69.4 <i>(3)</i>	68.4 <i>(1)</i>	38.7 <i>(5)</i>	78.4 <i>(4)</i>	12.6 <i>(3)</i>	1.7 <i>(2)</i>	20.6 <i>(6)</i>	13.3 <i>(4)</i>
Poland	56.8 <i>(6)</i>	30.7 <i>(5)</i>	20.3 <i>(8)</i>	75.4 <i>(6)</i>	13.3 <i>(7)</i>	6.8 <i>(5)</i>	22.3 <i>(7)</i>	12.8 <i>(3)</i>
UK	77.7 <i>(1)</i>	56.8 <i>(3)</i>	50.2 <i>(2)</i>	77.9 <i>(5)</i>	12.9 <i>(5)</i>	4.9 <i>(3)</i>	18.6 <i>(5)</i>	13.8 <i>(7)</i>
Sweden	70.3 <i>(2)</i>	64 <i>(2)</i>	69.8 <i>(1)</i>	86.2 <i>(1)</i>	4.9 <i>(1)</i>	-1.6 <i>(1)</i>	6.4 <i>(2)</i>	6.3 <i>(1)</i>

Source: OECD

NB: the ranking of each country is shown in italics below the indicator.

Box 2: Measuring unemployment

In major surveys, such as the *Labour Force Survey*, the definition of unemployment established by the ILO (International Labour Office) is often the one used. According to this definition, the “unemployed” comprise all persons above a specified age who during the reference period were simultaneously “**without work**”, i.e. were not in paid employment or self-employment, “**currently available for work**”, i.e. were available for paid employment or self-employment; during the two weeks following the reference week; and “**seeking work**”, i.e. had taken specific steps in a specified reference period to seek paid employment or self-employment. The specific steps may include registration at an employment exchange; application to employers; making proactive moves; answering advertisements; seeking assistance of friends or relatives; looking for land, building, machinery or equipment to establish their own enterprise; arranging for financial resources; applying for permits and licences, etc.

The first problem with this definition is that it is based on a combination of three criteria. A person is counted as unemployed if all three conditions are met simultaneously. The ILO definition therefore excludes people who have become discouraged after an excessively long period of seeking work. They fulfil the first two criteria but not the third. Another category for which this definition of unemployment is unsuited is young mothers who have taken a career break to have a child: they meet the first and third conditions but not the second, given that it is often impossible for them to make themselves available for work within two weeks owing to childcare difficulties. Another drawback is the broad notion of employment implicit in this definition. “Employment” is taken to mean any “work” lasting at least one hour per week. All paid work, however occasional and short-lived, is taken into account. One hour of baby-sitting, for instance, is sufficient not to be classified as unemployed in the ILO meaning. Similarly, the reference week used by people when responding to the survey could distort the results. Finally, these surveys rely on self-reporting, and the responses to certain questions may be subjective. For example, some women may describe themselves as inactive although they would accept a job if it were offered to them.

Box 3: Measuring part-time work

Measuring part-time work is always problematical in terms of international comparisons, since there is in fact no harmonised definition of it along the lines of the one given for unemployment by the ILO (International Labour Organisation). Hence, whereas Eurostat uses data emanating directly from the countries, each of which gives its own definition of part-time work, the OECD has opted to define part-time work as follows: “usual working hours under 30 per week”. The figures diverge considerably depending on whether the OECD data or those from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey are used. While the OECD applies a strict definition of part-time work, the Eurostat source relates to self-reported data, whereby individuals define themselves as being - or not being - part-time. Countries where long part-time hours (over 30 hours per week) are especially widespread will have a much lower rate of part-time work under the OECD calculation than will emerge from the European survey results. The following table illustrates the differences according to the source and definition used.

Table for Box 3:

Part-time work as a % of women’s paid employment, according to different statistical sources in 2006
(25-54 age group)

	OECD	LFS	Bardasi and Gornick (age 25-59)
DE	41%	45.6%	31.8%
FR	22%	30.2%	n/a
IT	31%	26.5%	12%
HU	4%	5.6%	n/a
NL	57%	74.7%	n/a
PL	14%	13%	n/a
SE	14%	40.2%	33.7%
UK	34%	42.6%	28.1%

Source: OECD, Eurostat, Bardasi and Gornick (2008).