



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Gender mainstreaming in surveys

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This report is available in electronic format only.

This comparative analytical report provides a comparative overview of how gender mainstreaming is incorporated into national working conditions surveys, based on 12 national contributions. It investigates the conceptual and methodological framework of gender mainstreaming in surveys, as well as its implementation. The report then examines some of the survey findings on the respective situation of women and men regarding working conditions. The national contributions from the following 12 countries are available (as PDF files): [Austria](#), the [Czech Republic](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Italy](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#) and [Sweden](#).

Introduction

Further to the Beijing Platform of Action, as part of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the European Union placed increased emphasis on the need to enhance the gender sensitiveness of national statistics. This goal was included within the [Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality 2001-2005](#).

Data that are disaggregated according to sex are now generated in most EU countries on almost all relevant subjects covered by surveys. However, these data are not always systematically published nor analysed. Apart from the Scandinavian countries, there is still some way to go to produce real engendered statistics in which the gender issues are taken into account from the conception of the survey to the data analysis. This is despite the fact that specialists have prepared many reference documents and guidelines in this context in the past 10 years.

The purpose of this comparative analytical report is to present the following:

- the conceptual and methodological framework of gender mainstreaming in surveys, along with questions pertaining to its actual implementation in national surveys;
- some of the existing information on the respective situation of women and men regarding working conditions, as provided by the national surveys.

Aim of the report

This comparative analytical report has a number of aims:

- to examine whether and how gender sensitive statistics on the quality of work and employment are produced in EU Member States;
- to identify lessons that can be learned for gender mainstreaming in surveys at European level;
- to investigate how surveys provide sex-disaggregated data;
- to consider specific male or female issues;
- to report on indicators that reflect gender issues and may contribute to addressing situations of gender inequality.

The report will thus focus both on the production process as well as on indicators that reflect these gender issues. It is outside the scope of this report to assess whether subsequent reporting from these national working conditions surveys is gender sensitive.

Although this report examines gender mainstreaming in surveys, it will mainly focus on surveys relating to work and employment, such as national working conditions and labour force surveys. The report will cover 12 countries within the [European Working Conditions Observatory \(EWCO\)](#) network. The national reports for each country are available (as PDF files): [Austria](#), the [Czech Republic](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Italy](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#) and [Sweden](#).

Context to gender and gender mainstreaming

The notion of gender has been introduced into social sciences in order to distinguish between the biological characteristics, which relate to sex, and the culturally and sociologically constructed representation of women and men, such as psychological characteristics, activities, social roles and status. The study of gender issues examines the social relation dynamics between men and women that result from these representations.

According to this approach, there is no fixed 'positive' definition of women or men as social actors, not just biological individuals. However, there is a tendency to naturalise feminine and masculine characteristics, notably in the field of economic activity. In other words, 'the definition of gender roles in society mainly depends on social norms, cultural background, religious beliefs and people's attitudes' (Angela Me, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 2004).

Consequently, this representation, as it can be experienced within a social group at a certain time, cannot be understood independently from the social relations that prevail between women and men, at a specific time in a specific group. Furthermore, this relation is maintained in the private sphere as well as in the public and professional sphere. Family life and professional life are articulated one to the other because they rely on the same logic of gender relations. The professional and personal paths of women and men are closely tied to the representations prevailing about the relations between women and men in society.

This tendency to naturalise characteristics of men and women, combined with the long established prevalence of men in western economic and social systems, resulted in the implicit assimilation of the male characteristic as the normality, as a form of 'neutral gender'. Anything that differs from that norm is an exception or 'accident'. This implicit norm is still at work in many if not all fields of social life, and is qualified as a 'gender neutral' or 'gender blind' approach.

On the other hand, the 'gender sensitive' approach does not refer to any form of norm, but considers actual characteristics of both women and men in their specificity and their complex interconnections in order to promote an actual and not only formal equality among all citizens in a society.

As specified by the [Final report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming](#) for the Council of Europe: 'The main point is not the mere existence of such differences, but the fact that these differences should not have a negative impact on the living conditions of both women and men, should not discriminate against them and should contribute to an equal sharing of power in economy, society and policymaking processes'.

Resulting from these premises, gender mainstreaming promotes a new conception of equality policies between men and women, in which gender issues are not treated apart from other areas of decision, but in which they are permanently integrated in the decision-taking process, in all fields, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking. In this perspective, economic policy, negotiations and action should not be separated from occupational equality issues; action on equality issues should not be conceived of independently or in an effort to repair the inequities already put in place by earlier policy.

According to the Final report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming:

Gender mainstreaming means that gender equality becomes a full part of common policies. It implies a broader and more comprehensive definition of gender equality, giving value to differences and diversity. At the same time, it emphasises the need to (re)organise, improve, develop and evaluate policy processes ... Gender mainstreaming cannot replace 'traditional' policies that have been designed to deal with specific problems related to gender equality. It takes as a starting point policies that already exist or are being developed and then looks at how gender equality perspective can be incorporated in the policy process, so that the specificity, interest and values of both sexes are taken into account. Gender mainstreaming and specific equality policy are dual and complementary strategies with the same goal: gender equality.

Further, the report specifies that 'equality policies usually target women as a whole - but gender mainstreaming should be able to target the diverse situations of the different groups of both women and men (migrant women, young women, old men, etc).'

The Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly of the United Nations ([ECOSOC](#)) defines gender mainstreaming as follows:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that

women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. E.1997. L.O. Para. 4. Adopted by ECOSOC 17 July 1997

Learning from the studies

Gender mainstreaming requires the implementation of tools that adequately reflect the situation of women and men in all policy areas, both in its initial development and its evolution over time. This is why the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 set the production of gender statistics as a strategic objective: Strategic objective H.3. 'Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation' (for a detailed presentation, see Annex 1 of [Angela Me's article](#)).

The demand for statistics with a gender perspective is also expressed by the European Union in the [Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality 2001-2005](#) . It calls for:

- 1. the development and dissemination of comparable statistics broken down by sex and, if possible, by age, and statistical series of women's and men's situation in different policy areas;*
- 2. the development and dissemination of methodologies and indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of gender equality policies and practice (benchmarking).*

Similarly, gender mainstreaming was at the core of the first guidelines of the European Employment Strategy, and Member States were invited to 'develop indicators to measure progress in gender equality in relation to each guideline. In order meaningfully to evaluate progress, Member States will need to provide for adequate data collection systems and procedures and ensure a gender breakdown of employment statistics'.

In a wider perspective, gender mainstreaming aims at producing statistics that provide a description of the situation in the field covered by the survey that is as accurate and complete as possible. This requires considering - at each stage of the statistical production process - how well it represents the specific situation of the various actors, avoiding the notion of regarding one group as a norm to which the others will be compared more or less accurately.

This implies that a) valid labour statistics need to be based on definitions and classifications that, taken together, can reflect well the different work situations of all participants in the labour market; b) measurement needs to use sound methodologies that will ensure that these particular work situations are clearly and consistently identified; and c) dissemination practices need to present data in such a way that differences and similarities, and their causes, are clearly highlighted. (Mata-Greenwood, 2001)

Mata-Greenwood's article gives a complete description of the issues related to engendering labour statistics, and the way to deal with them; its reading should be of great interest for those producing statistics.

From sex-disaggregated data to gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming in statistics differs noticeably from the production of sex-disaggregated data.

The production of gender statistics requires more than just collecting official data disaggregated by sex. Concepts and methods used in every stage should adequately reflect any gender-based biases in social norms, attitudes and economic life, to correctly evaluate the contribution of women and men to the society. Engendering statistics therefore goes beyond the mainstreaming of sex into the normal process of data collection and dissemination. It looks into those areas where additional data collection or analysis is required in order to highlight imbalanced roles or inequalities. (Me, UNECE, 2004)

The differences between an actual gender conception of surveys and the usual ones is clearly highlighted by Vogel (2003), when he underlines the

great diversity in the interpretation of the notion of gender for research on health at work. For some, when the research considers a population group that includes a significant proportion of women, that is enough to conclude

that the question of gender has been addressed. ... For others, it is necessary that at least the two groups of women and men have been compared in the analysis of the problem. What is common to these two approaches is that the questions are not asked as to why women are more likely to be nurses or cashiers and why more men are likely to work in the construction or policing sectors. It all takes place as if the sexual division of work were a matter of fact ... which, in itself, is neutral when we consider its impacts on health. ... At another level comes the demand that the study addresses the questions that concern exclusively or mostly women, such as reproductive health, sexual or psychological bullying, work-life balance. It is surely a positive point that the position of women is better taken into account than in the past. Nevertheless, a doubt emerges when one observes new stereotypes being formed. ... Saying 'gender' today can be a secret language. It means that we are going to talk about 'women' ... Other research goes much further and takes into account the bounds that exist between the organisation of paid work and more global social factors. ... They also bear on the social construction of masculinity (or manliness) and of femininity, in as well as out of work. (Translated from French by report author Anne-Marie Nicot.)

From a gender neutral to a gender sensitive approach

In a few countries - mainly Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany - gender issues are explicitly taken into account in the conception of working conditions surveys and surveys on employment. Particularly in Finland, as explained by the national correspondent, 'the principle of gender sensitiveness ... goes much further than only presenting the figures by gender. It has been and still is about assessing what is characteristic of women's work and orientation instead of taking the work in male-dominated sectors as the norm; questions are then designed to cover these 'female' aspects as well. The aim is also to take into consideration gender differences in responding.'

Moreover, the choice of the survey instrument is not neutral. The German contributor explained: 'In general, the approach of a panel, such as the German Socio-Economic Panel, that includes questions about work and non-working life can offer advantages with regard to gender mainstreaming as it covers a broader range of factors that are relevant for gender equality within one survey. Additionally, people's development can be observed over a longer period of time and this also offers the chance to analyse differences between women and men as regards training and employment histories or the impact of family groups'.

In this perspective, it is possible to note that, except in some of the countries, the underlying model in the conception of surveys remains gender neutral rather than sensitive, as the gender question continues to be more or less considered as synonymous to problems or work situations specific to women. As explained above, a genuine gender analysis would consider the social construction of masculinity as much as that of femininity. Consequently, research can be gender oriented even if it is based on a strictly male population, which can still be found in some working teams in certain jobs such as, for instance, the construction sector (Molinier, 1997, 2000 and Kjellberg, 1998).

On this point, it can be noted that the notions and concepts used in the statistical surveys also reflect the dominant representations in society. No subdivision of the population is naturally given; it is all constructed - under the influence of the different social and cultural forces at work in society, which may vary from one country to another, and even within a country. The studies and surveys at local level in Italy, Spain and France, for instance, sometimes reveal a much better awareness of gender issues than those conducted at national level.

This issue of notions used to represent the reality through the surveys is clearly underlined by Mata-Greenwood in her article on gender issues in labour statistics.

The production of statistics requires that the reality be simplified or codified into synthetic categories that highlight certain aspects of this reality, while ignoring others. These aspects that are highlighted or suppressed will depend on priorities and objectives of the description to be undertaken and on the method of data collection that can be used. As data collection methods are faced with limitations of many types, and the measurement priorities depend to a large extent on the intrinsic perception of a society about how the labour market functions, labour statistics have generally been successful in identifying and characterising 'core' employment and unemployment situations National labour statistics have been less successful in describing other work situations. (Mata-Greenwood, 2001)

A large part of Mata-Greenwood's article is dedicated to these questions, especially under the sub-heading 'Gender issues in definitions and classifications':

The crucial role of definitions and classifications in the production of data is often underestimated. They determine what is to be covered or not and in how much detail a variable will be described. The whole data production process is based on definitions and classifications, and therefore the quality of the resulting figures depends on how well these definitions and classifications, taken together, reflect the actual situation of the different participants in the labour market. ... To be useful for gender distinctions, definitions should recognise that women and men do not necessarily perform the same activities, nor do they always behave in the same way, nor are they subject to the same constraints. Two characteristics are essential: coverage and detail. Definitions need to cover all qualifying work situations, regardless of whether they are performed by a man or a woman, and need to describe the different work situations in sufficient detail to bring out any gender distinction.

These issues on definitions and classifications are presented at length in Mata-Greenwood's article. There is not much to add to it in this comparative analytical report except to confirm that, in most working conditions surveys, some of the major points for improvement that she underlines still have not been completely achieved, especially in relation to the description of workers' occupations. The definitions of occupational groups frequently tend to hide gender segregation, or to combine in a few heterogeneous groups the jobs in which women predominate. A major improvement would result from using the most detailed level of the current version of the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO-88) in data collection.

Steps for engendering statistics

The shift from sex-disaggregated data collection to genuine gender statistics requires a profound evolution in some of the concepts used in the field concerned by the study or survey, along with a questioning of the pertinent boundaries of investigation. For instance, the assessment of the actual contribution of women to society systematically stumbles over the concept of work as defined by economists, which only includes remunerated work. Questioning this definition challenges the bases of modern economics for which market value and solvable demand are core concepts. As this definition is used for the calculation of gross domestic product (GDP) - which plays a central role in national policies - it can be easily understood why unremunerated work becomes a blind spot in decision making most if not all of the time. Instead of using GDP as a measure, some economists, such as Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize Winner for Economics, work towards the conception and promotion of alternative indicators that would better reflect the actual socio-economic situation of countries. Nevertheless, they are still a small minority.

Another major point may lie in the difficulty of shifting one's understanding of a phenomenon from a relatively 'simple' system of causality to a much more complex one. A simple causality follows the logic that A produces B; for instance, working in a hospital implies exposure to bacteriological agents, and generates the risk of disease. In a more complex perspective, the components interact in a framework that challenges the usual boundaries between the fields of study; the question of the proportion of women in different occupations is a good example of a complex causality system.

To facilitate such a shift in thinking, a certain number of institutions, such as UNECE and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), have produced guidelines for the development of gender mainstreaming in surveys, in line with the Beijing Platform of Action's strategic objectives.

UNECE provides an online presentation of the [methodology for the production of gender statistics](#) :

'The process of production of gender statistics implies some indispensable steps:

- selection of topics that need to be investigated;
- identification of the data needed to understand gender differentials and women and men's roles and contributions in the different spheres of life;
- evaluation of existing concepts, definitions and methods used in data collection against existing realities for women and men;
- development of new concepts, definitions and methods to produce unbiased gender statistics;
- compilation, analysis and presentation of statistics in formats easily accessible to a wide array of users;
- development of dissemination plans for statistical products to reach a wide audience.'

UNECE also proposes a step by step description of the production process (developed by Statistics Sweden), specifying that 'all steps should be undertaken by data producers in continuous collaboration with relevant groups

of users ... - policymakers and planners, NGOs, research institutions and gender issues advocates.'

This production process model illustrates how things should ideally work. The analyses provided by the EWCO correspondents show that, even if the overall logic of the statistics production process is respected, the actual dynamics for gender mainstreaming differ noticeably from this model. The major differences come from the actions and interactions of the actors ('users' and 'producers' in the model), and from the conceptual shifts described above, which a genuine engendering of statistics requires.

Required commitment of individuals

The statistics production process differs considerably among the 12 countries under review for many reasons, such as size of country or national political system. Some countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Sweden) have a special unit or a dedicated officer in their statistical institutions to integrate gender issues in the survey production process. These examples are now briefly outlined.

- Austria: Further to the Federal Statistics Act 2000, two project groups entitled 'Frauenfragen national' (women's issues national) and 'Frauenfragen international' (women's issues international) within the Social Statistics and Education unit are responsible for gender statistics. However, they do not collect data themselves, but analyse existing data.
- Sweden: The equality unit of Statistics Sweden screens surveys for their gender sensitivity. This procedure is based on the Official Statistics Ordinance 2001, where the following article appears in the section under 'Availability': Article 14. 'Official statistics related to individuals should be disaggregated by sex, unless there are special reasons for not doing so.' Statistics Sweden has produced advice and guidelines for work with statistics disaggregated by sex. Its equality unit has also received a small budget for promoting the concept of gender sensitivity to its clients.
- Italy: *No special unit exists to address gender statistics, nor is there a formalised role in relation to gender sensitive statistics for each unit. However, the head of the Family and Society Unit, which is responsible for the Multi-purpose set of surveys, is in charge of gender statistics. Moreover, in each unit, somebody (generally a woman) covers the topic, although in an informal way.*
- France: *Neither of the two main statistical institutions has a formal unit devoted to gender statistics. The Ministry of Labour's research and statistics unit [DARES](#) is in charge of the national working conditions survey, while the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies ([INSEE](#)) is responsible for the labour force survey. Nevertheless, both institutions have advisers to address these questions: in the research unit at DARES and in the department of demographic and social statistics at INSEE.*
- Czech Republic: In June 2003, the Czech statistics office created a special department to manage specific population statistics; gender statistics are one of the most important issues included in the department's brief. The supervisor of this department is a member of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs coordination group for equal opportunities for men and women.

However, the existence of such structures does not seem to have a great impact on the actual cooperation between the 'users' and the 'producers', noticeably at the stages that contribute to identifying the need for statistics.

Some excerpts from the national contributions convey an idea of this dilemma.

- Sweden: 'Needs are not collected systematically, but there seems to be a constant dialogue between the statistics producers (Statistics Sweden) and the decision makers. ... However, the relationships between different authorities can vary, with some being more cooperative and gender aware than others.'
- Portugal: The Ministry of Social Security, Family and Children as well as a specialist in the field are invited by the General-Directorate of Studies, Statistics and Planning (DGEEP) to identify users' needs as well as to contribute to the development of the survey. However, the process is not specifically directed to identify users' needs in terms of gender-related issues *and 'the need for gender sensitive surveys and/or questionnaires was clearly acknowledged'*.
- Austria: 'The survey questions are discussed in special task forces within Statistics Austria. Representatives of ministries, the social partners and other institutions attend those meetings. No one from the women's issues projects attends them as data are already collected according to sex; Statistics Austria understands gender statistics as collecting data by sex. Thus, if representatives of ministries, social partners and other institutions do not insist on a gender sensitive formulation of questions, gender sensitivity will not be

considered.'

- Finland: 'The needs of users are mainly collected during the questionnaire design in an advisory group consisting of the funding bodies of the survey as well as other users and specialists. It should be emphasised, though, that none of the main users have so far had very specific demands on the gender sensitiveness of the surveys. The increasing gender sensitiveness in the Quality of Work Life Survey (QWLS) is mainly due to the strong orientation of the team responsible for the survey at Statistics Finland.'

The point highlighted in the Finnish contribution (i.e. the major role played by the personal involvement of the researcher administering the QWLS survey in gender issues) is also found in other countries: beyond the formal structures, the personal position and involvement of individuals in these issues plays an important role in their actual integration in the statistics production process at all levels.

For instance, in Austria, the correspondent underlines that 'gender mainstreaming rarely exceeds EU directives. In cases where it goes beyond the directives of the EU, this depends on the dedication of the person responsible for gender mainstreaming.' Likewise, in Sweden, the correspondent notes that 'there is an increased pressure from high-level policymakers to have gender statistics data available, although this seems to vary upon individual interests of decision makers; some are more 'equality aware' than others'.

As a result, the development of gender mainstreaming in surveys cannot rely solely on the establishment of structures or formal processes. If the people in charge of the statistics production process ('producers') are not personally aware of these issues, trained to manage them properly and regularly informed of the topical questions, these structures can become empty shells. This situation is clearly underlined by the Austrian correspondent:

The main problem is that gender mainstreaming is enacted by the European Union. Therefore, women's issues no longer come from the bottom up, but gender mainstreaming comes from the top down. This paradigm shift results in two problems. First, gender mainstreaming rarely exceeds EU directives. In cases where it goes beyond the directives of the EU, this depends on the dedication of the person responsible for gender mainstreaming. Secondly, although there is an obligation to have a gender mainstreaming representative, his/her knowledge on gender and gender mainstreaming might be less than complete. Thus, there is the danger of using the terms in an insubstantial way.

Changing statistical representation

In the surveys referred to in this report, the data are collected according to sex. However, these sex-disaggregated data are not always published and, furthermore, not analysed nor commented upon. In many cases, the production of gender statistics is limited to the production and publication of data by sex.

Without a deep analysis and intertwining of the data produced by the different surveys, it is difficult to shift from a flat description of the state of issues relating to work and employment, which can be biased by a gender blind or gender neutral approach, to an understanding of the underlying dynamics - and, moreover, to set up a pertinent equality policy.

As explained by Vogel (2003), 'by themselves, the data by sex cannot allow a gender analysis of the situations described. In many cases, they just appear as a demographic description variable of the population covered.... There is a problem in the knowledge production that results from the very low analytical use of the gender variable. ... The major weakness comes from the poverty of the underlying explaining models.' (Translated from French by report author Anne-Marie Nicot.)

Thus, the major issue is to shift from 'state of things indicators', which describe the situation, to 'explaining factors indicators', which help to understand the underlying dynamics. For instance, beyond the indicators showing the disparities between men and women in the labour market, in order to develop an accurate equality policy, it will be necessary to refer to a broad information area: from the education and school orientation of girls and boys, to children and elder care systems, type of household, share of domestic tasks and further related issues. A better understanding of these dynamics requires going far beyond the primary exploitation of surveys, to lead in-depth research studies on gender mainstreaming.

The interest of qualitative studies is also underlined by Statistics Finland with reference to the major lessons that could be drawn from their experience in gender mainstreaming in surveys: 'The methodology of combining

qualitative research and quantitative research has turned out to be very effective in determining characteristics that are individual to women's work and men's work. This information has been used both in questionnaire design and in interpreting and reporting (Lehto, 1996; Lehto, 2002; Lehto, 2005; Pulkkinen, 2002).'

Thus, the output of the statistics production process cannot be limited to the publication of a sex-disaggregated data compilation, as is done in many countries. Even if those publications constitute real progress (considering the time it takes to raise awareness in all EU countries), they face many limits, the major one being their flat presentation, with little intertwining of data and analyses of the underlying phenomenon. To understand the actual situation of women and men at work, it is necessary to integrate the different aspects of their access to resources and benefits, their specific needs and constraints: family context, type of household, access to education or credit. This point is reinforced by the German correspondent: 'In all steps of the development and implementation of the survey, as well as in the interpretation, a gender mainstreaming perspective is required. Such an analysis should not only investigate single questions related to gender and a potential gender impact; the whole picture must be the frame of reference covering working life and non-working life of women and men in their societal context'.

More widely, it is necessary to carry out secondary analysis, along with qualitative and, if possible, transversal studies. Such studies make it possible to: a) identify problems that have not emerged previously; b) establish goals for improvement; c) make hypotheses on the most suitable methodologies to ensure accurate statistical representation; and d) assess the possible methodologies and implement one. It should be noted that, if the last steps are rather technical, the first and, above all, the second are very political: it is only with the lobbying of social actors that a problem identified by researchers can be transformed into a need - and goals - for improvement. Gender mainstreaming cannot go far if it is not fuelled from the bottom by the social actors.

Combining top-down and bottom-up approaches

Developing knowledge on gender issues and their underlying dynamics, and on the way they shape individual and collective behaviours, is crucial for an actual shift in the social positions and roles of men and women towards less discrimination. On this subject, as pointed out by Vogel (2003), it is possible to note the 'limits of a policy defined in terms of equal opportunities rather than in terms of social equality'. (Translated from French by report author Anne-Marie Nicot.)

Moreover, in their report on 'Gender, jobs and working conditions in the European Union', Fagan and Burchell (2002) conclude:

Yet obstacles still remain in the labour market that make it difficult for women to enter or advance in many of the higher status and better paid areas of employment, and similarly deter men from entering 'non-traditional' female-dominated areas of employment. Progress to reduce these obstacles has been made in the development of equal treatment legislation, and the implementation of formal organisational 'equal opportunities' policies, but further reform is required to strengthen the legislation and to promote good practice in organisations (European Commission, 2001). It has also become increasingly apparent from research and monitoring within organisations that it is important to tackle some of the more subtle or deep-rooted organisational practices and cultures that perpetuate gender inequalities. These factors are frequently expressed in terms of the metaphor of the 'glass ceiling' that makes it difficult for women to advance up the hierarchy, but these factors also apply more widely to the barriers operating throughout the economy to deter women and men from moving into areas of employment where their sex is in the minority.

Looking at the situation in terms of social equality rather than in terms of equal opportunities, it becomes apparent that some social or economic developments can challenge the results of policies conducted at another level. For instance, the Finnish correspondent underlines that:

There are pressures from the employer side to expand local pay agreements and performance-based pay systems as well as more flexibility in general. Proposals have also been made for increasing demands for low-paid work in order to encourage people who are unemployed into employment. Furthermore, the reorganisation of work in the public sector is under discussion. All of these trends towards greater flexibility heighten the risk of deteriorating working conditions, particularly with regard to women's labour market position, in the form of insecure contracts, widening pay gaps compared with men, increasing pressures at work as well as overlong working hours, especially among professional employees. These concerns are widely discussed in Finland. Moreover, it is becoming widely

recognised that, as long as fathers do not increase their use of family leave, young women will continue to have difficulties in securing permanent contracts. Currently, fixed-term contracts are twice as common for women aged 25 to 44 years as for men in that age group.

This problem is also underlined by Hubert (1998) who notes that, in spite of the improvements due to European Community legislation, ‘the differences in the professional situations between men and women remain significant and continue to increase in all of the EU countries’. Further, she adds that ‘the impact of legislation on the collective situation of female workers is not convincing.’

As a result, gender mainstreaming cannot only rely on an institutional force, although this plays an important role, especially by defining a legislative framework that prevents the most obvious discrimination. In fact, although European or national directives can play a certain part, they cannot by themselves change the established representations and practices that the actors usually perpetuate without knowing it. People maintain the form of ‘naturalisation’ of male and female characters that the gender approach specifically aims to unfold and to question. Thus, gender issues have to permeate society through all the social forces, whatever their nature - politicians, trade unions, associations - and level.

On this question of the levels of initiative, and as remarked earlier, it may be interesting to note that in some countries - mainly Italy, Spain and France - local level policies are sometimes more advanced than the national level on gender issues. Some local level initiatives would even deserve to be benchmarked by the national level. For instance, in Spain, the Women’s Institute of Navarra and the Regional Institute of Health at Work have published a survey report on health and working conditions of women in Navarra, which aims to assess the real situation for women in this area. According to Vogel (2003) regarding this example, ‘at the methodological level, a small number of adaptations would be enough to provide an even more accurate view of the situation’. For him, the example of Navarra shows that ‘political will and listening to the direct experience of female workers are the two major elements for a more precise description of gender relations in health at work.’ (Translated from French by report author Anne-Marie Nicot.)

Hedman’s conclusion on 20 years of statistics engendering comes close to this:

What more is needed in written documents to produce concrete actions within national statistical offices? In fact, nothing! What is required instead is a widespread awareness within each statistical office about the existence of these documents together with knowledge about gender concerns and gender equality policies and why gender statistics has to be mainstreamed in the development of the official statistical system. (Hedman et al, 1996)

Gender mainstreaming in working conditions surveys

This comparative overview is based on responses by 12 EWCO correspondents to a common questionnaire prepared by the two authors of this report. The national reports for each country are available (as PDF files): [Austria](#) , the [Czech Republic](#) , [Denmark](#) , [Estonia](#) , [Finland](#) , [France](#) , [Germany](#) , [Italy](#) , the [Netherlands](#) , [Portugal](#) , [Spain](#) and [Sweden](#) .

Attention to gender mainstreaming in organisations

In most countries, the national bureau of statistics monitors work and employment through a national working conditions survey; sometimes part of a ministry has this responsibility. In some countries where there is a national bureau of statistics, this institute may serve several ministries (e.g. in the Netherlands). Other countries give certain responsibilities on monitoring work and employment to other organisations, but this is in the minority of cases.

The following table summarises the actors responsible for the national surveys and the availability of a special unit dealing with gender issues. It also summarises the relevant surveys per country.

Table 1: Main actors responsible for working conditions surveys, and presence of a special unit for gender issues

Country	Actors responsible for national	Special unit dealing with gender
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	surveys	issues?
Austria	Statistics Austria	Yes; two projects on 'women's issues national' and 'women's issues international' in the Social Statistics and Education unit
Czech Republic	Czech Statistical Office (CZSO)	Yes
	Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	No
Denmark	National Institute of Working Life (AMI)	No
Estonia	Statistical Office of Estonia	No
Finland	Statistics Finland	Yes
	Ministry of Labour	No
	Finnish Institute of Occupational Health	No
France	DARES (in Ministry of Labour)	No, but designated advisers
	INSEE (in Ministry of Economy and Finance; the National Institute for Statistics)	No, but designated advisers
Germany	German Institute for Economic Research (DIW)	No, although the GSOEP group is like such a research group, systematically dealing with gender statistics
	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and Institute for Employment Research (IAB)	No
Italy	Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)	No, but someone responsible
	Agency for training at the Ministry of Welfare (ISFOL)	No
Netherlands	Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)	No, but the Social and Cultural Planning Office is responsible for the 'Emancipation Monitor'; this has a special unit on gender mainstreaming that discusses indicators and implementation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and CBS every second year
	TNO	No
Portugal	General Directorate of Studies, Statistics and Planning in the Ministry of Social Security, Family and Children (DGEEP) (now the	No, but a person in DGEEP is in charge of supplying updated data to the 'Gender Profile' database

	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity)	
Spain	General Sub- directorate of Social and Labour Statistics in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	No
	National Institute of Safety and Health in the Workplace	No
Sweden	Statistics Sweden (SCB) but the Swedish Work Environment Authority is responsible for the content of reports	Yes

Source: EWCO national contributions

Driving forces for engendered statistics

Several major driving forces were identified for paying increased attention to gender mainstreaming, as reported by the EWCO network correspondents.

European guidelines and international agreements

Countries, particularly the new Member States, could adopt the gender issue to show that they acted according to EU standards. This argument was explicitly put forward by the Czech Republic, as well as by Spain. The following examples of European guidelines were of specific importance:

- guidelines of the EU Framework Strategy on Gender Equality;
- agreements of the Action Platform at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women;
- European strategy for employment, resulting in national plans of employment;
- guidelines from Eurostat for the National Bureaux of Statistics.

National policymaking developments

Some countries observed increased attention on gender issues, which was mainly fostered by national legislative changes. An example is the widely debated acceptance of the law on gender equality in Estonia; the act was passed in 2004. In Finland, the Act on Equality between Men and Women was passed in 1987 and is believed to have led to increased awareness of gender relevant issues. In other countries, such as France, legislation on equality was also reported to have been of major importance. However, some countries from the EWCO network experienced no increase in interest in engendered statistics, such as Denmark. Nevertheless, it has to be said that the concepts of gender and gender mainstreaming have already been established in Denmark for many years.

Other types of legislation relating to employment, such as working time in Italy, may have had important influences on increasing awareness of gender relevant issues. The Italian correspondent referred to a law on engendered statistics. Law 53/2000 implemented the EU directive on parental leave. This law also introduced training leave and addressed the organisation of working time in cities. The law stipulates that ISTAT should publish a report every five years, based on the Time Use Survey from which data results are presented differentiated by sex and age.

Other drivers in raising awareness of the gender issue at national level are proposals by ministerial units and other statistical users. This was found to be the case in Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain.

Demographic changes

The ageing workforce and the need to retain women and older people in work was mentioned as a driver of increased awareness of gender issues in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden. An increase in women's early exit from the labour force due to health problems and/or disability was also a significant factor in

relation to the need for better awareness of the issue; this problem was cited in Denmark and in the Netherlands.

Economic developments

The move away from industry towards the service economy has caused a clear change in the occupational structure of the working population, with an increased participation of female workers. These service sectors have been characterised by certain negative factors and changing circumstances in several countries. Examples of such negative aspects cited by the national correspondents were increased unemployment in economically vulnerable times, temporary employment contracts, lack of staff and greater time pressure. Finland was among the countries noting these difficult situations. Periods of economic recession appeared to be particularly difficult for women, as reported from Finland, Italy and Portugal, although Sweden found such periods difficult for both women and men. Reforms and cutbacks in social welfare and public services have particularly affected women.

Changes in working contracts, working time and working time arrangements

These indicators of increasing demands for flexibility in the context of global competition appear to be highly gender sensitive and have particularly affected women, as reported from Finland and Portugal.

Technological changes

The arrival of information technology (IT) has been discussed from a gender perspective for many years. In the early 1980s, work that was mainly carried out by women was seen as being seriously threatened by the introduction of computers. First, it was believed that office automation would radically reduce women's office work; slightly later, the concern was more about how employees with different backgrounds might cope with the change. In Finland, the Quality of Work Life Surveys explored this topic in detail, especially in the 1980s (e.g. Lehto, 1989).

Scientific and research developments

Perhaps partly due to societal and demographic changes, international research interest has been mounting in relation to specific concepts like work-life balance, as well as to the ageing workforce, and women's participation in work. Denmark is among the countries reporting interest in these topics. Increasing international research interest is also seen in gender sensitive working conditions such as emotional demands and the requirement to hide feelings, also cited by the Danish correspondent.

Gender sensitive changes in national working conditions surveys

As national working conditions surveys are relatively recent in several of the countries studied, little can be said on longitudinal trends in these surveys in terms of increasing gender sensitivity although most correspondents expect them to become more gender sensitive.

In countries with a longer tradition of surveys on national working conditions (over 10 years), only a few had introduced changes specifically for gender mainstreaming purposes. However, when analysis showed that questions on gender sensitive issues were misinterpreted by either the respondents or the analysts, it became necessary to change the questioning in subsequent surveys.

Example from the Labour Force Survey in Estonia

In the 1995 survey, some questions were addressed only to women. This was part of the 'future developments' section and included questions like 'Do you plan to have more children?', 'How many and when do you plan to have them'? However, this part was only in the 1995 survey and was removed in subsequent years. It is obvious that this kind of targeting of questions does not allow a balanced analysis of the data as men might also have plans to have children.

Examples from the Quality of Work Life Survey in Finland

1. Since 1984, questions dealing with work involving customer contacts - typical for women - have been

included.

- In addition, a question asks about the male or female dominance of the sector: 'Considering the tasks in your work, are your co-workers who are doing roughly similar tasks to yours: All women / Mostly women / Both men and women / Mostly men / All men / Nobody else does work similar to yours?' This question is used not only as an indicator for gender segregation of sectors, but as background information when analysing working conditions: characteristics specific to work in male or female-dominated sectors are detected in a better way than merely analysing the results by the sex of the respondent.
- A question on the sex of the superior was introduced: 'Is your immediate superior: Male / Female / No immediate superior?'
- Moreover, questions on the civil status of the respondent, labour market status of the spouse as well as the number and age of children were included. A few questions were added on work-life balance, on absenteeism because of sick children and on the right to stay at home to take care of sick children with full salary.
- The 1990 survey introduced two questions on sexual harassment - its prevalence at the workplace and whether the respondent had been subjected to it. Since it turned out to be difficult to get reliable answers for these kinds of questions, the experiment was not repeated in later surveys. Instead, questions on prevalence of psychological violence/bullying at the workplace were integrated into the 1997 survey.
- Qualitative interviews of an approximately even number of men and women in a variety of occupations preceded the questionnaire design of 1997. The aim was, firstly, to test some of the existing questions, e.g. on discrimination. Secondly, the purpose was to determine the best way to design questions on special new themes, namely time pressure and fixed-term employment relationships. Gender specific characteristics of both these issues were identified and they were adapted into gender sensitive questions.
- In the 1997 survey, the question 'Could you estimate what proportion of your working hours is spent dealing with people other than your co-workers (e.g. customers, patients, passengers, pupils, etc)?' resulted in an unusual finding. Some 25% of childminders employed by the local municipality as part of the state's public childcare service had answered 'about one quarter of the time' or even 'less'. For one reason or another, these childminders were evidently referring only to the parents of the children, not to the children themselves. In 2003, when the option of 'children' was added to the question ('e.g. customers, patients, passengers, pupils or children'), every single childminder answered 'Almost all the time'. Childminders are mostly women, so these results were significant in terms of gender sensitivity.

Other examples

Generally speaking, more gender sensitive issues have been incorporated into national working conditions surveys, such as in the above examples. However, Italy is an unusual example in that a regional survey in Bolzano has paid more attention to gender sensitive topics than the traditional national survey.

Another option is to design new surveys specifically on gender sensitive issues, such as the Gender Disparities survey in Austria.

Brief overview of gender sensitive issues in surveys

The national contributions mention specific issues that have received increasing attention in working conditions surveys in the past decade:

- gender discrimination and harassment. Questions on this issue have been included in the Finnish survey since 1990, in the Netherlands since 1994 and in the Swedish survey since 1995 (expanded in 1999). Other countries, such as Germany, also include questions on this topic in other surveys;
- specific working conditions of a gender sensitive nature:
 - emotional demands and hiding emotions - both are included in the Danish, Finnish and Dutch surveys. In the Netherlands, more men (21%) than women (14%) respond that their job is emotionally demanding; similarly, more men (16%) than women (10%) report getting emotionally involved;
 - being treated with dignity and respect - in the Czech Republic, slightly more men (49%) than women (43%) state that they are treated with dignity;
 - customer contact - included in the surveys in Finland and France;
 - receiving praise from co-workers and clients - included in the Finnish QWLS. As a positive side to work involving customer contact, 39% of women compared with 22% of men receive praise for their work from

other members of the work community or customers. On the other hand, more women (25%) than men (19%) mention that lack of appreciation makes their current job less enjoyable (total 22%).

- physical risks - included in most surveys. In France, for example, even when men and women are in the same jobs, men are more exposed to physical effort than their female counterparts.
- autonomy at work. Differences emerge between men and women with regard to autonomy. Furthermore, even among similar groups of employees and sectors, working conditions between women and men differ. For instance, the French contribution reports that more women (32%) than men (24%) cannot interrupt their tasks, and that women have less opportunity to change deadlines (30% of women, 41% of men). Among production operators, 25% of women work on the line, compared with only 7% of men, and 35% of women report a high pace of work, compared with 20% of men.
- work-life balance, reconciliation of work and family life (e.g. in Austrian, Danish, Finnish, German, Italian, Dutch and Spanish surveys), and information on the household (cited in Italy, the Czech Republic and Denmark). The Austrian survey has an extensive series of questions on child day care, such as number of hours, cost, hours of opening. The Dutch survey includes questions on the balance between family and work life: 'Do you neglect or forsake family activities because of work?' and 'Do you neglect or forsake your work because of family responsibilities?'
- organisation of working time and working time preferences (Austria), and unpaid work (in the Dutch and Estonian surveys). In Finland, women report having less opportunities for flexible working hours, whereas flexibility in working time arrangements is considered more important by women than men. Moreover, the French survey reveals that, on average, women leave home at a later hour than men and come back earlier; thus, female managers are leaving earlier than male managers and the gap between them is widening.
- gender pay gap (e.g. in Austrian, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Dutch surveys) and type of benefits provided by employer (cited in the Czech Republic).
- gender specific working time preferences (e.g. in Austrian, Finnish, French, Dutch and German surveys).
- reasons for participation or exit from the labour force (Austria, Denmark, Germany);
- gender equality at the workplace (Finland).

Dissemination strategies

In many countries, some regular reports with gender sensitive statistics are available. The references of these are included in the bibliography of this report and the associated national reports. This section highlights particular initiatives that go beyond the mere publication of reports with gender sensitive statistics.

The Czech Statistical Office, in cooperation with the [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#), issues a regular publication entitled 'Focus on women, focus on men'. In addition, the results of projects funded from research budgets of the ministries and research institutions are also published, examining factors leading to discrimination against women, or to occupational risks for women's health.

In Germany, the data from the [GSOEP](#) (German Socio-Economic Panel Study) are available to all scientists in Germany, as well as in other countries. The dataset is frequently analysed on gender aspects, at national level and in international studies.

In Portugal, the main strategy to present and disseminate gender sensitive statistics is the so-called ' [Gender Profile](#) ' initiative. The principal aim is to create and maintain a database providing updated statistical data by sex, sorted and systematised in a single access point. The Gender Profile was established following a request to the National Institute of Statistics (INE) by the public bodies for gender equality, the [Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres - CIDM](#) (Commission for Equality and Women's Rights) and the [Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego - CITE](#) (Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment). This initiative corresponds to a measure of the second national action plan for equality and is also considered important in the implementation of the second national action plan against domestic violence. The Gender Profile initiative acknowledges the relevance of gender equality issues as well as the need for monitoring and evaluating the

implementation of different programmes and strategic instruments, namely those referred to above.

Statistics Sweden has produced advice and guidelines for work with statistics disaggregated by sex. This material can be downloaded from their [website](#). The equality unit in Statistics Sweden has also received a small budget for promoting the concept of gender sensitivity to its clients.

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Further information

A selection of relevant reports by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions on gender issues is available at: <http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/employment/gender/> ; a more extensive listing is also available at: <http://www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/bysubject/listGender2006.htm>