Title: Mainstreaming in the Finnish National Action Plan for Employment

Country: Finland

Authors: Reija Lilja

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MASTREEMING IN THE FINNISH NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT

Reija Lilja
National expert, "Gender and Employment" -network

In many respects Finnish women behave similarly in the labour market as men. There are no huge overall gender gaps in labour force participation, employment and unemployment rates. A larger share of Finnish women work full time than on average in other EU Member States. The share of women in active labour market programmes is substantially higher than that of men. Between the years 1997-99 the activation rate of women was 35 and that of men 26 per cent.

The fact that many policymakers feel that Finland has already a relatively good gender equality balance (except for gender segregation), may lead to a situation where gender aspects in the National Action Plans get less attention than they would otherwise. It seems that a rather common notion is that, when policy targets and initiatives are compared between different countries, one should acknowledge differences in initial gender gaps in these countries. There are gender related problems in the Finnish labour market but their nature and scope can be very different from countries in which full-time adjusted labour force participation rates of women are markedly lower than that in Finland.

There has been a gradual improvement in taking gender equality into account in the National Action Plans. In the 1998 NAP very few statistics were available to monitor gender equality. An equality barometer was introduced in 1998 as a new tool for monitoring the development of equality. In 1999, a conscious effort was made to develop statistics and new indicators to follow gender equality. In 2000, a research project was launched, that will serve as a basis for constructing a systematic framework for monitoring gender pay differentials at regular intervals. It appears that efforts have been made to provide data on gender equality, but the Finnish NAP still needs a more critical assessment of figures that have been presented by gender (i.e. gender impact assessment is needed).

The mainstreaming approach does not represent itself very strongly in Finnish NAPs, even though efforts have been made towards the right direction. Comparing the 1999 and 2000 NAPs one cannot avoid from concluding that gender mainstreaming was more explicit in the 1999 programme than it was in 2000. It is difficult to know whether the requirement to produce fewer pages in the 2000 programme contributed to this but the difference is there. Due to the fact that gender mainstreaming does require a relatively lot of space (if done properly), one could question if the compressed form of the present National Action Plan can provide a good starting point to gender mainstreaming approach.

One could say that in 2000 when introducing new initiatives the Finnish National Action Plan does not seem to utilise gender mainstreaming approach: gender issues are not explicitly discussed. The implicit message from this seems to be that most of the initiatives for Pillars I-III are regarded as gender neutral. This implies that the general approach has been defensive mainstreaming, i.e. proposed measures are thought to be such that they do not increase gender inequalities. This does not, however, mean that proposed measures do not promote gender equality. In fact, there are quite a few examples of
measures which can be argued to be consistent with proactive gender mainstreaming even though they are not presented as such in the NAP.

When comparing the Finnish NAPs over time, one can notice an overall coherence in dealing with gender equality. This appears, for example, in such a way that proposed measures on gender equality that were brought up in 1998, were first quite abstract general principles but have over the years become more concrete measures. For example, in 1998 to combat segregation, the Ministry of Education launched a project to study possibilities to evaluate how educational institutions can alleviate segregation in education. In 1999, measures were introduced to increase women's participation in information technology training and related sectors. In 2000, labour market organisations launched a three-year co-operation programme with schools and companies, which aims at studying ways of encouraging boys and girls at various stages of their education into choosing occupations which are not typical of their gender. Thus, from studying possibilities in 1998, and from focusing on women in 1999, one has in 2000 reached a stage, in which gender segregation is regarded an issue that involves both boys and girls.

The Finnish National Action Plans are not particularly specific what comes to the size and share of the employment-policy related budget devoted to gender equality and gender mainstreaming measures, and it is, therefore, difficult to evaluate the used and proposed means for different measures. There is definitely need for improvement in this respect in the National Action Plans.

The priority areas for future action in terms of policies are very similar to those already expressed in the earlier Finnish Action Plans; reducing horizontal and vertical gender segregation, and gender pay differentials; improving the position of female entrepreneurs, and of those in atypical employment contracts. The need to reduce taxation on labour in Finland can, however, provide a threat to female employment, if it means cuts in public expenditure. One should take care that reducing gender segregation and tax burden on labour does not mean deterioration of public services. It is public childcare and old-age services that have, in the first place, made it possible for Finnish women to attend the labour market with full capacity.

As good practices to be followed in other Member States we propose three measures:

- Subsidised childcare services of high quality have made it possible for mothers with small children to participate in the labour market. All children under seven years of age have the right to a full-time, municipal childcare place.
- To make it possible to grasp mechanisms behind gender wage gaps, a study on the statistics and monitoring of gender-based pay differentials has been launched in Finland. It will provide analytical information on the mechanisms that produce gender pay gaps, making it possible to deal with these mechanisms in future wage agreements. Going deeper into the factors affecting gender wage gaps makes it easier to fight gender pay discrimination.
- The Government is adopting the practice whereby new legislation is always accompanied by an assessment of its effects on gender equality. In 2000, the Employment Contracts Act is assessed for its gender impact as a pilot project, which can be used as an example of evaluation of other legislative bills for gender impact.
## Summary table. Evaluation of National Action Plan - Finland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>List of Measures in 2000 NAP</th>
<th>(i)</th>
<th>(ii)</th>
<th>(iii)</th>
<th>(iv)</th>
<th>(v)</th>
<th>(vi)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment promotion (job creation etc)</td>
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<td>Tax and benefit system (incentives for participation etc)</td>
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<td>Measures for the employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures for the unemployed</td>
<td>• Methods for evaluating and recognising skills will be created to enable adults to draw on the skills they have required previously at work, through NGO activities or otherwise in their studies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• For those seeking training, information will be provided more efficiently on the training available and sectors where future job opportunities are likely to lie.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Steps will be taken to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of the job-seeking plan and skills mapping carried out jointly by the employment office and the job-seeker.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A special programme will be created for further training and practical training for highly educated immigrants</td>
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already resident in Finland.

- Measures will focus on joint clients of the labour administration and social services who have been unemployed for a long time and for whom labour market measures are not enough on their own to ensure their entry or return to the labour market.

- Efforts will be made to improve co-operation between the social services and the labour administration. Shared responsibility for the client will be made the starting point of intensified co-operation between various bodies involved.

- The division of responsibility between the labour authorities and the municipalities in arranging activating measures and rehabilitation will be made clearer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures for the inactive and returners</th>
<th>During 2000, the necessary legislative amendments will be prepared for eliminating obstacles to the employment of people with disabilities and improving their potential for finding work.</th>
<th>✓</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>In the Government programme it has been decided to launch a special entrepreneurship project (2000-2001). In becoming an entrepreneur there is a special focus on women as entrepreneurs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>The Finnish National Workplace Development Programme will be continued and expanded with relevant ministries. The areas of focus in 2000 are promotion of forms of work organisation which support learning, improved personnel management, improvement of the functioning of work communities, especially with a view to ageing workers and promotion of equal work communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender mainstreaming</td>
<td>In 2000, the Employment Contracts Act will be assessed for its gender impact. This assessment will be a pilot project which can be used as an example in evaluation of other legislative bills for gender impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desegregation</td>
<td>Target of alleviating segregation was introduced as part of the labour administration's management by results. In 1999, based on the target, each Employment and Economic Development Centre has drawn a programme for alleviating segregation. The aim of the Government is to influence the mechanisms behind people's choices of occupation to encourage men and women towards a more equal distribution in various occupations. An extensive strategic project 'equal labour market' will be launched in this area. It lasts for four years (2000-2003). During 2000, the project will work with research findings and good practices to discover the key factors for eliminating this clear gender division in certain occupations. After this, the project will define the measures needed, their extent and the bodies responsible for implementation, and then monitor implementation. The labour market organisations will launch a three-year co-operation programme with schools and companies. This will study ways of encouraging boys</td>
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and girls at various stages of their education into choosing occupations which are not typical of their gender. An information campaign aimed at schools and other educational work will be implemented as part of the programme.

| Pay                                      | • A study on the statistics and monitoring of gender-based pay differentials, which starts in 2000, will serve as the basis for constructing a systematic monitoring framework for monitoring gender pay differentials in the labour market. The aim is to facilitate analysis of the factors which influence these pay differentials and to apply statistical methods to monitor changes in the differentials at regular intervals. | ✓  | ✓  |
| Parental leave                           | • Measures have been prepared (in 1999) to encourage more effective uptake of paternity leave. |   | ✓  |
| Care (children, elderly, other)          | • August 1, 2000 free pre-school teaching for all 6-year-olds starts. |   | ✓  |
| Other family friendly measures           |                                                       |   |   |

(i) gender impact taken into account in the design  
(ii) aimed at improving the process of gender mainstreaming  
(iii) monitored for gender impact  
(iv) aimed at closing gender gaps  
(v) aimed at improving the reconciliation of work and family life  
(vi) aimed at allowing women and men to return to the labour market
Mainstreaming
in the Finnish National Action Plan
for Employment

15 May 2000

by

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1 THE GENDER EQUALITY DEFICIT AND THE NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 General features in the labour market

After the early 1970s labour force participation rate of Finnish women rose steadily reaching the peak of 65 per cent in 1990. This trend was reversed by the severe recession of the early 1990s, when the labour force participation dropped both among men and women markedly. In 1999 the labour force participation rate was 69 per cent for men and 62.5 per cent for women.

Employment rate of Finnish women has been higher than European average. In 1998 the employment rate for women aged 15-59 was 64.2 per cent in Finland, whereas it was, on average, 54.7 per cent in 15 Member States. In the age group 25-49 as many as 75.6 per cent of Finnish women were employed.

Children do not deter Finnish women from attending the labour market. Among women with children 80 per cent attended the labour force in 1998. The lowest participation rate, 60 per cent, was among women who had two small children (less than seven years of age). In the age group 25-39 almost 89 per cent of women, who did not have children, attended the labour force.

Women's unemployment rates have traditionally been lower than those for men in Finland. In 1996, however, the female unemployment rate rose above that for men. This has been partly due to the fact that the economic recovery started first at the male dominated sectors (such as manufacturing, construction, and business services), and that typical female sectors (such as public services) have experienced lower employment growth. In 1999 female unemployment rate was 10.7 and male unemployment rate 9.8.1

Long-term unemployment hits hardest the older age groups. In 1998 among unemployed men aged 50-64 about 63 per cent had been unemployed for over a year. For women this share was 53 per cent.

1.2 Employment – gender segregation

Men's and women's labour markets are strongly segregated in Finland. In 1998 about 71 per of employed people in manufacturing were men, whereas in services women accounted for 73 per cent of all employed people.2

Gender segregation is also apparent when one looks at employed people according to their employers. In 1999 about 1,656,000 people were employed in the private sector. Thirty nine per cent of them were women. At the same time 634,000 people were working in the public sector, of which as many as 69 per cent were women.

Horizontal gender segregation that appear in the labour market can reflect either optimal choices of individuals or they may be due to different constraints that men and women

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1 In Appendix 1 a more detailed description of male and female unemployment rates in different industries over the period 1995-1999 are reported.
2 In Appendix 2 women’s share in employed labour force is reported in different industries.
face in their choices. Once an occupational decision has been made, similar women and men may still face vertical segregation.

Among salaried employees about 75 per cent of managerial positions were held by men, and 71 per cent of lower level jobs were held by women in 1999. Among blue collar workers, due to the dominance of men in manufacturing, 68 per cent were men.

There is some empirical evidence (from the banking sector) that suggests that both gender segregation into different jobs as well as the lower probability of promotion from similar jobs makes it more difficult for women to be promoted (Lilja, 1999). Thus, it is important to focus both on horizontal as well as on vertical segregation in order to promote equality in the labour market.

1.3. Self-employment

The share of employers and self employed is at an average European level in Finland. Among employed men 19 and among employed women eight per cent belonged to this category in 1998. There appears to be a gender segregation also among self employed. Women entrepreneurs work mostly in private services and trade, and women's customers are mostly ordinary consumers, whereas men provide more business services and have more often than women firms as their customers.

1.4. Atypical forms of employment

Temporary employment is slightly more common in Finland than in Europe on average. In particular, in 1998 young Finnish women had almost twice as high propensity of having a temporary job than their colleagues elsewhere. Among those female employees aged 25-49 14.3 per cent had a temporary employment contract in Finland. The corresponding figure for EU-15 was 7.7 per cent and for Finnish men 8.2 per cent. In this age group almost 80 per cent of Finnish men and 83 per cent of women said that the reason why they were temporary employees was because they could not find a permanent job.

The younger the person the more probable temporary employment is. It appears that higher education does not make temporary employment less of a problem. According to a survey, made in 1998, among female employees with full-time jobs, who were less than 30 years of age and had a university degree, over half had employment contracts that were temporary. Every fifth young man was in a similar situation. Over 50 per cent of these young people in temporary employment experienced it as problematic. (AKAVAn työmarkkinatutkimus 1998)

About six per cent of Finnish men and 17 per cent of women worked part time in 1998. Men's share is close to European average of 5.5 per cent but women's share is much lower than that of 33 per cent for EU-15. Only young women, who combine studies with working, part-time work is more common than in other EU countries. Almost half of women aged 15-24 work part time in Finland. Quarter of men do so.

Combining family and working life through part-time work is not a concept that Finnish women follow. Only 13 per cent of women aged 25-49 worked part time in 1998. Almost 32 per cent of women in 15 Member States did so.
1.5 Childcare services

In Finland subsidised childcare services of high quality have made it possible for mothers with small children to participate in the labour market. All children under seven years of age have the right for a full-time, municipal childcare place. Children attending school receive a free lunch at school. All these services have made it possible for mothers of young children to work full time in the labour market. The Government extends these services by arranging free pre-school education for all children who are six years of age in year 2000.

Employees are entitled to return to his or her previous job after parental and child-care leaves. This system has been working rather smoothly in Finland. Women with temporary job contracts may have problems if the contract ends during their parental leaves. There is no information on the long-run effects of these policies on gender equality in the labour market. It has been acknowledged that the opportunity to be out of job for long periods may have harmful effects on recruitment, job assignment and career mobility among women. The large shares of young women in temporary jobs may be an indication that employers regard young, fertile women as a group which has a high risk of exit.

1.6 Tax and benefits

The Government reduces employment taxes and social security payments during its four-year-term. The emphasis in these reductions is on low-wage earners in order to increase their incentives to become employed. The marginal taxes in all income groups will be adjusted so that they do not rise due to this procedure. The Government also prepares a report on the potential reductions on non-wage labour costs targeted to the low-wage earners. This is the first step towards the policy line adopted in several EU countries.

Tax cuts may imply that there is a threat for cutting public expenditure. For female employment the cuts in public consumption can be detrimental. Recent economic developments in Finland suggest, however, that proposed tax cuts can be made without this threat. Due to the fact that the majority of low-wage earners are women the above policy emphasis should, by and large, be beneficial for female employment.

1.7 Gender pay gap

In 1998 women earned for normal working hours, on average, about 82 per cent of men's earnings. The ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings was highest in municipalities, 85 per cent, and lowest in government, 81.8 per cent (see Appendix 3). From 1990 onwards relative earnings of women increased most in the private sector: the ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings rose from 77 per cent in 1990 to 82 per cent in 1998. In government, on the other hand, the ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings fell by one percentage point during the same period.

Relative earnings of women do not seem to be sensitive to hours women work. According to wage structure statistics from 1997 the ratio of women's hourly wages to men's hourly wages was 80.6 per cent in full-time work. In part-time work it was 83.8 per cent.

The gender wage gap is expected to rise with the increases in performance-related and profit sharing schemes. These schemes are more common in male-dominated branches.
Gender segregation is one of the reasons why gender wage differentials exist in Finland. In this respect efforts have been made to implement ‘equal pay for equal worth’ principle. Further, to increase equality collective wage agreements have included special pay-settlements for women and low-wage sectors. However, current wage agreements that became in effect this year did no include these kinds of provisos.

In 1998 about 74 per cent of men and 80.6 per cent of women were members in the trade unions in Finland. The coverage of wage agreements was about 95 per cent in 1997 (SAK, 2000).

1.8 Access to active labour market programmes and lifelong learning

The activity rates\(^3\) in labour market programmes show that Finnish women participate in these programmes more often than men. Between the years 1997-1999 the activity rate has been around 35 for women and 26 for men.

What comes to lifelong learning about 41 per cent of male employees and 43 per cent of female employees were on-the-job training in 1998. In 1995 these figures were 45 and 44, respectively. Men received somewhat longer training: the median was five days of training for men and four for women.

Thus, in terms of the quantity of participating in labour market programmes or on-the-job training the gender gap is relatively modest. These figures, however, do not reveal qualitative aspects of the programmes/training.

1.9 Need for action

The working patterns of Finnish women differ much less from those of men than in other European countries. The municipal child-care system has made it possible for majority of women to work full time. Combining family and working life has not meant substantial part-time work in Finland. The problems still remain, and attaining gender equality in the labour market requires efforts. There is a need to

- reduce horizontal gender segregation. Still only two women in ten are working in jobs in which the gender distribution is relatively even (Savola, 2000).
- improve career prospects of women, and reduce vertical gender segregation.
- improve the position of young women in the labour market. The high share of temporary job contracts among young people can have negative effects both on lifelong learning and career prospects.
- promote self employment among women also in business services.
- reduce existing gender wage gaps by collective wage bargaining.
- reduce long-term unemployment and improve employability of those men and women aged 50-64.

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\(^3\) The ratio of those in active labour market programmes to the number of registered unemployed.
2 ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Equality between women and men has been integrated into the employment policy agenda in the two-year period since the launch of the European employment process in Luxembourg in 1997. In the 1998 Employment Guidelines equal opportunities were introduced for the first time as one of the four Pillars. In 1999 a new Guideline on gender mainstreaming was introduced.

2.1 Monitoring and evaluation

In many respects Finnish women behave similarly in the labour market as men. There are no huge overall gender gaps in labour force participation, employment and unemployment rates. A larger share of Finnish women work full time than on average in other EU Member States. Finnish women have higher education than men in all age groups.

What comes to the active labour market policy it appears that the activation rate of Finnish women has been substantially higher than that of men. Between the years 1997-99 the activation rate of women was 35 and that of men 26 per cent.

The fact that many policymakers feel that Finland has already a relatively good gender equality balance (except for gender segregation), may lead to a situation where gender aspects in the National Action Plans get less attention than they would otherwise. It seems that a rather common notion is that, when policy targets and initiatives are compared between different countries, one should acknowledge differences in initial gender gaps in these countries. There are gender related problems in the Finnish labour market but their nature and scope can be very different from countries in which full-time adjusted labour force participation rates of women are markedly lower than that in Finland.

In the 1998 National Action Plan only selected statistics were available to monitor gender equality. An equality barometer was introduced in 1998 as a new tool for monitoring the development of equality. In 1999, a conscious effort was made to develop statistics and new indicators to follow gender equality. In 2000, a research project was launched, that will serve as a basis for constructing a systematic framework for monitoring gender pay differentials at regular intervals.

In evaluating the 1999 NAP, a substantial, and a much larger, set of indicators was presented by gender than in the previous year. There was, however, not sufficient information on the number of indicators that will be followed on a regular basis. The methodology of gender evaluation and monitoring has not been presented as systematically as could be hoped for, even though efforts have been made towards this direction by providing more data by gender.

In discussing the implementation of the 1999 NAP the gender aspect is reflected basically in the background statistics. Monitoring indicators for Guidelines 1 and 2 were given by gender, but only part of the indicators on the impact of measures. These included, among other things, entrants, inflow into long-term unemployment, compliance with insertion, action plan on going, non compliance, rate of compliance, rate of non-compliance, indicators related to prevention of long-term unemployment, extension of unemployment, average volumes of labour market measures, activation rate, indicators related to education and training, and entrepreneurs.
In 2000 the important difference to the 1999 NAP was that the impact of some measures was given separately for men and women. This is a first, and necessary, step to take into account gender aspects in the evaluation of programmes. However, it is still far from gender impact assessment.

According to a recent Finnish study the most efficient programmes (in terms of improvements in the employment possibilities of participants in open, non-subsidised labour markets) were enterprise allowance and labour market training. However, the calculations from the study show that a policy shift from private sector job placements to labour market training would weaken, not improve, the employment prospects of women, families with children, and the disabled.

The above result emphasises the need for gender impact assessment in the NAPs. It appears that for groups for whom entering the labour market is problematic (e.g. young women are more prone to have temporary employment contracts than young men), policy measures that alleviate entry are more beneficial than other measures which just postpone the problem into the future. It appears that young women, in particular, who are suspected not to be as much attached to the labour market as men due to their childbearing ability, need to 'prove' their labour market attachment by actually attending the labour market.

Job-sharing models have been introduced in the Finnish NAPs to support lifelong learning. In 1999 job rotation or part-time supplements were used by about 11,000 people, who took time off or transferred to a part-time job. There was no a priori gender aspect in the design of these models but it turned out that they were used mainly by women. It is clear that job-sharing models improve individual choice in the labour market, but do they have any effect on gender equality is a question that remains open. In fact, the high share of women participating the programme may be simply due to the fact that it is easier to participate in these schemes in typical female jobs (and is a result of gender segregation rather than increasing equality in the labour market).

The above example of job-sharing schemes tries to emphasise the fact that a labour market policy measure does not automatically improve gender equality, if the share of women is high among participants. Therefore, even though, at first stage, it is important to report indicators and statistics of a certain policy measure by gender, it is far from sufficient from the point of view of evaluating the effect of this policy measure on gender equality. What the Finnish NAP still seems to lack is critical assessment of figures that have been presented by gender.

In 1999, start-up grants were granted to 4,300 unemployed people to set up in business as entrepreneurs; 48 per cent of these were women. Women's entrepreneurship loans were granted by the Finnvera Plc to a total of 1,300 companies. Over 1,500 jobs were created in these companies. Female loans provide a positive example of a measure designed to alleviate specific problems that women face when starting up a business. More qualitative information of the type of firms that women start up and their life-expectancy could be useful for analysing the long-run effects of these grants.

It appears that in the 1999 Finnish NAP the mainstreaming approach was rather weak but the gender aspects got more attention than in the 1998 NAP. The mainstreaming approach was most apparent in the case of entrepreneurship Pillar. In particular, in the

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4 Hämäläinen (1999).
adaptability Pillar, mainstreaming approach was disappointing. This is a pity, since many important qualitative questions related to working life are discussed in relation to this Pillar. In the fourth Pillar, strengthening equal opportunities policies for women and men, the discussion was at a rather abstract level. There were no mention of detailed timetables, parties responsible or resources available for the programmes.\(^5\)

In 2000, the outline of the NAP report changed. In the Commission instructions the report should first discuss the implementation of the 1999 NAP and then new policy initiatives under the NAP.

What comes to gender mainstreaming in the current NAP report, one can see a clear distinction between the first two chapters. In the overview of the implementation of the 1999 NAP most of the statistics and indicators are provided by gender. In the first part of the report gender issues are clearly at focus, even though proper gender impact assessment of different measures is still lacking. On the second part of the report, in discussing new policy initiatives under the NAP, the gender mainstreaming almost totally disappears. One could guess that one of the reasons to this is that to be able to keep the required short length of the report, gender mainstreaming has been restricted to the implementation part, which in terms of descriptive statistics is rather straightforward, rather than to new policy initiatives, which would have required a more qualitative approach.

\section*{2.2 Initiatives to promote gender equality}

One could say that when introducing new initiatives the current Finnish National Action Plan does not seem to utilise gender mainstreaming approach: gender issues are not explicitly discussed. The implicit message from this seems to be that most of the initiatives for Pillars I-III are regarded as gender neutral. This implies that the general approach has been defensive mainstreaming, i.e. proposed measures are thought to be such that they do not increase gender inequalities. This does not, however, mean that proposed measures do not promote gender equality. In fact, there are examples of measures which can be argued to be consistent with proactive gender mainstreaming.

In improving employability skills surveys will be introduced in order to improve the definition of training needs. A functional unit will be formed out of different training alternatives, helping company management to draw up development programmes and improving the skills of employees and the unemployed. Further, the use of indicators will be promoted for describing the staff situation at the workplace (personnel strengths, individual qualities and the work community). An example would be the use of personnel accounting. Even though no gender aspect is explicitly mentioned in introducing these measures, it is likely that they will strengthen the labour market position of women, who tend to be less aggressive in expressing their know-how at working places than men. These measures, make the skills of women more 'visible' to the management, which can have positive effects on women's career and training possibilities.

Under the Finnish Equality Act, all workplaces with at least 30 employees must draw up staff equality plans, implementation of which is supervised by local work safety and health districts. It appears that in reality only a small fraction of firms actually draw up equality plans.

\(^5\) Ilmakunnas (2000) provides a more detailed discussion on the mainstreaming approach in the 1999 Finnish NAP.
plans. For example, a recent survey among clerical employees in Finnish industry revealed that only six per cent of firms, who should have had an equality plan actually had one. Equality plans are a major instrument for combating vertical segregation, and it would be important that the requirement for drawing up equality plans is monitored and implemented in practice. The Finnish National Action Plan could take a more active role in this implementation process due to the fact that labour market organisations are involved in drawing up the plans and, thus, committed to them.

Measures related to coping at work and maintaining work capacity, and improving staff well-being and working conditions are targeted towards ageing workers. These measures are in line with the Council recommendation to raise the average retirement age. They may also have a positive effect on gender equality due to the possibility of reducing the risk of becoming unemployed. At present, if an ageing woman becomes unemployed she has a smaller probability of finding a job than a man. It has been argued that older female job-seekers face both gender and age discrimination.

In reinforcing the information society all educational institutions will assess their present curricula and draw up an IT and communications technology curriculum by 2002. An additional aim is for more than half the staff of the education administration to acquire good skills for pedagogic use of information technology and for at least a sizeable proportion of teachers to have mastered the basic skills. Making it possible for all children to learn IT skills at school may reduce the strong gender segregation in IT industry in the long run. At present about 70 per cent of employees in IT sector are men (Savola, 2000).

In the Government programme it has been decided to launch a special entrepreneurship project (2000-2001). The project is divided into four stages. In becoming an entrepreneur there is a special focus on women as entrepreneurs. In the 1999 NAP women were able to get special women's entrepreneurship loans to start up a business. There is not any detailed information in the current NAP whether or not this possibility remains and if new measures will be introduced that are related to this target. Anyway, the programme is designed to overcome the barriers to entrepreneurship faced by women and is consistent with proactive gender mainstreaming.

Further, two regional support test projects for employment in domestic work in the home continue also in 2000. Through direct support to companies offering domestic services or through temporary tax relief system it is possible for households to buy subsidised cleaning, childcare, renovation and other domestic services from the private sector. This project has improved employment in private services, which is a female dominated sector. It has, furthermore, alleviated combining family and working life for those who have used these services.

In 1999 a new project ‘Hoiva 2000’ was launched also to promote entrepreneurship in care provision in the social services sector by bringing together the service procurers (the municipalities) and the service providers (companies). This project makes it easier to keep high quality of standards in care services, and it improves the status of entrepreneurs in this sector.

Combining family and working life has been relatively painless in Finland due to flexible choices in family leaves and day care services that are ensured for all children. People returning from family policy leaves have a statutory right to return to the same employer.
An employee with children under school age is entitled to work part time. From the first of August 2000 onwards free pre-school teaching is available for all 6-year-olds adding another measure aimed at easing lives of families with children.

In encouraging adaptability the Government proposal for the reform of the Employment Contracts Act will be submitted on the basis of committee proposals and further preparation during the spring session 2000. The proposed amendments include improvements to the job security of people in atypical employment including provisions related to trial period, cumulative benefits, and obligations related to offers of work. Due to the fact that a larger share of women than men have atypical jobs, this change of legislation will most likely strengthen the position of women in the labour market.

Further with the view of promoting equal work communities the Finnish National Workplace Development Programme will be continued and expanded in co-operation with the relevant ministries.

A specific problem that Finland as well as other countries with high female labour force participation rates face, is strong gender segregation in the labour market. Of all working women, 60 per cent are in sectors where women account for at least 80 per cent of the workforce. This situation creates hindrances to smooth functioning of the labour market. Council recommendation is to reduce gender segregation in Finland.

In 2000, the Government will launch an extensive strategic project 'equal labour market' (for the years 2000-2003) in order to influence the mechanisms behind people's choices of occupation to encourage men and women towards a more equal distribution in various occupations.

During 2000, the project will work with research findings and good practices to discover the key factors for eliminating gender division in certain occupations.

The labour market organisations will launch a three-year co-operation programme with schools and companies. This will study ways of encouraging boys and girls at various stages of their education in choosing occupations that are not typical of their gender. An information campaign aimed at schools and other educational work will be implemented as part of the programme. It will receive ESF funding, among other sources. A positive feature in this programme is that it is aimed at both girls and boys. As it appears from the guide to gender impact assessment there are positive effects in promoting the participation of men in female professions in relation to rights, norms, values and resources.

The average earnings for regular working time of women in full-time employment have been around 80 per cent of men's throughout the 1990s. To make it more possible in the long run to reduce gender wage gaps, a study on the statistics and monitoring of gender-based pay differentials is launched in 2000. The study will serve as a basis for constructing a systematic framework for monitoring pay differentials in the labour market. The aim is to facilitate analysis of the factors which influence these pay differentials and to apply statistical methods to monitoring changes in the differentials at regular intervals. This is a very welcomed initiative due to the fact that despite the strong position Finnish women have in the labour market, the persistent gender pay gaps remain. It is important to know the mechanisms that produce these pay gaps, so that in future wage agreements these mechanisms can be dealt with.
2.3 Coherence and consistency in the gender mainstreaming approach

When comparing the Finnish NAPs over time, one can notice an overall coherence in dealing with gender equality. This appears, for example, in such a way that proposed measures on gender equality that were brought up in 1998, were first quite abstract general principles but have over the years become more concrete measures. The mid-term review mentioned in Lisbon conclusions requires a long run perspective in discussing the National Action Plans. Therefore, let us first evaluate (using some selected examples) the coherence of the Finnish NAPs over time.

In 1998, gender in terms of statistics and indicators was practically invisible in the Finnish NAP. In 1999, Statistics Finland made more gender distinctions in their statistics. The 1999 report on implementation of the 1998 programme gave already information by gender. In 2000, the gender based data has been further improved but there is still a need for certain improvements in ministries' data collection systems and statistics.

In 1998, in combating segregation the Ministry of Education launched a project to study possibilities to evaluate how educational institutions can alleviate segregation in education. In 1999, with the 'Tietonaisia' campaign measures were introduced to increase women's participation in information technology training and related sectors. In 2000, labour market organisations launch a three-year co-operation programme with schools and companies, which aims at studying ways of encouraging boys and girls at various stages of their education into choosing occupations which are not typical of their gender. Thus, from studying possibilities in 1998, and from focusing on women in 1999, one has in 2000 reached a stage, in which gender segregation is regarded an issue that involves both boys and girls.

In 1998, methods to be able to evaluate the performance of equal pay for equal work principle were developed. In 1999, systems for assessing job demand have been devised and introduced, and a statistical and analytical procedure was being drawn up and introduced to allow for regular monitoring of women's and men's pay and labour market standing. In 2000, a study on the statistics and monitoring of gender-based pay differentials is launched giving concrete information on the mechanisms that produce gender wage differentials in the Finnish labour market.

What comes to coherence and consistency of gender mainstreaming within the NAPs, a few matters are worth mentioning. First, comparing the 1999 and 2000 NAPs one cannot avoid from concluding that gender mainstreaming was more explicit in the 1999 programme than it was in 2000. It is difficult to know whether the requirement to produce fewer pages in the 2000 programme contributed to this but the difference is there. Due to the fact that gender mainstreaming does require a relatively lot of space (if done properly), one could question if the compressed form of the present National Action Plan can provide a good starting point to gender mainstreaming approach. However, as it appears from the above discussion the lack of explicit gender mainstreaming approach does not necessarily mean that gender issues are neglected in the NAP.

What comes to potential inconsistencies within the NAPs one potential inconsistency is related to the Council recommendation to reduce taxation on labour in Finland. This may prove problematic from the gender point of view, if the supposed tax cuts mean further cuts in public expenditure. The Finnish Government's emphasis in these reductions is,
However, on low-wage earners in order to increase their incentives to become employed. Government also prepares a report on the potential reductions on non-wage labour costs targeted to the low-wage earners. Due to the fact that the majority of low-wage earners are women the above policy emphasis should, by and large, be beneficial for female employment on the condition that cuts in public consumption can be avoided.

The Finnish NAP takes a relatively positive view to the policies on temporary employment contracts. In 2000, it states (page 8): "A number of legislative amendments since 1997 have made temporary employment a more favourable option for job-seekers, while also making the use of fixed-term employment relationships easier, and improving security for those taking up such employment. This is helping the unemployed become integrated into the labour market." This statement does not fully account for the specific problems men and women face in the labour market. In 1998 young Finnish women had almost twice as high propensity of having a temporary job than their colleagues in other EU Member States. About 14 per cent of female (and eight per cent of male) employees aged 25-49 had a temporary employment contract in Finland. Over 80 per cent of those in temporary jobs would have preferred a permanent job.

One of the background factors explaining why it appears to be more difficult for young women to enter the labour market, can be related to our maternal/parental leave system. A woman is entitled to return to her previous job after maternal, and childcare leaves. It has been acknowledged that the opportunity to be out of a job for long periods may have harmful effects on recruitment, job assignment and career mobility among women, since employers regard women as a ‘risky’ group. This is reflected in the types of job contracts women are able to make in the labour market. Therefore, temporary job contracts can be an important issue for gender equality, and a neutral (or positive) attitude towards them is not necessarily a good choice.

When evaluating the overall coherence and consistency of the National Action Plans the conclusion is that, in this respect, the plans can be regarded rather successful.

2.4 Mechanisms for implementing gender mainstreaming

A mainstreaming methodology project was launched in Finland in 1998, aimed at formulating models that will allow gender equality to be integrated into the drafting of Government proposals, and in budget and information work. The Government is adopting the practice whereby new legislation is always accompanied by an assessment of its effects on gender equality.

A final report on the Government's equality programme was published in March 1999, dealing with over 100 projects at various ministries. In 1998 an equality barometer was produced for the first time, charting people's subjective views about equality in practice and changes in it. Finnish statistical systems classify data by gender to a relatively advanced degree. More detailed and systematic work is, however, still needed e.g. in the case of compliance with the mainstreaming principle throughout the State administration, and implementation of active labour market policies.

In 1999, a mainstreaming process was implemented through which the most important administrative sectors will take equal opportunities into account in the planning and implementation of their operations. In 2000, the Employment Contracts Act is assessed for
its gender impact. This assessment will be a pilot project which can be used as an example of evaluation of other legislative bills for gender impact suggesting that gender mainstreaming has been understood by policymakers to be a permanent part of the policy formation, implementation and evaluation process.

In the 1999 National Action Plan the mainstreaming approach was carried out jointly by civil servants in charge of work on the various Guidelines and a special officer responsible for mainstreaming throughout the Plan. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's equality unit has also been actively involved. Ilmakunnas (2000) in her evaluation on the mainstreaming process in 1999 concludes that division of work between the officer responsible for mainstreaming and the rest of the working group needed clarification. It was not clear whether the role of the special officer was to act as a gender equality 'consultant' for the rest of the group or was she supposed to draw up independently gender impact analyses on the Guidelines. Ilmakunnas finds the latter alternative more problematic, since the whole idea of mainstreaming approach is, that it should be an integral approach in administrative work, not a special issue on which only few have an expertise.

In February 1999, the equality unit arranged a seminar for civil servants at various ministries and representatives of labour market organisations involved in drawing up the Action Plan. Representatives of the equality unit also commented on the draft version of the Plan at several points during the drafting process, making suggestions for changes. Mainstreaming was also discussed with Commission representatives at a bilateral seminar in March 1999.

In drawing up the National Action Plan in 2000, working group did not any more have a special officer solely responsible for the mainstreaming approach. There were sub-groups discussing separately each Pillar. In the case of the Pillar IV, a representative from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's equality unit was actively involved. For the first time, the social partners were present throughout the whole process of drawing up the Finnish NAP.
3 ASSESSING THE PRIORITY ACCORDED TO GENDER EQUALITY

The Finnish National Action Plans are not particularly specific what comes to the size and share of the employment-policy related budget devoted to gender equality and gender mainstreaming measures, and it is, therefore, difficult to evaluate the used and proposed means for different measures. There is definitely need for improvement in this respect. For evaluation purposes it is necessary to know both beforehand and afterwards the amount and nature of resources allocated to gender equality and gender mainstreaming measures. At present, this kind of information is not available without substantial effort.

Due to the long history of female participation in the labour market the need for action in Finland is not that much related to combining work and family life but to other issues in the labour market. In the first chapter of this report need of action was identified in the following areas:
- horizontal and vertical gender segregation (Pillar IV)
- qualitative aspects of self employment among women (Pillar II)
- young women in temporary job contracts (Pillar III)
- gender pay differentials (Pillar IV)
- long-term unemployment of those aged 50-64 (Pillar I).

When one looks at the NAP processes over the years 1998-2000, it is easy to conclude that definite improvements in policies can be seen in the area of horizontal gender segregation. In all of the National Action Plans gender segregation has been an important issue. What comes to vertical segregation, more needs to be done. As was mentioned earlier, equality plans are a useful tool for combating vertical segregation. In this respect the Finnish National Action Plan could take a more active role than it has until now in securing that these plans are put in practice.

The relatively low share of self-employed women (in 1998, eight per cent of employed women were self-employed) has also been a concern in all of the NAPs, and special measures have been designed to promote self-employment among women. Until now little attention has been paid to the qualitative aspects of self employment. Women entrepreneurs in most cases provide services to ordinary consumers whereas men tend to work more in business services. This means that the business risk of male and female entrepreneurs can be very different. More attention to this aspect of self-employment could be useful when future NAPs are discussed.

The question of temporary job contracts is not easy, and the Finnish NAPs have focused on improving insecurity related to these types of contracts. However, more information is needed on the long-run effects of temporary job contracts on the access to the on-the-job training, on promotion prospects, and family formation among young women.

Reducing gender pay differentials have also been on the agenda in all of the NAPs. Pay differentials are persistent in Finland, and more information on the mechanisms that produce these differentials is needed. In 2000, a new project that produces this type of information on a regular basis has been launched. This is a welcomed initiative and it will give valuable information to labour market partners on how to improve gender equality in wage formation.
In 2000, new sectoral wage agreements did not include special items for women and low-paid jobs as they did in previous agreements. This can be regarded as a setback from the gender equality point of view due to the strong gender segregation in the Finnish labour market.

Long-term unemployment of ageing workforce is problematic both for men and women. The optimal state would be if ageing workers were able to keep up their ability to work. This has been recognised in the Finnish NAPs by introducing measures related to coping at work and maintaining work capacity, and improving staff well-being and working conditions.

In 1998, the gender mainstreaming approach was not in the agenda. Nine measures were introduced in the connection of Pillar IV. The discussion on gender related issues was quite extensive. In 1999, the gender mainstreaming approach was introduced. At an overall level the gender mainstreaming was rather weak but it was visible both when implementation of the 1998 measures and new initiatives in 1999 were discussed for Pillars I-III. Six measures were introduced in the connection of Pillar IV.

In 2000, the gender aspect was explicit when implementation of the 1999 measures were introduced but almost invisible when new initiatives were discussed. There were 22 appendix tables, and in about half of them figures were presented by gender. In the implementation part of the NAP report 53 measures were mentioned for Pillars I-III. In five cases gender aspect was explicit. For Pillar IV seven measures were described. In the second part of the NAP report, new policy initiatives, 47 measures were described for Pillars I-III, only in one of them gender was explicitly mentioned. Three measures were described for Pillar IV.

In 1999 and 2000, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's equality unit has been actively involved in drawing up the National Action Plans. In 1999, the mainstreaming approach was carried out jointly by civil servants and a special officer responsible for mainstreaming throughout the Plan. In 2000, there were sub-groups working for each Pillar separately. The chairperson of the working group drawing up the Plan was a woman and about half of the civil servants involved in the work were women.

The Council recommendation to examine, in the context of gender mainstreaming approach, ways to reduce the current levels of occupational and sectoral segregation in the labour market has been taken seriously, and steps to alleviate this problem have been made. A definite improvement in 2000 in this respect was made when it was recognised that alleviating gender segregation is not an issue involving women/girls only.
4 PRIORITY AREAS FOR FUTURE ACTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF BEST PRACTICE

4.1 Priority areas for future action

Despite the fact that the labour force participation rate is almost as high among Finnish women as it is among men, the gender equality in the labour market is still a target that has not yet been achieved. The priority areas for future action in terms of policies are very similar to those already expressed in the earlier Finnish Action Plans: reducing horizontal and vertical gender segregation, and gender pay differentials; improving the position of female entrepreneurs, and of those in atypical employment contracts. The need to reduce taxation on labour in Finland can, however, provide a threat to female employment, if it means cuts in public expenditure. One should take care that reducing gender segregation and tax burden on labour does not mean deterioration of public services. It is public childcare and old-age services that have, in the first place, made it possible for Finnish women to attend the labour market with full capacity.

Monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plans have improved with the new statistics and indicators that have been provided by gender. However, the gender mainstreaming has, for the most cases, been limited to reporting figures by gender without going too deeply into the mechanisms that these figures reveal. There is definite need for proper gender impact analyses of the measures.

What comes to mechanisms and processes it appears that one needs to modify the current process of drawing up the National Action Plans so that it is able to integrate gender mainstreaming in all of the Pillars, also when new initiatives are introduced. This, most probably, requires that sub-groups working for different Pillars get specific instructions in taking gender mainstreaming into account in their work. It appears that just the general principle of gender mainstreaming is not enough, one needs specific examples in different Pillars to be able to put gender mainstreaming approach into action.

4.2 Identification of best practice

In Finland subsidised childcare services of high-quality have made it possible for mothers with small children to participate in the labour market. All children under seven years of age have the right to a full-time, municipal childcare place. For children under three years of age it is also possible to get support for home care if parents choose so. Children attending school receive a free lunch (warm meal) at school. All these services have made it possible for mothers of young children to work full time in the labour market. In 1998 the labour force participation rate among women aged 25-54 was 84 per cent (among similar men it was 90 per cent). Among women with children 80 per cent attended the labour force in 1998. About 17 per cent of women and six per cent of men worked part-time in 1998.

Low-cost, high-quality municipal day care services function as a tool for overall equality in the society. Less privileged children can have a similar start in their lives as better-off children. In social services it has also been recognised that providing free lunches at schools is an advantage which especially less privileged children benefit from.
The Government extends child care services by arranging free pre-school education for all children who are six years of age in year 2000. It has also been under discussion to extend the right to parental leaves by allowing fathers to have one months' leave of their own. All these changes strengthen the labour market position of women.

The general notion in Finland is that the day care services provided by municipalities and free meals at school are, indeed, of high quality. This makes it easy for parents to make the decision to leave their children to day care, and allows women to work full time in the labour market. High quality day care services are a prerequisite for gender equality in the labour market. In this respect Finland has done a good job and the provided day care services represent a good practice and can be recommended to other Member States.

To make it possible to grasp mechanisms behind gender wage gaps, a study on the statistics and monitoring of gender-based pay differentials was launched this year as a new measure for Pillar IV. The study will serve as a basis for constructing a systematic framework for monitoring pay differentials in the labour market. The aim is to facilitate analysis of the factors which influence these pay differentials and to apply statistical methods to monitoring changes in the differentials at regular intervals. The study uses a framework, which allows the decomposition of gender pay differentials that are either due to differences in background characteristics (and possibly differences in productivity) or due to differences in remuneration from these characteristics (discriminatory, unexplained component of the pay gap). This decomposition makes it possible to evaluate to what extent overall pay gap reflects wage discrimination and to what extent it can be due to 'natural' causes such as differences in productivity.

The above initiative of providing information on the composition of the gender pay gaps at regular intervals is very welcomed, due to the fact that despite the strong position Finnish women have in the labour market, the persistent gender pay gaps remain. It will provide analytical information on the mechanisms that produce gender pay gaps, making it possible to deal with these mechanisms in future wage agreements. Going deeper into the factors affecting gender wage gaps represents a good practice to fight gender pay discrimination that can be recommended to other Member States.

A mainstreaming methodology project was launched in Finland in 1998, aimed at formulating models that will allow gender equality to be integrated into the drafting of Government proposals, and in budget and information work. The Government is adopting the practice whereby new legislation is always accompanied by an assessment of its effects on gender equality.

In 2000, the Employment Contracts Act is assessed for its gender impact. This assessment will be a pilot project which can be used as an example of evaluation of other legislative bills for gender impact. The results of this project remains to be seen but performing gender impact analysis on new legislation definitely represents a good practice that could be followed beyond Finnish boarders.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1. Unemployment rates in different industries by gender, 1995-1999

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<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<td>7.2</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
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<td>6.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>15.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
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<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<td>6.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financing, insurance and business services</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<td>15.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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</table>

M = Men; W = Women

Source: Labour force survey

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6 There is a large number of unemployed people whose industry is unknown, in 1999 this was the case in one third of the cases. The figure for all industries in the above table includes also these unemployed people, and represents official unemployment rate.
APPENDIX 2. Women’s share in employed labour force by industry in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture and forestry</td>
<td>32.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mining, manufacturing, energy and water supply</td>
<td>29.1</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and communications</td>
<td>27.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financing, insurance and business services</td>
<td>47.4</td>
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<td>Services</td>
<td>72.6</td>
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<td>All industries</td>
<td>47.2</td>
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Source: Labour force survey
APPENDIX 3. Average monthly earnings for normal working hours by gender and sector, in 1990 and 1998

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<td>Government</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>9,900</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>13,100</td>
<td>81.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8,200</td>
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<td>10,700</td>
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<td>Municipalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Private sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>12,300</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>7,300</td>
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<td>10,100</td>
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Source: The Index of Wages and Salary Earnings