EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

Assessment of the National Action Plan for Employment 2002 from a Gender Perspective

U.K.

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The UK's Employment National Action Plan (NAP) 2002:
Initial summary and assessment

The UK report prepared for the European Commission's Group of Experts on Gender and Employment (EGGE), Equal Opportunities Unit, DGV

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Colette Fagan

This briefing paper provides an initial assessment of the UK Employment Action Plan 2000 (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment-social/news/2002/may/naps2002). The Equal Opportunities Unit, DGV, of the European Commission requested that this assessment be made using the following reference documents, that they provided:

- Template for the assessment
- Standard Outline for the National Action Plans for employment 2002
- List of indicators to be used in the NAPS 2002-06-17

Introductory note

Have the gender equality bodies been involved in the NAP's preparation and how?

The gender equality bodies are not mentioned in the list of partners consulted in the preparation of the NAP. The consultation mechanisms for involving the gender equality bodies are discussed under pillar IV in relation to gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities, so the omission here might be simply to remove repetition in the document. However, as will become evident in the comments on the rest of the NAP, it is not self-evident from the NAP whether the consultation with the gender equality bodies has been systematically fed into the NAP beyond involvement under pillar IV.
A. National employment policy in context

Assess how far this chapter addressed the specific gender gaps and gender developments in the national economic and employment context

Extract/summary from the NAP:

The employment rates in the UK in the UK already exceed the Lisbon and Stockholm targets: 74.6% of the working age population are in employment, the female employment rate is 69.3% and that of older workers aged 55-64 years it is now 53%.

The focus of the employment strategy is to raise the employment rate further through a combination of active labour market policies, benefit reform to reduce unemployment and poverty traps and so 'make work pay', and to enhance skills and lifelong learning opportunities.

Comment

This part of the NAP is brief, only one page (the guidelines suggest up to 3 pages). Gender issues are discussed in an integrated manner alongside those of age and other target groups, but the brevity of the section renders it incomplete. To provide a fuller picture of gender developments in the employment rate, and the policy implications of these developments, the NAP could:

- Discuss the role of part-time work in raising the employment rate for women (over 40% of women's employment is part-time in the UK) and what the impact on the employment rate is if expressed in terms of full-time equivalents.
- Present the employment rates by age group broken down by gender to demonstrate the degree of gender difference at different age bands.
- Compare the employment rate of lone mothers and those in couples, and ethnic minority differences in women's employment rates, for the employment rate is much lower for lone mothers and for women from particular ethnic minority groups.
- Employment rates by education levels vary markedly in the UK for both men and women, and this merits assessment for policy.

B. National action to raise employment rates and improve quality at work

a) Is the gender dimension taken into consideration in the analysis of the national strengths and weaknesses in terms of raising employment and identification of the main changes between now and 2010? How?

Comment

Again, this is a brief section of 3 pages in length covering the quantity and quality of employment (the guidelines suggest up to 10 pages).

The NAP specifies a number of employment targets for 2004 and 2010, but many of them are not expressed in numerical targets. More use of numerical targets – alongside other indicators – provide an effective contribution to policy impact analysis and monitoring.

Gender is discussed in relation to (a) the target of raising the employment rate of lone mothers and (b) anti-discrimination policies. Both of these are 'standard' gender issues in employment policy. Gender issues are buried in a number of the other policy targets identified, and a more comprehensive gender mainstreaming analysis would have helped to expose the gender
dimension which in turn may have relevance for the design and evaluation of the policy intervention. For example:

- The two targets of (a) reducing the numbers of households containing children but no adult in employment by 2004, and (b) halving of child poverty by 2010 have a gender dimension in that the low employment rate of lone mothers, the low pay of many women and the lack of affordable childcare services are contributory factors.

- Another target is to address the low literacy and numeracy skills of an identified 750,000 people. It is likely that there is a gender dimension with certain groups disproportionately represented (Older women? Women and/or men from certain ethnic minority groups? Young 'underachieving men', for young girls are now more highly qualified than young men?).

\[ b) \text{ Is the gender dimension taken into consideration in the initiatives undertaken to improve quality at work? How?} \]

Extract/summary from the NAP:

The policy priority is job creation and ‘...it is essential that attempts to improve the quality of employment do not jeopardise the creation of jobs’ (p3).

The NAP argues that the measures set out in the NAP will contribute to improving the quality of work by
- Improving employment opportunities
- Continuing development of the regulatory framework of employment standards, security and fair treatment
- Enhanced flexibility
- Promoting good practice

Comment

There is no discussion of the gender dimension in this (brief) part of the NAP, but there is some discussion of gender when the policy measures are discussed in more detail in the 'Progress Report' section on the four pillars (see below).

C. Response to recommendations

Does the NAP respond to the gender equality recommendations?

a) Overall quality of the responses

b) Key measures undertaken to respond to specific recommendations

Extract/summary from the NAP:

The Council made four recommendations to the UK:

1. The UK should further foster social partnership at the national level, in particular to improve productivity and skills, and the modernisation of working life

2. The UK should pursue efforts to reduce the gender pay gap and take action to improve childcare provision, with a view to making it easier for men and women with parental responsibilities to take employment. Special attention should be given to the needs of lone parents.

3. The UK should reinforce active labour market policies for the adult unemployed before the 12-month point to supplement the existing support…particular attention should be paid to groups facing particular problems in the labour market.

4. The UK should reinforce current efforts to encourage and develop work-based training to address increasing workforce skill gaps and low levels of basic skills.
Comment

The NAP provides a comprehensive response to each recommendation – including the gender equality recommendation - and summarises the policy initiatives taken.

Recommendation 1.

The Nap discusses how social partnership with trade unions and employers' associations has been strengthened. There is no mention of the involvement of gender equality agencies, which would be expected as part of a genuine gender mainstreaming approach. Neither is there any cross-reference to the discussion of consultation mechanisms with the gender equality agencies that appears under pillar 4. This suggests a compartmentalised approach (i.e. gender agencies should be involved in the discussion of equal opportunities policies and in the development of GIA tools) rather than a genuine gender mainstreaming approach (gender agencies are involved as key social partners in policy development. Furthermore, one example of how social partnership has been enhanced that is given is the 'Work and Parents Taskforce' that is addressing work-life balance issues and involves employers' associations and trade unions but there is no mention of involvement from the gender equality agencies.

Recommendation 2.

Extract/summary from NAP:

A number of measures have been taken:

Research on pay

- An independent, in-depth review of women's employment prospects and pay was published in December 2001 (Report into Women's Employment and Pay, known as the 'Kingsmill Review).
- Gender Pay Gap Study (by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, 2001), which identified the complexities behind the pay gap and has informed the focus of government policy.
- The Women and Equality Unit is participating in the cross-national project Towards a Closing of the Pay Gap (led by Norway and involving Austria, Iceland, Greece, Denmark and the UK) under the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality, due to be completed in December 2002. This is designed to promote equal pay by identifying the appropriate tools, instruments and best practice for dissemination via a conference, a web-site and a handbook

Information, promotion and training on equal pay

- The results of the Report into Women's Employment and Pay was disseminated at a Government-hosted conference on equal pay where the actions that business and others can take were discussed and 'generally accepted' by Government.
- Fair Pay Champions have been appointed by the Government from business and trade unions to promote good practice in their sectors
- Castle Awards were introduced in March 2002 to reward employers' good practice in addressing equal pay by reviewing their pay systems and structures
- Extra funding has been provided for 500 trade union equal pay representatives to be trained in pay negotiations and review methodology in 2001-2
- The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has received Government funding to produce a technical model – the Equal Pay Review Model – for employers to carry out pay reviews, which will be piloted from March 2002.

Pay reform in the public sector

- The pay gap is already lower in local government than in the private sector, but a new Equality Standard for Local Government has been introduced as a 'Best Value' performance indicator for 2002-3. This provides a framework to promote and sustain good equality practice, including equal pay.
• The Government has made a commitment that Government departments and agencies will carry out reviews of their pay systems by April 2003 and prepare action plans to reduce equal pay gaps.

**Legislation to enable equal pay claims**

• The Employment Bill includes provision for a new questionnaire procedure that will make it easier for women (and men) to obtain information from employers to ascertain whether they are receiving equal pay.

**Measures to promote gender desegregation**

• The ESF funds vocational training to help men and women in non-traditional occupations

**Evaluation and Development of the National Childcare Strategy**

• Between 1997-September 2001 over 484,000 new childcare places have been created and a number of quality assurance mechanisms have been put into place. The strategy is discussed and commented on under Guideline 18, below.

• An extensive research and evaluation programme has been put in place, including biennial Parents' Demands for Childcare Surveys. The Government's interdepartmental review of childcare will report its conclusions later in 2002, which will inform the design of childcare policy for the next 10-year period.

• Between 2001/2 and 2003/4 childcare funding will more than treble to over £200 million. Additional funding is available from the New Opportunities fund to target increased provision in disadvantaged areas.

• The Government has set a target of a childcare place for every lone parent entering employment by 2004.

• The child-care costs for low-income families are subsidised through the Working Families Tax Credit, which is now claimed by over 158,000 families. Help is also available for student parents and benefit claimants.

• The ESF Objective 3 programme also contributes to the Childcare Strategy, e.g. through funding and training of childcare workers

**Comment**

The gender pay gap has had a higher profile on the political agenda in the last couple of years, and it is evident from the above that a number of initiatives have been taken by the government. However, it should be noted that:

• The emphasis is upon research and promotional activities – in line with the voluntarist emphasis of UK employment policy – rather than legal requirements. In particular, the EOC and the trade unions have campaigned for a long time for the equal pay legislation to be strengthened and simplified yet legislative reform is not on the current agenda.

• There is no mention of how the impact of these promotional measures is to be monitored and evaluated.

• There is no discussion of the sizeable hourly pay gap between women in full-time and part-time work and the contribution that the pay conditions of part-timers make to the gender pay gap.

• The Childcare Strategy has produced an important expansion of childcare places from a low starting point in comparison to the situation in many other member states. The budget allocation and its trebling to over £200 million is a substantial injection, but this should be put in perspective given the scale of the shortfall in childcare. Official statistics show that there are 4,896,000 children under 8 years old and 6.6 children per childcare place¹

¹ This figure excludes playgroup and pre-school provision which are only for a few hours per day or week and where parents attend and help to run the scheme, and hence such provision is not designed to enable parents to be employed. Taken from table 9, C Fagan (2002) 'Follow-up to the Council's Recommendations on the UK NAP: Information on the level of Gender Segregation, Childcare Places and the Work-Life Balance Policy Initiative', The UK report prepared for EGGE for the European Commission, April.
Recommendation 3.

Comment

There is no gender analysis in this response concerning active labour market policies, beyond mention of the New Deal for Lone Parents. Unemployment rates are slightly lower for women than men overall in the UK, and hence some of the gender issues are about men's unemployment rather than women's. However, the issue of childcare access and/or working hour requirements present particular barriers for some groups of women preventing them entering certain areas of employment. These barriers may both reduce women's employment and help to channel women into certain female-dominated areas of work.

Recommendation 4.

Comment

There is no gender analysis in this response concerning work-based training policies, despite the known research evidence on gender gaps in access to training and persistent gender segregation in the types of vocational training undertaken (see source at footnote 1 for further information).

D. Progress report

Analysis of gender mainstreaming in terms of

a) Mechanisms

- Developing and reinforcing consultative systems with gender equality bodies
- Applying procedures for gender impact assessment under each guideline
- Developing indicators to measure progress in gender equality in relation to each guideline (including gender breakdown of employment statistics)

b) Policies and gender mainstreaming in the three first pillars

- Are active labour market policies made available for women in proportion to their share of unemployment?
- Does the NAP pay attention to the gender impact of tax and benefit systems?
- Does the NAP pay particular attention to ensuring the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equivalent value?
- Does the NAP include measures to improve women's entrepreneurship?
- Does the NAP include measures to ensure that both men and women are able to benefit from flexible forms of work organisation, on a voluntary basis and without loss of job quality?
- Does the NAP include measures facilitating the access of women to lifelong learning and in particular to IT training?

Comment

a) Mechanisms

There is no discussion in the first three pillars of if, or how, gender mainstreaming was undertaken. The gender equality agencies consulted are explained under guideline 16 (see
below), but there is no discussion of how gender mainstreaming was implemented in the
development of the NAP. Gender mainstreaming is clearly more pertinent for some guidelines
than others, but overall a gender perspective is largely absent in the discussion of pillars 1-3.

b) Policies and gender mainstreaming in the three first pillars

- Are active labour market policies made available for women in proportion to their
share of unemployment?
The information is not provided.

Women's unemployment is addressed explicitly in so far as there are New Deal policies for
Lone Parents and for Partners of the Unemployed.

- Does the NAP pay attention to the gender impact of tax and benefit systems?
This is not addressed explicitly, even though the National Minimum Wage, the tax-benefit
reforms to 'make work pay' and the new Child Tax Credit have a clear relevance for their
impact on women's employment and the gender pay gap. A national campaign to inform
people about job vacancies and their new income and childcare options in light of these
reforms mentions in passing that these people will be 'largely women'.

- Does the NAP pay particular attention to ensuring the application of the principle of
equal pay for equal work or work of equivalent value?
Yes, this is discussed under the response to council recommendation 2.

- Does the NAP include measures to improve women's entrepreneurship
The NAP reports than women own one third of small businesses in the UK (p25). There is
one targeted initiative mentioned: the Small Business Service has a Phoenix Development
Fund to support under-represented groups in setting up businesses, and one of the targeted
groups is women.

- Does the NAP include measures to ensure that both men and women are able to
benefit from flexible forms of work organisation, on a voluntary basis and without loss
of job quality?
Yes, this is discussed under guidelines 13,14 and 18. However, there is no discussion of job
quality. Also, the large proportion of full-timers – particularly men - who work very long
hours in the UK is not discussed, and is 'hidden away' by simply referring to average hours of
all full-time and part-time workers, broken down by gender. Both the issue of the use of
the exemption from the Working Time Directive for those workers who 'self-determine their
hours', which the Government has been criticised for interpreting too leniently by both the
TUC and the European Commission.

- Does the NAP include measures facilitating the access of women to lifelong learning
and in particular to IT training?
There are no measures explicitly targeted at women discussed in guidelines 4, 5, 6 or 15.
There are measures to increase women's involvement in Science, Engineering and
Technology discussed under guideline 17. However, there is no cross-reference or
consideration of how increasing women's representation under guideline 17 might help to
address the policy concerns of guidelines 4,5,6 and 15, which suggests compartmentalisation
of gender issues rather than a gender mainstreaming approach.

Furthermore, it should be noted that under guideline 6 the NAP reports that one of the skill
shortage areas is in professional and associate occupations. To be more precise, key skill
shortages in these occupations include the female-dominated areas of teaching and nursing. Shortages of childcare workers have also been projected to be a growing constraint on the success of the national Childcare Strategy by the government's own funded research (see the source at footnote 1, above, for further information). Thus, a gender perspective would enhance the diagnosis of the skill shortage problem in the UK and the related policy design and evaluation.

c) Analysis per guideline of the IV Pillar - Strengthening Equal Opportunities Policies for Women and Men (Guidelines 16-18). Provide a clear list of key measures and their assessment, highlighting:

- Progress made in implementing previously announced measures, their results, impact and effectiveness
- New policy initiatives
- Budget allocation

Guideline 16. Gender Mainstreaming

Developing and reinforcing consultative systems with gender equality bodies

Extract/summary from the NAP:

The gender equality bodies consulted are:

- The Women and Equality Unit (WEU) was established by the current Labour Government and is located in the Cabinet Office. It works on specific issues and projects alongside the various government departments and Ministers. According to the NAP the WEU has responsibility across the UK for policy and legislation on gender equality, including 'sponsorship' of the UK Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

- The UK Equal Opportunities Commission which was set up under the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, with responsibility for the enforcement and development of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA, 1975) and the Equal Pay Act (EPA, 1970 implemented in 1975). Although funded by the government it is an independent, non-governmental organisation, staffed by public servants not civil servants.

- The Women's National Commission (WNC), which is an official, independent advisory body set up in the 1970s.

- The EU’s Equality Advisory Committee.

- Consultation also takes place on specific issues and campaigns with women and their representatives from other non-governmental organisations, including the voluntary sector, trade unions and business associations.

Comment

a) Progress in implementation and effect of measures

There is an established consultation mechanism in place, and in practice consultation is established, advertised and publicly disseminated in most areas of the UK’s governmental policy-making process.

However, it is not clear what is meant by the WEU's 'sponsorship' of the EOC, or the precise relationship and relative standing between the two bodies in the Government's consultation systems. Clarification of this is important given that the EOC is an independent body charged with the evaluation and development of the legislation, and afforded some unique statutory
powers that have the potential to make radical interventions into policy-making and legal procedures\(^2\), while the WEU is a governmental unit with fewer independent powers.

There is no information provided on the impact or effectiveness of the gender equality consultation mechanisms on policy making, either in general or across the four pillars of the NAP.

\textit{b) New policy initiatives}

There are no new initiatives planned to develop or evaluate these consultation mechanisms.

\textit{c) Budget allocation}

No information is provided.

\textbf{Applying Procedures for Gender Impact Assessment}

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Extract/summary from the NAP:</th>
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<tr>
<td>The GI mechanisms in place or under development are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The Government issued policy impact assessment guidelines to all Ministerial departments in November 1998. The \textit{Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment Guidelines} address gender, ethnicity and disability. The guidelines set out the steps that officials should take from inception to delivery of policies in order to consider the impact of the policies. When policy proposals are made they must include an impact analysis of the effect on the priority groups, and how any relevant differences have been addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In 2002-3 the WEU is producing a \textit{Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) framework} to help assess the impact of policies and services on women and men, drawing on work carried out by the Council of Europe, non-government organisations and in liaison with Government departments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 Programme and the Community Initiative EQUAL have established an \textit{equal opportunities mainstreaming management system}. The key components include mainstreaming action plans for England, Wales and Scotland; an Equal Opportunities Working Group to report on progress with the action plans as a standing item for the Monitoring Committee; training initiatives in equal opportunities for those responsible for implementation of EO mainstreaming; plans to train project assessors and selectors on equal opportunities</td>
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\textbf{Comment}

\textit{a) Progress in implementation and effect of measures}

There is no information on whether or how the Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment guidelines have been used in policy making since 1998, either in general or across the four pillars of the NAP.

Similarly, there is no information on the progress or effect of the ESF's equal opportunities mainstreaming management system.

\textit{b) New policy initiatives}

The WEU is due to produce a GIA framework in 2002/3. An earlier draft of this framework was summarised and evaluated favourably by EGGE in a 2001 report for the Equal Opportunities Unit\(^3\), but the final version will need its own assessment. It is not clear from

\(^2\) The EOC has unique statutory powers to undertake formal investigations into the practices of particularly companies who are considered to be in breach of the legislation; the power to assist individuals in litigation under the SDA and EPA, including cases taken against the government; and responsibility for making recommendations to the government with regard to legal reforms of the SDA and EPA.

the NAP whether government policy-makers will be obliged to use this framework as a tool in conjunction with the Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment Guidelines, or whether it is a 'good practice' example for use on a voluntary basis.

The ESF is due to introduce equal opportunities training for project assessors and selectors, but no information is provided on the intended coverage or content of this training programme.

c) Budget allocation

No information is provided.

**Developing indicators to measure progress in gender equality in relation to each guideline (including gender breakdown of employment statistics)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Extract/summary from the NAP:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• A wide range of labour market data disaggregated by sex are collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and widely disseminated through the government's web sites for use and further analysis by independent researchers and campaigning organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The WEU 'Gender Briefing' provides a regular source of statistical information on women's position in the labour market.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In 2001 the WEU commissioned a project called 'Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain' to provide a comprehensive overview of available up-to-date information and indicators of employment and all major aspects of life. This is intended to provide a baseline for monitoring change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 2001 the Gender Research Forum was established, organised and run by the WEU, the ESRC (a government funding body for academic research) and ONS to allow users and providers of gender research to exchange information and debate current gender-related research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Government meets regularly with the Women's Budget Group, consisting of leading academics working on gender issues.</td>
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</table>

**Comment**

*a) Progress in implementation and effect of measures*

The amount and quality of statistical information available from the government, and the gender breakdown of these statistics, is generally good and widely disseminated as part of the 'open government' ethos. Results from non-governmental surveys and research are also more widely available in the UK than in some other member states, including a lot of gender-related statistics available from the EOC's own web pages.

There are some areas where the statistics on gender and employment have been criticised by independent researchers. In particular, the statistics on pay are usually made available for full-timers and part-timers separately (by gender) and there is a demand for the overall pay data for full-timers and part-timers together (by gender) to be made more readily available. Under the previous Conservative governments there was a lot of debate about the way that the definition and calculation of unemployment statistics were repeatedly changed over the 1980s.

*b) New policy initiatives*

The development of the baseline key indicators by the WEU should provide a useful focus for monitoring progress in gender equality.

The continued activity of the Gender Research Forum and the Women's Budget Group should help in the development of the indicators and their application in monitoring...
Guideline 17. Tackling gender gaps

Strengthen efforts to reduce the gender gap in unemployment and employment rates

Extract/summary from the NAP:

On page 43, the NAP notes that the employment rate for women is 69.3%, which is the highest it has been since the LFS survey series began in 1984 and is well above the EU Lisbon target. The UK also has one of the highest female labour market participation rates in the EU (45%) and is one of the few countries with a lower ILO unemployment rate for women than for men (4.4% compared with 5.6%).

The target group for action to raise employment rates are lone parents (most are women). The active labour market policy mechanism for this is the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), which was launched in October 1998 and provides advice on childcare, training and in-work benefits. Between October 1998 and January 2002, 318,990 lone parents have participated on the programme, of which 41% (132,730) have moved into jobs.

Comment

a) Progress in implementation and effect of measures

Concerning the employment and unemployment rates, the following should be noted:

• Meeting the EU employment rate targets is less of a policy concern in the UK than in many of the other member states for the EU target for women's employment and unemployment rates are already met in the UK.

• Over 40% of women's employment in the UK is part-time and that much of this is in short-hour part-time jobs (which generate low earnings). When the female employment rate is expressed as a full-time equivalent the employment rate is much lower.

• The participation and employment rate is lower for older women and for women from particular ethnic minority groups (e.g. Women of Bangladeshi origin), but there is no mention of these groups as targets for policy.

• A number of evaluation studies have been conducted on the various 'New Deal' programmes for lone parents and other target groups, but the results of these studies are not reported in the NAP. To evaluate the effect of the NDLP it would be useful to report results on the type of jobs that lone parents enter, the extent of employment stability versus exits and 'churning', the impact on their household income, and so forth.

b) New policy initiatives

No new policy initiatives are announced in relation to employment and unemployment rates.

c) Budget allocation

No information is provided.

Take action to bring about a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors, occupations and at all levels

Extract/summary from the NAP:

About 90% of lone parents in the UK are women. In contrast to the situation in most other member states, lone parents have lower participation and employment rates than mothers living in couple-households.
The policy emphasis is upon using women as mentors and role models to promote career choices to other women, with a particular focus upon increasing women's involvement in Science, Engineering and Technology. Initiatives include:

- Increasing the involvement of women in SET and related advisory bodies. The target of 25% by 2000 has now been raised to 40% by 2005.
- The ATHENA project aims to increase the representation and retention of women in the academic sector in SET careers.
- Promotion of SET training and careers to school-girls via targeted initiatives in Science Week, and the Speaking-Out Project (promotional visits to schools by women scientists and engineers, provision of training and resource packs).
- Research to identify good practice, with two projects mentioned. A cross-national study of the education and employment of women in Information Technology and Electronic Communication (ITEC) was launched in 2001 to consider good practice and identify actions for the UK to improve the participation of women in this sector. The WEU in partnership with the EOC, TUC and Opportunity Now are leading in the EU project 'Advancing Women in the Workplace' under the Community Framework Strategy 2002-3 which will focus on the barriers to women's advancement in the UK, Ireland and Denmark and will produce and disseminate good practice examples of national and company policies.
- Participation in the European Women Experts Database (re-launched in September 2001).
- The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act, 2001, enables political parties to adopt positive measures to increase women's rates of election to political office.
- The Government, via the WEU, is encouraging more women, including ethnic minority and disabled women to apply for national public appointments, primarily via seminars targeted at women who are already involved in public life at local or regional level.
- Note: the ESF also funds training for men and women in non-traditional occupations (see under the response to council recommendation 2).

**Comment**

*a) Progress in implementation and effect of measures*

Women's share of employment has been increasing and is approaching 50% (but note that more than 40% of employed women work part-time compared to only a minority of men). Women have also increased their representation in male-dominated managerial and professional occupations. However, women remain under-represented in certain areas of the economy – particularly science, engineering and technology, senior management and craft-related occupations - while other jobs and sectors are heavily female-dominated. Campaigns to encourage young girls and women into science and engineering careers have been running for some years in the UK, and the female share of SET training and occupations has risen modestly but women remain in the clear minority. This new enhanced campaign is likely to contribute to gradual, additional modest rises in women's representation, but women's under-representation is likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

The proportion of women holding political office has also risen in recent years. The new 2001 legislation for positive measures is in response to a dispute over the legality of political parties reserving places for women on the shortlist of candidates for selection to stand for office. This reform, in conjunction with the re-launched efforts to increase the proportion of women applying for national public appointments should help to increase women's representation in public life.

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5 For further information see the earlier report C Fagan (2002) 'Follow-up to the Council's Recommendations on the UK NAP: Information on the level of Gender Segregation, Childcare Places and the Work-Life Balance Policy Initiative', The UK report prepared for EGGLE for the European Commission, April
It should be possible to monitor the impact of these initiatives by tracking the female share of SET and related training courses and occupations, representation on SET and related advisory bodies, gender differences in representation and retention of SET-related academics, and women's representation in political office and other public appointments. The NAP does not state whether this monitoring will take place.

It should be noted that there is no specific policy to improve the range of employment opportunities available on a part-time basis. This omission is despite the known evidence that part-time work is disproportionately concentrated in a narrow range of low paid, low status occupations. Neither is there any specific policy designed to address the issue of vertical segregation. The Work-Life Balance Campaign may help to address both of these issues, see below, but it is not cross-referenced in the NAP.

b) New policy initiatives

In relation to improving the balance of gender representation the new initiatives are:

- The target for women's representation in SET and related advisory bodies has been raised to 40% by 2005.
- The Speaking Out Project aims to visit every school by 2003
- The results of the research to identify good practice should be available for dissemination to inform policy in 2003.

c) Budget allocation

No information is provided.

**Initiate positive steps to promote equal pay for work of equal value, to reduce gender differentials in income, and to identify and assess the impact of policies on gender pay gaps**

The information on this is reported in the NAP in the response to the Council's second recommendation, discussed above.

### Guideline 18. Reconciling work and family life

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Extract/summary from the NAP:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The policy focus is the government-led Work-Life Balance Campaign, which aims to persuade and encourage employers to introduce flexible ways of working that meet the needs of both their business and customers on one hand, and their employees on the other (see footnote 4 above for further information).</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is underpinned by a National Childcare Strategy, which aims to increase the availability of affordable, accessible and good quality childcare (see footnote 4 above for further information).</td>
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<td>The WEU runs 'taster days' in a range of fields for women returners who have been out of the workplace for some time.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comment**

a) Progress in implementation and effect of measures

The **Work-Life Balance campaign** is a high profile government policy to promote good practice and research evidence about the 'business case' for introducing work-life balance policies to employers. The amount of promotional activity, advice and website information available is impressive (see footnote 4, above for further information). However, it is too
early to assess the actual impact on companies' policies. Furthermore, the emphasis is upon voluntary compliance and the danger of this approach is that policies spread unevenly and become more established in the public sector and large private 'leading edge' companies, often targeted at recruiting and retaining highly skilled employees, with access more restricted for lower status employees. There is no detail in the NAP about how the government intends to monitor and evaluate this initiative.

The **Childcare Strategy** has resulted in a major expansion of childcare provision, and the Government is on track to meet its target of creating 900,000 new childcare places for 1.6 million children by 2004. Within this overall target a number of specific targets and new initiatives have been announced (see b, below). However, the NAP does not specify the ratio of full-time to part-time childcare places in this expansion, and this information would be useful to have for this has a major impact on mothers' availability for full-time or part-time employment. A large proportion of the childcare places in the UK are part-time, and there are still problems of availability and funding (see footnote 4 above for further information).

**Rights to time off from employment** for family responsibilities have been extended. Since December 1999 all employees have had the right to 'a reasonable amount of time off' to deal with emergencies involving a dependent, and new rights are to be introduced in 2002 and 2002 (see b, below). It should be noted that both the EU Maternity Leave Directive and more recently the Parental Leave Directive have played a key role in developing these rights in the UK. Research evidence from the EU Childcare Network suggests that the extended periods of unpaid maternity and parental leave are unlikely to have a high take-up – and the problem is particularly severe for men - because few families can afford to take extended unpaid leave.

It should also be noted that the EU Employment Guidelines suggest introducing measures to increase men's involvement in domestic responsibilities, but in the NAP there is no policy targeted at men to increase their working-time adjustments so that they put more time into domestic responsibilities, beyond the introduction of paid paternity leave and unpaid parental leave.

**b) New policy initiatives**

**Childcare:**

- A new target is that there should be a childcare place for every lone parent entering employment in the most disadvantaged areas.
- 900 Neighbourhood Nurseries are to be established in the most disadvantaged areas by 2004.
- The current Education Bill includes provisions to give school governing bodies more freedom to develop childcare and after school initiatives. The Government has set a target of creating 100,000 new full-time places for 3 and 4 year olds in schools and up to 100 Early Excellence Centres as 'beacons of good practice' by 2004.

**Rights to time off from employment:**

- From January 2002 rights to parental leave have been extended (to bring the national legislation into line with the Parental Leave Directive).
- In 2003 maternity leave will be increased to one year in total, statutory maternity pay will be increased from 18 weeks to 26 weeks, and paid paternity leave for fathers will be increased (to two weeks)
• From 2003 employers will have a duty to 'seriously consider' request for flexible working arrangements (including part-time work) from parents with children under the age of six years.

*c) Budget allocation*

The Government is continuing its financial support to state nursery schools to encourage them to develop and extend their facilities, but no budget details are provided in the NAP for this or the other programmes mentioned here. Some budget information for childcare is provided in response to the second Council recommendation (discussed above).

**Annex 1. Statistical Information**

*Are the requested indicators in the NAPs?*

No, the NAP reports that an Annex with performance indicators is still being completed, and presumably will be provided in due course.

**Annex 3. Example of good practice (optional)*

*Is the example given by the member state relevant from a gender point of view?*

No example is provided (yet?).

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6 An assessment of Annex 2 (key financial data) was not requested.