

EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

Supplementary information regarding policies to promote gender equality and employment

Denmark

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**Supplementary information regarding policies to promote gender equality
and employment : Denmark**

Ruth Emerek, Aalborg University

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**REPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S GROUP OF
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Gender Equality and the Council Recommendations on Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policies for the year 2002

1. Introduction

After the general election in November 2001 Denmark has had a change in government. The coalition in power now consists of the Liberals and the Conservatives with the Danish People's Party as a supporting party. The former government consisted of the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals. This indicates that the 2002 Danish National Action Plan for employment may include new and different actions.

The new government have restructured and reshuffled the Government Departments. The most relevant in regard to this evaluation is the transformation of the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Employment, and a establishment of a new Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration with responsibility for all aspects in this area.

The new government have "to fulfil their election pledges on tax stagnation and reduction" planned to make a significant cut in public expenditure by reduction of employees in the public sector, reduction in advisory councils and boards, and wholesale closing of expert and research centres. Furthermore the government have submitted 198 proposals on amendments to Acts and law reforms (by mid April 2002).

This paper will discuss the most relevant law reform from a gender equality point of view relevant to the Council recommendation on guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2002. In focus will be the horizontal guideline A (*Enhancing job opportunities and providing adequate incentives for all those willing to take up gainful employment*), which contains special objectives for women, and the equality pillar. At the same time the paper will integrate the special request concerning Denmark, and give information on:

- Information on the ongoing reform to reduce the overall fiscal pressure on labour (gender perspective)
- Gender perspective in the integration of migrant workers policy
- Measures undertaken to reduce gender pay gaps (information, studies...)

2. Horizontal Objectives with special guidelines for equality

Horizontal Objectives

- A. Enhancing job opportunities and providing adequate incentives for all those willing to take up gainful employment with the aim of moving towards full employment recognising Member States' different starting positions, and recognising the fact that full employment is a goal of overall national economic policy. To this end Member States should consider setting national targets for raising the rate of employment, in order to contribute to the overall European objectives of
- reaching by January 2005 an overall employment rate of 67% and an employment rate of 57% for women
 - reaching by 2010 an overall employment rate of 70% and an employment rate of more than 60% for women.

Although Denmark has one of the highest employment rates in EU, Denmark's is still discussing the problem of an ageing society and a declining workforce. The lowest birth cohort in the last century are now reaching the years, where they are under final education, while the highest birth cohorts are approaching the years where they withdraw from the labour market. A forecast computation based on the 2000 employment rates for women and men in the various age groups for the forecasted population in 2010 show that the overall employment rate will drop from 74,2% in 2000 to 71,8 % in 2010 (from 70,2% to 67,8% for women and from 78,2% to 75,9% for men). This forecasted decline is thus solely caused by the change in demographic structure (Annex table). Another forecast shows that refugees, immigrant and their descendants are a growing part of the Danish population (Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration 2002a). Therefore this forecast computation is too optimistic, unless immigrant employment rates increase to a substantially higher level.

The future increase in employment – by improving employability - is a greatly discussed topic. The question is, as to where the rise in the labour force and employment should come apart from immigrants. The criteria of a 70% employment rate are already met for women and men in most age groups in the population (Annex table). Only in the age groups 16-19 years and 60-66 years have women and men employment rates lower than 70%, the first group mainly due to education, the last group to early retirement. The employment rate for the age group 60-66 years is relatively low - 18% for women and 35% for men. An analysis of persons not in employment shows however recruitment potential among the young, the older,

people with poor education and the marginalised persons (Emerek GIA 2000). It may also be feasible to recruit part-time labour among the group on disability pensions and to retain the middle aged and seniors in the labour force for a longer period – possibly on part-time arrangements.

2.1 Immigrants

The overall employment rate for all immigrants in 2000 is 49,3 with 42,6% for women and 55,9% for men (Statistics Denmark 2001a). The Danish Governments have been aware of this fact – and in the 2001 NAP the former government's objective of increasing labour market participation of immigrants from 57% to 65% in 2010 was an important part in the development of employability. The new government has recently published their policy on integration of immigrants into the labour market (Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration 2002b).

The new government's Integration policy includes new measures and a breakaway from former traditions. The underlying understanding is that work is the key to integration, and the primary goal in the integration policy is to integrate refugees and immigrants into the labour market, and to employment. The paper on integration policy is gender neutral, and contains no specific action to integrate especially immigrant women in employment; the only form of the equality of treatment mentioned is non-discrimination towards immigrants. The keywords are "Employment as quickly as possible", "Efficient education in Danish" "Make more out of qualifications" and "Integration - a concerted action". New ideas include:

- that asylum seekers will have to work in the hostels or at nearby firms,
- that highly qualified asylum seekers must have the opportunity of obtaining a work permit,
- that an immigrant can receive a special start salary for their first year in employment,
- that training in Danish can be part of a trainee service at the workplace,
- that job opportunities in the social services and health sector are combined with education

The last point may be of special relevance for immigrant women, as the social services and health sector in Denmark is a female dominated area, in particular in low and unskilled occupations. The paper on integration policy does not discuss this connection, though the special measures for improving immigrant women's employability are obvious, and

immigrant women with the greatest employment problems have no or little education (Jacobsen 2000). The government's targets on employment are gender neutral or gender blind, and there is no gender assessment in the policy instrument or in the goals.

Besides the Integration policy the government has made a proposal for an amendment to the Acts on Social Policy and on Integration. This amendment will make access to social benefits more restrictive for immigrants (L 126 of 1st Th of Marts 2002). The proposal contains no gender assessment.

2.2 Part time

The number of part-time jobs in Denmark has decreased. The part-timers of today are mostly persons under education or seniors gradually leaving the labour force (Annex table, the of employment measures in headcount and full time equivalents).

The Minister of Employment has however submitted a proposal on part time to ensure that an employee and an employer freely can arrange part time work for an employee, in spite of practice and collective agreements (L 106 of the 20th of February). In the additional remarks to the proposal the Minister of Employment argues, that the consequences of the proposal will be gender neutral. It addresses the part of the labour market with no previous access to part time work, which is mainly the male dominated labour market, thus giving men opportunities of part time work, similar to those of most women, who already predominate the number of part-timers. If so, it should enable employees to stay in the labour market on part time and postpone retirement, thus improving employability.

It is difficult to predict if this argument is a valid one. Investigation of previous work time arrangement regarding different form of leave and sabbatical show, that women use these arrangement to a greater extent than men (Emerek, GIA 2000). The opposite supposition is that it may only increase the percentage of part-time working women, as women working at the male dominated labour market will now gain access to part time work. If so, it is hardly the way to improve employability.

3. The Equality pillar

The Equality pillar includes 3 points:

16. Gender mainstreaming approach
17. Tackling gender gaps.
18. Reconciling work and family life

3.1. Gender mainstreaming approach

16. Member States will adopt a gender-mainstreaming approach in implementing the Guidelines across all four pillars:
- developing an 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.
- In order meaningfully to evaluate progress, Member States will need to provide for adequate data collection systems and procedures and ensure a gender breakdown of employment statistics.

While year 2000 marked a turning point in Danish policy regarding increasing gender awareness with the Equal Opportunity Act from 2000 including an Equal Status Department, a Debate Forum and a Knowledge Centre for Equal Opportunities, year 2002 marks a retreat towards less gender awareness – or quite frankly – to gender inattentiveness, and a back to a focus on equal rights in stead of equal opportunities and results.

The Minister of Gender Equality has submitted an amendment proposal to the Act of Gender Equality to close down the Knowledge Centre for Equal Opportunities – officially know as the *National Centre for Research and Information on Gender Equality* (L 127 by 27th February 2002). Part of the centre's work will be transferred to the Equal Status Department. According to the Minister the closure of the centre will have no consequence for gender equality!

This is the state of affairs even though the Knowledge Centre for Equal Opportunities is partly privately financed by the export of Danish gender equality know how, international consultancy and course activities. Although the centre has existed only for one and a half

years, it has already obtained both national and international recognition. The closure of the centre is proposed without evaluation, and appears to be a decision based only on policy. It is disturbing that this occurs in the year where Denmark holds the EU-presidency.

The Minister of Employment has submitted an amendment proposal to the Act on Equal Pay for Men and Women, which temporarily postpones the newly (June 2001) introduced Act on Enterprise-based Wage Statistics broken down on gender (L 106 of 20th of February) on the grounds of administrative problems. The minister argues that this will have no consequences for equality, as there are alternative ways of ensuring equal pay. The minister calls on the social partners to find these alternative ways and solutions. The act on enterprise-based statistics was mentioned as an example of good practice in the Commission Services Paper (Commission of the European Communities, p. 135)

These “reforms” will mean a cut back in the possibilities of providing data and relevant knowledge of gender inequalities, and Denmark will have greater difficulties in fulfilling the gender mainstreaming approach in the EU-guidelines

3.2 Tackling gender gaps.

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| <p>17. Member states will, where appropriate with social partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- strengthen their efforts to reduce the gap in employment rate between women and men by actively supporting the increased employment of women, and consider setting national targets in accordance with the objectives set out in the conclusion of the Lisbon European Council;- take action to bring about a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors and occupations and at all level;- initiate positive steps to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and to diminish differentials in incomes between women and men: actions to address gender pay gaps are necessary in the public and private sector, and the impact of the policies on gender pay gaps should be identified and addressed;- consider an increasing use of measures for the advancement of women in order to reduce gender gaps. |
|---|

Denmark already meets the Lisbon employment targets for 2010 and has no special employment target for women. The Danish labour market is gender segregated, and the ministry of employment will soon be publishing a report from a project of underpinning the existing knowledge regarding the mechanisms underlying the gender-segregated labour market, as well as a report on experience from successful attempts to break down gender-segregation. Breaking down gender segregation has been used as a measure to combat bottlenecks

Gender segregation is seen as the main cause of the wage gap, which is the present focus of inequality. There is less focus on gender differences in unemployment rates – and apparently almost none on the problem of interaction between gender and ethnicity.

The gender wage gap is one of the lowest in Europe, but this has to be related to the very low difference in income in Denmark as a whole. Denmark has one of the most equal income distributions in the world (Finansministeriet 2000). A gender wage gap standing at around 12-20% (depending on the measure used) could in this light be considerable. The development of income shows a more and more equal income distribution in the 80'es and early 90'ties, the gender wage gap however does remain and increased slightly in the 1980's. Investigations of the wage gap taking into account the elements of wage formation that are of importance in identifying wage differences (including seniority, occupational sector) indicate that part of the gap is linked to an over-concentration of women in the public sector. The wage gap exists however even within different trades and occupations (Arbejdsministeriet 2000, Petersen 2000, Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening 2001).

In a newly published booklet on the perspective- and action plan from the Ministry of Gender Equality mentions the gender segregated labour market and equal pay as a areas for special consideration and effort (Minister for Equality 2002).

3.3 Reconciling work and family life

18. Member states and social partners will:
 - design, implement and promote family-friendly policies, including affordable, accessible and high-quality care service for children and other dependants, as well as parental and other leave schemes;
 - consider setting a national target, in accordance with their national situation, for increasing the availability of care services for children and other dependants;
 - give specific attention to women, and men, considering a return to the paid workforce after an absence and, to that end, they will examine the means of gradually eliminating the obstacles to such return.

There is a growing awareness of the dilemma of reconciling work and family in Denmark. The introduction of women as full-time employees in the labour force in Denmark has in fact had the result, that the two-breadwinner family's working time has increased more than 50% in most families compared to a one-breadwinner family. This has happened in spite of the reduction of the working hours for the individual person by 25%. The factual increase in working hour leaves less time for other aspects of life and makes leave schemes absolutely necessary. The new government has taken initiatives to better these conditions.

Childcare

The Danish childcare system almost covers the need for childcare. The number of children aged 0-10 years on waiting list for childcare facilities was 0,8% of these children in 2001. In some regions there are no waiting list for children under two years old at all. Yet, the Minister of Social Affairs (same person as the Minister of Gender Equality) has submitted an amendment proposal to the Act on Social Service and Act on Active Social Policy concerning subsidy to the care of one's own children in the age group 24 weeks to six years (L 129 by 28'th of February 2002). One household will normally only be able to obtain maximum 3 subsidies. It is however up to the individual local authority in the municipality to determine the size of the subsidy within a frame of maximum 85% of the net expenditure of childcare for the child's age group. It can normally be given up to one year per child.

It is stated directly in the gender assessment remarks to the amendment, that this proposal gives men and women an equal right to use the arrangement. The Ministry of Social Affairs

expects however that the subsidy to the care of one's own children will be used mainly by women, as the present parental leave is almost totally used by women. Women constitute more than 90% of the persons in the parental leave scheme. Furthermore the tendency of female participation in this leave shows a slightly rising tendency. The less attractive the scheme is in form of benefits the greater the percentage of female participation (Emerek, GIA 2000). The reform may thus have negative effect on gender equality. Another problem mentioned is that this subsidy arrangement may contribute to weaken the integration of immigrants and low income groups at the labour market, and have a considerable negative effect on labour supply (Ministry of Social Affairs, L129). This is given as reason to restrict access to the subsidies to persons, who do not receive unemployment or other form of benefits, and who have lived in Denmark in 7 of the last 8 years.

Caring of other dependants

The Minister of Social Affairs have also submitted another amendment proposal to the Act on Social Service concerning the employment of persons up to six month to care for disabled or very sick dependants in (L 128 by 27'th of February 2002). At the same time these persons should be guaranteed leave from their normal job by an amendment proposed by the Minister of Employment (L 124 by 27'Th of February 2002). The gender assessment of the two proposal amendments are (like the gender assessment concerning subsidy to the care of one's own children) that the proposals give men and women equal right to use the arrangement. It is however also expected, that predominantly women will use the arrangement, which will affect gender equality in a negative way (Ministry of Social Affairs, L129, Ministry of Employment, L 124).

Maternity/paternity and parental leave

On top of this the Ministry of Employment submitted an amendment proposal on maternity and paternity leave and parental leave (L 47 by 25'Th of January 2002). The amendment was passed by the 20'Th of Marts, removing the right to parental leave for children born after that date. The maternity/paternity leave is extended to a year in total. The mother still has to take 2 weeks maternity leave after the birth of the child, following this period she still has a right to 12 weeks leave, a total of 14 weeks with unemployment benefit. The father can take 2 weeks paternity leave with unemployment benefit during the first 14 weeks after the child is born –

normally just after. Subsequently both parents have a right to 32 weeks of leave each giving a total of 64 weeks; which they can claim whenever they (and their employers) wish until the child is 9 years old. The parents have a right to full unemployment benefit for a total of 32 of these 64 weeks.

The arguments for the amendment were to better the condition for families with children, to make it possible to reconcile work and family, and make maternity/paternity leave more flexible. It is stressed in the gender assessment of the proposal amendments that both mothers and fathers are given an individual right to leave, and that individual rights and flexibility as well as the economic compensation (full unemployment benefit) may make fathers more motivated in leave taking (Ministry of Employment, L 47). The extended possibilities of leave may however have a negatively affect on labour supply.

It is necessary to better conditions for families with children, and the new parental leave scheme may possible be a tool. It may however also be a tool in the labour market policy in a negative way, as it will not promote equality if women mainly use it. This means that women may loose contact with the labour market and equality between women and men will have more difficulties. Young women may to a higher extend be caught in ‘the leave trap ‘ and have difficulty returning to employment after an absence with long maternity leave possibly combined with unemployment. The former Minister of Gender Equality did warn against the gender gap, which will arise if a longer leave not is divided between the mother and the father. Gender assessment of prolonging the maternity leave has been part of the political debate since it was launched in the spring of 2001.

Gender assessment of prolonging the maternity/paternity leave has pointed to the necessity of giving special rights to the father (as to the mother), and warned against the negative gender equality consequences of the present law reform. As investigations show, that few fathers chose to use the existing possibilities of paternity leave. Latest data show, that less than 60% of fathers take 2 weeks leave after the child is born, very few (less than 5%) take leave in the weeks 15 – 24 after the child is born, and about 25% of fathers take leave in the special weeks 25-26 which are earmarked for fathers only (Statistics Denmark 2002).

Equal rights – equal opportunities – equal result?

The government appears to give preference to equal rights well knowing that women and men have not the same opportunities, background and possibilities of availing these opportunities. The government is apparently aware that the proposals and act amendments may possibly lead to a less degree of gender equality. It is furthermore remarkable, that the proposed and accomplished changes in the area of reconciling work and family not are related to the segregated labour market. The law reforms may imply less labour supply – not in general – but probably in the female dominated, family friendly areas of the labour market, resulting for instance in a shortage of nurses in the health sector. A sector the government aims to improve and develop.

4. Recommendations to individual Member States

Denmark should:

1. pursue and closely monitor implementation of on-going reforms to reduce the overall fiscal pressure on labour, in particular through lowering the high marginal effective tax rates on low and medium income earners;
2. pursue incentives to encourage yet more people to take up employment, particular through further development of the inclusive labour market and further efforts towards the integration of migrant workers.

Since the fall in unemployment, the former government searched constantly for ways of increasing the labour force to solve the expected problems of the financing the welfare state in general, and the old age pension for the large number of coming senior citizens in particular, without a growing tax burden.

Tax – reforms and the Whitsun package has been brought in to reduce the tax burden especially for low-income groups, and make the tax system more employment friendly. Since the Whitsun package of June 1998 reductions in marginal taxes have been phased in. The phasing in period continues until 2002. The problem is however, that the easing of marginal taxes has been partly offset by increasing municipal taxes. As women's average incomes are lower than men's, they could be expected to have benefited most from such a change, although women are not the main target for the tax-reform. Due to relatively high

unemployment benefits and transfer incomes, part of the unemployed in the low-skilled groups do not get a significantly higher income by employment. Research show that part of this group prefers to hold employment, but different investigations give conflicting results (Christensen 1998, Schultz-Nielsen 2000, Smith 1998a & 1998b, Finansministeriet 2001). The present government have declared, that they will reduce tax on labour and make work pay. The specific proposals are not yet known.

As earlier mentioned a forecast computation shows that the overall employment rate will drop from 74,2% in 2000 to 71,8 % in 2010 solely because of the change in demographic structure. The forecast also shows, that 18,7% of the population will be in the age group 16-66 years and *not* in employment. This group is thus surprisingly even bigger than the group of persons over 66 years old (the “burden” of senior citizens), which constitute 13,6% of the population (annex table). It is however still difficult to predict the effect of the different measures aimed at enlarging labour supply. The new reform on integration of immigrants use both labour market inclusive measures and economic incentive and may increase immigrant labour market activity and employment, while the part time reform may result in both a decrease and increase of labour. The law reform on caring may cause a lower labour supply and result in new bottlenecks in the female dominated labour market.

The final result of the cutback in the public sector and law reforms is not yet known. There is however every indication that the average age of fired employees in the public sector (until now) will be in excess of 50 years – which may amount to a higher degree of unemployment of persons over 50 years old – and to more numerous early withdrawals from the labour market. The effect of the governments first initiatives thus seem to increase the flow out of work, and reduce the work force of persons over 60, due to this age group’s possibilities of early retirement. There is not yet knowledge of the gender distribution of fired employees.

The effort of creating an inclusive labour market still has a long way to go.

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Annex Tables.

Table1. Forecast of employment for the forecasted population in 2010 by the 2000 employment patterns for the Danish Population

	2000					2010					
	Population	Employment		Proportion		Population		Employment		Proportion	
		Head-count	FTE full time equivalent	Head	FTE	Forecast 2010	Part of population	Head-count based on 2000	FTE based on 2000	Head 2010	FTE 2010
Females	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
0-15						534825					
16-19 years	111 325			58,5	34,8	137252		80292	47764		
20-24 years	168 155			71,8	58,1	158366		113707	92011		
25-29 years	189 316			76,1	71,0	151727		115464	107726		
30-34 years	202 822			80,0	78,3	176190		140952	137957		
35-39 years	196 606			82,3	80,5	194705		160242	156738		
40-44 years	183 546			83,5	80,7	205273		171403	165655		
45-49 years	181 650			82,6	78,6	197073		162782	154899		
50-54 years	198 286			77,2	72,7	180645		139458	131329		
55-59 years	166 003			62,9	58,7	175553		110423	103050		
60-66 years	179 389			18,3	16,0	254818		46632	40771		
67 years and above						429105					
Females 16-66 years	1777098	1247523	1149782	70,2	64,7	1831602		1241355	1137899	67,8	62,1
Females In total						2795532					
Males											
0-15 years						562955					
16-19 years	115 632			64,2	43,3	144378		92691	62516		
20-24 years	172 784			78,5	68,3	161420		126715	110250		
25-29 years	194 083			83,9	79,3	150760		126488	119553		
30-34 years	212 783			86,7	85,2	176000		152592	149952		
35-39 years	205 523			86,8	85,9	195064		169316	167560		
40-44 years	189 850			86,4	85,6	210794		182126	180440		
45-49 years	185 351			85,8	85,0	202356		173621	172003		
50-54 years	203 062			84,4	83,7	183263		154674	153391		
55-59 years	167 024			77,9	77,1	174780		136154	134755		
60-66 years	170 551			35,4	33,9	250225		88580	84826		
67 years and above						320425					
Males 16-66 years	1816643	1420615	1061199	78,2	74,7	1849040		1402955	1335245	75,9	72,2
Males in total						2732420					
Population:											
Children (<15 years)						1097780	19,9				
Population 16-66 years	3593741	67,4		74,2		3680642	66,6	2644311	2473144	71,8	67,2
Employed 16-66	2668138	50,1				2644311	47,8				
16-66 years not employed	925603	17,4				1036331	18,7				
67 years and above						749530	13,6				
Population in total	5330020	2668138	1868347	50,1	47,0	5527952	100	2644311	2473144	47,8	44,7

With corrections for lower pension age:

Females 60-64 years						186537		34136	29846		16,0
Males 60-64 years						184326		65251	62487		33,9
Population 16-64 years						1714860		1367132	1301981	79,7	75,9

Total population						5527952		2608487	2440504	47,2	44,1
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Sources: Statistics Denmark (2001a), and Statistics Denmark, Data bank (www.statistikbanken.dk/).

Table 2: Special recommendations with special relevance for gender equality to Denmark 2000, 2001 and 2002 and responses 2000 and 2001.

	Recommendations	Responses
2000	Promote training and job opportunities for unemployed women, and examine, in the context of a gender mainstreaming approach, ways to reduce the current levels of occupation and sectoral segregation in the labour market	Use of gender blind approach to allocating participants within active labour market policies. Emphasis on encouraging men as well as women to move into atypical job areas with unbalanced gender distribution). The industrial policy is to increase the share of female entrepreneurs.
2001	Continue efforts to develop a more substantial mainstreaming approach and comprehensive strategy for reducing the current levels of occupational gender segregation in the labour market.	Mainstreaming still is not a real concern in the general section on the economic and employment policy. Gender impact assessment is not included in the presentation of the general employment policy, and there is a lack of gender specific measures according to long-term employment goals - on for instance a reduction of the gender difference in employment and unemployment. There is growing gender awareness about the wage gap, and on gender segregation as one of the explanations of this gap.
2002	Pursue incentives to encourage yet more people to take up employment, particular through further development of the inclusive labour market and further efforts towards the integration of migrant workers.	???