



Mainstreaming Ageing

Spring 2010

Supporting the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Dear Reader,

As we previously announced, this second issue of the Mainstreaming Ageing newsletter focuses on women, work and pensions. This is a rather broad topic and our newsletter contributions highlight only some of the issues and related policy areas where the differing experiences of women and men have important implications both in the quest for gender equality and in responding to the new demography.

On the 8th of March we celebrated International Women's Day. Let me greet all our female readers on this occasion!

Eszter Zólyomi

Project Coordinator

News in brief...

Europe – SHARELIFE, The Retrospective Survey

This latest wave of SHARE (The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) focuses on the life histories of individuals aged 50 and above. Linking individual micro data over the respondents' entire life with institutional macro data on the welfare state, it allows for the assessment of the effects of welfare state interventions on the life of the individual. Data will be available on the SHARE website in summer 2010.

[More](#)

World – Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention

The report, a joint effort by nine international ageing organizations, highlights the need for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. According to the report, a new UN Convention would ensure that older people's rights are realized. It would provide an explicit legal framework, guidance and support for national governments to combat ageism and age discrimination, clarify responsibilities for legal protection and international law, and guide policy-making surrounding ageing issues.

[More](#)

Women's Work and Pensions: What is Good, What is Best?

Designing Gender-Sensitive Arrangements

This new book aims at exploring difficulties women face in working life and retirement - and what could be done to achieve more gender equality and fairness for women and men alike.

How different are fe/male life courses, and why? And what is good, bad, best for women under these or probable future circumstances? It leads to complex, subtle, often ambiguous, and sometimes quite surprising policy conclusions.

Based on the empirical evidence at hand and using tools of economics and social science, it addresses design choices in public policies.

It gives an overview on trends in population ageing and pension reforms around the Millenium - and the gender impact of demographic and socio-economic changes and main policy measures.

Leading European pension experts analyse the basic challenges through single and comparative country studies. The editors provide facts and figures on women's lives, work and pensions and draw theoretical lessons and practical policy conclusions from the studies and gendered statistical indicators.

For further information please visit the [website](#).



At the 54th session of the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW)

in New York, 1 – 12 March, 2010, the UN, governments and NGOs were reviewing progress and identifying future actions arising out of the Beijing Platform of Action signed at the 4th World Conference of Women in 1995.

Older women and their organisations have been active since Beijing to ensure gender and age remain visible at a strategic level and are working to mainstream the agenda in international and national frameworks.

The following are just two examples of mainstreaming actions by the CSW NGO Sub-committee on Older Women (SCOW) of which the authors are members.

Mainstreaming gender in international meetings

In collaboration with the IFA (International Federation on Ageing) in-coming President, Irene Hoskins, SCOW carried out a gender impact assessment of the presentations at the Copenhagen meeting in 2006. Across a wide range of presentations we assessed evidence of data disaggregation, gender analysis and differential impact. The following recommendations were made for future IFA conferences

- presenters should ensure greater data disaggregation by gender, age cohorts and diversity
- criteria for acceptance of future presentations should include taking account of gender implications, and if there are none, the evidence base should be explicit
- keynote presentations should also be required to take account of gender and diversity.

The IFA president has recently confirmed her commitment to a strong gender perspective in future meetings of the Association and will hold a high-level discussion on older women with Board

members at the IFA conference in Melbourne later this year. ([more on this event](#))

Supporting CEDAW General Recommendation on Older Women

Since 1999, despite intensive lobbying of UN missions when States parties to the Convention were reporting progress in delivering women's human rights, SCOW members felt more could and should be done by governments to address the human rights of older women. A different approach needed to be taken. SCOW members monitoring the CEDAW Committee meeting in July 2008, sported large badges 'ask me about older women'. This caught the eye of Ferdous Ara Begum, the member from Bangladesh during one of the breaks. At the same meeting, a shadow report from HelpAge International (HAI) on the situation of older women in Tanzania had been presented alongside the government report.

Working with SCOW and HAI, Ms Ara Begum persuaded her colleagues to set up a CEDAW working group to examine the potential for a general recommendation (GR) on older women. A CEDAW GR is a powerful mechanism to ensure States parties, when they report every 4 years, address the particular issues and concerns within the GR. These issues are set out under the articles of the Convention. It also enables the NGO community to advise the Committee, through subsequent shadow reports, if they feel governments are not doing enough to deliver, in this case, older women's human rights.

Such has been the progress of the working group, the interest of all members of the Committee and the support of the NGO community, that it is hoped that the GR will be adopted at the July meeting of the CEDAW Committee.

It is a long way from Beijing, but we are at the brink of achieving a major mainstreaming success. Now it will be up to us to hold our governments to account through the monitoring process.

For more information please visit the [website](#).

News provided by: Marianne Seger and Elizabeth Sclater represent the Older Women's Network, (OWN) Europe and EURAG at the UN Commission for the Status of Women

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), a special agency of the European Union, was opened in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 16 December 2009.

Established in 2006 by Council Regulation (EC) No 1922/2006, the Institute is funded by the European Commission. Below is an interview with the Institute's Director, Ms Virginija Langbakk.

Ms Langbakk, what are the mission goals and main tasks of the Institute?

The EIGE is a European agency created to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all Community policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex. The institute will also contribute to raising EU citizens' awareness of gender equality.

In order to provide technical assistance to the Community institutions, in particular the Commission and to Member States' authorities, the Institute will collect, analyse and disseminate comparable data and information on equality between women and men. It will additionally develop methodological tools and methods, in particular for the integration of the gender dimension in all policy areas and will facilitate the exchange of best practice and dialogue among stakeholders. A resource centre and library containing relevant literature and research on the issues of equality between women and men - will be established at the Institute to support the main stakeholders and all organisations, research centres, individual experts and interested members of the general public. For the purpose of exchanging information, experience and best practices - the EIGE also envisages the development of a European network on Gender Equality bringing together organisations and experts from all over Europe.

Scandinavian countries are considered to be among the countries with the greatest gender equality. As you come from Sweden, could you please tell us what lessons other countries on this path towards gender equality can learn from Sweden?

It would be difficult to provide concrete advice on Sweden's most effective approaches mainly since Member States employ diverse legal frameworks and machinery when implementing various policies. Political priorities vary from country to country as do the levels of commitment for improved equality between men and women. Nevertheless some areas where Sweden shows more progress in, include:

- a good balance of women and men in decision-making, and in particular in the public sector;
- a very developed social protection system where not only services of childcare and elderly care allow women to be on the labour market - but also where legislation on parental leave encourages fathers to become more involved in caring for the baby.

Could you please highlight some gender issues relevant to the phenomenon of demographic ageing (especially since this newsletter deals with ageing related issues) which will be covered by the Institute?

Currently the issues of ageing do not fall within the direct remit of the Institute's work. Yet, the differing needs of women and men from all walks of life will include the gathering of information for the EIGE database and the collection of best practices for the Institute's resource centre. Additionally, the functioning models of long-term care or health care, opportunities of active ageing and other ageing related aspects may also figure. This is however an issue which we need further room to develop.

For more information on EIGE please visit the following [website](#).

New publication addresses gender pay gap in EU Member States

In Europe, the gender pay gap stands at about 18%, which means that the hourly pay of women is, on average, only fifth of that of men. A recently published report by Eurofound draws on both qualitative and quantitative research to provide an overview of the gender pay gap across EU countries. It identifies policies and initiatives carried out by national governments as well as by social partners aiming at addressing gender wage differentials. The publication also highlights some successful good practice examples from companies in this area.

The publication is downloadable from the following [website](#).

Women's work and pension schemes - The Italian case

A recent sentence by the European Court of Justice sanctioned Italy for its gender differentiated retirement age scheme applied within public employment, and this brought the issue of the gender dimension of Italian pension schemes to the attention of politicians, researchers and public opinion. A particular interest has been devoted to cost-benefit analysis related to women's careers.

Evidence suggests that the links between pension schemes and women's conditions within the labor market, in particular, women's future pension support and benefits are mainly affected by a series of well-known phenomena of the Italian labour market such as:

- lower female employment rates,
- higher incidence of atypical jobs among female workforce gender pay gaps among employees
- gender pay gaps among employees
- women are more likely to experience work-life balance difficulties,
- less favourable unemployment benefits, due to lower income and fragmented contributions.

Gender gap in employment rates in Italy amounts to 22.8 % and reaches 26.2% among older workers. When employed, women are more likely to be employed in fixed-term positions (15 % of employees) and part-time jobs (23.5 %). The former positions are more likely to undergo unemployment and career interruptions, while the latter are characterized by a reduced amount of contributions with respect to a full-time job. In addition, female total social contributions are severely cut by pervasive gender pay gap. When measured in terms of average monthly employees' wages they in fact amount 20.1 % (21.8 % among 45-64 years old workers). According to Labour Force Survey, only 4.2 % of unemployed women receive unemployment benefits (vs. 6.9 % of men). ISFOL analysis on unemployment benefit recipients shows that the monthly income support amounts on average to 989 euro for men and to 835 euro for women. In the defined benefit method, the amount of pension depends on the number of working years and on the average of the salary of last ten years of activity. In the defined contribution method (which is the basis of the current pension system reform), pension otherwise depends both on the amount of contributions paid during working life and from the age of retirement. It is therefore clear that pension benefit replacement rates will increasingly be correlated with the length and continuity of individual careers*. Rising statutory retirement age could therefore allow women to reduce contribution gaps with respect to men, but, as stated above, it is at the same time important not to neglect work-life balance difficulties and labour market discrimination which affects women behaviour in and out of the labour market.

For more information please visit the [website](#).

Tiziana Di Iorio and Emiliano Rustichelli – Italian Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers (ISFOL)

Information provided by the National Focal Points on Ageing from Italy, Mr Pietro Checucci

* In the defined contribution method amount of pension is calculated multiplying the sum of individual contributions with a transformation parameter, established in accordance with worker's age. Individual contributions are annually adjusted in accordance with GDP. Transformation parameters are calculated taking into account, among others variables, worker's death probability, and survivors' probability not to be eliminated for death or new marriage, probability to leave the household and age difference between spouses.

Manka goes to work...

Newly published e-book on public childcare in the Visegrad countries

The book, "Manka goes to work: Public childcare in the Visegrad countries 1989-2009", offers data and analysis on day care for children in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

Through its single and comparative country studies, the book describes and explains the evolution of childcare services and, more generally, family policies in the region in the past twenty years.



This book is of particular relevance for policy makers in Europe facing the rather similar challenges of low fertility rates, lower female employment and reconciliation of work and family life.

The book is part of a project, funded by the International Visegrad Fund, which also includes the compilation of a comparative dataset on public childcare.

The book has been published by the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis and can be downloaded from their [website](#).

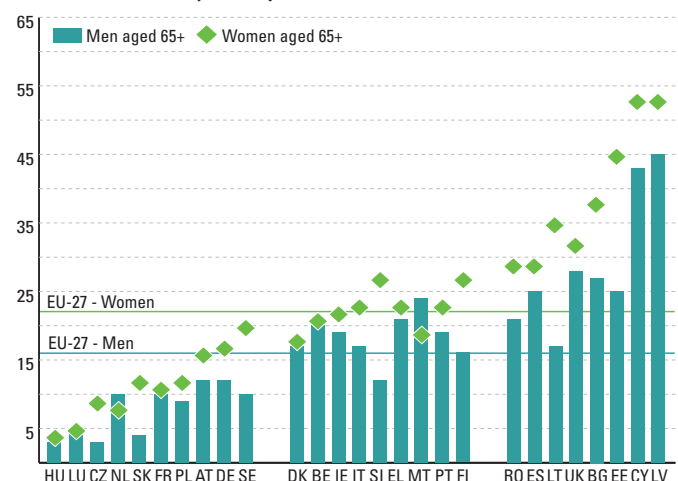
Poverty Risks for Older Women in EU Countries

An Update

Gender has been structurally ingrained in European pension systems since their inception – mostly because of the expectation that women leave paid employment on marrying and take on home responsibilities. Husbands were the sole breadwinners of the family, and the pension systems were structured around this immutable paradigm. Spousal pension rights for women were generally derived on the back of their husbands' working careers.

Such systems contained built-in work disincentives for women in general and mothers in particular. These perverse incentives meant longer durations of labour market absences for women and, subsequently, also affecting their employment and career prospects. This structural bias, despite corrective measures to mitigate its impact, reflects on the low pension income experience of current generations of older women. Not surprisingly, as the results presented here show, women experience a much higher risks of poverty in old age than men of the same age. On average, older women in EU countries have a poverty risk rate of about 22% as compared to an older men poverty risk rate of about 16%. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: At-risk-of-poverty rates among men and women of retirement age (65+), using 60% of the median as the poverty threshold, 2008



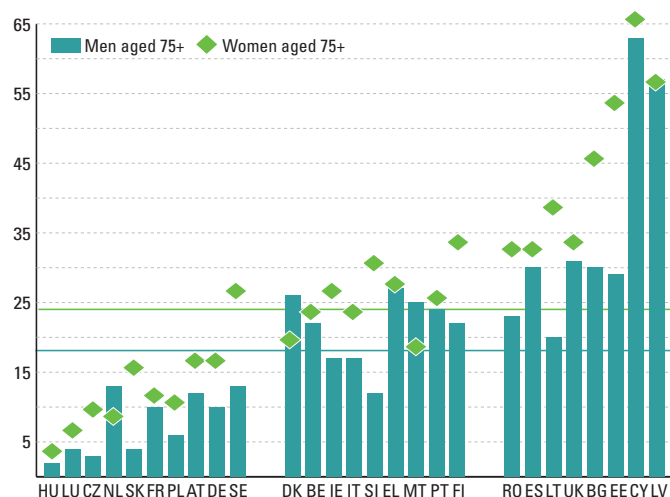
Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2008 (National Household Budget Survey for Bulgaria and Romania)

Partly mirroring the above results is the fact that the oldest age cohorts, aged 75+, have a higher poverty risk rate than those aged 65-74. This is principally because women dominate the oldest age cohort, as – on average – women live longer than men. One added reason for the high risk of poverty attaching to the oldest age cohort – who joined labour markets in the 1950s and 1960s – is that during this period pension systems coverage was rather low for most groups. Many pension systems were in their infancy and the coverage of the population increased piecemeal during subsequent periods. Thus, when pension systems matured, they offered greater opportunities to a larger group of working age people to be affiliated with a formal mechanism to put aside savings for their old age. Another explanation is that, in many countries, the indexation of pension benefits

with prices only led to pension benefits lagging behind the general evolution of incomes. Another compositional counteracting effect arises because richer people tend to live longer than poorer people do.

On average, in EU27, almost 24% of all women aged 75+ have a risk of falling in poverty. In the majority of countries with higher-than-average poverty risk rates for older persons (clustered at the right side of the chart below), the risk for poverty for the oldest women cohort is strikingly high (in excess of 40%). (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: At-risk-of-poverty rates among men and women of age group 75+, using 60% of the median as the poverty threshold, 2008



Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2008 (National Household Budget Survey for Bulgaria and Romania)

One critical question is whether, and how, this low pension income situation for older women is likely to change in the future. Three issues of relevance can be considered here. Firstly, the 'male breadwinner model' is on the decline in most European countries. The educational and labour market performances of younger women have been improving. Thus, future cohorts of older women are likely to have had longer working careers as well as higher pension incomes in their own right. Secondly, although pension systems in many countries can be seen to be slow to react to these social and economic changes observed in the lives of modern women, reforms in many countries have moved towards increasing the statutory retirement age for women and also towards improving inbuilt work incentives. It is therefore likely that these changes will have the positive impact of longer working careers, and

improved pension rights, for current and future generations of women. Thirdly, although women in general are bridging the gender employment gap and also reducing the gender pay gap, it is nonetheless possible that many women will remain disadvantaged in the labour market, because they continue to bear disproportionately greater burdens of social care responsibilities. Altogether, it can be said that women in retirement are likely to be less disadvantaged relative to men of the same cohorts in the future.

For more information please contact [Asghar Zaidi](#).

The Policy Brief on which this article is based on can be downloaded from [here](#).

The Gender Dimension of Retirement

(la dimension du genre et les retraites)

On March 8, DREES (Direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation et des statistiques), COR (Conseil d'orientation des retraites), the OECD and the European Centre Vienna jointly organised a workshop on „the gender dimension of retirement“ in Paris, France.

This closed event, attended by French Ministry officials and by international experts from Europe and the US, provided a platform for an exchange of views on the topic of gender and retirement with particular relevance to the French situation. Key findings of recently published materials (including the European Centre's new book on Women's Work and Pensions) as well as preliminary results from OECD research were presented and discussed in three thematic sessions:

- demographic and socio-economic changes and trends,
- recent and ongoing pension reforms and their gender differentiated impacts,
- specific policy instruments implemented to achieve more gender equality.

Please find the Agenda [here](#).

Upcoming events



▶ **Conference on Minimum Pensions: Maturing of Social Security Systems and Its Contribution to Social Inclusion**

22-23 April 2010, Burgos, Spain

The conference looks into the role of minimum pensions as contribution to social inclusion in the context of European pension system reform. [More](#)

▶ **Conference on Active and Healthy Ageing**

29-30 April 2010, Logroño, (La Rioja), Spain

This high-level Spanish EU Presidency event aims to promote active ageing in the EU covering a number of key issues such as healthy ageing, life long learning and social participation. Held on the same day as the „European Day of Solidarity between Generations“ the conference has a particular focus on intergenerational solidarity. [More](#)

▶ **Transforming care: Provision, quality and inequalities in late life**

21-23 June 2010, Copenhagen, Denmark

This international conference explores the dynamics and contexts of changes in elder care policies and approaches and emerging challenges. [More](#)

▶ **Gerontology Without Borders Diversity in European & Transnational Ageing Research**

1-3 July 2010, Swansea, Wales

International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG), European Social Research (ESR). The conference provides a framework for interdisciplinary and international exchange on issues in ageing research, policy and practice. [More](#)

▶ **6th World Ageing & Generations Congress 2010, World Demographic & Ageing Forum**

25 - 28 August 2010, St. Gallen, Switzerland

As in the past years the congress will be a platform where academia, business, policy makers and practitioners from different fields come together to share their experience and expertise to cope with the challenges of demographic change. [More](#)

The [European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research](#), an intergovernmental organisation affiliated to the United Nations, has been mandated to undertake various follow-up activities of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing since 2002.

The [Mainstreaming Ageing: Indicators to Monitor Implementation \(MA:IMI\)](#) project is an institutionalised collaboration between the European Centre and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Eszter Zólyomi is the Project Coordinator.

For further information please visit the

[Monitoring RIS website](#)

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