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Towards a PINK NEW DEAL

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More than four years after its inception, the European recession is still a work in progress. While this makes any stocktaking exercise a tentative affair, it is indeed clear that women are becoming more and more important for the European economy. crisis provides an opportunity to implement radical changes, including the ability to make significant progress on the issue of equality between women and men, but at the same time also poses a challenge where gender equality is regarded as a matter to be relegated to the rosy moments.



1. Introduction

More than four years after its inception, the European recession is still a work in progress. While this makes any stocktaking exercise a tentative affair, it is indeed clear that women are becoming more and more important for the European economy, for a set of reasons.

- *They are the true "multiplier effect".* There is ample evidence that when women are able to develop their full labour market potential, there can be significant macroeconomic gains.¹ GDP per capita losses attributable to gender gaps in the labour market have been estimated at up to 27 per cent in certain regions.²
- *From them depends the demographic future of our countries.* It is statistically proven that, unlike in the past, today there is a positive correlation between female employment and fertility, so a higher participation of women today would favour an increase in the birth rate.³
- *They guarantee greater productivity and innovation in business.* Many international studies prove that companies with a significant number of women in senior management are able to produce better corporate performance, as well as an appropriate gender balance within the working groups has a positive influence on innovation.⁴
- *They allow a more positive situation of pension accounts.* It is absolutely clear that an increase in the female employment rate, especially that qualified, would allow a breath of fresh air to the retirement accounts of our countries, thereby providing an answer to the problem of financing public pensions.⁵

The anti-crisis intervention does not appear in Europe as *gender-neutral*, but rather it is inspired by prejudice, potentially worsening the role of women in the economy and society, as well as introducing additional gender inequalities.

If women were initially spared from the worst effects of the crisis, they have not been able then to avoid the worst effects of some of the proposed "remedies". The austerity measures and fiscal consolidation undertaken since 2010 have essentially taken the form of cuts in public spending for welfare and public employment, with an implicit prevalent recipient: women.

In this context, the aim of this paper is to look at the main challenges concerning the economic independence and the role of women in the labour market in the EU. In particular, it focuses on the existing gaps between men and women (gender gaps in the labour market, gender gap in pay, pension gender gap), looking and the factors behind them. The analysis takes into account the effects of the crisis and, in drafting policy recommendations, reflects existing good practices. Throughout the paper, labour market segregation and women's broken careers are considered as important factors behind gender gaps, according to specific relevance.

¹ See Dollar D. and R. Gatti (1999), "Gender Inequality, Income, and Growth. Are Good Times Good for Women?", *World Bank Gender and Development Working Paper*, No. 1, Washington; Loko B. and A. Diouf (2009), "Revisiting the Determinants of Productivity Growth: What's New?", *IMF Working Paper*, No. 09/225, Washington.

² See Cuberes D. and M. Teignier (2012), "Gender Gaps in the Labour Market and Aggregate Productivity", *Sheffield Economic Research Paper*, No. 2012017.

³ See Engelhardt H., Koegel T. and A. Prskawetz (2004), "Fertility and Women's Employment Reconsidered: A Macro-level Time Series Analysis for Developed Countries, 1960-2000", *Population Studies*, vol. 58 (1), pp. 109-120. Evidence for Italy can be found in Modena F. and F. Sabatini F. (2012), "I Would if I Could: Precarious Employment and Childbearing Intentions in Italy", *Review of Economics of the Household*, vol. 10(1), pp. 77-97.

⁴ For a survey, see IMF (2013), *Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains From Gender Equity*, Washington.

⁵ See Corsi M., Crepaldi C., Samek Lodovici M. (2011), *The Socio-economic Impact of Pension Systems on the Respective Situations of Women and Men and the Effects of Recent Trends in Pension Reforms*, EGGSI report, European Commission, DG EMPL, Bruxelles. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/equal_economic_independence/pensions_report_en.pdf

In our view, crisis provides an opportunity to implement radical changes, including the ability to make significant progress on the issue of equality between women and men, but at the same time also poses a challenge where gender equality is regarded as a matter to be relegated to the rosy moments.

2. Background

In recent years, the debate about welfare policy has paid more attention than in the past to vulnerable people, such as women, providing a series of measures to stimulate their entrepreneurial skills, to reduce barriers to entry into self-employment, to support rights of equality and empowerment of women, being aware that only such a social model could effectively halt the population decline, the aging of the population, and create a positive impact for the future economic and social development of the region.

However, what worries most is that in EU countries still reigns a sort of marginalization, segregation, both vertical and horizontal, toward the working woman, which tends to occur in both a high concentration of women in low value-added activities and thus low remuneration (such as poor tertiary), and major obstacles to achieving top positions within companies, despite the academic performance of women is, for some years now, better than that of men.

In short, if general mechanisms of allocation of talent do not seem to work properly as a whole, these seem to be almost non-existent when it comes to women, which not only fail to find jobs that match their skills, but are also little valued, as evidenced by their low wages: it is estimated that, for equal work, women in the European Union are paid about 10-20% less than their male colleagues, with differences even more pronounced in the private sector and in top positions.⁶

It is clear that in an economic system where female employment tends to polarize (almost identifying) with the tertiary and focus mainly on low-profile jobs, also from the point of view of remunerations, the choice of work for women depends on their family status. This is a question that tends to present in a clear manner at the time of the birth of a child: at that stage, many mothers decide to exit from the labour market to devote themselves entirely to the child, and although the majority of women consider this exit as temporary, only some of them are able to find work again after a certain period, usually paying professionally the price for this temporary stop.⁷

It is unclear how these mechanisms have serious implications on the economic status of the households and overall levels of poverty in EU: it is not a coincidence that about 44% of EU households with at least one child is not able to support unexpected expenses and are able to do so even less those families where the woman is the main income earner.⁸

The Gender Equality Index evidence

⁶ See the European Commission webpage on this theme: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/index_en.htm

⁷ Recent ILO data on 185 countries show that the large majority of women workers in the world – around 830 million – do not have adequate maternity protection. Discrimination against women in relation to maternity is a pervasive problem throughout the world. Where legislation exists, ensuring it is effectively implemented remains a persistent challenge. Cf. ILO (2014), *Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world*, Geneva; available at: www.ilo.org/maternityprotection.

⁸ Eurostat data (last update 04.06.14), survey on income and living conditions (SILC); available at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_mdes04&lang=en

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) provides a comprehensive measure of equality between women and men relevant to the EU policy framework.⁹ The results presented in Table 1 show that the EU is halfway towards gender equality, although there are large differences between Member States in how close they are to the equality point. The range of the index scores shows the broad scale of variation throughout the EU in the level of gender equality achieved overall, with the most problematic areas in the domains of power and time, but also much room for improvement in the work and economic independence (money) domains.

Table 1: Scores of the Gender Equality Index (GEI)

Country	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
BE	59.6	66.4	79.3	54.7	45.3	45.2	94.1
BG	37.0	49.9	40.7	32.0	17.3	33.8	84.5
CZ	44.4	71.6	59.3	37.3	23.2	29.6	89.6
DK	73.6	81.6	79.2	75.1	64.9	60.0	91.8
DE	51.6	72.5	76.3	44.1	41.6	28.0	89.5
EE	50.0	64.6	49.1	53.0	51.4	27.5	83.8
IE	55.2	71.0	77.0	52.8	53.4	26.5	96.4
EL	40.0	59.7	63.3	36.7	17.4	24.4	92.4
ES	54.0	61.3	60.7	53.5	33.8	47.2	90.7
FR	57.1	67.0	75.9	49.4	35.8	50.3	90.6
IT	40.9	60.6	68.2	32.1	33.0	18.6	90.8
CY	42.0	68.7	74.1	52.9	25.3	12.2	91.1
LV	44.4	54.9	42.0	38.8	35.2	38.6	77.1
LT	43.6	61.0	41.5	47.4	24.1	32.1	84.9
LU	50.7	66.4	90.9	61.1	48.9	14.7	93.9
HU	41.4	55.9	54.4	35.1	32.5	24.4	83.7
MT	41.6	55.0	68.2	34.0	37.5	18.7	93.2
NL	69.7	73.1	82.5	65.5	71.3	52.2	94.7
AT	50.4	73.9	77.9	44.6	40.0	24.3	91.6
PL	44.1	61.4	52.2	44.0	20.9	34.5	82.6
PT	41.3	66.2	56.3	30.4	22.4	30.6	84.5
RO	35.3	60.4	39.0	28.8	17.8	24.9	84.0
SI	56.0	69.1	70.2	51.4	49.1	36.0	88.7
SK	40.9	61.0	53.7	35.0	17.8	33.1	85.8
FI	73.4	82.0	78.4	67.0	63.8	68.8	89.9
SE	74.3	78.6	80.2	66.3	63.9	74.3	93.1
UK	60.4	76.6	74.3	68.8	43.2	35.2	95.4
EU-27	54.0	69.0	68.9	48.9	38.8	38.0	90.1

Note: The scores of the Gender Equality Index range from 1 to 100, where 1 stands for absolute gender inequality and 100 marks the level of full gender equality.

⁹ The Gender Equality Index is a unique measurement tool of gender equality that combines indicators, according to a multidimensional framework, into a single composite indicator. It relies on sound and transparent methodological principles, and is easy to interpret and communicate.

The Gender Equality Index consists of six core domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and two satellite domains: intersecting inequalities and violence. The satellite domains are conceptually related to the Index but are not included in the core index because they measure specific population groups, such as lone parents or people with disabilities for intersecting inequalities, instead of the full population. GEI provides results on three levels: EU level (EU average), Member States level and scores in each domain and sub-domain.

Source: EIGE.

Considering that GEI measures a complex concept, related to both social and economic spheres, it is worthwhile to examine its scores in the context of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and in the context of spending on selected areas such as social protection, education, research and development and active labour market policies. As Table 2 shows, the highest association exists between the GEI and the spending on research and development, followed by spending on active labour market policies and social protection in general. These findings suggest that the structure of public expenditure – that is, the financial resources allocated to particular public policy areas – is more important for achieving gender equality than economic affluence itself.

Table 2: GEI in relation to different spending areas

<p>GDP per capita The relation between GEI and GDP per capita (in PPS) shows a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.57$).</p>	<p>This means that there is a tendency for higher scores of gender equality among richer Member States. However, it is important to stress that the results of gender equality can vary for Member States that share similar levels of economic wealth. For example, the level of wealth in Scandinavian countries (DK, FI, NL and SE) is similar to that of other Western European Member States (AT, BE, DE, FR, IE and UK), but with significantly higher levels of gender equality in the former than the latter.</p>
<p>Spending on social protection The relation between GEI and spending by Member States shows a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.69$).</p>	<p>This association shows that countries that generally spend more on social protection are also those with relatively higher scores of gender equality. Spending on social protection ranged, in 2010, from less than 20% of GDP in Romania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania and Malta, to as much as one third of GDP in Denmark or France.</p>
<p>Education The relation between GEI and the spending of Member States on education shows a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.65$).</p>	<p>This shows that there is a general tendency for higher proportions of spending on education in Member States, which have higher scores of gender equality.</p>
<p>Research and development (R&D) This spending is strongly positively associated with higher levels of gender equality ($r = 0.84$).</p>	<p>This is an important finding, which suggests that Member States, which spend a greater percentage of their GDP on R&D tend to have higher scores of gender equality. There are large differences in the R&D spending, as a percentage of GDP, among Member States in 2010, with as little as 0.5% in Romania and Cyprus, to nearly eight times as much (3.9%) in Finland.</p>
<p>Active labour market policies</p>	<p>Spending in Member States ranges from less than</p>

The relation between GEI and the spending of Member States on education shows a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.70$).

0.1% of GDP in Romania, Malta, the United Kingdom and Bulgaria, to more than 1% in Belgium and Denmark.

Source: EIGE.

3. Women at work

3.1 Narrowing gender gaps in the labour market

Key employment indicators show a narrowing of the gender gaps in the EU. Although the activity and employment rates for women in the EU are still much lower than for men, there have been important changes over recent years, and especially since the crisis hit Europe in 2008. While the activity rate for men remained stable between 2009 and 2013, the rate for women increased by about 2.0 pp. At the same time, while male employment rate dropped by about 2.5 pp, it remained stable for women. As a result, gender gaps in the activity and employment rates have narrowed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Activity and employment rates by sex, 2006 to 2013 (%)



Source: Eurostat.

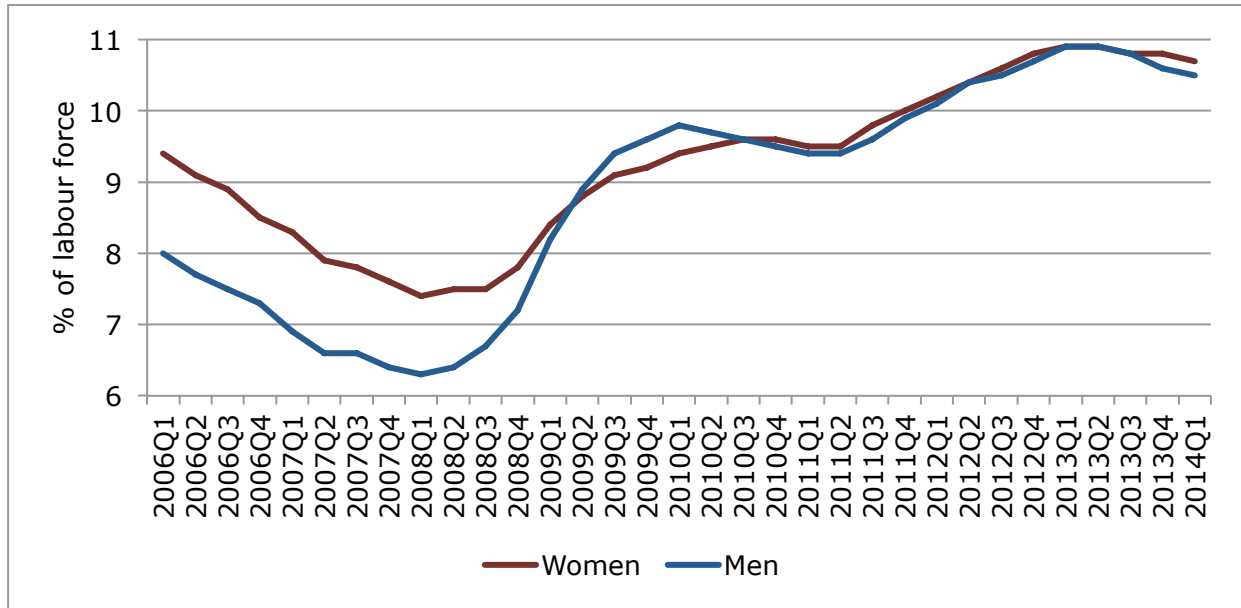
Similarly, the gap between female and male unemployment rates has been narrowing, mostly because of rising unemployment for low-skilled men in 2008, with both showing a similar upward trend since 2009 (Figure 2 and 3). The gender gap in unemployment rates in the first quarter of 2008 was about 1.0 p.p., falling to near zero by the first quarter of 2013 (Figure 2). Nevertheless, recent figures show that unemployment is falling faster for men than for women, and in several Member States female unemployment rates remain at their post-crisis peak.

While in general women have been less affected by the crisis, they have not fared equally well in all EU Member States. In several Member States the historically high unemployment rates for women seen in recent years persist (Figure 4).

In the EU, the share of women in part-time work (over total female employment) is still considerably

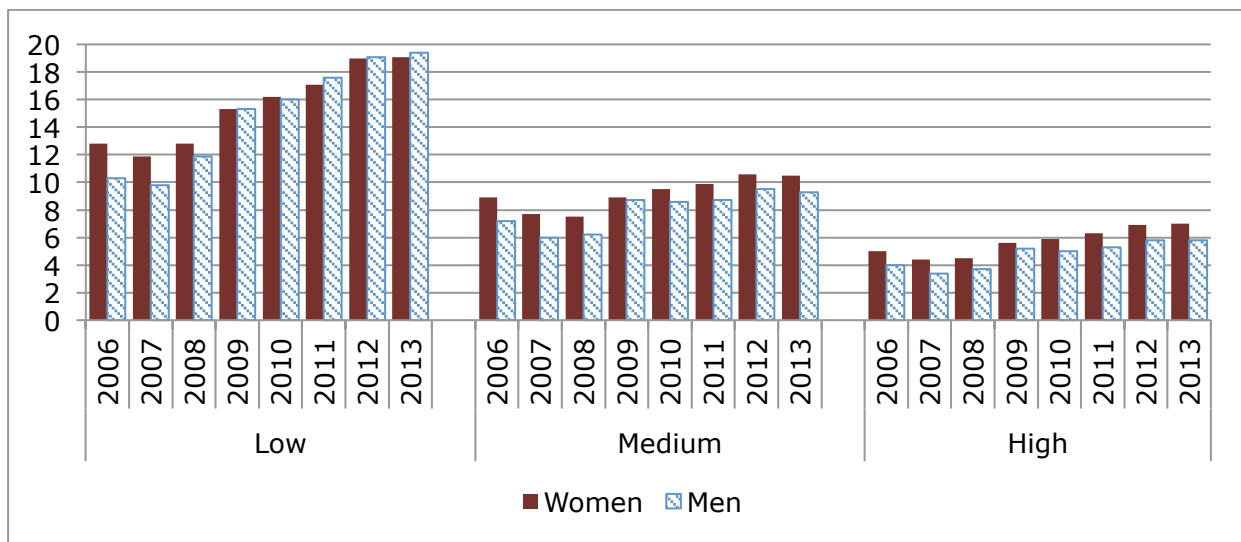
higher than that of men (32% compared to 9% in the last quarter of 2013, and 30.5% compared to 7% in the last quarter of 2008). Moreover, the extent of female part-time employment varies considerably across the EU. Part-time work by women is most common in the Netherlands (77%), followed by Austria (46%), Germany (45%), Belgium (42%), the UK (41%), Luxembourg (40%), Sweden (38%), Ireland (35%) and Denmark (34.5%). Some of these also have high female employment rates (Figure 5).

Figure 2: Unemployment rates by sex, 2006Q1 to 2014Q1



Source: Eurostat

Figure 3: Unemployment rates by level of education and sex, 2006 to 2013 (%)

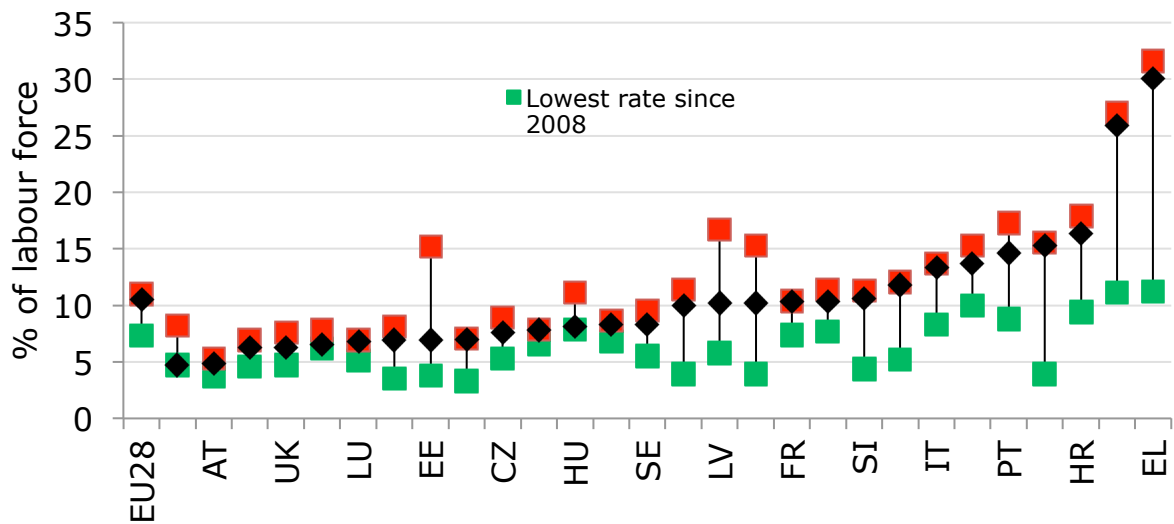


Source: Eurostat.

While working part-time can reflect personal lifestyle preferences and positively contribute to the work-life balance of female workers, the high share of female part-time employment may also stem

from multiple constraints, including family and care-related reasons (Employment and Social Developments in Europe Report 2013 — ESDE 2013: page 185).¹⁰ Conversely, very low rates of part-time work may also be problematic as they may result from rigid working time arrangements set by the employer or the legal framework (ESDE 2013: page 226). This is the case for example in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary, where women's average working hours are as high as that of men, and where part-time work accounts for less than 10 per cent. These are also the Member States where women appear to delay their labour market participation, as shown by large employment gaps between the 25-34 and the 34-54 age groups (Czech Republic and Bulgaria). This is most likely due to parenthood and is supported by evidence of a low nursery-enrolment rate among children below 3 years of age in these countries (ESDE 2013, page 203).

Figure 4: Female unemployment rates by EU Member State in April 2014, and the highest and lowest unemployment rates since 2008



Source: Eurostat.

Figure 5: Female employment rates (left axis) and % of female part-time workers (right axis) in the last quarter of 2013 by EU Member State

¹⁰ ESDE 2013 available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7684>



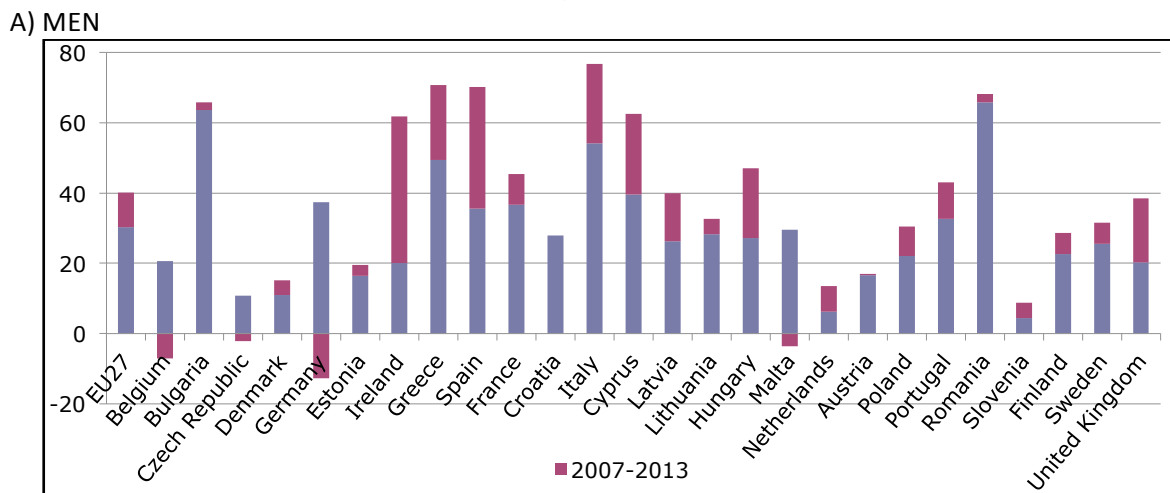
Source: Eurostat.

3.2 Quality of work deteriorates as effect of the crisis

Economic crises heighten the risk that the ‘quality’ of employment will decline, because employers impose inferior conditions in an effort to curtail costs, or because employees are more willing to accept some worsening if it helps them stay in employment. Available evidence shows that **the worsening of working conditions** has spared neither men nor women, but has affected them differently. It is also perceived differently, making issues of ‘more’ or ‘less’ rather questionable.

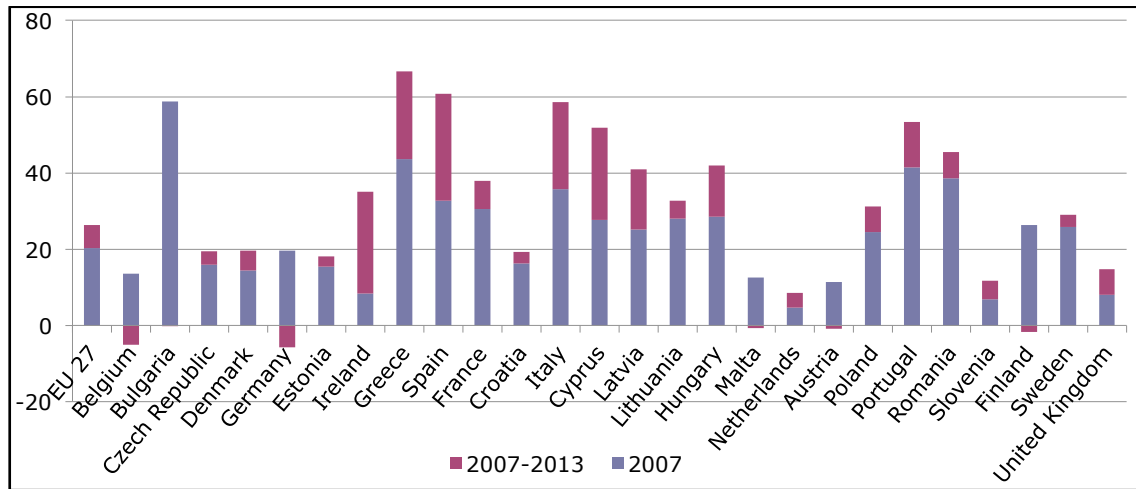
Part-time working has risen during the recession, and it has been used in Europe to avoid the harder option of **firing**.¹¹ According to the results of the European Social Survey conducted in 17 member states to investigate working conditions during the recession, more than 10% of female respondents reported having to work shorter hours in 14 of these countries (as against 13 for men).

Figure 6: Involuntary part-time employment as percentage of the total part-time employment by sex, 2007-2013



¹¹ See Hijzen A. and D. Venn (2011), “The Role of Short-Time Work Schemes during the 2008-09 Recession”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 115. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kgkd0bbwvxp-en>

B) WOMEN

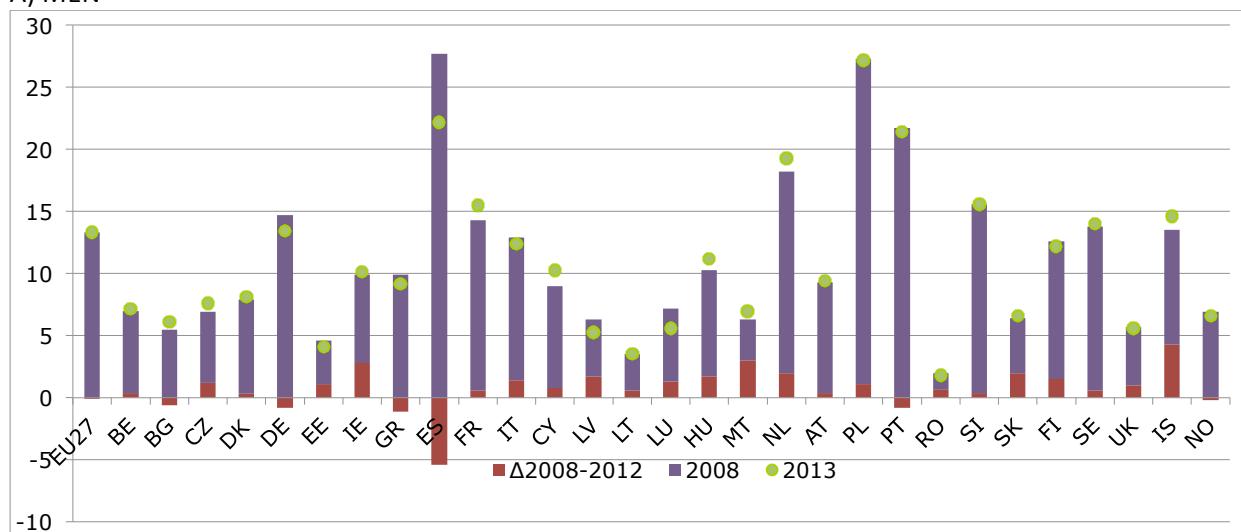


Source: Eurostat.

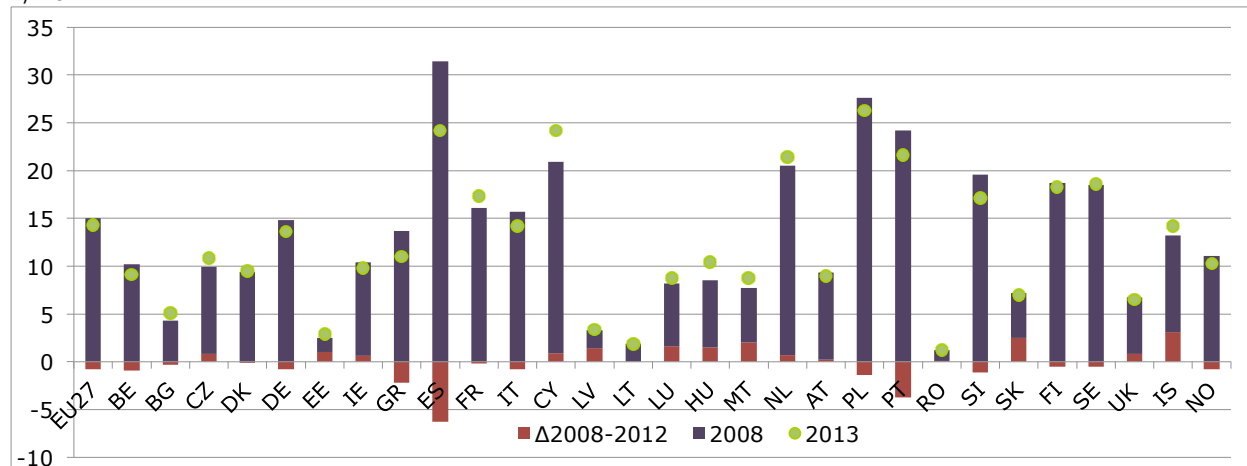
Given the use of shorter hours as an alternative to lay-offs, any increase in part-time employment during this recession may be considered as a mixed blessing. However, when workers identify themselves as ‘involuntary part-timers’, it is the sense of loss that prevails. In 2013, the share of involuntary over total part-time, for male workers, rose to 40.2%, up 9.9 p.p. from its 2007 level. Among women, the corresponding value is 26.3%, up 6 points over the same period. Country-specific patterns vary, of course, but those worst hit by the upsurge in involuntary part-time employment also tend to be those where there was more of it already (Figure 6). Specifically, **Mediterranean countries** such as Greece, Italy, Spain, and Cyprus have the largest share of involuntary part-time, as well as some of the largest increases for both genders. In percentage terms, however, it is **Ireland** that leads the league for increases, although its starting value was comparatively low among women. Nordic countries are more frequently found at the opposite end of the range to Mediterranean countries, while Eastern countries are found at both ends.

Figure 7: Temporary employees as percentage of total number of employees by sex, 2008-2013

A) MEN



B) WOMEN



Source: Eurostat.

Unlike part-time, **temporary employment** is distributed fairly equally between men and women, with a slight prevalence of the latter (Figure 7). In EU27, men on temporary contracts reached 13.3% of total male employment in 2013, while the figure for women was 1 p.p. higher (14.3%).

It is well known that temporary employees are disproportionately concentrated among **younger workers**. Temporary employment may bring some advantages to young workers, including more opportunities to shop around for better jobs; however, this crisis has added higher cyclical sensitivity to the list of disadvantages for this type of labour relations. The average young worker on temporary employment in the EU experienced a **wage penalty** of 14.4% in 2012 in comparison with a worker on a standard contract with similar characteristics. Moreover his/her chances of transiting to a standard, indefinite-period work contract were barely over one third in the same year.¹²

This has an important gender twist. Temporary contracts may **preclude access to full maternity benefits**, for example if the woman becomes pregnant during a spell of unemployment. Moreover, uncertainty about the timing and conditions of the next (sequence of temporary) jobs creates a specific disadvantage for young women. It has been found that **fertility** is delayed when labour market prospects are unclear.¹³ While this holds true in good and bad economic times, for the young female cohorts affected by the crisis uncertainty may lower fertility altogether, since a postponement of a few years will significantly shrink a woman's reproductive period.¹⁴

4. Gender pay and gender gap in pension

4.1 The Gender Pay Gap stagnates

Despite a sharp narrowing of the global gender pay gap between the 60s and the end of the 90s,¹⁵ the gender pay gap in Europe has stagnated over recent years. The latest figures show an average

¹² See Samek Ludovici M., Platenga J. and C. Remery (2013), *Starting Fragile. Gender Differences in the Youth Labour Market*, ENEGE report, Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130902_starting_fragile_report_2013_en.pdf

¹³ See Adsera A. (2004), "Changing Fertility Rates in Developed Countries. The Impact of Labor Market Institutions", *Journal of Population Economics*, n.17, pp. 17-43; Modena F. and F. Sabatini (2012), "I would if I Could: Precarious Employment and Childbearing Intentions in Italy", *Review of Economics of the Household*, 10(1): 77-97.

¹⁴ See Billari F.C., Gois A., Liefbroer A.C., Settersten R.A., Aassve A., Hagestad G. and Z. Spéder (2011), "Social Age Deadlines for the Childbearing of Women and Men", *Human Reproduction*, 26(3): 616-622.

¹⁵ Weichselbaumer and Winter-Ebmer (2005) analyses more than 260 published gender pay gap studies for over

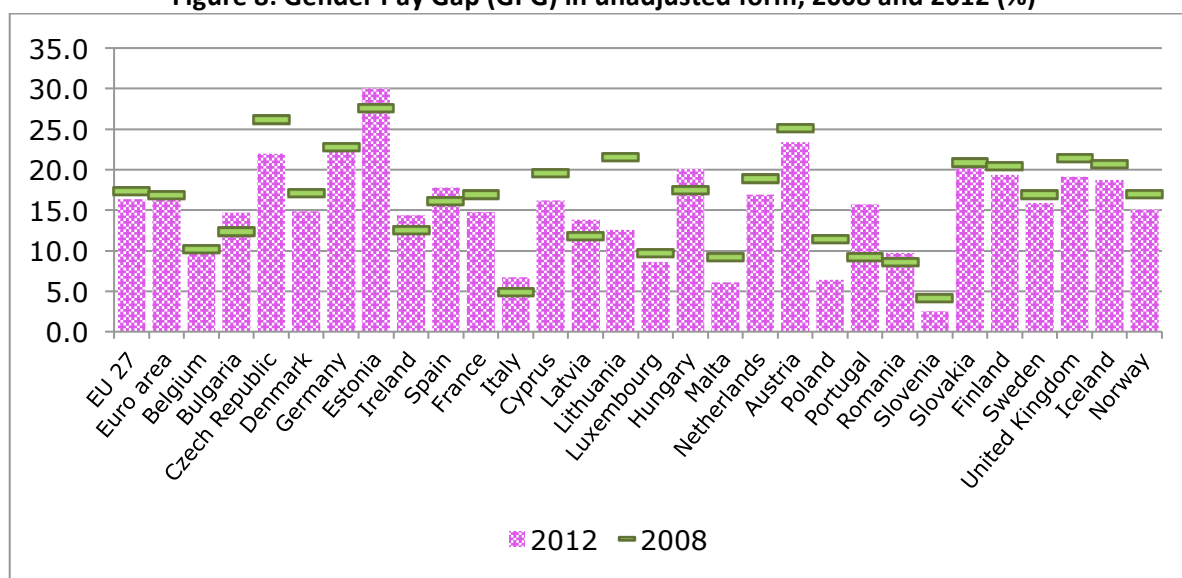
16.4% gender pay gap in 2012, with the figure around 17% or slightly higher in previous years (Figure 8). To understand changes in Gender Pay Gap (GPG) over time, one must realise that the factors influencing the GPG are diverse, some of which tend to increase the pay gap while others may decrease it. The impact of each factor may differ widely across countries. Factors may be **clustered** into individual characteristics, establishment and industry characteristics, and institutional characteristics.

Education, for example, is an individual factor. In most countries, workers with better education have on average higher earnings. Thus, if the share of high-educated women in the female labour force in a country increases faster compared with the share of better-educated men in the male labour force, the GPG will decrease.

Firm size is an establishment factor. In general, workers in larger firms have on average higher earnings. Thus, if, in a country, the share of women working in large firms increases faster compared with the share of men doing so, the GPG will decrease.

Minimum wages are an institutional factor. Assuming compliance with minimum wage regulation, these can be assumed to raise the wage floor. As more women are paid low wages compared with men, minimum wage-setting is assumed to decrease a country's GPG.

Figure 8: Gender Pay Gap (GPG) in unadjusted form, 2008 and 2012 (%)



Source: Eurostat.

As far as institutional factors are concerned, a report by the European Commission from December 2013 on the implementation of EU rules on equal treatment for women and men in employment (Directive 2006/54/EC) found that equal pay is hindered by a number of factors. These include a **lack of transparency in pay systems, a lack of legal clarity in the definition of work of equal value, and**

60 countries and finds that, from the 1960s to the 1990s, raw wage differentials worldwide have fallen substantially from around 65% to 30%. The bulk of this decline is due to better labour market endowments of women. The 260 published estimates show that the unexplained or discriminatory component of the gap has not declined over time. A study of the OECD countries for the period 1980 - 2004 reveals that the size of the GPG tends to decline in all countries for which data are available. Since the early 1980s, the OECD notices that the largest decline has occurred in the US, and that in Japan and the United Kingdom the gap is also steadily narrowing. Some countries show fluctuating trends. In Sweden, for example, the gender pay gap was 14.5% in 1980, increased to 19.6% in 1990, and decreased again to 14.8% in 2004. Cf. OECD (2007), *Society At A Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

procedural obstacles. Such obstacles are, for example, the lack of information for workers necessary to bring a successful equal pay claim or including information about pay levels for employee categories (IP/13/1227). Increased wage transparency could improve the situation of individual victims of pay discrimination, who would then be able to compare themselves more easily to workers of the other gender.

The GPG is related in a complex way to **women's labour market participation rates.** Depending on the initial situation of a country, an increase in women's participation rates may affect GPG differently. If relatively large groups of poorly-educated women enter the labour market, the GPG will increase, assuming a stable stock of male workers. If relatively large groups of well-educated women enter the labour market, the GPG will decrease. Furthermore, in a country with low participation rates, on the one hand, the GPG may be low because the participating women might be well educated, gaining most financially from participating, as their earnings are relatively high. On the other hand, the participating women might be the ones with poor education and low earnings because they need to work to make ends meet. In this case, the GPG is expected to be wide, as concentration in low-paid jobs suppresses women's average wages.

In most countries, the increase in women's participation rates is predominantly due to the employment growth in the services sector and in the public sector. As Tijdens and Van Klaveren (2012) show, in many countries, the average wages in these sectors are higher compared to average wages especially in agriculture and manufacturing. Thus, countries witnessing these changes can expect a decrease of the GPG, assuming all other factors remaining constant. However, a strong **occupational segregation** may allocate women into the low paid jobs within these industries and as a consequence, the GPG may increase.

Child rearing has a large impact on women's average wages and thus on GPG. In some countries, women withdraw from the labour market when marrying or giving birth while returning after a couple of years. A re-entry mostly goes along with an allocation into lower paid jobs than women had before their career break, with an allocation into part-time jobs, or into dead-end jobs. This is called 'women's child-penalty'. Therefore, a raising share of re-entering women is likely to cause an increase in GPG. However, in some countries where women withdraw from the labour market and do not re-enter, the GPG is likely to decrease.

4.2 Measuring pension gaps

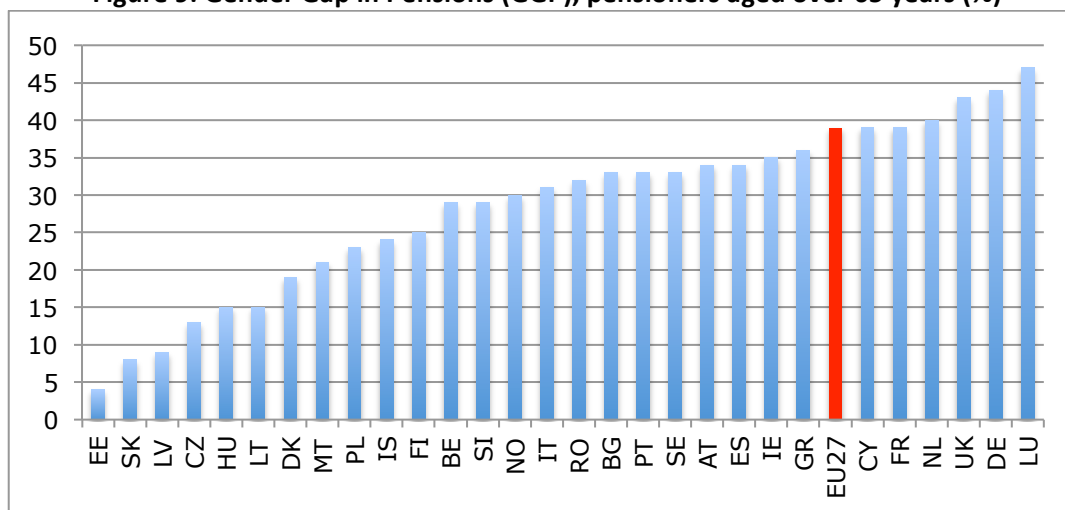
Considerable research effort has concentrated on Gender Pay Gaps. Although a generalisation to pensions is a natural extension, this topic has received little attention. Does old age maintain pre-existing inequalities, does it cumulate and amplify them, or does it give a chance to level out life chances? The broad international literature concludes that Gender Gaps in Pensions (GPG) are the result of **three factors**: women participate less in the labour market; they work fewer hours and/or years; they receive lower wages.¹⁶ The 'bad news' is that these facts snowball women's career earnings. The 'good news' is that pay gaps have been shrinking in the past two decades, although progress has slowed down in recent years.

Does this mean that pension gaps will likewise start shrinking with a similar lag, and that therefore they are a problem that will correct itself? In Europe, this question has not been formulated; or if it

¹⁶ Jefferson T. (2009), "Women and Retirement Pensions: A Research Review", *Feminist Economics*, 15: 115-145.

has been formulated, it has not been answered. There exist a number of national studies with a focus on specific institutional features or reforms.¹⁷ The overall picture of where **Europe** is – and of where it is going – is essentially absent.

Figure 9: Gender Gap in Pensions (GGP), pensioners aged over 65 years (%)



Source: Bettio et al. (2013).

That is why it is so important to have an idea of the extent of the GGP in Europe: the indicator presented in Figure 9 consists of the difference in average pensions between men and women over 65, calculated in terms of pensions gross of tax (i.e. before tax is deducted).¹⁸

Taking the EU as a whole (weighted by population), men receive on average higher pensions than women by 39%. The widest difference is observed in Luxembourg (47%), followed by Germany (44%), and the UK (43%), which are clearly above the average. The Netherlands (40%), Cyprus (39%) and France (39%) are around the average. A large group of countries have values exceeding a third (Greece, Ireland, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria), while five other countries are around 30% (Sweden, Romania, Italy Norway, and Slovenia). It is thus true to say that in 17 of the 27 Member States women receive a pension which is **on average 30% or more lower than men’s**. The EU average, being calculated on a population-weighted basis, is heavily affected by the gap of the larger countries, most notably Germany, the UK and France. Finland (25%), Poland (23%) and Denmark (19%) do fare better but still show sizeable differences in GGPs. The lowest values are found for Eastern European countries: Lithuania (15%), Hungary (15%), the Czech Republic (13%), Latvia (9%) and the Slovak Republic (8%). Estonia is ‘top of the class’ as women’s pensions are only 4% lower.

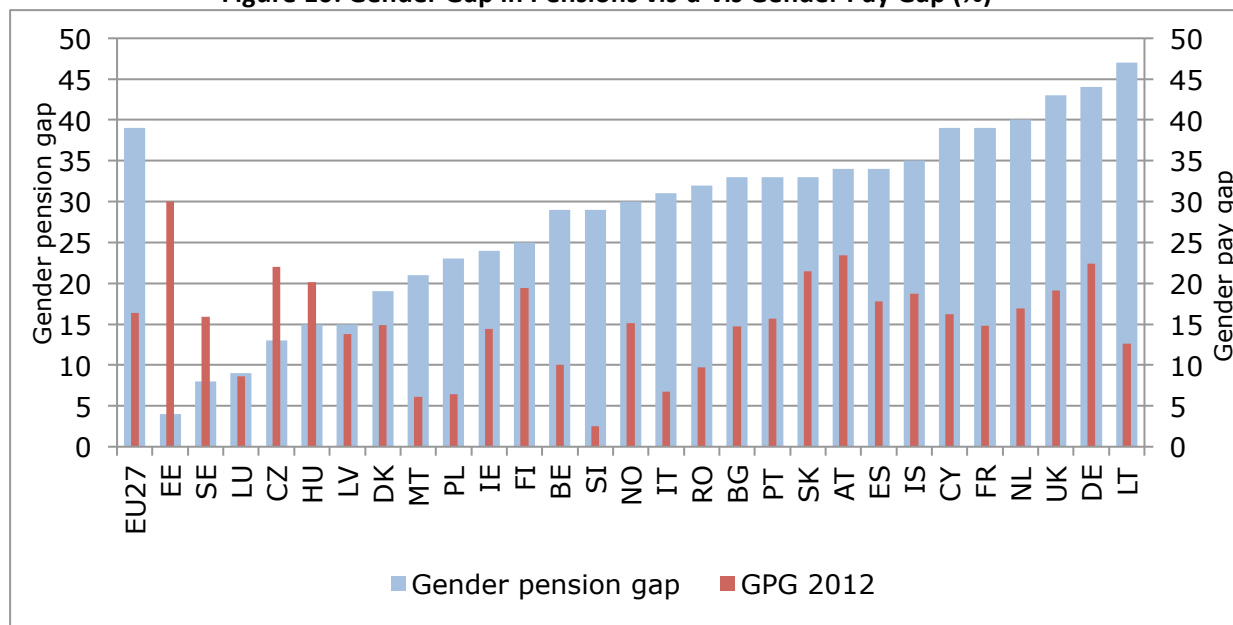
To understand **how wide is the pension gap in Europe**, one needs a point of comparison. In the case of pensions, the obvious yardstick is the gender pay gap. Pensions replace employment income at an older age when that ceases, so the comparison is a natural one to make. It must be noted, of course, that today’s pay gap and today’s pension gaps refer to different groups of *people*. If evaluated *today*, pension gaps average income sources of a different *generation* than the one currently earning

¹⁷ See Horstmann S. and J. Hülsman (2009), *The Socio-Economic Impact of Pension Systems on Women*, Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und Gestaltung (GVG), European Commission, DG Employment, Brussels; Brugiavini A., Cavapozzi D., Pasini G. and E. Trevisan (2013), “Working Life Histories from SHARELIFE: A Retrospective Panel”, *SHARE Working Paper Series*, 11-2013.

¹⁸ All statistical evidence discussed in this part of the study is taken from Bettio F., Tinios P. and G. Betti (2013), *The Gender Gap in Pension in the UE*, ENEGE report for the European Commission - DG Justice, Brussels. Available at: ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/.../130530_pensions_en.pdf

income in the labour market.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in order to grasp orders of magnitude, it is important to see how the two gaps compare (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Gender Gap in Pensions vis-à-vis Gender Pay Gap (%)*



Note: (*) GPG data for Greece are missing in 2012.

Source: own calculations on data provided by Bettio et al. (2013); Gender Pay Gap from Eurostat’s Earnings Database for 2012 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/labour_market/earnings/database

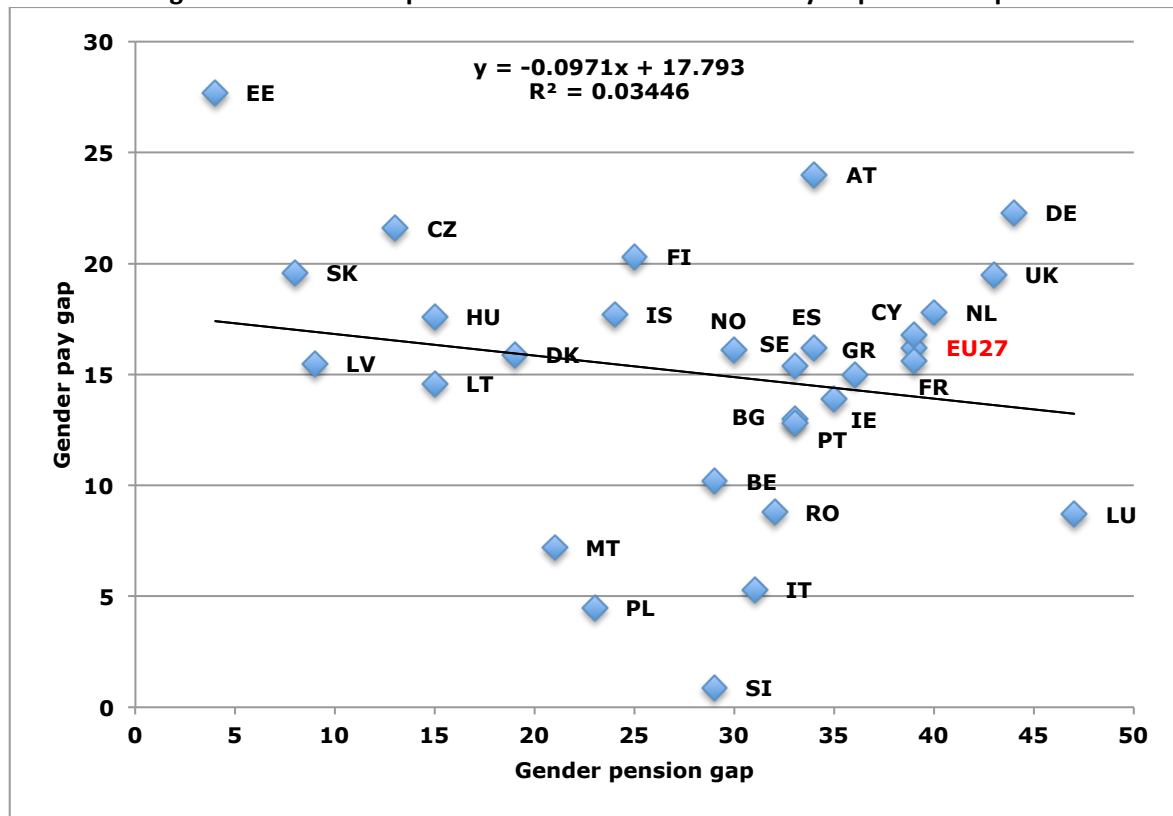
One first observation is that **pension gaps are considerably wider than pay gaps**: the average pay gap (16.2%) is less than half the average pension gap (39%). This is expected given that women work fewer hours per year as well as receiving less on an hourly basis. Thus a given pay gap is magnified into a wider *annual earnings gap*. In addition, women also work fewer years, and hence it can be expected an even wider *career earnings gap*.

Secondly, **no simple relationship** appears to link the two indicators. The country with the widest pay gap (Estonia) is the one with the lowest *pension gap*. A clearer picture of the relationship between pay and pension gaps can be derived from the scatter diagram linking the two sets of observations. Figure 11 plots pension gaps against pay gaps: the two sets of data cannot be linked with a direct *causal* relationship, as they refer to different people, i.e. a younger cohort working and an older cohort drawing pensions.

The scatter confirms the impression that there is no simple linear relationship between pension and pay gaps across countries; the line of best fit is almost flat and explains a tiny part of the variation ($R^2=0.034$).

¹⁹ In the study of ageing, a key distinction is between *age groups* and *cohorts* (i.e. people born at a particular time period). Today’s 60-year olds (born around 1950) may behave differently than the 60 year-olds of 1990 (who had been born around 1930). At any one time, however, the two concepts coincide. One should always be careful of making generalisations based solely on age, as these may be due to a cohort effect and hence not hold in the future.

Figure 11: Gender Gap in Pensions vis-à-vis Gender Pay Gap – Scatter plot



Source: own calculations on data provided by Bettio et al. (2013); Gender Pay Gap from Eurostat’s Earnings Database for 2012 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/labour_market/earnings/database

4.3 Do pension gaps reflect broken careers for women?

An important hypothesis explaining gender gaps in pensions is that gender gaps in pensions are to a large extent a reflection of women’s low and intermittent previous involvement with paid labour. In particular, especially in recent decades, a large number of **women dropped out of the labour force** in order to fulfil their family responsibilities. This may have reflected personal choice but may also have been imposed on them by insufficient childcare facilities, inadequacies in maternity leave, etc.

To **define** what a broken career means, and to classify women into categories according to labour force attachment, is quite a complex task. Following Bettio et al. (2013), it can be assumed that women with a number of years of employment greater than the median years²⁰ for their country do *not* have a broken career problem. To classify the remainder it is sufficient to note that in those countries that base their system on social insurance principles, the cut-off for pension entitlement (‘vesting’) is usually 15 years. Thus it makes sense to define three groups: (1) women with years of employment between 0-15 years;²¹ (2) those between 15 and the median; (3) greater than the median. Many (perhaps most) women who have fewer than 15 years’ work experience would have

²⁰ The (un-weighted) median value of years in paid work in the EU as a whole (but excluding Sweden, Denmark and Finland which do not report this variable in the SILC survey) is 28 years for men, 21 for women, with little change if we average out the single country’s median values in lieu of calculating the median at the aggregate EU level. For women, however there is considerable dispersion across countries: from 10 years in Malta and 16 in the Netherlands, to 29 years in the Czech Republic and 30 years in Hungary.

²¹ If the years worked data were of better quality, or if there could be access to administrative data, it would have made sense to distinguish ‘no work’ with even a small number of years.

worked after leaving school and at the early stages of building a family; thus at the age of 65 their involvement in employment may only be a distant memory. Given that many pension systems have **vesting requirements**, a woman who may have worked in the 1970s for 4-5 years would, for social insurance purposes, be treated in the same way as someone who has never worked.²² Both would only receive an old-age pension, or a means-tested ‘standard’ pension at the age of 65. This is the reason for aggregating the ‘never worked’ group (0 years) with those with a few years of payments.

Table 3: Classification of women over 65 according to broken careers status (%)

Country	0-10 years	11 – 14 years	15-median	>median
BE	39.5	3.4	7.9	49.2
BG	1.3	0.5	50.3	47.9
CZ	1.8	0.1	49	49.1
DK	..	..	..	..
DE	18.8	6.1	25.4	49.7
EE	0.8	0.3	57.5	41.4
IE	46.1	4.3		49.6
GR	26	1.3	23.1	49.6
ES	40.4	4.6	5.5	49.5
FR	28.6	4.7	17.6	49.1
IT	29.5	2.8	19.4	48.3
CY	43	3.5	3.9	49.6
LV	1.1	0.2	53.2	45.5
LT	..	..	..	..
LU	43.4	7.2		49.4
HU	9.6	1.9	42.4	46.1
MT	52		48	
NL	50.3		49.7	
AT	20.7	3.6	25.8	49.9
PL	11.3	1.7	38.3	48.7
PT	12.4	2.3	36.8	48.5
RO	15.4	1.1	35.8	47.7
SI	23.9	0.6	29.2	46.3
SK	4.7	0.5	50.3	44.5

²² A recent judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union in Case C-385/11 ruled that Spanish legislation on contributory pensions discriminates against women on account of the higher prevalence of part-time work and is thus contrary to Council Directive 79/7/EEC. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri= CELEX:62011CJ0385:Es:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:62011CJ0385:Es:NOT)

Country	0-10 years	11 – 14 years	15-median	>median
FI	..	..	..	..
SE	..	..	..	..
UK	14.3	11.1	26.1	48.5

Source: Bettio et al. (2013).

Table 3 shows the **classification** of women into the three groups. It further breaks down the low category into those with 0-10 and those with between 11 and 14 years' employment. In nine countries (Luxembourg, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Belgium and Slovenia), more than one in four women had been in employment for less than 14 years. On the contrary, in most Eastern European countries (with the possible exception of Poland and Romania), broken careers (in the sense of a large number of women with fewer than 15 years' work) appear to be less of an issue.

It can therefore be concluded that **broken careers** appear to be a major issue in explaining gaps in pensions. In almost all countries, women with a working life of less than 14 years exhibit a significantly greater Gender Gap in Pension income (Table 4).²³ In **Germany** for instance, women who had been in employment for less than 14 years appear to have twice as high a Gender Gap in Pensions income (64.1%) compared with women with the 'median' working life (31.8%). The trend is also to be seen in **France, Austria** and to a lesser extent in **Spain**. The 'dominant pattern' holds with broken careers being associated with greater pension gaps; as years of employment increase, pension gaps shrink. However, in **Bulgaria** and in **Poland**, there appears no significant variation across different working life categories. **Greece** is the main exception where, remarkably, gender gaps are *higher* for women with the 'median' working life. This extraordinary result may well be an artefact of the fragmentation of the system into **occupational categories**, each with very different generosity. **Portugal** is a partial exception since it records the lowest gap among women having spent between 15 years and median years in employment.

Table 4: Gender gaps in pension by broken careers (%)

Country	0 – 14 years	15-median	>median
BE	37.8	43	18.8
BG	34.5	35.2	11.4
CZ	31	13.5	89.6
DK	..	..	..
DE	64.1	48	31.3
EE	14	8.3	-1.4
IE	43.4	..	26.3

²³ To apply this categorization in order to compute gender gaps for each gradation of broken career and in order to get around the problem that broken careers are an exclusively female issue, the average pension for women in each broken career category is compared to the overall mean pension for all males. In this way all three computed gender gaps in pension have the same denominator.

Country	0 – 14 years	15-median	>median
GR	28.2	24.2	45.1
ES	39.9	41.8	26.8
FR	56.9	47.4	22.5
IT	41.7	37.9	20.9
CY	52.4	40.5	26.2
LV	12.8	14.4	3.1
LT	..	..	..
LU	59.2	..	33.8
HU	34.1	17.9	7.5
MT	23.4	..	17.3
NL	38.6	..	29.5
AT	50	43.1	21.3
PL	26.9	25.5	19.7
PT	51.3	16.5	40
RO	47.7	32.8	25.1
SI	50.7	31.1	11.5
SK	23	9.6	3.9
FI	..	..	..
SE	..	..	..
UK	50.2	47.3	36

Source: Bettio et al. (2013).

5. Looking for a pink new deal

At this particular time in European public life, it is worth focusing on the identification of useful tools to achieve real gender equality: to act only on the labour market, and its rules? Operate by specific forms of taxation? Or call into question the whole division of care work at home and outside?

From the answers to these questions, all to be formulated, a setting of economic policy could emerge, a **"pink new deal"**, recalling the "Roosevelt" way out from the biggest recession in history, that of 1929. There is indeed a need of a **general plan of investment in social infrastructure** on which to base the economic growth of our countries. **Schools, kindergartens, universities, and care for the elderly are an investment that generates employment and encourages qualified female employment.**²⁴ There is a large demand for quality services around Europe: if they increase, a growing number of women would be able to work outside the home, because the companies that provide them are often run by women who have shown they can stay on the market, despite the major difficulties faced in accessing credit at a time of credit crunch. It has been estimated that with

²⁴ See UK Women's Budget Group (2013), *To Ensure Economic Recovery for Women, We Need Plan F*, Briefing note, www.wbg.org.uk

a **gendered investment plan**, European GDP will increase gradually, reaching a level 2.4 p.p. higher by 2018 than without the investment plan (Hansen and Andersen, 2014).

5.1 Recommendations

National Governments and national Parliaments should fully acknowledge the scope for **fiscal policies to enhance female labour force participation (FLFP)**. Taxation of labour income and government spending on social welfare benefits and pensions both affect labour markets similarly. They weaken the link between labour supply and income, thereby influencing the decision to participate in the labour market. Thus, the appropriate design of benefits is important to avoid disincentives to work. Elborgh-Woytek et al. (2013) outlines a wide range of fiscal policies to enhance the labour force participation of both women and men.

- Replacing family income taxation with **individual income taxation**. Empirical studies indicate that the female labour supply is more responsive to taxes than the male labour supply. Hence, reducing the tax burden for (predominantly female) secondary earners by replacing family taxation with individual taxation could potentially generate large efficiency gains and improve aggregate labour market outcomes.
- **Tax credits or benefits for low-wage earners** could be used to stimulate labour force participation, including among women. These so called “in-work” tax credits reduce the net tax liability - or even make it negative for low-wage earners - thereby increasing the net income gain from accepting a job, and are usually phased out as income rises. In countries that emphasise the income support objective, credits are generally phased out with family income and are often conditional on the presence of children in the household.²⁵ However, the phasing out of credit with family income results in high marginal tax rates for both the primary and the secondary earner in a family, creating strong adverse labour supply effects among secondary earners. By contrast, in countries that emphasise labour force participation, credits are usually phased out with individual income - the preferable policy to increase FLFP - as the marginal tax rate applied to the secondary earner will generally remain lower.²⁶

Some examples of the practices existing already are shown in Box 1.

Box 1: Examples of good practices at national level

Enhancing Female Labour Force Participation

In the **Netherlands**, the increase in the female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) from about 35 per cent in 1980 to more than 80 per cent in 2008 can be attributed to a breakdown in barriers between full-time and part-time work contracts, in combination with well-compensated parental leave. Part-time workers benefit from the same hourly wages, social security coverage, employment protection, and rules as full-time workers, which also facilitates the transition from part-time to full-time status (ILO, 2010).

Sweden's high female labour participation rate, with a gender gap of only 6%, is mostly attributed to a generous and flexible parental leave policy with a high coverage rate for child care, job guarantees, and eligibility for reduced working hours. OECD countries with the highest public spending as a share

²⁵ This is the case in France, Ireland, the Slovak Republic, and the United Kingdom.

²⁶ This approach is followed in Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

of GDP on child care and education services for children under the age of five have been found to have higher employment rates among mothers with young children (Aguirre et al., 2012).

Germany's "Skilled Labour Strategy" includes measures to improve the availability of child care facilities and to promote more family-friendly working hours, in order to raise the FLFP rate (IMF, 2012).

In **Italy**, the reform of the labour market in 2012 (Law 92/ 2012, the "Fornero reform", after the labour minister who promoted it) indirectly targets women having the aim of decreasing the variety of contractual arrangements for atypical jobs and reducing the improper use of some of them. This reform introduced a more universal system of social protection which widens the coverage of the unemployment benefit scheme; it facilitates transition from school to work and favours work experience for young people still in formal education. Moreover, it includes two innovative measures for the conciliation of work and family life: 1) compulsory paternity leave; 2) vouchers for child-care services (Rosselli, 2013).²⁷

Targeting financial independence of women²⁸

In **Austria**, a means-tested minimum income scheme was introduced in 2010 as the successor of the system of social assistance. It is paid by provincial councils and envisages a minimum security payment oriented at the equalisation supplement reference rate of €747 (2009). The granting of minimum payments is coupled with the willingness to work if the beneficiary is able to. Positively, lone parents are granted a higher benefit than under past regulations to ward off the higher-than-average risk of poverty in this group. Means-tested minimum income payments were coupled in 2010 with the willingness to work if the beneficiary is able to work.

In **Belgium**, social assistance takes the form of a guaranteed minimum income called the Social Integration Income (*Revenu d'intégration social*, RIS). RIS is linked to a "right and duty" activation scheme that is obligatory for beneficiaries aged 18-25 and optional for other applicants. RIS is means tested, provided for as long as necessary, and varies according to household composition. The number of RIS beneficiaries has increased during the crisis, and women are the main beneficiaries. A specific, means-tested minimum guaranteed income scheme is provided to older persons (GRAPA), and women are the main recipients.

In **France**, during the recession, a new income-support scheme, the Active Solidarity Income (RSA), has been implemented. It can be seen as a welfare-to-work reform, encouraging income support recipients to participate in the labour market.

In **Luxembourg**, a basic guaranteed income (*revenu minimum garanti* or RMG) is provided either via an integration benefit²⁹ or a supplementary allowance³⁰ to individuals who do not have any income or whose income is below the minimum level set by law, either in an individual capacity or jointly with other members of their household. As of 1 January 2011, the basic guaranteed income amounted to €1,251.97 per month for a single person, €1,877.93 for a couple, €358.20 per additional adult, and a further €113.81 s for each child under the age of 18 who qualifies for family allowance.

²⁷ It is too early to assess the impact of the whole package of the Fornero Reform, but a welcome novelty is the implementation of a well-organized system of data-collection to monitor its impact, which could be useful now that reform of the reform is already under way.

²⁸ Cf. Corsi M., Cipollone A., D'Ippoliti C., Samek Lodovici M., Sansonetti S. (2009), *Gender Mainstreaming Active Inclusion Policies*, EGGSI report for the European Commission – DG Employment, Brussels. Available at: ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6335&langId=en

²⁹ The integration benefit is linked to assistance programmes for seeking employment, and job creation scheme and is paid to persons who meet certain criteria and are capable of working.

³⁰ The supplementary allowance is aimed at persons who do not qualify for measures to promote integration into working life or who are temporarily exempt from these. It makes up the difference between the maximum amounts of basic guaranteed income and the means at the household's disposal.

Promoting equal pay³¹

In **Belgium**, Parliament passed a law in 2012 obliging companies to carry out a comparative analysis of their wage structure every two years. Belgium was also the first EU country (in 2005) to organise an Equal Pay Day.

In **France**, the Government has strengthened existing sanctions against firms with 50 employees and above that do not respect their obligations regarding gender equality. For the first time, as a result of a 2012 decree, two firms were found in April 2013 not to have complied with the legislation on equal pay.

In **Austria**, the Equal Treatment Act obliges companies to draw up equal pay reports. The rules, which were phased in gradually, are now compulsory for companies with over 250, 500 and 1000 employees. Companies with more than 150 employees will have to produce a report starting in 2014.

In **Portugal**, a Parliamentary Resolution dated 8 March 2013 includes measures to guarantee and promote equality of opportunity and results between women and men in the labour market, including the elimination of wage gaps. The measures include reporting on gender gaps in wages by industry.

The Council should ensure the exchange of these good practices and issue, where appropriate, guidelines for the Member States.

The **European Parliament** should cooperate with and hold accountable the Council and the Commission for removing labour market distortions and creating a level playing field for measures that would help boost the demand for women's labour. Besides, it has to be taken into account that the norms that apply to women's participation in the labour market have a tangible impact on labour demand, FLFP, and thereby on macroeconomic outcomes. The persistence of gender gaps in pay (and pensions) shows that, despite significant progress over time, gender-based discrimination persists. Indeed, **changes in legislation** and **social norms** in recent decades have supported an increasing demand for female labour and have made it possible for women to seek paid employment outside their homes and to contribute to family income. However, while **anti-discrimination provisions** have been adopted legally within all EU countries, some measures have proven difficult to enforce.

In this sense, the European Commission should propose policies to improve anti-discrimination enforcement, including (OECD, 2008 and 2012):

- Increasing the **awareness of legal rights to equal treatment** by conducting information campaigns.
- Providing the right **incentives**: a robust burden-of-proof framework can encourage discrimination claims before courts while minimising the risk for unjustified claims.³²
- Empowering **national equality bodies** to conduct formal investigations on their own initiative (without an individual complaint) can increase employers' awareness of equality issues and help potential victims of discrimination..

Last but not least, the **European Commission** should reconsider the formulation of **indicators of gender equality** to monitor the social impact of the crisis. The apparent improvement of many

³¹ Cf. European Commission (2014), *Equal Pay Day*, Press release, IP-14-190, Brussels.

³² The corresponding provisions of Directive 2006/54/EC would need then to be reinforced by accompanying measures like guidelines for Member States and enterprises.

gender inequalities despite the deterioration of jobs, wages, working conditions, and income for men and women raises questions about the ability of these "gender gap" indicators to capture the trends of gender equality adequately during a recession. In this direction, and in line with the recommendations made by the Council of the European Union (2014), the European Commission should:

- Cooperate with EIGE to improve the quantity and quality of sex-disaggregated data and support further research on gender-relevant issues, including on women and men's perceptions of their role in the labour market and of the sharing of activities within the household, as well as their perceptions of working conditions and factors that limit opportunities in the labour market in EU-28 Member States.
- Review regularly the progress achieved on those critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action for which indicators have already been developed by EIGE, taking the outcomes of these reviews into account in the Commission's annual Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men.

In this respect, the European Parliament as one arm of the budgetary authority should

- Provide EIGE with the appropriate resources to keep on monitoring the critical area *Women and the Economy* (Area F) of the Beijing Platform for Action by using the existing indicators, and further developing and improving these indicators.
- Monitor and evaluate the correct implementation of EU legislation in the field of employment and social policy.

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