

1. More, better and equally paid jobs for women: stepping up efforts towards the Brisbane target



Background

In 2014, G20 leaders pledged in Brisbane to reduce the gender gap in labour market participation rates by 25% by 2025, with the aim of bringing 100 million women into the labour market, increasing global growth, reducing poverty and inequality¹ and countering the contraction of the workforce in ageing countries².

In developing its agenda, Italy took into account further efforts made by G20 countries to achieve the full equality of women and men in society and economy, particularly the 2017 German Presidency priority of reducing gender gaps in labour force participation and pay by improving women's job quality, as well as the G20 Policy Recommendations to improve the quality of women's earning, increase women's labour market security, and achieving better working conditions agreed in Bad Neuenahr³. In Hamburg, leaders highlighted the importance of access to STEM education and occupations for women's inclusion, launching the #eSkills4Girls initiative to promote the participation of women and girls in the digital economy. They also launched the Women Entrepreneurs Financing Initiative (WE-FI) to reduce barriers to financial inclusion and increase women's access to capital, markets and technical assistance. In 2018, in Argentina, Leaders and Labour and Employment Ministers acknowledged the importance of gender equality for economic growth and sustainable development and committed to promoting both women's access to leadership in decision-making processes, as well as their participation in the digital economy and STEM-related fields⁴. In 2019, under the Japanese Presidency, Labour and Employment Ministers focused on gender equality as one of the EWG priorities, highlighting once again the importance of women's empowerment for fair, inclusive and sustainable growth; calling for a more balanced share of household and care responsibilities between women and men; and agreeing to take steps towards the promotion of a greater work-life balance⁵. The same year, G20 Leaders recognized the importance of women's empowerment and launched the private sector alliance for the 'Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation (EMPOWER)⁶. Most recently, the G20 recognized that women have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19, acknowledging that women have the potential to be drivers of the economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis⁷.

¹ G20 Leaders' Communiqué Brisbane Summit, 15-16 November 2014

² G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Declaration, Melbourne, 10-11 September 2014, Annex D

³ G20 Labour And Employment Ministerial Declaration, 2017, Annex B: G20 Policy Recommendations to Reduce Gender Gaps in Labour Force Participation and Pay by Improving Women's Job Quality.

⁴ G20 Labour And Employment Ministerial Declaration, 2018, para 24; G20, Buenos Aires Leader's Declaration, 2018, para 12.

⁵ G20 Labour And Employment Ministerial Declaration, 2019, Para 23-30.

⁶ G20, Osaka Leader' Declaration, 2019, para 22-23.

⁷ G20 Labour And Employment Ministerial Declaration, 2020, para 10.



Evolution and policy response

Although differences persist in job quality and wages, **between 2012 and 2019, almost all G20 countries made progress** in terms of equal opportunities, participation of women to the labour market and reduction of the gender pay gap⁸.

The process of reducing gender inequalities has slowed down due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the global economy. The current crisis has particularly affected some economic sectors (retail trade, catering, tourism and personal services) as well as workers in atypical and informal employment, where women are over-represented. The presence of women is also very high in the so-called “essential” sectors, that are most exposed to the risk of contagion like health and long-term care (2/3 of the health and care sectors workers are women with peaks of 85% among nursing jobs and 90% among long-term care workers) in OECD countries⁹. Finally, domestic confinement measures have amplified women’s unpaid work burden, thereby widening the gender gap in unpaid work, and increased the exposure of women to domestic violence¹⁰.

The distancing measures and closure of many businesses have created difficulties also for those looking for a new or a first job. In many countries, this has led to a rapid increase in unemployment and inactivity rates, **especially among women**, and young women in particular, older workers and low-skilled workers, more generally. Reductions in hours worked, due to lockdown measures, have affected lower-skilled occupations – in particular those in elementary work – more than higher-paying managerial and professional jobs, and women more than men¹¹.

Therefore, one of the policy priorities during the recovery will be **not to dissipate the recent years’ achievements of the G20 countries** in reducing gender gaps in the labour market, and to resume the path of increasing women’s participation to the labour market and on better terms. This will require intensifying efforts to promote the creation of quality employment opportunities for women, to attract and retain more women into the labour markets, reduce the gender pay gap, create a favourable environment for women’s entrepreneurship and for a more equal distribution of unpaid work between men and women. Brisbane’s goal, which is purely quantitative, must therefore be enriched by a series of qualitative elements capable of removing the barriers that hamper full social and economic inclusion of women in the G20 countries. **For policies aimed at eliminating gender gaps to be effective, a first step**

⁸ ILO and OCSE (2020), “Women at Work in G20 countries”

⁹ OECD, Employment Outlook 2020

¹⁰ OECD (2020) “Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis”

¹¹ ILO (2020) “ILO Global wage report 2020-21: wages and minimum wages in times of covid-19”.



is to combat social and cultural gender stereotypes as well as unconscious bias. With this view, a rigorous analysis of national legislation that may adversely affect women's full participation in economic and social life should be undertaken as a preliminary step in the process.

Women are still under-represented in some of the most dynamic sectors, including ICT, which offer higher pay and better career opportunities. Moreover, although in most G20 countries the level of education of women is comparable to – if not higher than – that of men, they continue to be under-represented in leadership and entrepreneurial positions even in sectors that have long seen a substantially equal presence of men and women. This situation, stemming from factors that often include entrenched discriminatory practices, must be tackled by promoting policies that ensure equal opportunities and guidance in the choice of field of study, transition from education to labour market and in terms of access and career progression for women and men. Employers should be encouraged to ensure greater transparency in the processes of career progressions and the criteria for the selection of managers and other senior positions, as well as in promoting equal pay for work of equal value and within transparent and fair wage structures. At the same time, **an environment more conducive to promoting and expanding women's entrepreneurial initiative must be created**, including by ensuring equal access to professional advice and credit for start-ups and businesses.

The influence of gender stereotypes on the educational and training choices as well as actual barriers to equal opportunities for education and training are at the root of gender gaps in the labour market. **It is therefore necessary to continue to promote greater participation of girls in educational pathways that ensure rapid entry into the labour market**, including in scientific and technological disciplines. Equal access to training in the workplaces should also be promoted, as well as promoting and facilitating the access for men to sectors dominated by women.

To foster women's participation and facilitate their careers in the labour market, it is also necessary to continue to promote a more balanced distribution of unpaid work between men and women and to ensure access to affordable and quality child and elderly care services, especially for low-income and jobless families. Continued actions are also necessary to extend paternity and parental leave, including paid leave, as appropriate. As for gender pay gaps, **setting national minimum wages**, in due respect of national policies and practices, and its enforcement where already existing, **could have a positive effect from a gender perspective, given the prevalence of women in low-paid occupations.**¹²

¹² ILO (2020) "ILO Global wage report 2020-21: wages and minimum wages in times of covid-19".



The pandemic has exposed the essential value of care-related occupations, as well as their undervaluation and the related difficult working conditions. A fairer assessment of the skills, responsibilities, efforts and working conditions associated with these occupations is essential in order and would be key to reducing inequalities in pay between men and women.

The **Italian Presidency** intends to continue to closely monitor the progress made by the G20 countries towards the Brisbane target, while at the same time broadening the focus on the issue of quality of work and equal opportunities in business activities. To this end, we consider it useful to exchange good practices among the G20 countries, including with the aim of updating the policy recommendations agreed under the German Presidency in 2017, and to draw up, with the necessary contributions by the Social Partners, a **Road Map for achieving the Brisbane goal**. It may also be useful to introduce a set of complementary indicators to monitor and measure the progress towards full gender equality in the labour market.