

WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT OF SMALL ENTERPRISES:

Co-inspiration between social and conventional enterprises to promote equal access to decision-making positions in six European countries

Comparative study





**GENDER BALANCE
POWER MAP**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The restricted access of women to decision-making positions in the corporate sector remains a problem in all European countries. Nevertheless, some countries are doing worse than others. Numerous European countries have introduced quota laws to ensure a higher participation of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies. Despite these trends, even at European Union (EU) level, the quota laws have overlooked small enterprises. To understand the situation in small companies, we conducted a qualitative research study in 2014 on opportunities and barriers for women in management of small conventional and social enterprises in six countries (Belgium, France, Czech Republic, Romania, Finland and Italy). This European comparative study has shown how the various measures implemented by corporate and political stakeholders contribute to the enhancement of women's participation in economic decision making.

The six countries compared represent various conditions in terms of the legislative framing supporting gender equality and especially the promotion of women to decision-making positions in businesses through quota laws. Legislation to support women in decision-making positions through quotas were introduced in four out of the six countries compared, namely in Belgium, Finland, France and Italy. These EU member states have introduced different types of legislation, whereas in post-state socialist countries, such as Romania and the Czech Republic, there are still no laws supporting women in management.

French and Belgian companies with more than 250 employees have quotas for the equal representation of women and men in management. Legal measures to support women in decision-making positions were introduced for state-owned companies in Finland and in Italy, where quotas were also set for publicly traded companies. In Finland, a special gender equality plan should already be implemented in all companies with more than 30 employees. Similarly, in France companies with more than 50 employees are working on an agreement to promote equal opportunities and equal remuneration. In post-state socialist countries, such as Romania and the Czech Republic, the level of gender sensitivity and openness to quota legislation are very restricted due to historical burdens.

At company level, there are similarities and differences in policies and everyday practices in the area of gender equality across the countries (Belgium, France, Czech Republic, Romania, Finland and Italy) and sectors (conventional and social entrepreneurship) compared. **In all the countries compared as well as in the two sectors, there were no formal measures and no special attention given to directly supporting the promotion and equal treatment of women in management of these small enterprises.** At the same time, the enterprises accepted and invited women to managerial positions, but only in the professions or fields which are stereotypically feminine. As most of the companies analysed are operating in feminised sectors, vertical segregation in the companies was lower than horizontal (sectorial) segregation, except in Italy, where vertical segregation is high because the analysis was conducted in a male-dominated sector. There was informal support for women in managerial positions in social enterprises in France and in Belgium, where the company cultures tended towards supporting the promotion of women to management positions, while this trend was not found in conventional enterprises. In the Czech Republic and Romania, the gender blindness presented as gender-neutral practices in both private and social organisations resulted in a low level of awareness and the reproduction of gender stereotypes and discrimination across both sectors.

Wages in both social and conventional companies in Finland and Italy are defined by a given collective agreement, which should reduce the gender wage gap in both countries. Wage transparency, on the other hand, is absent in Czech, Romanian and French enterprises. In Belgium the lack of a strict remuneration policy in the conventional enterprise leaves room for individual negotiation on salaries, whereas the process is much clearer in social enterprises where salaries are tied to a pay scale established by a joint committee of social partners for the whole non-profit sector.





In general, social enterprises showed a higher level of gender equality than conventional enterprises. The main differences between the countries and companies compared were in the field of work/life balance measures (such as homeworking, flexible work, leave policy etc.). Work/life balance measures are common in conventional and social enterprises in Belgium, but they are absent in the companies under research in France. In Finnish social firms, the sensitivity to gender equality has led to encouraging men to avail of their right to parental leave, as well as taking leave when a child is ill. In conventional enterprises in Romania and the Czech Republic, personal or family life was perceived as a possible barrier to a successful career in management; this seemed less the case in the social enterprises. In Romania, flexible arrangements provide for pregnant women or women with small children. Czech conventional enterprises offered mothers of young children part-time jobs and the option of working from home. The work/life balance in the Czech social enterprise sector applies to those employees who are disadvantaged in terms of health, i.e. primarily not parents or specifically mothers with children.

A comparison of the two types of organisations leads us to conclude there are no general substantial differences between the small social and conventional companies researched in terms of policies or measures which would support women in management. We can conclude that social and conventional enterprises across the countries compared differ mainly in their social components. Social enterprises employ those with health disabilities, but in terms of social responsibility for the equal treatment of men and women, they often perpetuate the same gender stereotypes as conventional companies. Nevertheless, in some countries (e.g. Romania, Belgium), the organisational cultures in social enterprises are oriented towards humanistic principles and are thus in favour of building the confidence and job fulfilment of women with more opportunities for career development and better balance between work and family life. **Regarding the opportunities for and the barriers to the promotion of women in management, there are more differences between the countries in the sectors compared than between conventional and social enterprises in each country.**

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Even though the authors and project partners support the widely-shared recommendations from institutional lobbies (such as the European Women Lobby) or research institutes (such as the European Gender Equality Institute), they try to bring into the public debate new suggestions, based on their research, that will tackle the topic of gender equality in the under-documented small and medium enterprises. They set their recommendations by reference to the corporate level (e.g. adopting a gender-sensitive communication, redefining the code of management, setting up measures with well-defined indicators, developing transparent and gender-sensitive recruitment and promotion systems, developing work-life reconciliation tools and new work practices) with special focus on social enterprises; to the national-policy decision-makers and to the European ones. The purpose of all the recommendations is to work towards promotion of women to decision making positions in all kinds of enterprises, even the smallest and the most socially-oriented ones.

INTRODUCTION

According to the last Gender Equality Index of 2015 from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the gap between women's and men's representation in political, social and economic decision making is the one that showed the lowest gender equality score out of the six domains assessed by the Index. However, if we look more specifically at the economic sphere, the Index assesses a gradual increase in the proportion of women on the highest decision-making bodies; from 9% to 20% between 2003 and 2014¹. The increase is all the more visible in Member States having adopted binding legislation such as in Belgium, France and Italy. Unfortunately, this figure only concerns the largest publicly traded companies. Although small and medium enterprises represent the vast majority of employers on the continent (in 2014, they accounted for 99.8% of all enterprises in the EU28 and employed almost 90 million people, 67% of total employment)², policy measures and indicators mainly focus on the biggest corporate boards. Although legislative measures introduced in the past 10 years have led to substantial progress, especially when accompanied by sanctions, the debate on the issue tends to be dominated by the controversies over the need to establish gender quotas in European boardrooms.

Gender equality in small and medium enterprises is a rather sparsely explored topic, both in research and on a political level, given the lack of reliable and detailed data on the contribution of women to their activity. This lack of information is even more striking when it comes to organisations of the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social enterprises. The few research projects undertaken in the last 15 years that concern gender in the not-for-profit economy tend to focus on the few countries where sex-disaggregated data collections have been carried out (Themudo 2009; Faulk, Hamilton Edwards, Lewis and McGinnis 2013; Buckingham and Teasdale 2013; Huysentruyt 2014; Estrin, Stephan and Vujić 2015; Verschuur and Guérin and Hillenkamp 2015). The various legal frameworks falling under the social enterprises definition makes it even more difficult to research this topic on a European scale, as all these legal frames do not exist all over EU Member States. Yet the social economy and social enterprises have been conceptualised both by researchers and field players.

Our approach to social enterprises follows the EMES International Research Network³ definition: "Social enterprises are non-profit private organisations providing goods or services directly related to their explicit aim to benefit the community. They rely on collective dynamics involving various types of stakeholders in their governing bodies, they place a high value on their autonomy and they bear economic risks linked to their activity" (Defourny and Nyssens 2008). In other words, social enterprises are private and autonomous businesses operating in the market but with an additional and explicit aim of benefit to the community. This social orientation is even reinforced by criteria defining the internal governance of social enterprises that are supposed to be citizen-led initiatives, organised on a principle of democratic decision making (not based on capital) in a participatory process, involving those who are affected.

The high share of women among the employees of social enterprises (around two thirds in most of European countries having intended such estimations (Buckingham and Teasdale 2013) and the values at the core of the social economy, offering on the face of it a more gender sensitive corporate environment, make this a relevant subject for a crosscutting research topic, such as the state of gender equality in the social economy. Therefore, it was the purpose of the two-year Gender Balance Power Map project, which proposed an innovative approach to analysing and understanding the issue in small and medium enterprises by means of drawing comparisons between the state of the art in the social enterprises sector and the conventional enterprises⁴ sector with regard to women's access and participation in economic decision making.

¹ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2015.

² European Commission. 2015: 3.

³ For further information about EMES: <http://emes.net/>

⁴ The expression "conventional enterprise" is based on the established terminology used in the academic literature when referring to business companies not having the characteristics of social entrepreneurship (see Borzaga and Defourny, 2001 or more recent Fathi, Perotin and Gago, 2012). Whereas "conventional entrepreneurs" measure performance in profit and return, "social entrepreneurs" also evaluate their social impact (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001).





The project aimed at developing the comparison of different types of legal incentives in order to better understand which political, social, historical and cultural contexts could genuinely influence gender-equal participation in economic decision making. Thus, this study is intended for academic and policy stakeholders from both national and European levels with the ambition to bring into the public debate new research results in order to tackle the gender imbalance in economic decision making of under-documented small conventional and social enterprises.

The European impetus given by several directives enacted in the last 40 years on gender equality, along with the expansion of social economy initiatives and social enterprises in Europe since the adoption of the Social Business Initiative by the European Commission in 2011, meant that the European Union was the relevant area for our research activities. The various national economic and social realities ensuing from recent history in the European Union led the project leader to select a range of countries that would be representative of different cultural trends in Europe. Hence, the project – and so the present study – covers the situation in Western and Latin countries (Belgium, France and Italy), Central and Eastern ones (the Czech Republic and Romania) as well as Nordic Member States (Finland). Besides the fact that the sample has the advantage of covering countries that have joined the European Union at different periods of time, it also examines countries that have experienced very different socioeconomic realities in recent decades: on the one hand, because of the Cold War that put Central and Eastern European countries under the domination of the USSR until the late XXth century; and on the other hand, because of the 2008 economic and financial crisis that influenced the national economies of the aforementioned countries in very different ways.

As a result of the project, this comparative study takes stock of the levels of participation and access of women to decision-making positions in conventional and social enterprises in the six countries where the research was done. Based on national qualitative studies⁵ carried out in 2015, the present comparative study aimed to answer the following main research question: what are the obstacles and opportunities women are facing regarding their participation in economic decision-making in small social and conventional enterprises across diverse gender regimes in the European Union? In order to answer this question, a desk research gave the policy analysis needed in terms of a) political, social, cultural and historical contexts and b) legislation, policies, measures and players relevant to the field of the study. The qualitative research is based on the analysis of 103 semi-structured interviews in 12 small enterprises (6 conventional and 6 social; one of each in each country of the study).

Social enterprises are generally perceived as more gender sensitive and equal than conventional enterprises. In fact, this theory was not supported by our data. The restricted access of women to decision-making positions in the corporate sector remains a problem in all European countries regardless of the type of enterprise considered. The business entity does not matter, but rather the awareness and attitude of the management. Thus, in regard to the opportunities for and the barriers to the promotion of women in management, there are more differences between the countries in the sectors compared than between conventional and social enterprises within each country. Even though no formal measures exist to directly support the promotion and equal treatment of women in management in all countries compared, informal support of women in managerial positions existed in social enterprises in France and in Belgium, where the company cultures tended to support the promotion of women to management positions, while this trend was not found in conventional enterprises. In the Czech Republic and Romania, the gender blindness, presented as gender-neutral practices in both conventional and social organisations, results in a low level of awareness and reproduction of gender stereotypes and discrimination in both types of enterprises.

⁵ See Huchet, Marquet and Tancau (Belgium), Formánková, Maříková, Křížková and Volejníčková (Czech Republic), Hämäläinen and Tarkiainen (Finland), Miclet, Molenda-Pruvost and Rodríguez (France), Ghibelli and Bellione (Italy), Balica, Dragolea, Marin and Ene (Romania).

This European comparative study first looks at the theoretical and methodological framing having permitted the collection of data and structured the analysis (Chapter 1). It then develops the policy frameworks at stake in the six countries researched covering the cultural, historical and social background of gender equality as well as the gender equality infrastructures and laws before focusing in more detail on the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social enterprises in a gender perspective in the six countries (chapter 2). The core of the study is to be found in the qualitative research analysing the opportunities and barriers for women to access economic decision-making, both in social and conventional enterprises across four themes: (1) representation of women in the enterprise, (2) family-friendly arrangements, (3) education, evaluation and remuneration processes and (4) promotion of women to management roles (Chapter 3). The study ends on a conclusive chapter wrapping up the main results of the research with the intention of characterising the added value of the findings of the present study with regard to other former surveys (Chapter 4).





CHAPTER I

Theoretical and methodological framing

The aim of this chapter is to explain why it is important to focus on women in decision-making, their position and the gendered structure of organisations. The “Gender Balance Power Map” is a comparative international project investigating opportunities and barriers for women in management in small conventional and social enterprises. In the first part of this chapter we introduce our theoretical background for the study of organisations and their gendered structure. We also briefly demonstrate how the issue of gender in organisations is inherently connected to wider labour market gender inequalities such as gender segregation and gender pay gap. Then we introduce the most important concepts and theories on gender balance in decision-making such as tokenism, glass ceiling, informal networks and work-life balance. In the second part we provide basic information and definitions of social entrepreneurship from a gender point of view and of the main differences between social and conventional enterprises. In the third part of this chapter we describe the methodology used for the national studies which create the basis of this comparative study.

1.1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING

Gender theories of organisational processes have shown that the division of work and decision power is rooted in the evolution of organisations and how it is gendered. Modern organisations were created and controlled by men at a time when women occupied only marginal positions in the labour market; therefore, the structure of such organisations reflects the identity and roles that society assigns to men. Likewise in “classical” theories of management, which are mostly gender blind, differences in the living conditions, strategies and experiences of men and women are ignored. Attributes and actions traditionally understood and defined as male are considered the norm and the ideal to which women must accommodate.

In the past three decades gender sensitive theories of management showed that gender is hidden and permanently embedded in organisational processes and structures. The basic starting point for analysing the gendered way the management environment operates is to study conditions, opportunities and socio-institutional structures (Witz 1992, Walby 1991) as basic factors in the formation of women’s life strategies (Crompton, Harris 1998a, Crompton, Harris 1998b, Crompton (ed.) 1999). The category of gender is institutionalised in organisations as well as in the social structure (Connel 2002, Witz 1992, Walby 1991, Acker 1990).

Joan Acker showed that gender is deeply rooted within organisational processes and decisions that otherwise seem to have nothing to do with gender (Acker 1990). Positions, their content, and the relations between them seem on the surface to be gender-neutral. Employers often argue that the obligations required of workers in a specifically defined position are equal, but gender inequality derives from the very definition of a position as neutral and the strict adherence to its rules (Halford, Leonard 2001). For example, managerial positions are often based on the presumption of the rather masculine ideal of an uninterrupted linear career. An important role is also played by the strict division of personal/family life which “should not interfere” with work life. Consequently, family commitments are a handicap for women. Women tend to be concentrated at the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy and in positions and professions with worse conditions (lower wages, prestige, promotion opportunities, access to further training, benefits, etc.). Joan Acker’s description of ‘gendered organisations’ outlines the gender differences and inequalities that permeate the whole organisational structure and all its processes (1990). Acker claims that ‘[W]ork organisations are critical locations for the investigation of the continuous creation of complex inequalities because much societal inequality originates in such organisations’ (Acker 2006: 441).





Gender inequalities in organisations tend to occur via at least four interconnected processes (Acker 1990):

Divisions along the gender line

This involves institutional mechanisms that determine the division of work, permitted behaviour, actions, space and power between women and men. An example in organisations might be the concentration of men and women in different areas – horizontal and vertical segregation (see below for definitions).

The construction of symbols and images

This involves the formation and maintenance of symbols and images, which explain, express, and reinforce gender divisions between women and men, including the preference for the world of work over family life. This symbolism cuts across different levels and aspects of organisational life. It is apparent, for instance, with respect to clothing. The clothing of managers is chosen to project an image of successful and strong men who have everything under control. Conversely, women in service positions are intended to evoke an image of femininity. In addition, promotional materials of organisations are designed to reflect masculine values of success, physical strength, performance and material wealth. Any depictions portraying both men and women often communicate a message of men in a senior position – the man is standing and dictating, the woman is sitting and writing or carefully following what she is being told.

Interaction between players

A significant series of processes that generate gendered social structures, including organisations, are interactions between men and women, between women and women and between men and men. These processes are governed by and help to reinforce established relations of superiority and subordination. For example, if a man raises his voice in a group discussion, people will probably interpret his behaviour as a sign of assertiveness and forcefulness. When women raise their voices it is often interpreted as hysteria (Wajcman 1998).

The production of identities

If people want to assert themselves and ‘survive’ in an organisation they have to come to terms with the rules laid down in it for men and women. Thus an individual – often subconsciously and spontaneously – accepts the gendered organisational culture as their own and regards their role in the firm as part of their own identity.

I Gender inequalities and segregation in the workplace

Allocation of women and men to different occupations and positions in the labour market – gender segregation – is a consequence and a source of inequalities. Contrary to occupations with a predominantly male workforce, occupations with more women offer lower wages, worse working conditions and less career advancement opportunities. (Anker 1998; Charles, Grusky 2004) Two types of segregation can be distinguished:

1. Horizontal gender segregation is understood as under-(over-)representation of men and women in certain occupations or sectors of economic activity. Horizontal segregation is not only constant in the labour market in all the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries but, in some sectors, tends to grow over time (Anker, 1998, Bettio et al. 2012). Sociological theories explain horizontal segregation as a result of hiring discrimination, socialisation, institutional practices and limited job information (England et al. 1988). Instead of human capital-related factors, the concentration of women in feminised occupations is linked to structural constraints, such as lack of child care provisions, which lead to a higher uptake of family-friendly jobs by women (e.g. Piasna and Plagnol, 2015).
2. Vertical gender segregation refers to the division of women and men within the workplace’s hierarchical structure so that men are significantly more concentrated in hierarchically higher, executive positions and women in lower, service positions (Reskin & Roos, 1990; Crompton & Sanderson, 1990). As a consequence of vertical gender segregation, men enjoy better opportunities to achieve positions of power where they

can control their subordinates and financial resources, are paid more for their work and have better working conditions and more flexibility in scheduling their work assignments as well as their time and place of work. Women, on the contrary, are more concentrated in positions with fewer promotion opportunities, have fewer subordinates, are paid less, possess less control over decisions about organisational resources and strategies, often are subject to control and have more limited autonomy in their work (Reskin & Padavic, 1994).

Horizontal and vertical segregation, often combined in the complex system of the labour market, produce gender-based distribution of resources, such as money, other rewards and benefits, working conditions and autonomy. Gender segregation has several negative consequences for equality between men and women. Firstly, male-dominated occupational sectors are seen as more prestigious and better compensated (Blau & Ferber, 1987). Consequently, occupational segregation is the main factor in the persistent *gender wage gap* or income differences between men and women (England et.al., 1988). Secondly, segregation has a negative effect on the functioning and performance of the labour market as the potential of individual male and female workers is not exploited efficiently, and the use of their skills is often affected by gender stereotypes (Reskin & Padavic, 1994). Thirdly, gendered segregation negatively affects the education and training of future generations because parents, schools and children's decisions about their future fields of study are largely based on observed job opportunities (Anker, 1998). Finally, segregation restricts women's employment as the segments of the labour market accessible to women are small and the wages are often low.

The gender segregation results in a *gender wage gap*, in other words in differences in wages for work of equal value. These wage differences occur in paid employment with comparable qualifications and work tasks, and result from the lower value assigned to women's work, which affects the wage levels (England 2005). There are also underlying issues such as the gendered choice of the type of occupation and employment position, the availability of various types of work for women and men, and the degree of limitation regarding one's choice of work. In line with this argument, Lips (2012) presents compelling analyses indicating that the human capital model of occupational status is inadequate to completely explain the gender pay gap. Examination of investments in work, defined by variables such as work history, education, years of experience and various occupational behaviours, provides insufficient explanations for gender wage gaps and gender segregation. Social stereotypes, overt gender discrimination as well as the gendered nature of the workplace and networks are the most important factors that contribute to continuing gender differences in occupational achievement (Lips, 2012).

1.2. MAIN CONCEPTS AND THEORIES OF GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING

I Women in management as tokens

When the number of women in management in an organisation and consequently in society is limited, they have the additional negative consequence of standing out as tokens. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) in her classic study of organisational environment defines token status by its three main features. Firstly, as there are few such employees, tokens are over-observed. This high visibility generates increased pressure on performance, which may be met by overachieving (Kanter, 1977). Secondly, token persons are seen in opposition to the rest of the employees. To maintain the notion of a polarity between the two groups, the differences between token persons and the dominant group are exaggerated. Polarisation thus leads to the isolation of token members from the larger group, especially in informal contexts. Thirdly, individual characteristics of token people are misperceived due to stereotypes about the token group.

Tokens react to the pressures from the dominant group in two ways. Their first strategy is to accept and assimilate to their stereotyped image, which can subsequently lead to "role entrapment" (Kanter, 1977). A second strategy is to challenge the stereotype on almost every occasion. Tokens often find it easier to conform to expectations (Kanter, 1977). Kanter's theory has been criticised for being blind to gender categories. Among many others, Yoder





(1991) argues that, unlike men who often benefit from their visibility as tokens in feminised working environments, women more often face the negative consequences of tokenism, especially in male-dominated occupations that are considered inappropriate for women.

Based on Kanter's theory Guillaume and Pochic (2009) found that male managers play an active role in the reproduction of a masculine symbolic order. They conclude that "[W]omen are constrained by the need to deal with the dominant culture, which means either being trapped in 'role encapsulation' (fitting pre-existing generalisations about one's category as a group), accepting isolation or becoming insiders by turning against their own social category." (Guillaume, Pochic 2009:26).

I The glass ceiling

The glass ceiling theory advances a view of organisations as gendered institutions, in which gender is an organic structuring part, and at the same time the structure is considered gender neutral by its players so that it becomes invisible but is then recognised and experienced once women try to advance to higher positions beyond a certain level. It is "an invisible obstacle that prevents women from rising to certain levels within an organisation. It relates to women as a group, who are prevented from advancing upwards because they are women." (Baxter, Wright 2000: 276). Particular types of obstacles that collectively or in various combinations can give rise to the glass ceiling include:

- Social barriers – these encompass opportunities in access to education and employment, the overall gender structure of society and, in particular, gender stereotypes.
- Information barriers – these relate to the fact that there tends not to be enough information available in either firms or society as a whole about the share of women in management and leadership positions. This creates the impression that no problem exists. Also, information about available management positions are not always widely published and shared with those who are not insiders - members of the "community" or of various networks.
- The barrier of difference (sometimes called "homo-social reproduction") – employees who hire other employees stereotypically pick applicants who do not differ significantly from them. If there are more men in senior positions, senior management will most likely continue to hire men.
- The gendered division of the labour market (segregation of the labour market) – women who do reach senior and management positions tend to work in feminised, less prestigious and/or financially less rewarding fields. Women are more often employed in the public sector and in social economy as opposed to the dominance of men in the private sector and in conventional businesses.
- The existence of 'old-boy networks' – these are networks of informal ties that men form amongst themselves through activities at work and outside work. Given the gender homogeneity (of boards or other institutional decision-making bodies) and interests (e.g. sports) of these groups and networks, it is difficult for women to become a part of them. Belonging to such a network, however, could be one of the contributing factors for success.
- Sexual harassment – unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature or other form of behaviour with a sexual basis affecting the dignity and position of a person. Sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relations within organisations.
- Inadequacies in anti-discrimination legislation – legislation against discrimination is in some countries rather vague, unsystematic, and lacking in adequate and effective penalties and law enforcement mechanisms.

Extending the metaphor of the glass ceiling, "the glass cliff" describes the phenomenon whereby women are more likely to be found in leadership positions that are associated with a greater risk of failure and criticism. Women's work in management is used in situations of crisis and as an opportunity to save money by paying women managers lower wages than men. Ryan and Haslam talk about precarious leadership positions which can be called the glass cliff (2005).

I Informal networks

One of the main criticisms of traditional and classic theories of organisation processes is that they focus almost exclusively on the formal structure of organisations and the formal rules of how they operate (Witz, Savage 1992; Mills, Tancred 1992). The informal structure of networks at the workplace, however, is an important and often key driving force in the dynamics of an organisation, including important decisions. For example, informal relations contribute to the seeming invisibility of the glass ceiling. The informal networks that are formed in workplaces, for various purposes, whether for learning or using the unwritten rules of the organisation of work in general, for obtaining important contracts, for cooperation within a team, for advancing to a better position, or for activities outside work, are primarily used by men. The problem is the small share of women in management collectives and the very nature of these informal networks, which are often referred to as 'old-boy networks' (Powell 1993; Wajcman 1998). For women these networks represent another disadvantage in work and out-of-work activities. Women often declare an unwillingness or lack of time to meet with colleagues outside work or they simply do not share the same out-of-work interests as men, which are often centred on some kind of sport. This excludes them from these networks. Membership in such networks, however, is a very important factor that is often crucial to career advancement.

Guillaume and Pochic (2009) who analysed opportunities and barriers for women's access to management in one large company in France found that female managers do not always feel at ease with the male dominant forms of sociability, which includes content and style of communication, humour and jokes and body language, and the status of women is undermined by the numerical dominance of men and by the gendered distribution of power (2009:26).

I Work-life balance policies and women in management

According to the theory of gender segregation, women's position in the labour market is constrained by their family roles, so the more women invest in their human and cultural capital, the more they can see the opportunity cost of children as too high (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000). In addition, time spent out of the labour market has a negative influence on a woman's labour market prospects and her level of pay. In the segregated labour market, mothers are generally paid less and shifted to less prestigious female dominated sectors, with lower remuneration, just because they are mothers (England, 2005). Availability of work-life balance policies on the organisational level plays an important role in promoting women to management, as the ability of women to combine work and family life has a crucial impact on their career prospects (e.g. Hochschild, 1997; Lewis et al., 2007). An organisational environment is very complex in terms of working conditions and certain vital aspects need to be considered such as the provision of alternative employment arrangements, conditions under which the opportunities for flexible working hours or place of work are implemented and the way they are negotiated, and the status of such jobs, etc. (Lewis et al., 2007). As Joan Acker (1990, 1992, 2006) argues, all organisations have inequality regimes which are reproduced in formal processes as well as in informal interactions (Acker, 2006). Therefore, although there might be an egalitarian goal, certain inequalities persist due to the unequal division of power and control within the company. In addition, although targeted at both parents, work-life balance policies are not gender neutral and therefore, the impact of these policies on men and women should always be assessed separately (Burnett et. al., 2010).

An employee using the work-life reconciliation measures is often in a marginalised position in the organisation (Hochschild, 1997). He/she can end up in a trap of low remuneration, involuntary underemployment, work insecurity and discrimination (McGinnity and McManus, 2007; Beck, 2000). Simpson (1998) points out that an assessment of one's work commitment is often based on the number of work hours put in. He refers to a corporate environment in which individual employees are evaluated on the basis of their overtime work as a culture of 'competitive presenteeism'. A competitive corporate culture increases demands on the length of time spent at work, creating only limited career opportunities for those who use alternative work arrangements. In any such organisational culture, part-time work and home-based work are logically evaluated as less important and people perceive such employees as inferior. The ambivalent and often negative impact of taking advantage of work-life reconciliation measures on the position of women, especially the ones in managerial positions, was frequently discussed by Formánková and Křížková (2015).





The Welfare state has a proactive role to play in initiating and supporting family-friendly or gender equality policies implemented in social enterprises. Welfare state theories that build on democratic values, including gender equality in opportunities and treatment, construct an adult worker model (Lewis 2001) or a worker-parent model (Leira 2002), which must be free from gender stereotypes. Each individual should be able to choose his or her own strategy for combining work and care so that no type of choice is penalised. In order for carers and parents, women and men, to be able to equally choose the degree of their involvement in paid and unpaid labour, it is necessary to put in place a mixture of policies relating to time (working hours, time for work, time for care), money (for purchasing care and supporting those who personally provide care), and services (for children and for the sick and the elderly) (Leitner 2003; Pfau-Effinger 2005; Bettio and Plantenga 2004; Lewis 2006: 111). These mixtures of policies differ in various types of welfare states.

Křížková, Maříková, Dudová and Sloboda (2009: 544) identify the following six main interlinked factors relating to the variability of family-friendly policies and practices in organisations: the concrete welfare policy setting (1), ranging between universalism and familiarism and creating the gendered frame for the operation of organisations; parental (motherhood) ideologies (2) as ideas about what constitutes 'proper' parenthood (motherhood), which, at the level of organisations and at the level of society, can facilitate the performance of parental (maternal) and working roles or aggravate and make impossible the performance of parental (paternal) and working roles in terms of attitudes and evaluations (which are also reflected in policies); the organisational culture of non-discrimination and equal opportunities (3), which is a precondition for the willingness on the part of employers to offer and the ability of employees to take up family-friendly measures; the activity of players (4) in work relations because, as we showed, at the level of organisations we can still discern a culture of employee passivity in terms of negotiating better working conditions, the unwillingness of employers to offer family-friendly measures and flexible working models and the 'blind' acceptance of top-down measures by employees (from superiors) and employers (from the state); the role of trade unions (5) in negotiating working conditions and particular family-friendly policies at the organisational level; and finally, the practical experience of the organisation with their employees as parents (6) is important for building a family-friendly organisational environment. They also emphasize the role of managers who often act as 'gatekeepers' with regard to the use of individual, formalised measures or in terms of the development and implementation of employee demands. This approach might be useful for a cross-country comparative analysis of gendered opportunities in organisations.

1.3. SOCIAL ECONOMY, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GENDER

There is a diverse range of institutions securing economic and social relations in contemporary European countries. Besides the public sector and the private sector (represented by conventional enterprises), there is a wide range of activities that have no clear connection with or do not fall into either of these categories. They are carried out by organisations with different umbrella names depending on the country and may be referred to as the third sector, non-governmental non-profit sector, independent sector, voluntary sector or the social economy. However, according to some authors (cf. Čepelka 2003) the social economy is not the same as the non-profit sector and is not even exclusively formed by it.

In the interest of clarity, we will use the term of social economy in its broader acceptance throughout this study. By social economy, we intend to include organisations from the non-profit sector, although not exclusively. Even though there are various concepts of social economy in different countries, the main principles of its functioning are usually the following:

- a. A primary goal of service to members or the community rather than accumulating profit;
- b. Autonomous management (as distinguished from public programmes);
- c. Democratic decision-making process; which means the involvement / active participation of workers in the management of the organisation through decision-making processes;

- d. Primacy of persons and work over capital and redistribution of profits⁶.

We accept as social economy co-operatives, mutual societies, non-governmental non-profit organisations providing social services such as non-profit associations and foundations, work insertion social enterprise (WISE)⁷ and charities, including churches.

I Social entrepreneurship: development and definition

The concepts of social economy and social entrepreneurship are closely interconnected although they are not (completely) identical. The two concepts have been variously defined using identical characteristics such as: social good; balance; assistance to groups at risk; and positive impact on society, community and the environment. Social entrepreneurship is specific for its combination of profit making with a social purpose (c.f. Dees and Anderson 2003). Social enterprise is a new type of economic entity with new patterns of social as well as economic behaviour and at the same time it signifies a new process, part of which are various entities with their diverse end goals⁸. Social entrepreneurship started to receive increased attention at the end of the 20th century when unprecedented discussion developed on the functionality of economic systems and market mechanisms, and emphasis started to be placed on the social aspect of entrepreneurship (Di Domenico, Haugh, Tracey 2010: 681-683).

The discussion and subsequent definition of social entrepreneurship (SEP) do not yield completely identical results in Europe and the USA. Based on an analysis of SEP's history in the USA and in different European countries, Defourny and Nyssens (2010) show how closely SEP's definitions and their use depend on historical, social, cultural and political conditions of a given country. Despite some specific defining characteristics of SEP stemming from variance in historical (social, cultural and political) development of individual countries (Levie, Hart 2011: 201-206; Di Domenico, Haugh, Tracey 2010: 683-684), there are some basic points that all the definitions share. Defourny and Nyssens (2008: 204) summarise the basic characteristics of social entrepreneurship as follows: *"Social enterprises are not-for-profit private organisations providing goods or services directly related to their explicit aim to benefit the community. They generally rely on a collective dynamics involving various types of stakeholders in their governing bodies, they place a high value on their autonomy and they bear economic risks related to their activity"*.

As collaboration across social organisations has a long tradition in Europe (unlike in the USA), EMES⁹ European Research Network, uniting researchers of all EU member states, was established in the second half of the 1990s under the auspices of the European Commission. The Commission defined the main criteria of SEP as follows:

5 criteria reflect the economic and entrepreneurial dimensions of social enterprises:

- a. A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services;
- b. A high degree of autonomy;
- c. A significant level of economic risk;
- d. A minimum amount of paid work;
- e. An initiative launched by a group of stakeholders.

⁶ Cf. Martin, Osberg 2007, Ninacs 2002.

⁷ WISE are companies employing disadvantaged workers. For a full definition, see (Defourny, Gregoire, Davister, 2004).

⁸ Sociální ekonomika a NNO v ČR. 2005.

⁹ Acronym of the French name "EMergence des Entreprises Sociales en Europe".





5 criteria defining the social dimension of social enterprises:

- a. An explicit aim to benefit the community;
- b. An initiative launched by a group of citizens;
- c. A democratic decision-making process, not based on capital ownership;
- d. A participatory nature - various stakeholders involved;
- e. A limited profit-distribution.

According to the OECD analysis (Huysentruyt, 2014) social enterprises operate in many different sectors from construction and energy to education, health and social work and including retail and community services, often with a specific focus on services. Social enterprises have been found to be more sensitive and responsible to social market needs. This type of enterprise is also opening up new markets at a much higher rate than conventional enterprises are doing. They very often employ disadvantaged or marginalised people who struggle to find a job.

The EU has been increasingly interested in SEP in the past few years. The European Commission launched The Social Business Initiative in 2011, which is to improve the conditions of emergence and development of social enterprises. The goal is to a) improve the access to money, b) give more visibility to social enterprises and c) optimise the legal environment¹⁰.

I Social economy, social entrepreneurship and gender

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In the past years, research into SEP has also focused on its gender dimension. Research in the USA and Great Britain has shown that more women than men work in the non-profit sector, SEP and SE as they are more motivated (e.g. due to time flexibility) to enter this field (Levie, Hart 2011). A secondary analysis of Great Britain data (i.e. GEM¹¹ UK 2009) shows that there are 46% of women in SEP compared to 27% in conventional entrepreneurship (Levie, Hart 2011). Teasdale, McKay, Phillimore, Teasdale (2011) point out that gender needs to be established as the basic unit of analysis for SE and SEP analysis as women form the majority in the third sector of the economy.

The GEM UK 2009 data analysis also shows that people working in social enterprises work fewer hours than in conventional ones. While in SEP, employees would typically work part-time, in conventional business, the time investment would exceed 40 hours a week. Women are much more interested in social entrepreneurship issues and are highly motivated to work in this area mainly for better opportunities to reconcile work and family life (Levie, Hart 2011: 207-213).

Furthermore, a secondary analysis of several data sets from the third sector, volunteerism, non-profit sector and SEP¹² was conducted in Great Britain. On its basis, its authors (Teasdale, McKay, Phillimore, Teasdale 2011) reach several interesting conclusions:

- a. Women outnumber men as volunteers as well as paid employees in education and care.
- b. There are more women managers in the third sector (than in private or public sectors).
- c. Out of all women and men working in the third sector, 45% of women compared to 41% of men hold lower managerial positions, yet at the level of higher management it is only 10% of women compared to 21% men from the total.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publications/docs/sbi-brochure/sbi-brochure-web_en.pdf (consulted on 5-01-2015).

¹¹ The special Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey; in this case, only UK data is analysed.

¹² E.g. data from National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification –NSSEC; Department for Trade and Industry - Social enterprise: A strategy for success; Office for National Statistics - Population estimates.

- d. 50% out of all the women employed in the third sector hold managerial positions. At the same time, women represent 67% of the third sector workforce¹³.
- e. If the low number of women holding managerial positions is a sign of gender inequality, then women in the third sector face it less frequently than in the other sectors. According to Teasdale, McKay, Phillimore and Teasdale (2011), the number of women in managerial positions in the third sector depends on the size of the enterprise: more women hold managerial positions in small enterprises than in large ones. However, this practice can also be seen as a sign of gender inequality, mainly if women work in less prestigious and less well paid fields in this sector. Although there is a gender pay gap in the third sector, it is not as wide as in conventional enterprises. For instance, in the private sector in Great Britain women earn GBP 10.17 per hour compared to GBP 13.51 per hour earned by men (the gender pay gap is 33%); in the public sector women earn GBP 12.46 per hour compared to GBP 15.25 per hour earned by men (the gender pay gap is 22%); while in the third sector women earn GBP 11.13 per hour compared to GBP 12.97 per hour earned by men (the gender pay gap is 16%). (Teasdale, McKay, Phillimore, Teasdale 2011: 64-69)

The comparative study by the OECD shows (Huysentruyt, 2014) that the gender gap in social entrepreneurship is smaller than the gender gap in conventional business. Moreover, women seem to emphasize social goals more and economic goals less than their male counterparts. Comparing women-led social enterprises to men-led ones, a lot of similarities have been found (e.g. in size, profitability and growth and innovation). However, the women-led enterprises seem to be more likely to open up new markets. Perhaps due to women's socialisation and sensitivity towards social needs, women social entrepreneurs are notable "lead innovators". This study also confirms that female social entrepreneurs seem more likely to adopt participatory management practices which empower others and enable them to develop important talents and skills. Some preliminary results of the study suggest that this management style is systematically associated with more innovation (ibid: 20-21). We may, therefore, use social entrepreneurship to look for inspiration, find good practice examples and apply them to conventional entrepreneurship.

1.4. METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE NATIONAL STUDIES

The main objective of the study is to build a knowledge pool on obstacles and opportunities women are facing in relation to their (attempted) participation in economic decision-making in small social and conventional enterprises across six European countries. The study is based on a European comparative analysis of social and conventional enterprises from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy and Romania. The main research question is: What are the obstacles and opportunities women are facing concerning their participation in economic decision-making in small social and conventional enterprises across diverse gender regimes in the European Union?

I Selection of countries and sectors

We have selected six countries to fit different models of women's engagement in the decision-making process. All these countries have different gender equality legislation, different possibilities and measures of work-life reconciliation through welfare state measures and different gender cultural norms in division of paid and unpaid work and engagement of women in the labour market and in decision-making processes.

Among the countries under study, France, Italy and Belgium have adopted fully-fledged quota legislation for the boards of companies including sanctions, whereas Finland have put forward codes of conduct and voluntary measures to improve gender balance on the boards of state owned companies. In the Czech Republic and Romania, two post socialist countries, there is no legislation to promote women in decision-making positions in the corporate or public administration sector.

¹³ In the public sector, women represent 64% of the workforce with 46% of women holding managerial positions. Women make up 40% of the workforce in the private sector with 24% of them holding managerial positions.





When focusing on the work-life reconciliation conditions in the countries compared applying Esping-Andersen's classification, France, Belgium and Italy are defined as corporatist welfare states and Finland as a social democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen 2000: 23). The first group of countries is typified by a general family-support model and Finland by a dual-earner support model (Korpi 2000). In addition, the first group of countries represent welfare states where access to support services and benefits is based on social status, profession or income and where there is no strong support for access of women to the labour market, while in Finland access to services and benefits is rather universal and women are supported in their labour market participation (Lewis 1992). Inclusion of the Czech Republic and Romania in this comparative analysis can provide additional knowledge to this body of literature (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Křížková et al. 2009).

The study proposes a very innovative approach to analysing and understanding the issue by means of drawing comparisons between the state of the art in the social enterprises sector and the conventional enterprises sector. Social enterprises are typically guided by values and principles that are different to those of the conventional sector and women are better represented in top management positions than in the classic business sector. However, even though small and medium enterprises represent the vast majority of employers on the continent, policy measures regarding gender equality mainly focus on the biggest corporate boards, especially when it comes to decision-making.

In our case-oriented analyses, we are comparing one case of conventional and social enterprise across the selected six countries, so altogether 12 companies. In each company, we have conducted interviews with both employees and managers and analysed these together with the corporate materials. Analysis of the legislative framing is also provided. In such a model, the analysis focuses on identifying common patterns in a small number of selected case(s). The international comparative design is very compatible with using both - quantitative and qualitative methods and approaches. Integration of research methods in this way, provides resources to bridge macro (state) - mezzo (company) - micro (individual experience) levels of social analysis and to address different aspects of the research problem, so that a fuller picture might be developed and can be regarded as complementary.

I The method of data collection and analysis

As mentioned above, to bring the complex picture of the corporate environment into an international comparative perspective, the study is based on the multi-type data set. The qualitative data - interviews and documents and quantitative statistical data - are used and combined to answer the research question.

The policy analysis is based on desk research on a) political, social, cultural, historical context and b) legislation, policies, measures and players relevant to the field of the study. Data selection for the desk research is theory driven; mostly the documents on the women in decision-making, social entrepreneurship, work-life reconciliation policies, relevant employment policies (legal acts, public discussions, analytical papers, official documents, etc.) and the national level studies were included in the analysis.

The labour market context is analysed using statistical data and indicators on labour market participation and policy take-up – Eurostat, Eurofound, European Commission and the national statistical datasets are utilised. We have focused on the following measures: gender gap in employment and unemployment rates, gender gap in tertiary education in respect to age, female and male self-employment as well as part-time employment, percentage of fixed-term contracts by gender, employment impact of motherhood and fatherhood, gender wage gap and the percentage of women in decision-making positions.

Qualitative research in the companies included the collection of semi-structured interviews. In each company, we conducted a set of 6 to 10 interviews with both employees and managers. Six interviews were conducted with female employees without subordinates and three to four with male and female managers. Altogether 103 interviews were carried out and the answers collected and analysed together with corporate documents, when available. The interviews focused on the following themes: educational and professional career paths; the importance of work and job satisfaction; personal understanding of benefits and costs of female management; organisational gender culture and the setting of the company process from a gender equality perspective; company

level work-life reconciliation measures on policies and practices to promote women to decision-making positions in the company and experience with discrimination. The managers were also asked about their experience with managerial positions and their ability to look for talents and leaders among their female subordinates.

The data were collected between September 2014 and February 2015. The length of the interviews varied to a great extent in each company and country context; the minimum length was 30 minutes and the maximum 90. The interviews were collected in the national language and then structured thematically by using an analytical grid in English. Relevant passages from the interviews were transcribed and used as a direct quote and, for the purpose of the international comparative study, translated into English.

I Data analysis

In the analysis, the qualitative and quantitative methods are integrated in various ways at various stages of the analysis. In the first step of the analysis – when the structural and institutional factors are analysed - both types of data are used. In the second step, the qualitative data from the interviews are transformed and quantified during the analysis. In the last step, the findings from all steps are integrated to draw the common inference.

1st step – The analysis of the structural framing focused on gender equality and labour market participation, the access of women to decision-making and social entrepreneurship. The inferences are based on policy analysis of the relevant documents. Data on policy reforms of national legislation, official government programmes, scientific research papers and policy statements are analysed with a specific focus on development over the last five to ten years.

2nd step – Descriptive quantitative analysis of the data from various European survey datasets. The analysis focuses on the patterns of female employment and their economic position in the six countries in order to provide empirical evidence on the structural conditions in the social and conventional economy.

3rd step – Thematic analysis of the companies and the individual experiences of employees within the companies. The analysis is focused on the following topics - the organisation/enterprise and representation of women, women in education, evaluation and remuneration processes, women in the promotion process with a specific focus on formal and informal barriers and opportunities for women in management.

The representation of women among the company's workforce is based on statistical data and demonstrated by providing the percentage of women in the three levels of management (lower, middle, top) and the documents framing the organisational processes.

The access of women to education and training and gender equality in evaluation and remuneration is based mainly on the interviews and on the analysis of corporate materials, when available. The analysis of barriers and opportunities for women to participate in the leadership of the enterprise is based mostly on the experiences from the interviews.

The analytical categories are theory driven and their main targets are gender based inequalities and discrimination. After analysing each of these in the companies, the two types of entrepreneurship – conventional and social – were compared focusing on commonalities and differences.

The analysis is case-oriented so the main focus is on the country specific patterns in the access of women and men to management positions within the two types of business – social and conventional. The sequential approach to the analysis allows for the integration of the findings from all steps of the analytical process and with the different level of detail into meta-inferences valid and relevant in the national and European contexts.





CHAPTER II

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Although gender equality constitutes one of the founding values of the European Union, the cultural and social differences among Member States with respect to this principle are striking. The situation remains rather geographically unbalanced given the different historical paths European countries have followed. This chapter aims at covering these national specificities with regard to gender equality and gender balance in corporate decision-making. Thus after having highlighted in a general perspective the cultural, historical and social background of the six countries compared, national gender equality frameworks and their influence on the participation of women in decision-making positions will be presented. A last section will focus more specifically on social economy, social entrepreneurship and social enterprises and gender equality within this economic reality.

2.1. CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SIX COUNTRIES

While the XVIIIth century saw the first women's claims, the major advances occurred in the following century when the literacy and education of women in parallel to the industrialisation of newly born Nation-States brought women out of their households. While women accessed secondary schools and universities in the XIXth century, the XXth century confirmed women's emancipation with the development of women's suffrage in the first half and the legalisation of divorce mainly in the 1970s (Offen 2012).

The time discrepancies among EU countries attest to the various national and regional trends that compose European feminist history, especially in the late XXth century. In Western countries, the French Revolution of 1789 marked the issue of women's participation in political citizenship and claimed for an extended suffrage including women. While the counter-revolutions dampened the development of feminism and women's rights in Europe, the industrialisation in the second half of the XIXth century saw the re-emergence of feminist claims and access of women to education. In western European countries, concurrently to the installation of secondary schools for girls, the opening of tertiary education to women is discussed. In France and Belgium, prestigious universities authorised women to study for all academic degrees from 1880-1890s. The wars of 1870, 1914 and 1935 brought the fight for women's rights to a halt and it is only after the Second World War that women were granted the right to vote (1945 in France and Italy; 1948 in Belgium). Finland, as a Nordic country, also presents a long tradition of gender equality and a positive attitude towards the concept. Both women and men were the first in Europe to receive full political rights in 1906 when the Finnish Diet was first elected by universal suffrage. Already in 1910, the Assembly included 19 women. The contribution of women to public decision-making helped put new issues on the political agenda such as the status of unprotected children and women, women's rights and gender equality. The contribution of more and more women to public decision-making, such as in governments or as President even accelerated the evolution towards equality.

Former socialist countries, such as the Czech Republic and Romania, followed a totally different path. Romanian feminism, at the early stages in the middle of the XIXth century, followed similar developments as in Western Europe: first universities opened to urban and privileged women in the 1880s (Clark 2008); during the industrialisation period, even though it affected only a small proportion of the population, famous feminists made their voices heard for further civic and political rights in the early XXth century. All through the first decades of the XXth century, women fought for female suffrage and eligibility which led the first female senator to be elected in 1939. Universal suffrage was achieved in 1946 when the communist government allowed women to vote and be elected for the deputies' chamber under the same conditions as men (Rodriguez-Ruiz and Rubio-Marín 2012). Except for the voting rights,





the development towards gender equality stopped in Romania as the country entered the communist era. Yet, while the egalitarian philosophy rejected any kind of gender discrimination, women's and feminists' organisations undertook great mobilization for the emancipation of women. Although the specificities of these organisations varied from country to country, they were all state-run mass organisations variously charged with mobilising domestic women and/or representing their nations at international forums concerning women's rights. After the overthrow of the communist dictatorship in 1989, Romania witnessed a transition period in gender relations where the patriarchal system of values within the family, unchallenged under the communist period, returned as the only set of values and traditions ruling gender relations both on a public and private scale (Suciu [undated]). The European Union accession process provided an incentive for a legislative change in the field of equal opportunities. Yet, it turned out to be insufficient with regard to advancing equal opportunities; the lack of political will to prioritise gender equality left women caught between opportunities and vulnerabilities. Even though indisputable progress was made in Romania, the reality remains that the country still has the lowest level of gender equality in the EU¹⁴.

The domination of the Czech lands under the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the XIXth century gathered feminists and nationalists who merged their claims into common demands for a greater autonomy of the Czech people. The contribution of women to Czech independence in the early XXth century together with the influence of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, founder of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia and declared feminist, permitted women to access political rights such as voting and being elected without fighting from the beginning of the First Republic in 1918, earlier than in most of European countries. In the second half of the century, while the Soviet philosophy promoted emancipation and equality, the communist period, as in Romania, once again stifled women's claims. The external domination of the country meant all struggles converged on human rights and national independence (Ferber and Raabe 2003). In the Czech Republic after the 1989 development, the values of emancipation and equality were widely rejected as "the legacy of the Communist political system" (Havelkova 2010). After 1989, the rejection of Communism labelled efforts to promote gender equality as an import from Western feminism hostile to men which resulted in gender equality being viewed as coming either from the communist past or from outside the country. The transition of the Czech Republic in the 1990s, therefore, increased defamilisation of the social policy, including the ideology of "women going back to their natural roles". Even today, the Czech Republic is one of the countries in the EU with the most gender-stereotypical attitudes about the division of roles in the family (Hašková 2007).

I History of women's labour market participation

Concurrently to their accession to education and political arenas, women were granted the right to progressively access the labour market. In line with the first political rights women had acquired since the end of the 19th century, the need for reconstruction after the Second World War and the beginnings of European integration contributed to the further integration of women into the European labour market. Their participation greatly depended on the industrialisation processes and welfare state models of each country.

Hence in Western and Nordic countries, positions formerly reserved for men were opened to women in the late XIXth century: the first female nurses and midwives started to serve in the 1880s. Women were allowed to access the work inspectorate in 1892 in France and 1901 in Belgium (Schweitzer 2013). The further opening up of education and new positions to women all through the XXth century did not challenge the horizontal segregation of the disciplines though: women remain much more numerous in humanities than in sciences at the University and some professions continue to be very poorly accessible to women such as those in War Offices and at the Court. The main developments towards gender equality in Western countries occurred in the last three decades of the XXth century. The fertility control that spread out in all Western and Nordic European countries made it easier for women to join the labour market. As a matter of fact, Finland legalised abortion in 1970, France in 1975 and Italy in 1978.

¹⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality, 2013.

All educational institutions became mixed in the 1970s, leading to an increase in the number of female graduates and a feminisation of the highest positions in the labour market. Nowadays, nearly 30% of EU citizens aged between 25 and 64 have a third level degree (see Appendix 1) and close to three fifths of graduates are women. On the labour market, women represent around half of the labour force in France (48%) and Finland (49%). In Belgium, the share of women is close to the EU average (46%). Only Italy contrasts with this trend with a share of women in the total active population closer to the situation in the Czech Republic and Romania (43-44%)¹⁵.

Under state socialism, the strong ideological pressure for the “emancipation” of women through paid work and specific measures on equal gender access to education, training and the labour market increased the participation of women in paid employment during the socialist state period. While the high level of women’s labour market participation became part of the Czech and Romanian lifestyles, gender inequalities in the labour markets (such as gender wage gap and unequal representation of women in decision-making positions) and households (such as unequal division of unpaid work and care) remained unchallenged. Despite the relatively high employment levels of women, supported significantly by state-run childcare services for preschool children, gender inequalities such as horizontal and vertical gender segregation as well as gender wage gaps were high during the socialist state period (Křížková and Vohlídalová 2009). Even after the fall of the Soviet Union, the aforementioned “modern patriarchy” which arose in Romania after 1989 was characterised by the revival of women’s economic dependence on men given the very low level of women’s wages (three times lower than men’s) (Suciu [undated]). By neglecting the importance of gender equality in the share of family duties, many Czech and Romanian women were overburdened, combining a full-time job with caring for the household and the family (Kalinova 2007).

These varied national paths did not suggest that women achieved equality in any of these countries. Still today, in all European countries, women and men do not experience equal opportunities on the labour markets. As a matter of fact, the last Eurofound Working Condition Survey (2015) underlined that work time differences between men and women remain very much marked: while men have longer paid work times (39 hours a week) compared to women (33 hours), they work less when the work as a whole (paid, unpaid and transit time) is considered. Women reach 64 hours weekly against 56 hours for men¹⁶. The following sections, therefore, attempt to characterise the gender differences prevailing in the labour markets of each of the countries compared in order to understand their cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

I Gender equality on national labour markets

Despite the fact that women exceed men in tertiary education attainment in most countries compared¹⁷, they remain in some aspects disadvantaged on the labour market. While the European employment rate for men reached 75% in 2015, the share of women working was 11.5 percentage points (hereafter abbreviated to ‘p.p.’) lower, achieving 63.5% only (see Appendix 2). The same trend can be found in all countries, though there are striking differences in the level of female labour market attainment. The female employment rates vary from 50.3% in Italy to 72.1% in Finland affecting the national gender gap; thus, it is much wider in Italy, the Czech Republic and Romania whereas in Finland the high female employment rate shows a small gender gap (only 1.9 p.p. difference). Given the rather low male employment rate in Italy compared to the EU average, it is quite likely that the country was still experiencing the consequences of the economic crisis in 2015. As for the Czech Republic and Romania, the gender gap is particularly significant given the high male employment rates.

Unlike the level of employment, the level of unemployment – at least when the EU28 average is considered – is rather equal for men and women with a rate of 8.8% of the male active population (men from 25 to 74 years old) and 9.2% of the female active population (see Appendix 3). The situation is probably due to differential impacts of the economic crisis on men and women on the labour market in different countries. In France, for instance, where

¹⁵ Eurostat. 2014a.

¹⁶ Eurofound. 2015.

¹⁷ As for the Czech Republic, the statement applies only to the youngest age cohorts.





the industrial sector was most affected by the crisis, the crisis caused a large increase in male unemployment. Women, though also affected by the crisis, were able to benefit from job creation in the services sector, which continues to be highly feminised¹⁸.

A few countries see their unemployment results being correlated with employment figures. Where relatively high levels of employment are to be found – that is the case of the male working population in the Czech Republic (82.2% employed) or the female working population in Finland (72.1%), for instance – low levels of unemployment are recorded. Thus, only 4.3% of the active male population in the Czech Republic and 6.4% of the active female population in Finland are unemployed. Similarly, in Italy, the relatively low levels of employment both for men (69.7%) and women (50.3%) go along with high levels of unemployment: 9.8% for men and 11.8% for women.

The case of Romania is more intriguing as the country shows both low levels of employment and low levels of unemployment. One of the hypotheses pointed out by Balica, Dragolea, Marin and Ene justified the relatively low female unemployment rate in 2015 by the fact that Romanian women were often forced into economic migration¹⁹, informal employment or domestic work and these are not taken into account in unemployment rates (2015). Although it is difficult to estimate the exact number of migrants due to the high volume of undocumented migration, official Eurostat data shows that in 2012 more than half of the people that migrated from Romania were women (more than 100 000 women out of 170 000 migrants). The difference between official employment and unemployment rates for women could, therefore, be explained by informal employment. Although difficult to define and measure, informal employment in Romania is dominated by young women²⁰. Furthermore, in 2012, a staggering 19.5% of women identified themselves as household workers against 7% of men²¹.

I Impact of parenthood on employment

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Parenthood widely influences employment rates of men and women in the EU. However, the employment rates appear to correlate differently whether male or female parents are considered. Fatherhood has a positive impact on male employment: -11 p.p. difference is to be found between employment rates of men (age group 20-49 years old) without children and those with a child aged 0-6 years old in the EU-28. In other words, men who are parents are more likely to be in employment than those who are not. On the contrary, the employment impact of motherhood reaches +10.7% (meaning childless women have almost 11 p.p. higher employment rate), highlighting the negative correlation between maternity and female employment (see Appendix 4). Yet again, these impacts are very different depending on the country considered.

Hence in countries with low female employment rates, like Italy and Romania, motherhood does not affect female employment rates (respectively 2 and 3.1 percentage points) as much as in countries with a high integration of women in the labour market. Finland, which has the highest female employment rate of all countries compared, also presents a high employment impact of motherhood (17.4%).

Only the Czech Republic seems to run completely contrary to this correlation: while the national female employment rate is close to the European average (63.8% compared to 62.6%), the employment impact of motherhood reaches 35.7 p.p. The main factors contributing to this drastic fall of the female employment rate in some countries such as the Czech Republic are: long periods of parental leave, low availability and affordability of childcare services, low availability of flexible working arrangements as well as a prevalence of gender-stereotypical attitudes within the household (Křížková, Maříková, Dudová and Sloboda 2009; Křížková, Formánková and Vohlídalová 2014).

¹⁸ <http://www.inegalites.fr/spip.php?article1122> (consulted 04-02-2016).

¹⁹ The main countries of migration for Romanians (women and men) are Spain, Italy and, recently, Germany.

²⁰ For a discussion on this topic in regards to Romania, see: Parlevliet J., Xenogiani T. 2008: 43.

²¹ Romanian Institute of Statistics. 2014.

As for the employment impact of fatherhood, men with children tend to enjoy higher employment levels in all countries compared. The lowest employment impact of fatherhood is to be found in former state socialist countries, that is to say the Czech Republic (-9.6 p.p.) and Romania (-8.2 p.p.). On the contrary, Belgium and Italy show high employment impact of fatherhood. Several researches suggest two different explanations: either men, on approaching fatherhood status are undertaking substantial efforts to support the household through employment, or fathers may be more protected by employers, especially in societies where the culture considers them to be the breadwinners. This high employment impact of fatherhood could also be due to the need for a secure employment situation for fathers as a prerequisite to becoming parents (Mills, Tsang, Präg, Ruggeri, Miani and Hoorens 2014).

I Gender balance in fixed-term and part-time contracts

Across Europe the proportion of fixed-term contracts is slightly higher for women than for men: 14.2% among female workers against 13.3% among male. Yet fixed-term contract work in Europe presents subtle gender bias. First, this gender balance tends to be very different depending on the countries (see Appendix 5). Romania even goes against this trend with very low levels of fixed-term contracts and a higher male rate (1.7% against 1.2% for women) as a consequence of a long legal tradition of inflexible regulations with regard to temporary work (Clauwaert and Schömann 2013). The latest changes to employment regulations in the Romanian Labour Code that came into force in 2011²² are aimed at more flexible working relations as well as more employer-friendly adjustments²³. Romania having one of the highest proportions of low-wage earners already among employees with indefinite contracts (25.4 %)²⁴, low wages also may act as a prohibitive factor driving people to choose informal employment and/or migration rather than temporary work. In Finland, the proportion of fixed-term contracts is high for both genders but the discrepancy with the European average is particularly important for women: 18.3% of them in Finland have a fixed-term contract against 14.2% in the EU-28. According to Finland Statistics, about a quarter of temporary workers did not want a permanent job. However, for 64% of temporary workers, fixed-term employment results from a lack of permanent job offers. Among them, 134 000 were women and 72 000 men, underlining the fact that female temporary work is mainly involuntary²⁵.

Gender bias is much clearer when it comes to part-time work (see Appendix 6). As for the EU-28, 32.8% of female workers are employed part-time against only 9.7% of male workers. Since the beginning of the crisis, the share of part-time work among total employment increased by about 2 p.p. for both men and women leaving the gender gap unchanged (see Appendices 7 and 8). A Eurofound analysis demonstrated that this upward trend is particularly noticeable for involuntary part-time work due to a scarcity of full-time jobs since the 2008 economic crisis²⁶.

According to Eurostat, the remaining gap between women and men could be related to the fact that women dedicate more time to family responsibilities because looking after children or adults in need of care was a reason for part-time work for 14% of young women against 1% of men²⁷. Similarly, the proportion of part-time female workers is higher for mothers: in 2010, 20.5% of women without children (aged 20-49) were working part-time in the EU compared to 36.4% of mothers. As for men, only 9% work part-time when they do not have children against 4% of fathers (Mills, Tsang, Präg, Ruggeri, Miani and Hoorens 2014), confirming the positive correlation of fatherhood on employment.

²² Since changes were made to the Romanian Labour code, temporary employment agencies can include open-ended employment contracts with temporary workers and the latter can now be freely used for specific and temporary activities.

²³ <http://www.aramt.ro/en/info-munca-temporara/> (consulted 03-02-2016).

²⁴ Eurostat. 2010a.

²⁵ http://www.stat.fi/til/tyti/2010/15/tyti_2010_15_2011-06-07_kat_001_en.html (consulted 03-02-2016).

²⁶ Eurofound. 2013.

²⁷ Eurostat. 2015.





This gender gap also varies among the countries compared. In Finland, results follow the European trend in which women more commonly have part-time jobs than men. The wider gap is to be found in Belgium where 9% of male workers are employed on a part-time basis against 41.4% of women (32.4 p.p.). The gender gap is also rather important in Italy (24 p.p.) and in France (22.9 p.p.). This Western trend may be explained by the fiscal incentives set up in Belgium and France at least. These subsidise part-time work through reduced social security contributions and tax relief for companies (Garnero, Kampelmann and Rycx 2013). In the case of Belgium, the authors showed that, given the fact that male part-time work was predominant in industries, it was more likely that reductions in working hours for male workers were due to collective bargaining. Female part-time work, predominant in the service sector, is rather the result of individual reductions of working hours because of domestic duties. The few men, who decide to reduce their working time themselves, would do so in order to engage in training.

On the contrary, former socialist countries present rather low and more gender balanced rates. In the Czech Republic, only 10.3% of women and 3.1% of men are employed part-time. In Romania, the gender gap is even smaller with 11.1% women working part-time against 9.1% of male workers. This may be due to the fact that both in the Czech Republic and Romania, no governmental measures aim to promote part-time work. Even though the national Labour Codes provide for part-time work in the two countries, the low wages make it economically unattractive and an inaccessible option for many families. Part-time work rather serves as a professional integration tool dedicated to people facing difficulties in entering or re-entering the labour market (such as those aged over 50 years old or people with disabilities)²⁸. However, some studies show that these categories of employees often take up part-time work involuntarily (Dudová 2008; Tilly 1996 and 1992; Wallace 2002).

I A different access to self-employment

Sex-disaggregated rates regarding self-employment also confirm gender inequalities. Out of the total male employment in Europe, self-employment accounts for 18.4% whereas only 9.9% of the total female workers are self-employed (see Appendix 9). The Flash Eurobarometer n°283²⁹ identifies a number of barriers to self-employment. These include access to finance, complex administrative procedures and difficulty in obtaining sufficient information about how to start up a business. The fear of the possibility of going bankrupt is also a key factor, the latter being all the more persistent in the current context of post-economic crisis³⁰. These barriers are particularly difficult to overcome for women (De Jong 2013); as for financing for instance, only 20.3% of the EU businesses launched in 2008 with venture capital were run by women. In a research paper from 2011, Hertz pointed out women may be subjected to stricter “quality control” on lending, asked for more collateral than men for loans, charged higher interest rates and refused loans more frequently than their male fellows (2011). Furthermore, women have access to fewer networks to help them advance companies, find partners and employees, secure finance and so on.

Once more, the situation varies among countries. In France, self-employment rates are particularly low for both genders: 14.3% of the total employment for men and 6.8% for women. While the gender gap remains, the low rates, compared to the European average, suggest the presence in France of national barriers hindering access to self-employment for all workers. A complex administrative system and high social taxes are mentioned as the main barriers, although France is on its way to facilitate the access to self-employment, thanks to the introduction of an “auto-entrepreneur” status³¹. In direct contrast, self-employment represents an important share of the total employment in Italy: 27.2% for men, 15.8% for women. While self-employment is identified in many countries as a solution to the current economic crisis³², Italian entrepreneurs also benefit from start-up incentives mainly targeting young entrepreneurs, the unemployed and urban depressed areas. These incentives focused on women until 2006: by introducing a specific law (215/92) that became operational in 1997, Italy

²⁸ Eurofound. 2010: 34-35.

²⁹ European Commission. 2010a.

³⁰ European Commission. 2010b: 12.

³¹ European Commission. 2010b: 12.

³² European Commission. 2010b: 33.

funded start-ups or SMEs with a significant share of women (not less than 60%) among their partners and on their boards. Since 2006 however, no funding for female start-ups was made available, which probably partly explains the gender gap existing in 2012 (11.4 p.p.)³³.

It is also worth mentioning the share in former socialist countries where self-employment is quite common: 12.2% for women and 21.6% for men in the Czech Republic and 11.2% for women and 23.6% for men in Romania. In both countries, measures were set up as incentives to support self-employment. In the Czech Republic, regular low-scale measures supporting entrepreneurship were provided as well as retraining courses (to enable start-up entrepreneurs to seek low interest rate loans for instance)³⁴. In Romania, the most significant measure has been the lower income tax rate applied to micro-enterprises since 2007. The measure was eliminated in 2010 due to public budget restrictions but an Unemployment Insurance Fund still provides subsidised loans to SMEs and self-employed people at a preferential rate³⁵.

I The remaining gender pay gap

As the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of men and women, the gender pay gap highlights a discrimination of female work. Indeed, in the EU-28 in 2014, women earned 16.1% less than men in full-time equivalent work across all sectors (industry, construction and services - excluding public administration, defence and compulsory social security) (see Appendix 10). Across the Member States compared, the gender pay gap ranges from 6.5% in Italy to 22.1% in the Czech Republic. According to the European Commission³⁶, a high gender pay gap, such as can be found in the Czech Republic or Finland, is typical for a highly segregated labour market where women are more concentrated in a restricted number of sectors or professions. As for Italy, the small gap is due to the low female employment rate. Indeed, few women have entered the labour market compared to other European countries and those who have earned relatively more than the average salaries. Thus, the difference between men's and women's average wages is smaller than it would be if more women worked, including in lower-salary jobs. In France, the gender pay gap can be explained by the fact that more women work part time, interrupt their careers more frequently, work less over-time than men do and tend to work in positions that entail fewer responsibilities, require lower qualifications and are paid lower wages. However, the Ministry of Women's Rights deemed that almost 9% of the wage gaps between men and women in 2010 remain unexplained³⁷.

I Gender equality in economic decision-making

According to the classification of occupation by ISCO 08 (LFSS) for 2012, when women are integrated into the labour market, they tend to be overrepresented in occupations such as professionals, clerks, service and market/sales workers and elementary occupations, whereas men mainly work as craft and related trade workers or plant and machine operators and assemblers. No major country difference is to be noted with regard to this horizontal segregation. The situation is similar for vertical segregation: Eurostat data on women in decision-making positions show that the "glass ceiling" holds strong in all European countries. In no country do women surpass the number of men whatever political or economic leadership is considered (see Appendix 11). Indeed, in the EU-28, the share of women in Parliament accounted for 29% of the total number of seats; the same proportion (28%) is to be found among the 28 national governments. In the economic sphere, the integration of women is even worse with only 21% of women in European central banks and it is even more acute in some of them.

³³ European Commission. 2010b: 22.

³⁴ European Commission. 2010b: 15.

³⁵ European Commission. 2010b: 41.

³⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situation-europe/index_en.htm (consulted 04-02-2016).

³⁷ Ministry Of Women's Rights. 2014: 4.





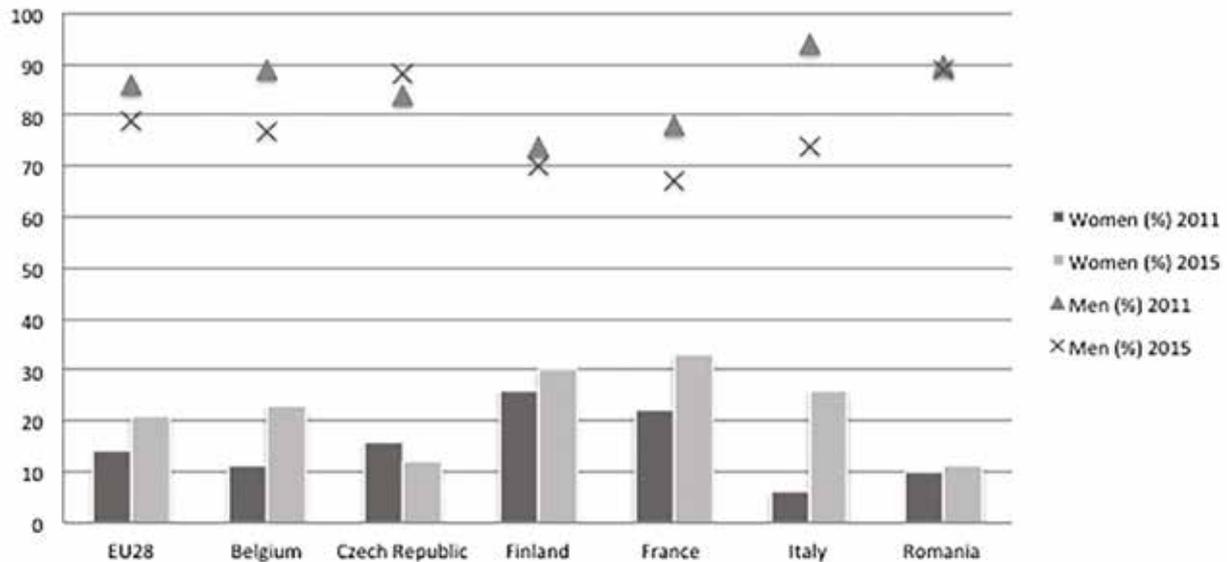
With regard to the corporate sphere more specifically, the figure for women on boards of the largest quoted companies in the EU-28 is only 21%. Nonetheless, the “glass ceiling” is thicker in some countries than others (see Chart 1 below). Thus, women occupy more than a quarter of the seats on boards of the largest listed companies in France (33%) and Finland (30%). In these two countries, more than half of corporate boards have at least two female board members³⁸. The recent laws set up in 2011 in France, Belgium and Italy (see below) are still bearing fruit: indeed, since the implementation of the legislation, the share of women among board members increased in Belgium from 11% to 23%, in France from 22% to 33% and in Italy from 6% to 26%. In the Finnish case, no binding legislation was adopted but a long tradition of gender equality was made concrete by the 1987 Equality Act. It marked the development of women’s integration in the labour market and fostered their participation in economic decision-making. The first country to set up quantitative targets for state-owned companies, Finland had been a long-time example to follow for the rest of the EU countries. Yet since 2013, the Belgian, French and Italian catch-ups have proved that binding legislation tended to show the most significant results. In the meantime, in countries without legislation, the situation stagnated or deteriorated. Thus, in Romania the percentage of women among board members slightly increased from 10 to 11% over the same period. In the Czech Republic, however, the share of women fell from 16% in 2011 to 12% in 2015³⁹, proving that legislation clearly matters.

³⁸ European Commission. 2012: 11.

³⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/business-finance/supervisory-board-board-directors/index_en.htm (consulted 05-02-2016).

Chart 1 - Women among board members (evolution from 2011 to 2015)

Source: European Commission, 2011 and 2015



I Women’s participation in social enterprises

The broad variety of definitions and laws in the EU (see Chapter 1) made it difficult to collect reliable data on social enterprises in Europe. Sex disaggregated data are therefore even more inaccessible. Notwithstanding, the 2010 Eurostat figures, along with national and comparative research projects, made some data available that this section aims to analyse. As a start, the following table summarises the share of total paid employment in the social economy for the six countries compared. In line with the historical development of the social economy concept followed in each Member State, the highest rates are to be found in EU countries with a long social economy tradition, namely: Belgium, France and Italy. Finland is slightly above the European average and right in the EU-15 average (7.41%) while the Czech Republic and Romania are still just starting to develop this sector.

Among the projects intending to examine this growing European social economy, SELUSI mapped the fields of activity social enterprises in Europe mainly cover⁴⁰. It resulted that 75% of the 600 social enterprises sample worked either in social services (16.7%), employment and training (14.88%), environment (14.52%), education (14.52%) or economic, social and community development (14.34%). The cultural and health sectors represent about 7% each whereas housing, business associations and law gather less than 3% of the sample. However, this sectorial repartition depends to a large extent on the country. Hence in Romania, social enterprises are mainly established in the health and social work sectors⁴¹ and in Italy, 40% of social enterprises operate in social care and civic protection⁴². In the Czech Republic, social enterprises rather tend to operate in the environment and land-based industries (restaurants and cafés (24%), maintenance of green spaces and cleaning (22%), and food sales and services (21%)) (Francová 2014).

⁴⁰ European Commission. 2013b.
⁴¹ SELUSI. 2011.
⁴² European Commission. 2014a: 16.



Table 1 - Paid employment in social economy (2009 – 2010)

Source: Eurostat, 2010b

	Total employment (in thousands)	Employment in the social economy (in thousands)	Rate
EU-27	14,128.13	216,397.80	6.53%
Belgium	462.54	4,488.70	10.30%
Czech Republic	160.09	4,885.20	3.28%
Finland	187.20	2,447.50	7.65%
France	2,318.54	25,692.30	9.02%
Italy	2,228.01	22,872.30	9.74%
Romania	163.35	9,239.40	1.77%

Similarly, very little sex-disaggregated data exist with regard to gender balance in paid employment. Recent researches have shown that women's participation rate in the non-profit sector (including paid employment) is higher than men's (Themudo 2009). Several authors have estimated the share of women working in the non-profit sector to 70%, even though the rate varies greatly across the sectors (Preston and Sacks 2010, Leete 2006 in Faulk, Hamilton Edwards, Lewis and McGinnis 2013). As for social economy more specifically, no reliable figures are available yet. A few national studies have estimated the share of female employment in the national social economy around two-thirds (Buckingham and Teasdale 2013); in Belgium, women represent the major part (69.8%) of the employees while they only represent 35.5% of the workers in the rest of the private sector (in 2012). In France, approximately one out of seven women in a salaried position works in the sector⁴³; and in Italy, 70% of about 160 000 workers in the social co-operatives are women⁴⁴.

Two factual elements permit to better understand this overrepresentation of women in social economy (Saussey and Degavre 2015): on the one hand, the sectorial specialisation of social economy organisations relates to traditional female-dominated sectors such as health, social action, education, etc.; on the other hand, social economy offers resistance and empowerment perspectives for women by rehabilitating competencies and knowledge that had been trivialised in the conventional sector. This capacity of social economy organisations to empower women is not the only explanatory factor justifying the overrepresentation of women in the sector. Indeed, the work of Saussey and Degavre underlines how women's arrival in the social economy sector often occurs as a resistance practice, in response to an individual professional path characterised by difficulties to find a job or stay in a job in the conventional private sector.

⁴³ CNCRES. 2008: 4.

⁴⁴ ISTAT. 2006 in Ghibelli, P. Bellione, S. 2015.

In terms of career development and women's participation in decision-making, social enterprises seem disposed towards women: it is estimated that 43% of social enterprises are women-led in Europe⁴⁵; they even outnumber men in the Romanian social economy. Women-led social enterprises in general are described as being as big and as innovative as men's. Yet the oldest social enterprises (over 20 years in existence) are largely (70%) led by men (Huysentruyt 2014); this suggests female social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomenon. The specific difficulties encountered by women when developing their social entrepreneurship projects may also explain to some extent this lower representation of women among the top managers of the oldest social enterprises. Similarly to conventional self-employment, the European Women's Lobby identified difficult access to finance for women as the most common barrier to success for female social entrepreneurship. It also noted the burden of a double working day and the lack of time as a significant obstacle given that the majority of women are also responsible for household and caring duties (Shrair 2015).

In fact, the overrepresentation of women does not suppose that the social economy is a friendly environment for them. In all countries compared, both social and conventional enterprises present difficulties in terms of offering direct support for the promotion and equal treatment of women in management (see Chapter 3). The gender pay gap in the social economy is reflective of the low specificity of social economy organisations with regard to gender equality. As a matter of fact, female social entrepreneurs in Europe earn 29% less than their male counterparts (Estrin, Stephan and Vujić 2015). In France, the gender pay gap (-8% for women) is lower in social enterprises than in the conventional private sector (-13%) but the difference increases as we consider higher positions in the hierarchy (-21% for female managers in French social enterprises). Consistently, the deepest gender pay gaps are to be found in cooperatives and mutual funds where the governance systems are the most vertical (respectively, -15 and -25%) while the gender pay gap is limited to -6% in associations⁴⁶.

The lower job quality in the social economy sector was also pointed out by several authors. In the absence of European data disaggregated by type of organisation and by sex, it is not possible to estimate the trend at EU level. As for France, comparative studies underlined that the figure for women working part-time in the social economy was 45% whereas it was 30% in the conventional sector. The lack of security is combined with the risk of exhaustion due to the lack of support and back-up within social economy organisations. Even if the social economy seems to offer empowerment opportunities to women, the low job quality still puts into question the real capacity of the sector to offer them sustainable positions (Saussey and Degavre, 2015).

⁴⁵ http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/146138_fr.html (consulted 11-03-2016).

⁴⁶ APEC, CNCRES. 2012.





2.2. GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORKS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN THE SIX COUNTRIES COMPARED

These figures must be highlighted by the different national gender equality frameworks that compose our sample. These frameworks depend on both gender equality machinery, made compulsory in each Member State by the European Union, and a set of anti-discrimination laws. Thus, this section aims to give an overview of these machineries and the legislative context, including quota laws when countries have implemented them.

I Gender equality infrastructure in the six countries

The European Union made it compulsory for each Member State to set up a national equality body to monitor the application of gender equality laws. Depending on the historical background of each country, Member States complied with the EU Directives by either designating existing institutions or setting up new ones. General equality bodies existing in all EU countries are in charge of tackling all kinds of discrimination: this is the role that has been assigned to the Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) in Belgium, the Defender of Rights in the Czech Republic and in France, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman in Finland, the Office against Racial Discrimination in Italy and the National Council for Combating Discrimination in Romania. It happens that these general institutions also cover gender discrimination. This is the case in France where the Defender of Rights is responsible for ensuring the “due enforcement of the law by overseeing the implementation of legislation and the impact thereof” and for “analysing practices to guarantee equality and facilitating change”⁴⁷ in order to support gender equality. Similarly, in Romania, the National Council for Combating Discrimination is dealing with all types of discrimination including gender discrimination. For example, the Council receives complaints from individuals who are discriminated against on the grounds of their gender (most of the time, the Council deals with cases of sexual harassment or maternity discrimination).

I Compulsory national gender equality bodies

Most of the time equality bodies specialised in gender have been appointed. It often takes the form of an embedded department or council under the responsibility of the national executives, except in Finland where the Ombudsman for Equality is an independent authority. The Ombudsman is in charge of supervising compliance with the Finnish Act on Equality between Women and Men by providing guidance and advice. Yet, the Finnish government also has its own gender equality structure called the Gender Equality Unit (TASY) which reports to the Minister of Family Affairs and Social Services. The TASY is in charge of the preparation, coordination and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in government administration but the policy implementation and operationalisation are left to each ministry, through a gender equality working group and gender-mainstreaming coordinator. All these working groups and coordinators are supervised by the TASY which gives all stakeholders an arena to share best practices and feedback.

In Belgium, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IEWM) is an autonomous public body founded in 2002 that reports to the government and provides data concerning the situation of women in Belgium, promotes gender equality in the professional sphere, and combats violence and gender discrimination. In order to achieve these goals, the IEWM undertakes research, advice and awareness-raising studies. The Institute also monitors the enforcement of federal and regional policies concerning gender equality. An additional body, the Council for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, established since 1993, is also active at the federal level but only has an advisory role.

⁴⁷ Since the Ordinary Law ratified on 29 March 2011, the French Defender of Rights has been responsible for the duties of the National Ombudsman, Children's Rights Advocate, High Anti-Discrimination Authority (HALDE) and the National Security Ethics Commission (CNDS).

Romania also had set up a semi-independent body prior to EU accession but the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) established in 2005 was closed in 2010 as a result of budgetary cuts. The ANES duties were transferred to a new division of the Ministry of Labour in charge of combatting discrimination in general. It was at the end of 2014 that a Department for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women was re-established, effectively replacing the ANES; it is “responsible for drawing up, coordinating and applying government strategies and policy in the field of equal opportunities between men and women, and exercising state competencies in strategy and regulation for the field of equal opportunities between men and women”⁴⁸.

In the Czech Republic, the Department for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men used to be part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs before being moved to the Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation in 2014. The Department for Equal Opportunities is in charge of coordinating gender equality policies along with “gender coordinators” that are responsible for the promotion of equality between women and men in their ministry. The department for Equal Opportunities performs the role of secretariat to a second gender equality institution, the Council of the Government for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. As the national coordinator for the agenda of equal opportunities of women and men, the Council comprises four committees which respectively focus on the reconciliation of working and private life, the institutional mechanisms for gender equality, women in politics and decision-making positions and prevention of domestic violence. In 2012, an additional working group on men and gender equality was established under the Council.

In France, besides the independent Defender of Rights, a Ministry dedicated to Women’s Rights was created in 1974. It has alternated between being a State Secretary or a State Department depending on the form of the executive chosen by the President. Since 2013, a decree from the French President enabled the creation of a High Council on Gender Equality between Women and Men, instituted under the Prime Minister to replace the former Observatory on Gender Equality. The High Council also took over the responsibilities of the National Commission against violence towards women and the Commission on the image of women in the media. The High Council is, among others, composed of high-public officials for gender equality (one in each ministry) in charge of implementing a mainstreaming approach in their respective policy areas. It works side by side with the Department of Women’s Rights and Equality (SDFE), the government body in charge of gender equality and gender mainstreaming at national, regional and departmental level.

Finally in Italy, in the wake of the World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Ministry for Equal Opportunities was established in 1995, followed by the Department for Equal Opportunities in 1997. Attached to the Office of the Prime Minister, the Department of Equal Opportunities is the functional structure working for the drafting, realisation and evaluation of equality policies for the Italian government. Councillors reporting to the National Council of Equality are also appointed to promote and monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles in the workplace. As public officials, they support the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs with regard to female employment, work-life balance, social security and social welfare and fighting gender discrimination. Finally, the Committee for women’s entrepreneurship, established within the Ministry of Industry, aims to promote substantive equality and equal opportunities for men and women in economic and entrepreneurial activities. Further to EU requirements, these governmental stakeholders work mainly with parliamentary committees dedicated to gender issues.

⁴⁸ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/romania/structures> (consulted 2016-03-15).





I Supportive local and non-governmental organisations

In a couple of countries, regardless of the system of government (centralised or federated), national gender equality bodies are also supported by local partners that both implement gender equality policies and action plans on the field in a top-down dynamic and provide the governments with feedback when it comes to experimenting a measure or assessing the policies. Given the federal system of Belgium, each region (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia) and each community (Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking) has its own government and a gender equality body under this government. Even with a sound Jacobin tradition, the French regional level contributes to the State's action through the Regional Delegations on Women's Rights and Equality (DRDFE). Coordinated at the national level by the Department of Women's Rights and Equality (SDFE), these directorates are in charge of giving the necessary impetus for gender equality at local level. In Italy, the Equal Opportunity Commissions that replaced the Equal Opportunities Committees in 2010 have been active in each institution of the public sector since 1988 (regional, provincial, municipal administrations, universities, local units of the national health system, etc.). They are in charge of formulating advice and implementing projects to enhance workers' welfare and to combat discrimination. This is nothing like a Western trend since the Romanian County Commission for equal opportunities between women and men gathers representatives of the 41 counties constituting the country.

Besides public bodies, private players also dedicate their actions for greater gender equality in their country. This is the case of both corporate stakeholders such as trade unions – at least in Western European countries – and civil society organisations (CSOs). Indeed, in Belgium, France and Italy trade unions are very committed to gender equality. As a matter of fact, trade unions in Belgium, France and Italy played an important role in the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies by signing a “gender mainstreaming charter” in 2004 (Ardura and Silvera 2002). In this document, the three largest Belgian trade unions (FGTB, CGSLB and CSC) committed themselves to establish gender mainstreaming policies in their organisations. In France, joint labour committees comprising representatives of employees and employers, contribute to operationalisation of gender equality in the workplace through collective negotiations. Finally, in Italy, trade unions contribute to gender equality by appointing along with the administration, an equal number of men and women to make up the aforementioned Committee of Guarantee for equal opportunities.

As for CSOs, their contribution through the national gender equality infrastructures is often to be found in umbrella organisations of women's associations. Their participation in public decision-making and level of impact on gender equality is, however, less formalised and depends somewhat on the mixed character of the gender equality bodies set up in each partner country. Only a few institutions formally provide for their participation. In Italy for instance, the National Commission for equality of men and women, established in 2006 and comprising 26 members is in charge of representing women's organisations and civil society organisations in order to facilitate their collaboration with the Minister. Similarly in the Czech Republic, the Council of the Government for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men brings together representatives of governmental ministries, non-governmental organisations, social partners and gender experts. In Romania, the new division of the Ministry of Labour is supported by the advisory National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men which is composed of representatives of ministries and central public bodies, national trade unions and entrepreneurship organisations as well as established non-governmental organisations.

Even though gender equality bodies exist in the six countries, their capacity to influence the political agenda and implement gender equality policies on the ground depends to a large extent on the means that are put at their disposal. Thus, the closure of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) as part of austerity measures five years after its establishment can probably partly explain why Romania still has the lowest level of gender equality in the European Union⁴⁹. In Italy, the action of the Minister has always been impaired by the lack of resources, the shortness of term of office (nine ministers in 18 years) and sometimes even the lack of experience in gender issues. In Belgium, it is the superposition of various gender equality bodies at different administrative levels that hindered the development of a joint and mainstreamed approach to gender equality.

⁴⁹ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2013.

I Gender equality legislation in the six countries

Gender equality has been one of the founding values of the European Union since its inception. The Treaty of Rome signed by the six founding countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 committed Member States to the right of equal work for men and women in the newly born European Community (article 119)⁵⁰. Following this first step, all treaties of the European Union mentioned this strong attachment to gender equality (Treaty of Amsterdam, Treaty of the EU and Treaty on the Functioning of the EU). In 2000 the Charter of Fundamental Rights reaffirmed the prohibition of gender discrimination (Article 21) as well as stating that equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay (Article 23). Several European directives – about 15 – were adopted between 1975 and 2010 in order to achieve gender equality on the continent⁵¹. Further to these specific measures, the European Commission adopted a first text about gender mainstreaming in 1996, just after the Beijing Conference.

The integration of gender mainstreaming into the policy process was considered by the European Commission as one of the best ways to fight discrimination against women⁵². Qualified as an “*acquis communautaire*”, gender mainstreaming permitted to put the gender equality issue on the agenda of all EU policies. These two types of tools either specific (directives) or transversal (gender mainstreaming) form the dual approach of the EU to gender equality. In recent years, the EU institutions intended to give a new boost to gender equality in the workplace. In March 2011, the European Commission thus called on EU publicly listed companies to sign the “Women on the Board Pledge for Europe” within the year and voluntarily commit to reach a level of representation of women of 30% by 2015 and to 40% by 2020⁵³. Given the failure of the Commission’s call – a year later, only 24 companies had signed the pledge⁵⁴ – the European Commission came with a proposal for a new directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive board directors in November 2012⁵⁵. The proposal set an objective of a 40% presence of the underrepresented gender among non-executive directors to be reached by 2020 for companies listed on stock exchanges. It took more than three years for the Council to make a decision and finally failed to adopt a general approach in December 2015⁵⁶. The Council Presidency, at the time occupied by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, thus published a compromise proposal based on national measures already in place; but the strong opposition of several Member States to any legislation in this field leaves doubts about the capacity of the Council to agree on the text.

Precisely in terms of national legislation, the six countries compared present various legislative framing supporting gender equality, especially when it comes to the promotion of women to decision-making positions in businesses through quota laws. All countries have enshrined gender equality as a constitutional principle, either very early, as in France (1946) or rather late, as in Belgium (2002). Three categories of countries can be drawn up among those compared. The first category gathers “old” EU countries (Belgium, France and Italy) having implemented their first gender equality laws in the 1970-1980s after the European Union passed the Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of equal treatment for men and women regarding access to employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions⁵⁷. Already members of the European Union when the Treaty of Rome introduced the guarantee of wage equality, these countries have had to comply with European legislation since the very beginning. Therefore, Belgium adopted its first law on equal pay in 1971; this granted female employees

⁵⁰ Treaty of Rome, Article 119, 1957: “Each Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work”.

⁵¹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/law/index_en.htm (consulted 14-03-2016).

⁵² European Commission, 2004.

⁵³ European Commission, 2014b.

⁵⁴ <http://www.eubusiness.com/topics/employment/women-boards/> (consulted 15-03-2016).

⁵⁵ COM(2012) 614 final.

⁵⁶ <http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/articles-actualite/2015/12/07-conseil-epsco-egalite/> (consulted 15-03-2016).

⁵⁷ Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976: All provisions relating to this can now be found in the European Directive 2006/54/EC of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunity and equal treatment for men and women regarding employment and labour.





the right to sue their company in cases where they refused to apply equal pay to men and women⁵⁸. France followed a similar chronology by adopting equal pay for men and women in a law of 1972⁵⁹. In Italy, the issue of equal economic treatment and reconciliation was covered by a 1977 law⁶⁰. The three countries kept developing their legal arsenal for gender equality in the late 1980s with, in Belgium the law of 4 August 1978 prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women on the labour market; in France, the Roudy Act of 13 July 1983 aiming to assert equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace; and in Italy, with the law of 1991 dealing with gender equality at the workplace.

While the late XXth century saw the emergence of national legal frames prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender in the workplace, the early XXIst century, still on the impetus of the European Union, saw further gender equality laws through the integration of indirect discriminations and developing supportive law for women to contribute to the European labour market. Thus, in Belgium, the law of 12 December 2001 introduced the “time credit” allowing employees to devote more time to their children’s education, personal training or medical care⁶¹. Women were then entitled to take up to 36 months of time credit until their children reached the age of 8, provided that their enterprises had signed a collective agreement. The law of 1 July 2002 completed this first measure by granting men equal entitlement to parental leave: since then, the 12-week long parental leave can be shared between the two parents (Maron, Meulders and O’Dorchai 2008). In Italy, the 2000 law on parental leave implemented the EU directive 96/34/EC on the “framework agreement on parental leave” within the national legislation and enabled, what Longo and Sangiuliano describe as a large shift in the traditional centrality of women as main caregivers within the family (2007). Indeed, the 2000 law led to significant changes in Italy by offering a new possibility for women to reconcile work and family life by sharing duties with the partner. In France where the first law for maternity leave dates from 1909, the 2000s were the opportunity to reinforce gender equality in the corporate sphere by making it mandatory for companies and branches to negotiate agreements on gender equality (Law 2001-397) and wage equality (Law 2006-340).

Recent years still demonstrate nuances at stake within the group itself. As a matter of fact, while France was adopting binding laws for companies, Italy enacted a White book in 2003 entitled “Suggestions for a dynamic and supportive society”, in which the Italian Government promoted a conservative and traditional vision of family as the main caregiver and, therefore, introducing a significant backward step after the introduction in 2000 of a very progressive piece of legislation for the Italian welfare system. The 2000 law had indeed intended to structure a new welfare system following European standards and characterised by public funding, local provision of social services and the supply of services by social cooperatives and organisations. While the transition to this mixed welfare system is still going on in Italy, the 2003 White Book emerged as a relic of the past. The austerity measures set up after the 2008 economic and financial crisis further threatened the development of adequate social infrastructures and also the egalitarian improvements that had been achieved in the pre-crisis period (Rosselli 2014).

A second group is actually only composed of Finland and characterised by a very low level of influence by European Union legislation. When the country entered the EU in 1995, it already complied with the legislative prescriptions of the time in terms of gender equality. As early as 1937, the Maternity Benefits Act was adopted providing maternity grants. In 1972, before the European requirement to set up national gender equality bodies, Finland founded the Council for Gender Equality (TANE). In 1985, the adoption of the Children’s Home Care Support Act confirmed the terms of maternity, paternity and parental leave. In 1995 when Finland entered the EU, the country was far advanced compared to its new European counterparts, as Finland had adopted the Act on Equality between Women and Men 8 years earlier. The main stipulations of the Equality Act concern: the promotion of equality in all the activities of the authorities; quotas in national and municipal bodies; obligations for employers and educational institutions to use equality plans; prohibition of discrimination, sexual harassment or gender based harassment; compensation in cases of harassment

⁵⁸ Law of 16 March 1971, article 47 bis.

⁵⁹ Law 72-1143 of 22 December 1972.

⁶⁰ Law 903/1977 on equal pay and equal treatment for men and women.

⁶¹ Royal decree of 12 December 2001.

and discrimination; and monitoring of legislation by the Ombudsman for Equality and the Equality Board. Revised in 2004, the current Equality Act now makes provision for new European legislative developments, having already provided the system for their implementation in national law: new national legislative proposals would be drafted in collaboration with social partners and civil society organisations before being submitted to the Finnish Parliament.

A third group of countries is composed of the European Member States having joined the EU after the enlargement of 2004. The Czech Republic and Romania, in order to enter the EU, were asked to implement the directives of the “*acquis communautaire*”. In these countries, gender equality legislations mainly developed in the years preceding the accession to the EU in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Czech government did not initiate any gender equality initiatives until 1998 when the EU held detailed meetings on the equal opportunity policy with the accession countries. April 1998 brought an abrupt shift when an interim Czech government passed a resolution on the “*Priorities and Procedures of the Government for Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Czech Republic*”. The gender equality goals in this document corresponded to EU equal treatment directives and the UN’s Beijing Platform for Action. From then on equal treatment and non-discrimination in labour relations were implemented by amendments to the Labour Code and the Act on Employment. By 2004 definitions of direct and indirect discrimination as well as sexual harassment had been introduced into this Czech legislation. Similarly in Romania, EU gender equality requirements were adopted in the early 2000s under two main laws in 2000 and 2002. The 137/2000 law deals with all types of discrimination. The 202/2002 was adopted with the aim of regulating the principle of equal opportunities between men and women. It provides definitions for various types of gender discriminations (direct and indirect, multiple discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.) and regulates the various areas where equal opportunities apply: labour market, access to services, education, health services and public functions. It also identifies the institutions responsible for applying the principle of equal opportunities and states the penalties for not complying with these legal provisions.

Recent developments in gender equality legislation demonstrate the traditional attitudes and values still influencing the political agenda in these countries. In the Czech Republic, the lack of this piece of vital legislation during the period from 2006 to 2009 (the Anti-discrimination Act was only adopted in 2009) led to entirely inadequate protection against discriminations on the basis of gender as well as additional characteristics, affecting access not just to the labour market but also to services. The discussions on the occasion of the Anti-discrimination Act evidenced the lack of a basic understanding of equality as well as a gender culture confusing equal treatment for gender blindness⁶². In Romania, the Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men was dismantled in 2010 – five years after it opened. It also evidenced a certain lack of political will to intervene on the matter. The only laws on equal opportunities between men and women passed in recent years are those required by prevailing European legislations, confirming this trend (Băluță 2014).

I Women in decision-making positions: regulation in the six countries

While the quota directive is still in deadlock at the Council of the EU, the operationalisation of the EU principle of gender equality into concrete legislation supporting women in management occurred only in four of the six countries compared (see Table 2 below). The “old” EU Member States, namely Belgium, Finland, France and Italy, have introduced different types of quotas to raise the share of women in management, whereas such laws are still lacking in the post-state socialist countries namely Romania and the Czech Republic because of historical burdens.

⁶² After having vetoed the Act in 2008 (fortunately outvoted by the Parliament afterwards), the President of the Czech Republic of the time, Vaclav Klaus, explained his decision to veto as follows: “The Czech Republic does not discriminate against anyone; (...) the law entitles citizens to equal treatment in civil law relations, which is by definition impossible; (...) it substantially interferes with a region that has been in Europe for centuries and is shaped by customary principles and ethical principles”. Source: President Václav Klaus: Antidiskriminační zákon je špatný.





Except for Finland, whose Equality Act was already mentioned, gender quotas represent a relatively new policy tool to ensure gender equality in political and economic decision-making positions. In Belgium where the law was enacted in 2011, the decision was essentially promoted by the government and feminist organisations. The business spheres were to a great extent against the measure considering that it was improper to have a better representation of women in the economic decision-making process⁶³. Despite oppositions⁶⁴, the law was voted on 28 July 2011. The implementation process is regularly controlled through the submission by companies of a yearly public report regarding the representation of women on their boards of directors. As soon as the law was passed, public companies had to comply with the quota and subsequently include progressively at least one third of women in their boards. Companies listed on the stock market employing more than 250 people were given six years to implement it, while the smaller listed companies were given eight years. No specific rules apply to non-listed companies for the representation of women on their Boards, with the exception of Walloon not-for-profit associations that are asked, since a decree of 2014, to ensure the participation of at least one third of the underrepresented gender on their boards when the associations are benefiting from an authorisation of the Walloon region⁶⁵. Several sanctions are listed in the law for infringements of the provisions on quotas. In Belgium, a court can rule null and void the decisions taken by a board which had not complied with the legal requirements. The benefits offered to board members can also be removed. Even so, these legal requirements are often ignored in the absence of real incentives – of a financial nature, for instance – to foster women’s participation in the governing bodies of companies. Such a shortcoming is all the more unfortunate in that companies do not seem to set up long-term strategies for a better representation of women on their boards of directors (Mercer 2008). With regard to this trend, the federal Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IEWM) made available several tools to promote women’s participation in corporate decision-making: a database of good practices, regular progress reports, etc. However, no genuine coercive instruments have been implemented as a follow-up to the enactment of the law.

Similarly, in France no law provided for access to decision-making positions for women until 2011. Rules in this area resulted primarily from the consistent jurisprudence of the Court of Appeals’ Social Chamber. Stirred by government action, the first law expressly dealing with the topic was the 2011-103 Law known as the Copé-Zimmermann Act of 27 January 2011 on balanced representation for men and women on boards of administration and supervisory boards as well as gender equality in the workplace. Concretely, companies are required to meet a minimum representation quota for both genders, accounting for at least 40% of the board members. The law only targets large companies⁶⁶ whereas smaller ones are not subject to any legal requirements in this respect. Just like in Belgium, the law provides only a recommendation and failure to comply does not entail any punitive action. Yet, the law provides for progressive targets in the frame of the implementation process by companies: upon the publication of the law, companies shall appoint at least one woman at the next ordinary general meeting. As a mid-term target, a 20% quota shall be met by the end of the first ordinary general meeting following 1 January of the third year, following the year of the publication.

By 1 January 2017, a 40% quota must be met by all private companies. In order to meet the 2017 deadline, the French government is continuing its action in favour of women’s access to leadership positions. In 2013, the former Minister of Women’s Rights, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, wrote to the largest French companies calling on them to appoint women who expressed interest in holding high-responsibility positions. A year later, an online platform connected women’s networks with hiring companies⁶⁷. Again, similarly to Belgium, any appointments to office not compliant with the aforementioned quotas may be pronounced null and void, and the directors’ fees paid may be suspended where the board is found to have been formed in violation of the law. However, no specific provisions have been adopted in France regarding a possible legal action in the event of a company failing to comply with the provisions of the 2011 law. Nonetheless, interested parties and social partners may refer to the industrial tribunal, further to the provisions found in the Labour Code regarding non-compliance with the law on gender equality.

⁶³ <http://trends.levif.be/economie/people/femmes-les-pme-belges-ne-veulent-pas-des-quotas/article-normal-200407.html> (consulted 24-03-2015).

⁶⁴ See : Huchet, E. Marquet, A.C. Tancau, M. 2015. Gender Balance Power Map National study: Belgium.

⁶⁵ <http://socialsante.wallonie.be/?q=action-sociale/egalite-des-chances/legislation/egalite-hommes-femmes> (consulted 16-11-2015).

⁶⁶ This law targets companies that employ more than 500 permanent employees and with a turnover exceeding 50 million euros during three years.

⁶⁷ <http://administratrices.femmes.gouv.fr/> (consulted 15-03-2016).

As for Italy, the recent 2011 bi-partisan Golfo-Mosca law (120/2011) established quotas to increase female representation on the Italian boards of both companies listed on regulated markets and public companies. The Golfo-Mosca law could be adopted after a period of political instability due to the end of the fourth Berlusconi government. As his mandate end approached, many citizens and civil society organisations expressed their claims and protested against gender discriminations (Rosselli 2014). The campaigns for the participation of women in corporate decision-making permitted the adoption in 2011 of the so-called “pink quotas”. The law requires that boards (executives and non-executives) of publicly-listed companies and state-owned companies are composed of at least 33% of each gender by 2015. Yet between 2011 and 2015, the companies were authorised to set temporary targets of 20%. Unlike the Belgian and French laws that gave longer transition periods to their national companies, the provisions of the new Italian law apply to publicly-listed companies from the first renewal of corporate governance or control bodies after one year following the entry into force of the law and for the state-owned companies after the entry into force of the implementation decree by 12 February 2013. The CONSOB (the Italian Stock Exchange Commission) is the authority designated to monitor the compliance of listed companies with gender quotas. In the case of a company not meeting the targets imposed by the law, the CONSOB will issue a warning to the defaulting company asking for compliance within a period of four months. If the company does not comply within the term assigned, the CONSOB will impose a penalty of up to 1 million euros for the administrative board and sets a new term of three months for the attainment of gender balance. If the company still fails to comply, the elected bodies will be removed.

The figures for women’s participation in decision-making positions in companies were already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. After this brief overview of the quota legislation recently set up in the countries compared, it is worth comparing again these data in the light of the different historical, cultural and legislative background we described. The increase of women’s share among board members of the biggest European companies, especially compared to the flat evolution of figures in Romania (from 10% in 2011 to 11% in 2015) and the decrease in the Czech Republic (from 16% to 12% over the same period), definitely confirms the relevance of introducing quotas in order to enhance women’s participation in decision-making positions in the corporate sphere. The sharp increase in Italy is all the more positive given that the country had the most unbalanced boards in terms of gender with only 6% of women among board members in 2011. The shorter period left to companies in order to comply with the law, along with the sanctions provided for in the frame of the law may have also contributed to this positive development.

The difference between the Belgian and the French situation is more surprising as the two quota laws were implemented in the same year, with approximately similar timeframe for the transition period and comparable sanctions. As a matter of fact, Belgium was already behind France in 2011 with 11% of female board members against 22% in France. However, the rapid Italian catch-up makes the Belgian law seem relatively less efficient.

The absence of dissuasive sanctions makes it hardly surprising that the effects of the law remain limited⁶⁸. Although, some women do access boards in the biggest Belgian businesses, gender parity on boards does not seem to be looming any larger in Belgium. One of the hypotheses may be that companies listed on the Belgian stock market differ from the companies listed on the French stock market. The former may be smaller and, therefore, less interested in their gender-balance performance while the latter may be bigger and, therefore, more internationally exposed and may have found an opportunity to promote themselves by highlighting their gender diversity.

⁶⁸ European Commission, 2013a.



**Table 2 - Comparison of gender equality legislations***Source : Gender Balance Power Map national studies*

	BE	CR	FI	FR	IT	RO
Legislation on quotas in organisations	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Year of enacting	2011	/	1987	2011	2012	/
Quota introduced	33%	/	40%	40%	33%	/
Time frame	Public companies: 2012 Listed companies (+250): 2017 Listed SME: 2019	/		2017	2015	/
Sector/type of organisation	Companies listed on the stock exchange and state companies	/	State and state co-owned companies and public administrations	Companies listed on the stock exchange	Companies listed on the stock exchange and state companies	/
Sanctions introduced	YES	/	YES	YES		/
Size of organisation covered by legislation	/	/	/	250+	250+	/

This chapter showed the long-term influence of historical paths and the more recent changes provoked by the adoption of quota legislations. The gender quota laws adopted in Belgium, Finland, France and Italy happen to be both the results of a specific cultural context and a political window of opportunity. In return, statistics show that these laws contributed to further embed gender equality within the national policy frame and influence economic stakeholders' practices towards greater participation of women in corporate decision-making. In the Czech Republic and Romania though, accession to the European Union supported the development of gender equality infrastructures and laws but the lack of political will to intervene on the matter leaves a large part of the issue – mainly the indirect roots of gender discrimination such as caring duties and the patriarchal structures of labour markets and households – unchallenged. Additionally, the lack of sex-disaggregated data with regard to gender equality in small and medium businesses and in social businesses – which makes it difficult to monitor the influence of a given national gender equality policy framework on the smallest and most alternative economic entities – revealed the need for further research such as what was conducted in 2015 in the frame of this study.

CHAPTER III

Opportunities and barriers for women in economic decision-making: qualitative research in enterprises in 6 countries

What are the obstacles and opportunities women are facing in access to economic decision-making in small social and conventional enterprises across diverse gender regimes in the European Union? In the situation of very limited research on gender equality and, more specifically, on women in management in small and medium enterprises, we adopt an innovative approach comparing opportunities and barriers in small conventional and social enterprises across the selected six countries – Finland, France, Belgium, Italy, Czech Republic and Romania.

The analysis in this chapter is based on research in one social and one conventional enterprise in each country comprising altogether 103 semi-structured interviews in 12 small enterprises. The interviews with women and men at various positions in the companies researched focused on the issue of representation of women and men, on education, evaluation, remuneration and promotion processes and on family-friendly arrangements. The comparison is cross-country and cross-sector exploring similarities and differences between the social and conventional economy in terms of women's access to management positions.

Based on the qualitative analysis of the interviews, we have structured this chapter as follows: first, we analyse the structure of the enterprises in terms of horizontal and vertical gender segregation. In the second part we have compared formal arrangements and processes in the enterprises studied concerning gender equality measures, remuneration, training, support of women in management and work-life balance policies. These organisations' processes, as they are rooted in the company cultures including the informal and internal rules and values, are analysed in the third part.





3.1. THE GENDERED STRUCTURE OF THE ENTERPRISES

I Table 3 - The gendered structure of the enterprises

Source : Gender Balance Power Map national studies

INDICATORS	BE		CZ		FI		FR		IT		RO	
Gender equality of the workforce / type of enterprise	CE	SE	CE	SE	CE	SE	CE	SE	CE	SE	CE	SE
The type of sector (F/M/MIX)	F	F	F	F	MIX	MIX	F	MIX	M	M	F	F
Predominant sector	Service	Service	Service	Mix – services and production	Mix – service and production	Mix – services and production	Service	Service	Service	Service	Service	Service
Predominant field	HR consulting	HR and financial consulting	Printing	Cosmetics/ gastronomy	Wood and metal processing/		Printing	Creating and developing inclusion project				
Size of the company	41	25	36	61	55	51	42	44	28	45	68	76
The overall representation of women in the enterprise (in %)	73%	68%	75%	64 %	42%	52%	52%	40%	25%	38%	62%	76.3%
Representation of women in lower management (in %)	50%	100%	50%	75%	100%	66%	DM	16%	50%	50%	52%	90%
Representation of women in middle management (in %)	100%	DM	DM	DM	0%	66%	50%	50%	50%	DM	61%	80%
Representation of women in top management (in %)	20%	0%	60%	50%	20%	100%	67%	67%	25%	0%	50%	12.5%
Representation of women on boards (in %)	0%	40%	DM	DM	25%	Board of directors 57%, Supervisory board 46%.	DM	DM				
Horizontal segregation (yes/no)	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES

DM=data missing

CE=conventional enterprise

SE=social enterprise

Gender segregation of the labour market means that women and men work in different occupations. There are certain sectors dominated by women and others by men. In the following chapter, we will discuss the sectorial position of the companies in our sample and related representation of men and women in the structure and

Co-inspiration between social and conventional enterprises to promote equal access to decision-making positions in six European countries

hierarchy of the companies analysed.

I The sector classification and the gender distribution in the labour force

The companies in our sample are similar also in terms of size. The majority of the companies fulfil the criteria of small enterprises as defined by the European Union⁶⁹. Four out of six conventional enterprises employ fewer than 50 people. The remaining two conventional companies fall into the medium-sized business category; yet, their number of employees is very close to the small size enterprise defining level (see Table 3). Moreover, all conventional companies fulfil the criterion of an annual turnover and balance sheet ceiling under the 10 million Euro mark. Among the compared social enterprises, only the Romanian and Czech ones have staff numbers slightly higher than the defined maximum; however, the turnover again qualifies them as small companies (see Table 3).

The representation of women in conventional companies varies between 75% of labour force in the Czech conventional company to only 25% in the Italian company. Among the social enterprises, female employees create a majority in all workplaces except in the French (40% of women) and the Italian enterprises (38% of women; see Table 3). The sample of the enterprises in the six countries in the study is homogenous in various aspects. When analysing the sector of operation, we use Joan Acker's 1990 notion, that in a gendered organisation "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (1990, 146). Using this approach, we go beyond the observation that jobs can be numerically male or female dominated. First of all, the majority of the conventional enterprises in our study are based in feminised service sectors. Similarly, the social companies are predominantly operating in the women dominated sector of social services and employment rehabilitation and training. Exceptions are the Italian social and conventional enterprises, as they operate in male dominated ICT field. The Finnish conventional enterprise is operating in both manufacturing and service sectors and mainly in fields dominated by men – in production and manufacturing of wood, metal processing and construction.

When analysing the prevalence of service versus production sectors in our sample, both the social and conventional companies in our sample are mainly providing service in the following fields:

- a. The Czech and French conventional companies are in the feminised sector of printing services.
- b. Both the Belgian social and conventional enterprises perform in the feminised field of human resources management.
- c. Both Romanian social and conventional enterprises are in the feminised financial sector. While the conventional company focuses on micro-finances, the social enterprise is providing social and financial services for pensioners.
- d. The Finnish social enterprise offers employment services and training and is selling products.
- e. The Italian social and conventional enterprises operate in male dominated ICT sectors.

⁶⁹ SEC(2009) COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT on the implementation of Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises Brussels, 7.10.2009 online : http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition/index_en.htm

Only a few enterprises can be found in both sectors – in services and production:





- f. The Czech social enterprise is providing services in the field of gastronomy and produces and sells cosmetics.
- g. The Finnish conventional enterprise combines wood and metal production with laundry and construction services.
- h. The French social company is combining construction work with social services.

The social enterprises have an added value by providing social impact. In our sample, the companies are offering intervention for the following social groups:

- a. The Czech, Belgian, Finnish and Italian social companies focus on integration of diverse groups marginalised in the labour market into paid employment e.g. young, long-term unemployed and/or disabled people. The Finnish and Czech specialise on employment of disadvantaged groups and those with health disabilities in the labour market. On the contrary, the Belgian companies provide services for this group, however informally, and also employ disabled and marginalised people.
- b. The French social enterprise focuses on employment and inclusion, but also addresses issues around environmental protection, local development and good citizenship.
- c. The Romanian social company, as distinct from other enterprises, does not focus on labour market integration but provides services for pensioners.

The sector of operation has a great impact on the composition of the workforce in the companies. When we focus on the participation of women in the horizontal and vertical structure of the companies, focusing on the gender distribution within specific departments of the analysed companies, one can see that the functions are unevenly divided between men and women.

I Horizontal segregation

When it comes to sectorial distribution of men and women in the enterprises, men usually occupy jobs requiring specific technical knowledge or skills (IT, specific software, logistics) or physical strength (work in the warehouse, wood department, metal & laser engraving, construction work, banks, car repairs, etc.). Moreover, strategic departments in companies such as sales, purchasing or risk management are mostly male dominated. Female employees, in line with the gender norm, tend to occupy support functions and administrative positions (assistants, customer care workers, financial support, shop assistants, customer service, accountancy, public relations, HR, etc.) or jobs associated with the traditional gender division of labour in the household (laundry, care provision, and cooking).

The gender differences, however, are rarely reflected upon by either the managers or the employees. Overall, the breakdown from the perspective of gender is seen as even or balanced when both men and women are distributed in some manner, though unevenly, in the horizontal and vertical structure of the company. As one employee representing the French conventional company declares: *"I think the gender balance has been well established; it's not really a problem in the company. There are men and women at every level."* (Lucie, employee, F, FR, CE)

Similarly, when talking about the uneven distribution of men and women, the gender based differences are considered irrelevant by stressing cases when individual characteristics were taken into account rather than gender. An employee from the Czech social enterprise argues: *"I believe there is no male/female hierarchy here... I will put it like this - some ladies can carry a bigger box than a man. Because the man's back hurts and he cannot*

(lift anything). So, although there is some labour division, it does not mean that because you are a man you do this work. I think that it is relatively balanced here, at least as far as my section and people are concerned" (Sandra,

manager, F, CZ, SE).

The regularly-recurring expression is that the gender differences in the horizontal structure of the company are “natural” or reflect characteristics discursively described as “typical” to either men or women. This justification of horizontal segregation reflecting the deep-rooted gender stereotypes in the male and female labour force is apparent in accounts from the Czech conventional enterprise: *“When it comes to buyers, women are better as they are reliable and careful. This is not the case with men really. A man has other qualities – he can make a better leader, he pushes himself more and can push better for particular conditions when dealing with suppliers. It may be more suitable for men to be product managers or heads of section as they are assertive. ... Women’s weapons differ from men’s, such as cleverness or a greater empathy, so that a woman can sense some things before a man can”* (Karel, manager, M, CZ, CE). Or another personal statement: *“From my feminine perspective, I would not want a male accountant. They lack women’s logic and women’s analytical thinking. They only do what they have learnt mechanically”* (Kateřina, manager, F, CZ, CE).

At the same time, critical accounts reflecting on the fact the workplaces are already designed with the vision of gender segregated professional paths, which again reinforce the horizontal segregation of the workplace, appeared in the French social company: *“Very little is done in the construction sector [to bring in more women]. There are no changing rooms [for them] and the safety footwear is not available in small sizes”* or *“In the work streams, there is a very clear gender divide in the professions: all of the social workers are women”* (Ibrahim, manager, M, FR, SE).

We can conclude here that the horizontal segregation is maintained by a lack of sensitivity to the gender differences or by envisioning them as normal, which serves as a self-fulfilling prediction. At the same time, even though some interviewees express a certain level of sensitivity, as long as there are no specific measures applied to invite or support the gender equal division of work, the horizontally segregated workplaces will remain and only selected individuals will have the ability to challenge the gender order.

I Vertical segregation

Regarding the representation of women in decision-making positions, or in other words, the representation of women in the vertical structure of companies, we can see a very different picture in each company. The findings, however, need to be put in the perspective that we are doing research on small companies, where the number of managerial positions is limited, with the result that changing one person in the management board can drastically change the overall gender (dis)balance.

In general, leadership by women is predominant in the lower managerial positions in the companies of our study. Women constitute from 50% to 100% of the lower management of the conventional and social companies. Only the French case constitutes an exception with 16% of women in lower management. Equally, between 50% and 100% of middle management positions are occupied by women in the conventional enterprises against 50% to 80% in the social companies. This observation is valid also for the companies where men dominate the staff number (Finnish conventional organisation, Italian social and conventional and French social enterprise). However, due to the size of the companies, middle management is not to be found in four out of the twelve analysed cases.

Greater diversity regarding the representation of men and women is to be found in top managerial positions (between 0 and 100%) in both types of business. Among the conventional companies, no women occupy top management positions in the Belgian enterprise and women represent only one fifth of the top management in the Italian and Finnish conventional companies. The highest share of women in top management is found in the French conventional company (67%). When social enterprises are compared, there are no women in the top management of the Italian social enterprise and they represent only 12.5% of top management in the Romanian social company. The highest number of women in the top management of social enterprises was found in the French and Finnish social enterprises (67% and 100%, see Table 3).

I Women in management – Results of horizontal segregation





Horizontal segregation results in the vertical allocation of men and women into the management of companies in our study. Gender stereotypes are reproduced in the hiring process, which also applies to the appointment and promotion of women as managers. Women's career opportunities are, therefore, influenced by gender stereotypes in respect to abilities and personal characteristics of women as complementary to those of men. When women get promoted, it is in sectors that require abilities stereotypically considered as feminine. Gender stereotyping is to be found in the managerial positions across all companies regardless of the country or the sector. Women manage female dominated departments in the gender typical female professions (assembly & laundry, administration, finances, services, customer care, product management, HR, etc.) whereas men lead departments in the male dominated fields (wood department, metal & laser engraving, construction and development, IT and web administrators, marketing, etc.). When men work in the feminised department of the companies, they occupy the management position (in the Czech social enterprise the man working in the canteen is a chef and in the Romanian social company there is a man in the leading administrative position).

At the same time, the positions with greater responsibility, such as top management, are dominated by men regardless of the sector. We can see this tendency in the Belgian social enterprise, where the top managerial position is held by a man and the board is also male dominated. While the social management department has a gender balanced management of one man and one woman, – the other two departments: consulting and training department – are managed by one man. This proves a certain monopoly that men have on strategic management in the company. Similarly, the Romanian social enterprise has a majority of women in the workforce, though the men dominate in the top managerial position. This is related to the regulations presented in the status of the organisation, where solely pensioners are allowed to be on the board. In this case the situation mirrors the gendered life decisions in Romania – in the category of pensioners, women are usually not active on the labour market. Only in the Czech conventional company do we see that women outnumbering men in the headcount is reflected in top management. Women tend to occupy lower structural positions, a tendency that reinforces the gender order (Martin 2003) and reproduces gender norms and expectations through day-to-day interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987). Their presence in leadership positions, on the other hand, may allow them to “rock the boat” and “disrupt the gender order” (Martin 2003).

In eleven of the twelve companies, the managing director or CEO is a man. The social enterprise from Finland, where the position of the managing director is held by a woman, serves as an exception. However, ten companies in our study have women representatives on the level of the board of directors or in other types of top management positions. There is no woman on the board of the Italian social enterprise or the Belgian conventional enterprise. However, the board does not really take part in the daily management of the Belgian company.

Thus, there are career growth opportunities in management for women but the options are limited due to the gender stereotypes. The first option is for women to occupy executive positions in gender stereotypical fields; the second option is for them to have a position in top management while providing service and support to the top manager, who is a man. The quote by a representative of the Czech company illustrated the normative expectation: *“There has always been a woman in the position below the CEO. There was maybe one man. I think that this is because the CEO gets along better with women than men. He chooses the women for himself, because he can communicate well with her and she's nice to look at, and I think that's important for him”* (Klaudie, employee, F, CZ, CE).

In this case, women are invited to the management boards when they are seen as no threat to men in management – it is assumed that they will adopt a submissively subordinate position of someone who is more a nice person than a competent and proactive one. In this situation the presence of women in management does not help to redefine the gender contract. Quite to the contrary, it is thereby continuously reproduced as women's capabilities are tested and approved only in fields and activities considered typically feminine. On the other hand, the physical attraction in the case of women can be seen as a constraint when women take over a position typically appointed to a man. The situation, in which appearance can be a constraint for women in

management, illustrates a quote from the French corporate context: *“The men were out of sorts. When she first got here, she had to prove that she had the skills. The men made comments, like: ‘She's too good-looking to be director of production’* (Carmen, manager, F, FR, CE).

The third option for women to succeed in management positions is when they are ready and able to work much harder and obtain much better results than any man in the company to prove that they deserve their position among the leaders. As the Finnish CEO admitted: *It is said that twice as much and better than men to be able to proceed in her career and keep her position*" (Lenita, manager, F, FI, SE).

The dominance of women or men in different fields of management can also be explained by education and work experience, which lead them professionally to different fields. However, when a woman enters into direct competition with men, she becomes an outlier or a token. Stressing her feminine side - in this case her physical attractiveness - is a way of undermining her competence to succeed in a position framed stereotypically as male. The gender normative evaluation of men and women in relation to abilities of both genders to succeed in leadership positions is very well unravelled by the Finnish female manager: *"Yes, it is more difficult, partly because of cultural factors, as we are quite used to seeing something masculine in public, when it is a question of management. Then, in practical situations, as I described about communication, it is also something cultural, as women's statements are not taken as seriously as men's. Women really have to do much more"* (Lenita, manager, F, FI, SE).

Concurrently, women managers are perceived as valuable for the companies, but in a different way to their male counterparts. Women are seen as a loyal labour force and cheaper compared to men. So they are able to provide the same amount of work as men under worse working conditions without threatening the employer that they may be leaving for better.

The recent changes in gender composition of the decision-making positions in European companies, as described in Chapter one, are also reflected in the current development of the companies in our study. In some of the companies in our study representation of women in management positions increased recently. For example, the benefits of having women in decision-making positions is described by a Belgian employee: *"Since last year two women joined the Board of our organisation, before there were three men, and the impression was that our [women's] demands have been more favourably taken into account. We have asked for the possibility to work from home. Before we were confronted with three men who perhaps were not open to change on this matter and the fact that two women joined the Board, who may have children or may spend more time with their families, has helped us to obtain a positive answer to our request"* (Nora, employee, F, BE, SE). When women are able to gain access to managerial and supervisory positions, they may gain greater power to reduce gender inequality or change the organisational processes (Cotter et al.1997).The recent changes in gender composition of the decision-making positions in European companies, as described in Chapter one, are also reflected in the current development of the companies in our study. In some of the companies in our study representation of women in management positions increased recently. For example, the benefits of having women in decision-making positions is described by a Belgian employee: *"Since last year two women joined the Board of our organisation, before there were three men, and the impression was that our [women's] demands have been more favourably taken into account. We have asked for the possibility to work from home. Before we were confronted with three men who perhaps were not open to change on this matter and the fact that two women joined the Board, who may have children or may spend more time with their families, has helped us to obtain a positive answer to our request"* (Nora, employee, F, BE, SE). When women are able to gain access to managerial and supervisory positions, they may gain greater power to reduce gender inequality or change the organisational processes (Cotter et al.1997).

Children and family are repeatedly mentioned as an obvious barrier to women's promotion. Thus, in most of the companies analysed, the ability and readiness of women to take over a managerial position are seen as limited taking into consideration their care responsibilities. Paradoxically, this idea of a woman manager not being able to have balanced personal and family life is reproduced by the female managers in their accounts. Women's career opportunities are partly formed by gender stereotypes about women as primary carers, that obviously some women share themselves too.





3.2. FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

I Table 4 - Formal arrangements in the enterprises

Source : Gender Balance Power Map national studies

INDICATORS		BE		CZ		FI		FR		IT		RO	
Formal arrangements to support women in management		CE	SE	CE	SE								
Gender equality plan/programme/action(s) are in place (yes/no)		NO	NO	NO	NO	N/Y	N/Y	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Family-friendly arrangement(s) in the organisation (yes/no)	Equal access for fathers and mothers (yes/no)	DM	DM	NO	NO	YES	YES	DM	DM	NO	NO	NO	NO
	Part-time working arrangements (yes/no)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	DM	DM	YES	YES	NO	NO
	Working from home/teleworking/flexi-time (yes/no)	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	DM	DM	YES	YES	NO	NO
	Company level arrangements to provide care for relatives (yes/no)	NO	NO	NO									
System of remuneration	Transparent policy of remuneration (yes/no) – wage ranges for each position available	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Training and education	Equal access for men and women to training and education (yes/no)	YES	DM	DM	NO	NO							
Arrangements and policies to support women in management	Company quotas or quantitative targets (yes/no)	NO	NO	NO									
	Gender sensitive evaluation process (yes/no)	NO	NO	NO									
	Peer programmes or training in leadership for women (yes/no)	NO	NO	NO									

DM=data missing
 CE=conventional enterprise
 SE=social enterprise

Transparent organisation processes are among the basic preconditions for gender equality at work. Comparing conventional and social enterprises in six countries, we will now analyse whether, and if so how, the processes relate to remuneration, training, access of women to management positions and work/life balance, based on formal procedures and/or documents.

I Gender equality plans

We can divide the enterprises into three types with respect to their gender equality arrangements: the first approach, which we can call “gender equality focused approach”, is characterised by gender equality as an important element which is taken into account in the organisation processes and policies. In the second approach - “the gender neutral one” - gender equality is considered but not as an important part of processes or policies. This approach is characterised by the opinion that the best way to assure gender equality is not to take gender into account because if we do not think or talk about it we cannot directly discriminate against anyone. The problem with this approach, however, is that groups and individuals are often indirectly discriminated against while seemingly equal/same conditions are set for everyone. The third approach, which we can qualify as “gender blind approach”, does not take gender equality into account as an important part of organisation processes or policies at all. The boundaries between the gender neutral and gender blind approaches are permeable, rather than delineated.

The approach to gender equality in most of the conventional and social enterprises in our sample is gender blind or gender neutral. With the exception of the companies in Finland, there is no gender equality plan, programme or action focused on gender equality in any of the enterprises studied.

The Finnish conventional company’s gender equality plan has been drawn up recently and it includes HR-policy, recruitment, human resources development, balance between work and private life, pay and employment conditions, management and decision-making, working conditions and environment, as well as discrimination. At the moment, the plan is being reviewed and commented on by the employee representatives and management. The interviewees in this research consider that all employees are treated equally by the managers with regards to the items in the gender equality plan and that all have equal opportunities of being promoted and trained.

In the social enterprise in Finland a gender equality programme is going to be included in the action and development plan. The Development Manager had started to draw up the plan, but it is not yet complete. Besides, the Managing Director has participated in a 3-year training programme of gender equality and she also actively follows gender equality issues at EU level. It is possible to estimate that gender equality in this social organisation is a natural and important element of everyday activities.

In the Italian social enterprise, gender policies are included in the policies of labour inclusion. The cooperative shall draw up a social report that will also highlight gender policies. The corporate culture in the Belgian social enterprise promotes values such as equality, tolerance, diversity and horizontal governance. As part of the quota law, companies in Belgium are required to provide a public report every year about the representation of women on their Boards.

In two conventional enterprises – in the Czech Republic and Belgium – there is not only the absence of gender equality plans or programmes but rather an intentional gender neutral approach. In the conventional enterprise in the Czech Republic the interviewees believe that equal treatment means that no attention is paid to the employee’s gender in recruitment, training, remuneration and promotion. Therefore, despite the fact (and according to the interviewees ‘because of the fact’) that there are no policies or measures supporting equal opportunities and gender equality, the interviewees believe the environment is not discriminatory. A similar situation is to be found in the Belgian conventional enterprise where no specific support is given to gender equality as it would be seen, in the prism of the gender neutral corporate culture, as unfair treatment. This gender neutral approach is supported by a corporate culture based on the promotion of individual competence, especially leadership.





In the conventional enterprise in Italy, the absence of a gender equality plan or programme is not reflected as an important part of organisational practices. Focus is rather on specific jobs and skills regardless of employees' diversity in terms of needs and skills. Very similar situations are at stake in the conventional enterprises in Romania, the Czech Republic and France. No explicit gender equality plans, policies or indicators are in place. There are no documents dealing with gender equality as it is not considered an 'issue' for the organisation. The gender-based approach to employees in these enterprises is intuitive rather than targeted (and, therefore, often gender blind) and frequently based on gender stereotypes.

Gender equality plans exist to some extent only in social enterprises in Finland and Italy. In all other social enterprises, the formal approach is rather gender blind, not considering gender equality as an important issue of the organisational processes. The only conventional enterprise with a gender equality plan is the one in Finland. The conventional enterprises in the Czech Republic and Belgium, in fact, refuse such an approach of dealing with gender equality, deeming that it would itself create inequality. This is a clear example of a gender-neutral approach. The conventional enterprises in Italy, Romania and France are rather gender blind and gender equality is not an issue to consider for a company level plan or policy. We can conclude that only few differences exist between the social and conventional enterprises. With the exception of the Finnish social enterprise, no "gender equality focused approach" was detected in any of the enterprises studied. An important factor is the particular country gender regime which could create opportunities or barriers for the promotion of women to management. An example of an opportunity is the Finnish case where gender equality is rooted in the national gender regime. In the absence of this national opportunity framework driven by gender equality culture, the small size of the enterprises under research seems a real obstacle for a gender equality focused approach, where gender equality plans would be developed.

I Remuneration

53

In the rather small enterprises analysed, no specific regulation of the systems of remuneration are offered. Therefore, policies for gender equality in remuneration are not created on the level of the companies under study but some companies in some countries such as Finland, Italy and Belgium enjoy systems of remuneration that are under national level guidelines.

In the conventional enterprise in Finland wages are, according to the collective agreement, based on the job in question and salaries should be equal for women and men. A collective agreement is negotiated nationally between employee organisations (trade unions) and the employer or employers' organisation. The collective agreement regulates field-specific terms of employment, such as wages, working hours, holidays and other benefits. The only exception is the Managing Director, who has an executive work contract, in which the wage is negotiable. Similarly, in Italy the wages of men and women are managed by a national agreement. The problem in the conventional enterprise is the horizontal gender segregation - women work in administration while men are technicians: salaries are thus linked to the employees' position. This system should permit a reduction of the wage gap between men and women at least for equal work, because the salary is tied to the national labour contract applied for individual workers.

In the Belgian conventional enterprise some procedures exist for remuneration but the criteria do not seem clear to employees who are not in a position to describe them. Some wage gaps were noticed in some departments even between men and women who had exactly the same position and the same work experience. Also, in the conventional enterprise in France the development of the personal management processes appears to be very limited. There is a deep-set culture of the "unspoken" and implicit. The lack of transparency regarding salaries makes it impossible to even establish whether gender inequalities in remuneration exist or not.

In the conventional enterprises in Romania and in the Czech Republic, there are also no company guidelines for remuneration. These companies lack both wage regulations and wage rates for individual positions. Rules for quarterly and annual bonuses are also not transparent. Team leaders may recommend a specific individual who deserves a bonus, but the decision lies with the company owner. Managers may propose their own system of

incentives for their subordinates, but the company owner needs to approve it. An obscure remuneration system breeds wage inequality but none of the interviewees believed there was a wage gap. The majority of them believe there is no wage inequality in the company. In the Czech company the interviewees even reported that it is an internal policy not to talk about one's salary; therefore, very few people know their colleagues' actual salary which makes any comparison very difficult.

Let's now turn to social enterprises and their remuneration systems. In the social enterprise in Finland a collective agreement for municipalities, i.e. KVTES, determines wages, which are similar for both women and men in the same job. In the social enterprise, all employees in comparable jobs have equal salaries, regardless of gender. Some slight differences may occur, depending on the field. The company is using this system but is lacking its own systematic evaluation, based on certain criteria. The managing director explained that the reason for this was that there were no two similar jobs in the company.

In social cooperatives in Italy there is a specific National labour contract for all employees and workers. According to the national study, if inequalities exist they exist not based on gender but based on disadvantage. It is due to the fact that people from disadvantaged groups often have lower qualifications.

For the social enterprise in Belgium the wage grids ("conventions collectives de travail" (CCT)) established by joint committees ("commissions paritaires") for each field take into account qualifications and functions. These grids define a minimum wage and are applicable in both social and conventional enterprises. Wages are then defined according to the position of the employees in the firm and their seniority and so the tendency is to avoid individual bargaining practices. Even though the wage grids only set up wage floors and do not prohibit higher salaries, the management made the decision to apply the same pay scale to all employees, thus making individual wage bargaining initiatives – often sources of gender discriminations – impossible.

In the social enterprise in France wages are regulated by collective agreement. However, individual bargaining is possible in some cases, which has created some doubts about equality in remuneration. In one case an interviewee even realised she is subject to discrimination. There is a lack of transparency in remuneration in the social enterprise in France as well as in the conventional enterprise as we noted above. In the social enterprise in Romania there is also a lack of transparency. Remuneration and bonuses are confidential. Specific bonuses are offered for employees with higher job performances. Performance assessment procedures have not been established formally. The Chairman is actually in charge of assessing job performances, in consultation with the direct manager of each employee.

The social enterprise in the Czech Republic has general wage regulation, which, however, was not provided for the analysis. The wage rate is set in the contract. The executive director admitted that women managers have lower salaries than men at the same level of management. This fits in with the assumption of the management that women, who are good and loyal workers ask for lower wages. Therefore, promoting women rather than men into management positions here means saving money. The job performance assessment of each employee is partly informal. The employee is entitled to the wage specified in the contract for a standard work performance. However, job performance is not standardised, rather, it is also intuitively estimated.

There are no significant differences between the conventional and social enterprises in general. Systems of remuneration exist at national level, which is the case of Finland, Italy and Belgium, rather than at company level. Transparency of the system and levels of remuneration is especially important. We found that regardless of the type of enterprise, transparency is lacking in France, Romania and the Czech Republic in the enterprises studied. In this situation individual bargaining is possible as well as various systems of remuneration and bonuses defined by individual managers for their teams. In this situation gender inequalities arise, even though we can estimate that they are often not recognised as it is not usual to talk about wages.





I Training

We wanted to map whether the compared conventional and social enterprises provide training for their employees and whether it is available to all employees - equally to women as well as to men.

It appears that in the conventional enterprises even though training is provided, it is not always available to all employees. Differences exist based on job position but from the gender equality point of view the approach is rather neutral, therefore, indirectly discriminating against women. Equality of access for women and men to training is not monitored; therefore, inequalities might exist especially due to gender segregation and focus of training on some positions only. In Finland, training has been reported to concern everybody in the conventional enterprise but with the main emphasis on the clerical staff. Similarly in France training is organised in the conventional enterprise but especially for the Production Department. Training is also provided based on individual and informal initiatives.

In Romania, systematic training is not provided by the conventional enterprise, except for induction training for new employees. Employees can participate in external training, though at their own expense. This is also the case for the conventional enterprise in the Czech Republic. Gender equality in access to training is not monitored in any of the conventional enterprises.

Contrary to conventional enterprises, training is never at the expense of the employees in the social enterprises under research. It appears that training is provided in four out of the six social enterprises and is more systematic than in the conventional companies. However, gender equality in access to training is not monitored in social enterprises any more than in the conventional ones.

In the Finnish social enterprise, training is available for all employees provided that it is applicable in their job. In 2013, the personnel as a whole received 306 days training (approximately 6 days per person, per year). Training is monitored by the number of days and not in relation to gender in this company. Employees may attend training suitable for their job and the organisation encourages and supports training, regardless of gender. In the Belgian social enterprise it has been reported that all employees are invited in an equitable manner to participate in training courses. Some training courses are organised in the company by managers and/or employees themselves on several issues such as operational or legal aspects. When it comes to software, an external expert is invited. Most of the time it is the employees who approach the managers with requests for training. The request is then analysed by the management to see if it matches the position the employees have in the organisation. In the French social enterprise, training is mandatory and a formalised training system is in place. However, gender equality in access to training is not monitored. In the Romanian social enterprise training opportunities, at the employees' request, are supported by the organisation. Costs are covered by the organisation for specific training courses that employees require in order to perform better in the organisation. Again access based on gender is not monitored.

It appears that only the social enterprise in the Czech Republic does not organise training for its employees, except for mandatory training on occupational safety and operational regulations. They use training offered by other companies - one person usually gets trained and then trains the others in the company rather informally.

It is possible to conclude that training is more systematically provided in the social enterprises compared to the conventional ones. However, gender equality in access to training is monitored neither in the social nor in the conventional enterprises under research. Training is sometimes not available to everyone, or at all, in the conventional enterprises. Therefore, we can estimate that gender equality in access to training exists rather in the conventional enterprises than in the social enterprises.

I Support for women in management

At the core of this research is an investigation into whether there are measures or policies in place to support the promotion of women to management positions in the enterprises under study.

None of the companies where we conducted the qualitative research has any quotas or quantitative targets for women and men in management set up. Although in any of the conventional companies there is no specific policy such as peer programmes or training in leadership for women, there are differences among the conventional companies in two elements which are very important for the definition of opportunities or barriers for women. The first element is a system of work performance evaluation, whereby the career path of particular employees is generally directed. It is important to note that none of the conventional or social enterprises has gender sensitive evaluation processes in place. The second element is the attitude of actual people in various positions: the attitude of women and men managers towards support for women in management and the interest of women employees themselves in reaching management positions.

In the conventional enterprise in Finland there is no special support for women to move into management. What is considered important is the evaluation of competence, skills, know-how, length of experience in the company and willingness to face new challenges. One manager stated that *“women do not have difficulties accessing managerial positions in the company. When it comes to Finnish working life in general, I recognise that it depends on the management, whether women can reach management positions”* (Janne, manager, M, FI, CE).

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A similar situation is to be found in the conventional company in France. While women managers talk about individual performance reviews being held, women at employee level do not talk about anything like this. This process seems to be under development as Carmen noted: *“I would like to set targets for each position and institute a self-assessment process”* (Carmen, manager, F, FR, CE).

In both Romanian and Czech conventional enterprises, the interviewees stress that promotion to management is conditioned by delivery of an outstanding work performance and that women and men have equal opportunities to be promoted. None of these enterprises has a system in place supporting the promotion of women to management positions. This gender neutral approach disadvantages women, who also have caring responsibilities more often than men do. In the case of the company in the Czech Republic there is no problem with women in management, according to the women there. It is the idea that *“women are different”* that is the basis of gender segregation in employment. Thus, a) feminised teams and b) the belief women are better communicators and have more empathy bring about the best opportunities for career advancement in the company. Women in leadership positions account for their position by pointing out that they chose a feminised field, such as accountancy, which is appropriate for women and where they do not compete with men; therefore, it is justifiable to hold a leadership position.

There is no special support for the promotion of women to management positions in the social enterprises under study. In the social enterprises in Finland, France and Belgium, the evaluation process is stressed as a basis for promotion, regardless of gender. This gender neutral approach might be a disadvantage for women as individual evaluation of work performance can be gender biased. It also depends on the selection board and





its composition by gender. In both Finnish and French enterprises, women comprise about two thirds of higher management positions; therefore, we can expect that there is no discrimination against women. In Belgium, where women comprise 100% of lower and 40% of higher management, the internally called “evolution sessions” are considered by the managers as a tool offering employees the possibility to express their well-being or lack of well-being at work and their future professional expectations. There is, however, neither formal support of women in management positions nor a formal system of promotion in the company. A similar situation is to be found in the social enterprise in the Czech Republic where no procedure for promotions has been formalised at all. According to this gender blind approach, promotions are conditioned by delivery of outstanding work performances. This condition is further reinforced by the absence of a clear definition of what are the exact criteria for promotion.

In the social enterprise in Italy there is rather a horizontal structure of positions. No special support is provided for the promotion of women to management positions. It appears that the opportunity for career growth is linked to the will of the individual to coordinate activities and in this regard, there is no gender difference in this company. Contrary to this, there is the situation in the social enterprise in Romania with a rather fixed vertical managerial structure of the organisation, which does not allow many promotion opportunities for women or men. There is a glass ceiling for women in this enterprise given the existing specific age and gender limitation for women to accede top management positions (see further Chapter 4).

It appears that the more systematic ground of training activities in the social enterprises might result in a more formalised promotion process and would be an advantage for gender equality in management positions. However, there is no specific system of support for women in management positions in any of the enterprises under study, either conventional or social.

I Work-life balance arrangements

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Family-friendly arrangements represent a very important precondition for participation of parents in paid work. Given the division of work and family responsibilities, which is still traditionally gendered in many European countries, family-friendly policies are especially important for women in the labour market in general, and for women to be able to participate in management positions, in particular.

Four of the six conventional enterprises offer the possibility of part-time and flexitime work, work from home and/or telework: Finland, Italy, Belgium and the Czech Republic. These arrangements are not formally available in the conventional company in France and in Romania. None of the companies offers any company level arrangement for care provision for relatives.

In the conventional company in Finland, which is the country with the most developed and universalist welfare state system based on gender equality, family-friendly arrangements, such as parenthood and child care leave, are available for all employees. In addition, flexitime is possible, for instance, for family reasons. It was mentioned that over recent years, men have mostly used child care leave, even for a whole year, when the mother is working. Also, in the conventional company in Italy the organisation of work is flexible. The company introduced measures specifically designed to help women to have “dual careers” (family and work) enhancing the role of working mothers and the importance of work-life balance policies. This flexible working policy, including part-time work and flexitime as well as teleworking, allows both men and women to reconcile work and family life. However, the company focuses on the access of women to employment rather than on their access to management positions or career growth.

The conventional enterprise in Belgium has set arrangements in place to support employees in their endeavours to balance private and professional life. The organisation offers two days of home working per week, the possibility of participating in meetings from home, flexitime, holiday credits (take more holidays before your children are 12 and less after), days off when needed without the approval of the manager and part-time work. Most employees and

managers use flexitime and home working. These arrangements are supported by many technical arrangements to help employees be fully efficient in their work. They all have laptops, their professional landline is redirected from work via the Internet and all their work files are accessible through an internal online platform.

All the interviewees in the conventional company in the Czech Republic agreed that the company made it relatively easy to combine work and personal lives. Working hours are flexible in this organisation as standard working hours start at 9:00 and finish at 17:00, but it is possible to come in and leave earlier or later. Part-time hours are arranged individually. Managers and high-ranking employees have two home office days per month, and a sick day is also available. As a rule they try to accommodate the needs of mothers of small children and some mothers, therefore, return to work straight after the six months of maternity leave, not using the option of parental leave until the child is three years old. Despite these arrangements, the women interviewed still believed that it was not possible to combine their career well with maternity. Remarkably, even the women managers with children, including one with a pre-school daughter, reproduced the stereotype of the incompatibility of maternity and a leadership position.

Although there are no formal arrangements for work-life balance in the conventional company in France, the employees interviewed feel that they have no trouble managing their work and family life. The primary facilitating measure, although informal, appears to relate to paid leave. Several employees reported that: *“People with children have priority when it comes to paid leave during school holidays, but nowhere is this actually written in black and white”* (Judith, employee, F, FR, CE) (See informal arrangements).

Although women are promoted to managerial positions in the conventional enterprise in Romania, this usually comes at a price for their personal or family life, for their hobbies or other professional development interests. There are no formal family-friendly arrangements available in this company.

We will now turn to social enterprises and will again start with Finland, Belgium and Italy – countries where national policies create a strong framework for work/life balance. At the social enterprise in Finland, family-friendly arrangements are equally available for both women and men. For instance, partial child care leave, parenthood leave, as well as flexitime, are possible, as is working from home. An important factor for an employee to use family-friendly arrangements is the profession of their partner. For example, if the job of the spouse requires travelling, their partner, employed by the social enterprise, uses child care leave or is absent from work to take care of children. It is more an exception if a male worker does not use the paternal leave. At the time of the research in this company, one man and one woman were on partial childcare leave (they work 4 days a week).

The social enterprise in Italy also promotes an equal-opportunity culture. It developed programmes to help women in work-life balance as it has carried out family-friendly projects and family-friendly services. The company cooperates with a social portal that provides services for the family⁷⁰. This enterprise also participates in debates on this topic.

The social enterprise in Belgium also offers family-friendly arrangements to help employees combine private lives and paid jobs. Those measures are both formal provisions (time-credit, flexible working hours, homeworking twice a month) and informal arrangements (possibility to bring children to work or work from home when they are sick, no work meetings in the evenings). The work-life balance of the employees is even more facilitated by an atmosphere of far-reaching mutual trust, i.e. employees are not closely and strictly monitored, they can organise their work in a fairly autonomous way. Among the informal arrangements, a tacit agreement also implies that no meeting or any work-related activity takes place out of the normal working hours. Gathering for professional purposes (even team building when it is at the initiative of the organisation itself) is avoided in the evenings or during the weekends. This informal measure goes against the type of informal networking sometimes called “old-boys networks”, which forms out of the working time and/or place and very often without women who are busy with their family responsibilities. Managers in this social enterprise tend to act as ‘gatekeepers’ for both the formal

⁷⁰ For more information see: <http://www.familydea.it>





and the informal measures. Therefore, it really depends on the particular manager whether an employee can or cannot use certain measures. In addition, although employees enjoy work time flexibility and a family-friendly atmosphere in the organisation, the heavy workload is often in conflict with the objective of work-life reconciliation, as the high number of cases to be dealt with by employees (about 50 clients per employee) often forces them to work overtime.

In the social enterprise in the Czech Republic the work-life balance options are rather limited. The company allows part-time employment in medically indicated cases, but flexitime is not available. Both women employees and managers see the set working hours in the company as a family-friendly measure, as they start relatively early in the morning and finish early in the afternoon, so they can spend time with their children and family. Parents, and mothers in particular, do not use part-time employment for childcare. The male manager tends to understand work-life balance as just a “woman’s problem”. This approach might produce gender inequality in access to family-friendly arrangements for men but also disadvantages women in terms of career growth or wage equality.

Similarly in the Romanian social enterprise, no family-friendly arrangements are offered to parents but the approach of the management is that work-life balance concerns those who are disadvantaged in terms of health. It is also important that most of the employees are living nearby, which might help their work-life balance.

Also in the social enterprise in France, as regards the interconnection between personal and professional life, employees interviewed did not feel a significant problem balancing out the two in their life. Several employees explained that “schedules are flexible”. Managers “agree to adjust working hours, whether the request comes from a man or from a woman”. It appears that such flexibility is not a result of “internal working rules”, but often results from an “informal agreement”. Some flexibility is offered but not on an equal basis for all employees. Our research shows that flexibility is offered first and foremost to those in management positions in this enterprise, broadly speaking. There are also some problems stemming from parental responsibilities such as late arrivals, which are less tolerated for those who participate in the inclusion programme of this company.

After having compared the availability of family-friendly arrangements in the conventional and social enterprises in six European countries, we can conclude that the type of enterprise – whether conventional or social – is not the main differentiating factor. The social policy framework defined at national level, however, seems to be a rather strong determinant for the family-friendly arrangements developed in the enterprises under research. There are significant similarities between the companies in each country. Formal arrangements are provided in Finland, Italy and in Belgium in conventional as well as in social enterprises. In both types of companies in the Czech Republic and France these are provided more informally, with a significant difference between these two countries. In the Czech Republic work-life balance is still perceived very much as the “woman’s problem” which has an impact on the chances of women with children being promoted to a management position. Also, there is an ideology of “intensive motherhood” in the Czech Republic, where finishing the working day early is valued. In France parents seemed more satisfied with their work-life balance than in the Czech Republic, even though family-friendly arrangements are provided on an informal basis in the companies in both countries. Another differentiating factor which, in fact, explains some differences not only between countries but also between conventional and social enterprises is the organisation and structure of the enterprise and the type and intensity of the work in a particular company. For example, in Belgium, although flexibility is formally available for all employees in the social enterprise, the heavy workload and the role of managers as gatekeepers, do not allow the employees to make a full use of the arrangements. In contrast, in Finland it seems that the social enterprise is characterised by a lighter workload, which allows for better work-life balance compared to some conventional companies.

3.3. GENDER SENSITIVE COMPANY CULTURE

Table 5 - Informal arrangements in the enterprises

Source : Gender Balance Power Map national studies

INDICATORS	BE		CZ		FI		FR		IT		RO	
	CE	SE										
Gender sensitive company culture	CE	SE										
Gender equality and prevention of discrimination is part of the company vision and mission (yes/no)	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	DM	DM	NO	NO
Informal arrangements to support work life reconciliation of people with caring responsibilities (yes/no)	YES	YES	YES	NO	DM	DM	YES	YES	DM	DM	NO	NO
Informal arrangements to support women in management (yes/no)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	DM	DM	NO	YES
The overall climate in the company is open and respectful to women (yes/no)	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES						
Satisfaction of employees												
Overall satisfaction	DM	YES	YES	YES	DM	YES	YES	YES	DM	YES	YES	YES
Satisfaction of women with work-life balance	DM	YES	YES	DM	DM	DM	YES	YES	DM	DM	NO	YES

DM=data missing

CE=conventional enterprise

SE=social enterprise





Gender sensitive company culture is closely linked to organisational policies promoting gender equality, especially to policies that prohibit gender discrimination and enhance women's participation in leadership. However, a gender friendly environment and company culture is also created by informal, unwritten values, rules and norms that are experienced by players in their everyday lives. From this point of view, a gender sensitive organisation should develop an organisational culture based on written as well as unwritten values, rules and norms that do not define jobs, work tasks and job responsibilities as sex/gender specific.

I Gender equality and company vision and mission

Many companies in our sample (10 out of 12) do not formally declare either their mission (what they want to do now) or their vision (what they want to be in future) for gender equality in the company. However, the mission in particular can be revealed from answers of interviewees as it is functioning on an informal level.

The mission of conventional companies involved in our research is mainly focused on profit, high job performance and productivity. Conventional enterprises are competence-focused as their corporate culture is oriented to competitiveness outside the company. Within the company, this orientation towards competence tends to enhance people skills, including those regarding leadership. Priority is given to client satisfaction as opposed to the well-being of employees. All these aspects imply a greater focus on the external image of the firm and its performance rather than on the internal situation of the firm. The exception from this "general rule" is represented by the Finnish conventional enterprise. Employing disabled people, the company character is close to the character of a social enterprise. Its mission and vision is to be the most significant Finnish model of responsible business, that includes responsibility for nature as well as for people who need help and for building a reputation as an employer, of which their personnel can be proud and which makes them feel secure.

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Gender equality does not make any guiding principle in both conventional companies in the Czech Republic and Romania, as well as in Italian, Belgian and French conventional enterprises. Their tools and programmes are not directly concerned with gender equality and gender equality is not part of their mission.

Even if some of the organisations under research pay attention to equality and the prevention of discrimination, they do not usually stress gender equality specifically. For instance, the Finnish conventional enterprise has a strict policy against discrimination and also equal opportunities are closely monitored. They have a zero tolerance regarding insulting behaviour/discrimination in this company, which is unconditional. Management intervenes in such cases with a "strict hand", if cases arise. No matter what kind of discrimination is in question, equality is under constant observation in an environment like theirs.

The corporate culture in social enterprises is much more focused on the company itself and the employees' well-being. Importance is given to a relaxed working environment, a cheerful atmosphere and friendly relationships. Contrary to the mission of most conventional enterprises focused on competition and profit, the mission of the social enterprises is oriented mainly towards solidarity and social responsibility, equality, diversity and the well-being of employees.

The Finnish social enterprise pays some attention to gender equality, as the gender equality programme is included in the action and development plan. However, a new gender equality programme is being drafted, whereby gender issues at company level should be included in a more systematic way.

Positive attitudes to gender equality were revealed in the Belgian and French social enterprises. Managers of this French company express a positive and clearly-asserted stance on gender equality: *"I would really like to see the structure be clearer about that. The association's project is not geared in that direction. I would like to see a formal commitment, but that's also because I'm a staunch supporter of this. Gender equality action depends a lot on the people behind it."* (Amélie, manager, F, FR, SE).

Moreover some employees of this social company identify themselves as feminist. In the Belgian social enterprise a progressive integration of gender issues within the agenda of the organisation is connected with the arrival of women onto the board. The Italian social enterprise also tries to promote an equal-opportunity culture mainly through formal organisational policies regarding work-life balance.

On the contrary, social enterprises from the former socialist states (i.e. from the Czech Republic and Romania) do not pay any attention to the gender equality issue. Their approach to gender equality can be considered as gender blind. This might stem from the national gender regimes which are generally gender blind in both cases and do not require gender equality focus either from the conventional or from the social enterprises (c.f. Hašková and Uhde eds. 2009, Hurubean 2013).

Although positive attitudes towards gender equality among managers and employees could be identified more often in social enterprises than in conventional ones, the issue of gender equality and prevention against gender discrimination has not been embedded (consistently) into corporate policies and the everyday practices of these enterprises, and this issue has not yet become an inherent part of their mission.

3.4. INFORMAL INCENTIVES AND/OR OBSTACLES FOR THE PROMOTION OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES

Even if no gender equality policy and programme existed in a given enterprise in order to support the participation of women in management, some internal and informal incentives can help women to reach managerial positions. Concurrently, several unwritten rules and invisible mechanisms can also work against women's career advancement.

I Personal level

The opportunities to be promoted were very often reflected by interviewees on the personal level. Their perceptions and reflections concerned the attitudes of managers to their subordinated employees, his or her "goodwill", abilities, competence and ambitions of female and male employees.

Interviewees' perceptions in relation to female opportunities for promotion refer to three different groups of women.

- a. Women who have no career ambitions and aspiration and who underestimate their capabilities.
- b. Women who have not very strong ambitions but are supported by management in a given enterprise.
- c. Women with strong career ambitions and aspirations.

The opinion on the perspective of promotions relating to women's specific self-image seems to play an important role. Some women regardless of the sector and country are not confident enough in their abilities and skills; they perceive themselves as not having enough knowledge, experience, etc. to hold managerial positions as the following quotations document:

"I didn't have the chance to hold a high-responsibility position, probably due to a lack of skill or ambition. (...) I don't have a lot of self-confidence. It's not one of my priorities to become a director" (Farah, employee, F, FR, CE).

"I don't think so. I can't get promoted because I don't have the knowledge and experience yet to be promoted to a higher position. For a higher position you need to have a specific set of skills and abilities. I don't see myself in the position of my current manager. I don't have enough knowledge compared to him. I feel more comfortable with my current position" (Delia, manager, F, RO, CE).

"I think that a leadership position is not suitable for me, because I am too soft to command (...) I do not like to





command, I'd better at doing things myself" (Stela, employee, F, CZ, SE).

These women were not taking the initiative for their personal career development, placing more value on safety than on taking a risk, especially in the former socialist states. While women do not feel "capable" of holding a management position, or do not feel that they "have the skills needed to be a manager", these perceptions may reflect a lack of recognition of employees' skills in the organisation, which can, in turn, hinder promotion.

Contrary to this group, there were some women interviewed with strong career ambitions and career orientation (especially in the conventional enterprises). One woman from the Romanian conventional enterprise even declared that in her opinion, being a woman might be an advantage only because women have the chance to exceed the traditional stereotype expectations, contradicting the traditional stereotypes of being weak in decision-making, too cautious or unable to take hard decisions. She confessed that she is using the stereotypes (allowing the male managers to see her as being sensitive and weak at first sight) in order to surprise them later on: *"I have had positive experience as a woman. There is an advantage to be a woman because people expect you to be weak. They have lower expectations for women than for men. When you have the opportunity to prove that you are performing well and that you are able to take decisions or to find solutions, the positive surprise puts you in an advantageous position"* (Denisa, employee, F, RO, CE).

According to some interviewees, the promotion of female employees depends mainly on the personality of the team leader and his/her relationship with the employees (e.g. Belgian and Czech social enterprises; and Romanian conventional enterprise). This managerial attitude is connected with some unwritten rules of promotion, especially with the impact on outstanding work performance.

A career development is seen as a personal issue, either on the level of managers or a person who is interested in promotion. Although some "incentives" as well as obstacles are perceived by our interviewees as personal and individual, they are an inherent part of informal mechanisms and internal culture of a given organisation.

I Level of informal organisational mechanisms, internal rules and values

Despite the fact that people perceive the issue of promotions usually only on the personal level, their perceptions refer also to unwritten rules, experienced norms and values. The aforementioned informal mechanisms for promotion regarding the personality of managers and their attitudes toward the advancement process are often viewed by interviewees as gender neutral as well as "natural" processes. This is because no attention is paid to his or her gender when a given subordinated person shows interest regarding her/his promotion:

"There is no selection process. Promotions are made naturally when people show that they want to develop" (Irma, employee, F, FR, CE).

"Anyone who wants to can move up the ladder. Our Executive Assistant used to be an operator. This goes for both men and women. The company is looking for people who want to work and who have the skills needed" (Carmen, manager, F, FR, CE).

The Belgian conventional enterprise reveals that the impact on competence can have a discriminatory impact on female employees. The competence-based selection method requires women to fit into a model of worker initially shaped for men. The so-called model of an ideal worker disadvantages women with children indirectly, since their maternity would have interrupted their career and their on-the-job training.

The model of a male manager is linked not only to competence-based selection and uninterrupted working career path but also to the time-flexibility, time availability and willingness to work overtime or late evenings. The informal obligations regarding time constraints somehow work as a limitation to women's career.

"When you apply for a higher position you need to be ready to work more. If you apply it means that you know that this will affect your life. If you have to leave at 5 to pick up your children from school it is not worth applying"

(Jan, manager, M, BE, CE).

This managerial model works as an obstacle for women's career advancement in other countries as well, more in conventional enterprises than social ones. As a Romanian case shows, sometimes women even changed their previous jobs in conventional enterprises due to time constraints and time pressure and started to work in a social one.

"I had the feeling that I couldn't accommodate everything (in my previous job in a conventional enterprise). I was starting the day very early in the morning. I was arriving home very late in the evening, exhausted and unhappy. My child got ill. I decided to stop working and to stay home with my child, with other job offers. However, I was looking for job with a fixed schedule and closer to my house" (Mindora, employee, F, RO, SE).

"In my previous job I was at the disposal of the company 24 hours a day. I was always available and took on a lot of responsibilities. I woke up one day and I said: I'm getting older, I have no partner, no family... where is my life? And that was the moment I decided to stop... My final decision was to change my job with a different profile and less responsibilities in order to have more time for my family" (Mirela, manager, F, RO, SE).

Characteristics of managerial careers reinforce the masculine image of managers, to which both men and women are obliged to conform, regardless of their time constraints out of work: *"I have noticed that sometimes women in management positions tend to be more aggressive than men. This is because sometimes women are behaving with more difficulty under pressure"* (Delia, manager, F, RO, CE).

The management of the time constraint is more challenging for women, who are willing to access managerial positions, as they have difficulties adapting family and career responsibilities. The temporal norms associated with management positions are prejudicial for women as the intense involvement in these positions ignores a specific period in their life course such as maternity:

"I have trouble to imagine I could fulfil my professional projects [i.e. become a manager] while having children. The day I have children, I would like to be more present for the child and not have to work more than 38 hours a week, which is the case in my current job. I imagine finding a balance: keep working but for a certain period of time, reduce the work a bit" (Marianne, employee, F, BE, CE).

"I turned down a managerial position because of time constraints as it needs to be someone who doesn't finish at 4 p.m. and closes the door behind him/her. There are moments when you have to be there at the weekend and I did not want to sacrifice my free time and family..." (Klaudie, employee, F, CR, CE).

"I think that women can give 100% of themselves once their children are older. It's not fair, in my opinion, because it means that women are not as available to work as men up to age 50" (Isabelle, employee, F, FR, CE).

Sometimes the opportunity for career advancement is seen by players as higher and friendlier for women in the social entrepreneurship compared to the conventional one as the following quotation confirms: *"I think, generally speaking, that it is hard for a woman to reach a management position. For instance, my brother does not hire women. In the social entrepreneurship sector, men are more intelligent. I have never felt stigmatised as a woman"* (Mathilde, manager, F, FR, SE).

Even though the opportunity of career advancement in this quotation is linked to the personality of male managers, it reveals the potential different attitudes of managers towards female employees in the conventional and social enterprises. These different attitudes suggest different evolution opportunities for women given the company culture which is not (so) competitive in social enterprises as it is in the conventional ones. As a matter of fact, social enterprises are described as more friendly and more respecting of their employees (see the case of Romania, Italy, France and the Czech Republic).

However attitudes to women who seek to be promoted are not necessarily very sensitive in the social sector, as the example of the Belgian social enterprise shows. When a woman is to be appointed for a management position





there, she is asked if she feels capable of tackling several responsibilities, both at work and at home. The question is not raised when the promotion concerns male employees, even though they may be fathers: *“However when a woman is appointed for a management position, I want to be convinced that she is able to manage both aspects of her life well – job and family. The question is (for women) “when you are entering a decision-making position do you feel capable of managing your job and your household? It is a question I do not raise in the case of men”* (Jacques, manager, M, BE, SE).

Organisational practice connected to managerial positions with a high level of stress and responsibility, with work in non-social time, overtime and overload, etc. can be obstacles for women’s access to management when they are still expected to be primary caregivers in their families, especially in some countries such as Romania, Czech Republic and Italy. When a lack of time and overload is seen by women as an obstacle for personal and family life then women, who want a satisfying personal life after work, do not aspire to take managerial positions. Due to the aforementioned barriers, women tend to be promoted later than men.

I Informal arrangement to support work-life balance of people with caring responsibilities

Many companies – regardless of the type of enterprise – have developed formal family-friendly arrangements in their organisation (especially part-time, flexi time and home or teleworking). In some companies, informal arrangements work well for people with caring responsibilities. Only the Romanian conventional enterprise does not offer either formal or informal arrangements for work-life balance.

Family-friendly arrangements in the conventional enterprise in France are rather informal with a generally good result for the practice of work-life balance of the employees. In this company the primary facilitating measure appears to relate to paid leave. Several employees reported that: *“People with children have priority when it comes to paid leave during school holidays, but nowhere is this actually written in black and white”* (Judith, employee, F, France, CE).

While employees or managers from the French conventional enterprise do not report about any (or substantial) problems in reconciling their work and private life, female managers in the Romanian conventional enterprise are not as satisfied with their work-life balance. As neither formal nor informal arrangements exist, they are only able to reach managerial positions at the expense of their personal or family life, hobbies and/or other professional development interests.

Even if some family-friendly measures help to find work life balance in both types of enterprises, the Belgian case of the conventional enterprise revealed a difficulty setting limits to work when having flexi-time, especially for female managers with children. These female managers have to work early mornings as well as late evenings when their children are asleep to complete their work tasks. Because of the amount of responsibility managers are asked to take on, one of the female managers interviewed mentioned with humour that she could certainly not win the “best mummy” award.

On the contrary some informal arrangements (such as the possibility of bringing children to work or working from home when they are sick, no work meetings in the evenings, etc.) are applied in favour of persons with caring responsibilities in the Belgian social enterprise. These informal measures go against the type of informal networking sometimes called “old-boys networks” which forms out of the working time and/or place and very often without women who are busy with their family responsibilities. Managers in this social enterprise tend to act as ‘gatekeepers’ in a positive way. They use both the formal and informal measures *“with regard to the use of individual, formally offered measures or in terms of the development and implementation of employee demands.”* (Křížková, Maříková, Dudová, Sloboda 2009: 544)

In the Czech social enterprise, while female employees appreciate a fixed working time which enables them to reconcile work and family duties, one female manager stressed the option of taking her child to work when she needed to work overtime. Even if a given person views this informal practice positively, the arrangement is

more advantageous for employers than for employees. This practice, similar to what is in place in the Belgian conventional enterprise, represents a negative flexibility of the workforce (Formánková, Křížková 2015). If it can help somebody to access and/or maintain a managerial position, it is at the price of her time for private life.

Contrary to this practice, informal rules applied in the French social enterprise do not allow the organisation of any work meetings or any work celebrations outside of working hours. Gathering for a professional purpose (even team building when it is on the initiative of the organisation itself) are avoided in the evenings or at the weekends. Moreover, when the schools or the nurseries are closed, due to strikes for instance, employees' children are taken by parents to the office. Managers of the enterprise agree to adjust working hours, whether the request comes from a woman or a man. It appears that such flexibility is not a result of "internal working rules", but often results from "a tacit agreement".

Sometimes formal flexible-work arrangements can help balance work and private life more for female employees than for managers. They are designed to help women to have a "dual career" (i.e. family and work) enhancing the role of working mother. However, especially in the case of female managers with caring responsibilities, formal measures do not always facilitate work-life balance and at the informal level, they can work as obstacles to women's career advancement. As a result of taking part-time work, women have sometimes forfeited the opportunity to be promoted or they are not promoted as quickly as men are. This practice is usual, for instance, in the Czech Republic (c.f. Formánková, Křížková 2015).

The formal as well as informal arrangements in this area are rather weakly gender sensitive to specific life situations of working women in a given life period. If work-life balance arrangements indeed facilitate the harmonisation of work and private or family life and preserve time for private life of persons with caring responsibilities (still mainly for women) which, we have seen, is not always the case, then they enhance possibilities for females to reach managerial positions. In this situation not only male managers, but also female managers could have both – work and private / family life and could easily reach well-being in these both spheres of their lives.

I Employees' satisfaction

Interviewees from both types of enterprises in our study declare that they are more often satisfied with their job than with their work-life balance:

"The work is important; I feel alive" (Anna, employee, F, IT, SE).

"The work is a key element in my life as it is a source of personal satisfaction and growth and allows me to learn new things every day, meet people and confront them" (Fabia, employee, F, IT, CE).

"We consider our organisation as a family. We work hard when it is needed, but we never intrude our working hours with our personal time. I have no plans to leave the company" (Miruna, manager, F, RO, SE).

The greatest frustration with reconciliation of work and private life was revealed among female managers in the Romanian conventional enterprise. Although a majority of the persons from this company interviewed declared that they share the family responsibility equally with their partners, women seem to have fewer opportunities for their personal and family fulfilment outside the job. While a man interviewed considered that he had time for hobbies and family, women seemed to sacrifice more of their personal and family life in order to perform highly at work. The most often declared effects of being career oriented for young women are: postponing marriage and having children; less time for their hobbies; fewer opportunities for social interactions outside the workplace. However, being overloaded can have some other negative effects in a female life as the next quotation shows: *"I get ill. I was working from Monday to Sunday. I really enjoyed the field of work. However, at one moment I realised that it was too much work and I had the feeling that I could not keep up the rhythm. Once I had a burnout, I was hospitalised and that made me quit the job. Yes, I am aware that I am going to be extremely tired but I think I will find a solution. (...) If I have children, I will stay home no more than 6 months. I will call my mother to come to take care of the children and I will continue my professional life. (...) So, although I don't want that, the job comes first*





for me" (Daniela, employee, F, RO, CE).

I The overall climate in the company in relation to women

In all social enterprises and four conventional ones there are no direct barriers to women's promotion. There are some indirect ones that reduce women's opportunities to career advancement. These indirect barriers for female promotion are based on an insufficiently sensitive approach to female labour force that does not respect the absence of gender stereotypes and prejudices some specific conditions of women's lives. Despite this fact, the overall climate in relation to women can be seen as open and respectful to women in these enterprises because they are able to develop some work-life balance measures that help women to have a "dual career", i.e. work and family life.

Two exceptions from "this rule" among the conventional enterprises are the Czech and Romanian enterprises. While some work-life balance measures work in favour of female managers in this Czech enterprise, there are neither formal nor informal measures in the Romanian company.

CHAPTER IV

Lessons learnt from the comparison of opportunities and barriers for women in the conventional and social enterprises

4.1. OPPORTUNITIES IN STRUCTURE

In the study of 12 enterprises from six European countries, we have first analysed the distribution of women and men in the company and the company structure. The gender segregation, (Anker 1998; Acker 2006) the situation in which women and men work in different jobs, sectors or under different contracts and working conditions, is to be found to a certain extent in all companies analysed regardless of the type of entrepreneurship or the country. As a result, women and men in the companies analysed were located in different types of professions and on different levels in the company structure.

What influenced our results regarding the work place segregation was the fact that both the social and conventional companies in our sample operate in a feminised service sector. Exceptions are the Italian social and conventional enterprises, as they operate in the male dominated field of Internet and communication technologies. The Finnish conventional enterprise is operating in both manufacturing and service sectors and mainly in fields dominated by men – in production and manufacturing of wood, metal processing and building construction. In other words, the results need to be put in the context of the gender segregated labour market of the six countries analysed.

When we look at the position of women within the management structure, we can see that with the exception of the social enterprise from Finland, where the position of the managing director is held by a woman, in eleven of the twelve companies in our study, the managing director or CEO is a man. This is explained by the interviewees across the companies as being the result of women having caring duties, which are often hard to combine with the demands of a high ranking managerial position. The “ideal worker model” that is “unencumbered” and works continuously, full time, with no disruption caused by family matters (Acker, 1990) still persists in the workplaces analysed. In this perspective, high-ranking professional positions, in particular, are often seen as incompatible with family life (Lewis, et al., 2007). In case of managerial positions, the work-life reconciliation strategies, as part-time work or work from home, is often unavailable, which restrains the career growth of women opting for this type of arrangement (Formánková, Křížková, 2015). At the same time, various studies bring evidence that the gender segregation is more and more generally considered as a negative trend, which is blocking diversity, productivity and flexibility in the labour market and the companies themselves (McKinsey & Company 2012; Nishii 2012).

Women in our sample occupied lower managerial positions much more often than higher positions. However, ten companies in our study have women representatives on the level of the board of directors or in other types of top management roles. Vertical segregation, expressed by a glass ceiling, is, however, the case in most of the companies in this study. The glass ceiling represents an invisible barrier which at some point blocks upward movement but which is not fully impermeable (Baxter, Wright 2000) (for more details on this theory see Chapter 1.1.). In this research on small companies, we found that the glass ceiling persists even though career growth opportunities exist for women under specific conditions. For example, in the Czech conventional enterprise women are represented on the management board if they are seen as no threat to men in management and it is assumed that they will adopt a submissively subordinate position. Another important condition depends on the field of activities, as for women it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to be promoted to a management position in a male dominated field. Although these opportunities represent a possible way to management positions for women, it does not challenge but reproduces the gender segregation and gender inequalities.





However, the fact that women are able to reach managerial positions in both types of enterprises suggests that there are opportunities for women to contribute to economic decision-making. Women are perceived as eligible employees for becoming managers, especially at lower management level, but usually in the fields or professions which are stereotypically labelled as female and are female dominated companies. In these professions, the characteristics stereotypically ascribed as female, such as the ability to cooperate and maintain good relations, are welcomed and prioritised. Indeed, the low and middle management levels are very often described as much more participative and relational than top management level. This suggests that some characteristics or capabilities perceived in a stereotypical view as feminine can work in favour of women at lower management levels.

In line with the theory of gender segregation, the individual characteristics attributed to top managerial positions, especially in the conventional enterprises are rather stereotypically masculine: e.g. top managers are asked to provide authoritative leadership, to be focused on quantitative results, to be always available and flexible with regard to their working hours, etc.

The few women who reach the top managerial positions often get there as tokens, which is also visible from our results (see Chapter 3.1.). The theory of tokenism (Kanter, 1977) describes tokens as people in the working environment, who have characteristics which make them stand out among the other employees and therefore attract attention. This high visibility generates increased pressure for performance, which might be met by overachieving (ibid.). At the same time, the distinctive characteristics are overstated, and other characteristics overlooked, so the tokens can be labelled as the complete opposite of the rest of the employees (ibid.).

Tokenism of women in management was to be found especially in the contexts of male dominated workplaces or fields, as for example in the French company, where a woman became a manager of a production stream of a company. In this case, her appearance was exaggerated – she was labelled as too attractive – whereas other characteristics, which made her a suitable person for this managerial position, were overlooked. In this context, according to Yoder (1991) the status of token brings different results for women and men. Whereas men often benefit from their visibility as tokens in feminised working environments, women more often face the negative consequences of tokenism, especially in male-dominated occupations considered inappropriate for women. The strategy to fight the negative status of token is, in the case of women in management, to work harder and better than men to prove their ability to sustain the position. The Finnish female manager of the social enterprise suggested working more and better than men to be able to keep up with the competition with men for the high managerial position. As Birgit Weyer aptly summarises: *“It is not that leaders are mostly men because men are preferred as leaders. Rather, most leaders are men because leadership is described as a task that requires behaviour deemed masculine. Thus, if women become leaders, they are likely to behave in a manner that is not expected of their gender based on gender-role stereotypes”* (Weyer 2007:488).

If women reach a critical mass, they have the opportunity to enforce measures in favour of gender equality or work/life balance (Torchia, Calabrò, Huse 2011). In the case of the Belgian social enterprise, employees could notice a change in the priorities of the board of directors when the board formerly made up of only three men, was enlarged to include two women. With two women constituting 40% of the board members, demands for better working and work/life balance conditions were accepted.

4.2. OPPORTUNITIES IN POLICIES

According to Fagan, Menéndez and Ansón (2012) the most important and effective methods to support women in management of companies regardless of their size are: legislation, action plans at national or company level and work/life balance policies at company levels. Legislation supporting the promotion of women into management (quotas), exists in four out of the six countries under study – Finland, France, Belgium and Italy. In the context of this research of rather small social and conventional companies, in Finland, a special gender equality plan should be implemented in all companies with more than 30 employees. Similarly, in France, companies with more than 50 employees are working on an agreement to promote equal opportunities and equal remuneration. In the Italian social enterprise gender policies are included in the policies of labour inclusion.

Quotas represent an important opportunity for women to be promoted and not to appear in the position of tokens but to create a critical mass at a particular level of management of the company. However, national quota laws do not apply to small companies, the existence of such a law is part of the national gender regime and as such, has certainly at least an indirect impact on the labour market. An opportunity for gender equality and, therefore, also indirectly for the support of women in management are policies for gender equality in remuneration which are not created only at company level but companies in Finland, Italy and Belgium enjoy state level systems of indicative remuneration which incorporate gender equality in remuneration. A transparent system of remuneration respecting gender equality is one of the signs of focus on gender equality in other areas as well, such as promotion and hiring in the company.

There is no specific system of support of the promotion of women into management positions in any of the enterprises under study, either conventional or social. However, there are some rather informal mechanisms, through which women get promoted, even though not systematically. As we concluded above, feminised teams and stereotypical behaviour and expectations from women (such as empathy, communication etc.) create opportunities for women to be promoted within the gender segregated workplaces.

4.3. WORK - LIFE BALANCE POLICIES

In the conventional as well as social enterprise in Finland, which is the country with the most developed and universalist welfare state based on gender equality, family-friendly arrangements, such as parenthood and child care leave, are available for all employees. In addition, flexibility in working time is possible, for instance, for family reasons. The long history of gender equality legislation and support for caregivers (women and men) in Finland, for example strong support for and high availability of childcare services, is an important precondition for gender equality in employment and in access to management positions for women and men. The conventional as well as the social enterprise in Belgium have set a system of arrangements in place to support employees to balance private and professional life, while in France these measures are rather informal in the companies in this study. Both countries, however, have legislation supporting equal access of caregivers to parental leave and a wide system of childcare facilities.

In the conventional as well as the social enterprise in Italy the organisation of work is flexible. The conventional company introduced measures specifically designed to help women to have “dual careers,” enhancing the role of working mothers and the importance of work-life balance policies. However, offering work-life balance measures, when they are not further supported by national level legislation or policies for the promotion of women into management, permit the access of women to employment rather than access of women to management positions or career growth. Focus on women in work/life balance measures often stems from the national gender regime with deep-rooted gender stereotypes. In the case of Italy we can see how this national gender regime, contradictory to the progressive gender equality legislation adopted recently (2000) and undermined by the White book (2003) maintaining a gender stereotypical approach and by even more recent austerity measures, persists in its influence on the practice and on assessments of opportunities for women to be promoted into management positions.

However having support for work/life balance rooted in the welfare state is a significant advantage for representation and promotion of women into management. In countries where the State does not support, for example, childcare facilities for small children (0-3 years of age), such as in the Czech Republic, women see this factor as limiting their possibility to work and to have equal access to career advancement. France is an example of a country with strong support for work/life balance, including high availability of childcare services for children of all ages. Therefore, although there are no formal arrangements for work-life balance in the conventional company in France the employees interviewed at the company feel that they have no trouble managing their work and family life. In the social enterprise in France there is more individual and informal access to family-friendly arrangements which seems to work out.





All the interviewees in the conventional company in the Czech Republic agreed that the company made it relatively easy to combine work and personal lives. Despite these arrangements, the women interviewed, including managers with children, still believe that it is not possible to combine their career with maternity as well as they would like. Neither in the social enterprise of the Czech Republic, nor in the conventional or social enterprise in Romania, are there any formal work/life balance measures.

After having compared the availability of family-friendly arrangements in the conventional and social enterprises in six European countries, we can conclude that the type of enterprise – whether conventional or social – is not the main differentiating factor. The social policy framework defined at national level and the gender regime in which this framework exists seem to be rather strong determinants for the family-friendly arrangements developed in the enterprises under research. There are significant similarities between the companies in each country. Formal arrangements are provided in Finland, Italy and in Belgium in the conventional as well as in social enterprise. In both types of companies in the Czech Republic and France these are provided more informally with a significant difference between these two countries. In the Czech Republic work-life balance is still highly perceived as the “woman’s problem” which has an effect on the chances of women with children being promoted to a management position. Also, there is an ideology of “intensive motherhood” in the Czech Republic where finishing the working day early is valued.

Opportunities for the promotion of women in management in the companies studied are generally blocked by two processes. First, the approach of the company representatives in our research can be characterised as essentialist, using gender stereotypes to explain the situation of the presence or absence of women in management. Second, there is the absence of enabling working conditions for women (for example changing rooms or fitting safety tools for women) or specific measures to support the promotion of women into management positions. Under these processes, segregation and gender inequality remain as well as underrepresentation of women in management.

4.4. GENDER STEREOTYPES ABOUT JOBS AND MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

Small enterprises in our sample do not differ from some big conventional as well as social enterprises in terms of sensitivity to gender equality and gender based inequalities (e.g. Fagan, González Menéndez and Gómez Ansón 2012, Teasdale, McKay, Phillimore and Teasdale, 2011). In most of the companies investigated, regardless of the sector - conventional or social - no policies or measures supporting equal opportunities and gender equality have been developed within their corporate policies. Even if managers as well as employees from both types of enterprises declare equal treatment between men and women in access to training and education, as well as in promotion to managerial positions, we can identify some informal barriers and obstacles preventing women’s career advancement and reducing women’s opportunities to be promoted to management.

These obstacles and barriers mainly deal with implicit and unconscious gender stereotypes which can be divided into symbolic and lived ones (Kiczková 2011: 127-131). They differ in the degree of their descriptive and prescriptive components. While descriptive components are based on the assumptions of differences between a group of men and a group of women and describe their different skills and abilities, different everyday behaviour, prescriptive components express how men and women should behave to be “proper” men and “proper” women. Descriptive components prevail in lived stereotypes, prescriptive in symbolic ones. We can identify both types of stereotypes in the perceptions and reflections of interviewees (men as well as women, female employees as well as managers of both sexes) in relation to the corporate and the individual level.

Gender stereotypes in enterprises investigated are closely linked to horizontal and vertical segregation (c.f. Chapter 3) and with perceptions of skills and abilities as exclusively or mostly appropriate for a given gender. The mechanisms of gender differentiation and re/production of gender stereotypes in relation to work abilities and capabilities are followed and reproduced when choosing the right candidates for the selected positions. From this perspective it is viewed again as “normal” that women (or men) occupy (or should occupy) executive positions in gender stereotypical fields.

The dominance of different genders in different fields of management can also be explained by education and work experience, which lead men and women’s professional steps to different fields. However, when a woman steps into direct competition with men, she becomes an outlier or a token. Stressing her feminine side, such as her physical attractiveness, is a way of undermining her competence to succeed in a position considered stereotypically as male. The masculine image of top managers can prevent some women from reaching higher managerial positions. Mainly time demands of work, overtime, hard work, the emphasis on extremely high job performance, etc. can discourage women from aspiring for higher managerial positions as several cases from our research confirm.

On the contrary, women can be assessed in a different way to men when aspiring for higher managerial positions just because of certain gender stereotypes about male and female managerial skills. What is viewed as appropriate for male top managers has not been viewed as appropriate for female managers, e.g. strong “male” managerial style, high “male” authority, etc. This explains why men are sometimes promoted primarily on the basis of their homosociality (Rose 1985, Bird 1996, Kanter 1997) rather than on the basis of their better qualification, better working capabilities or higher work performance. Some female managers in our sample reflected that they have to be better than men or have to work twice as much in order to reach the same (top) managerial position. Finally, our research confirms that women aspiring to managerial positions, or holding them, are very often in the so called double-bind situation. Women are perceived either as too masculine and not feminine enough or as not matching the ideal of a manager when they behave too “femininely” (c.f. Jamieson 1995).

4.5. GENDER CONTRACT AND GENDER STEREOTYPES ABOUT FAMILY ROLES

Not only men but also women (employees and sometimes female managers) reproduce gender stereotypes regarding the idea that having a career is incompatible with the role of a mother and a wife. Career building is considered synonymous with irresponsibility towards raising children. This stance in the case of female managers may be related to the experience women managers have with the huge burden of combining maternity with a managerial role. Nevertheless, it may also be caused by a lack of reflection of their own situation and a belief that they are exceptional, i.e. other women lack the qualities to achieve as much as those women did on the labour market.

Reproduction of the gender contract is one of the main barriers preventing women from promotion in the enterprises analysed. Having a career is associated with a masculine life course. Following this stereotype, a woman with career aspirations needs to adopt masculine patterns of behaviour. However, this simultaneously makes her symbolically worse in terms of her feminine role – maternity. A successful career thus implicitly carries the stigma of ‘failed’ motherhood as there is a stereotypical belief that the two roles cannot be successfully combined (as that would require one to be a ‘man’ at work and a ‘woman’ at home). This leads to a paradox where women’s caring responsibilities do not work as an argument supporting the implementation of specific company measures to support women in managerial roles. Quite the contrary – they work as a justification of the fact that women do not aspire to career growth. This gender stereotype influences not only women’s decisions but also employers’ expectations and even some social policies, especially those regarding family and care issues. In countries with strong gender stereotypical attitudes to women’s and men’s roles in family and at work these policies are mostly oriented in a familialistic way (c.f. familialistic welfare regimes) as can be seen in Italy, the Czech Republic or Romania (see Chapter 2, c.f. Crompton and Lyonette 2005).





4.6. COMPANY CULTURE AND INFORMAL ARRANGEMENTS AS A BARRIER FOR THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN

Excepting interviewees from the Belgian social enterprise, interviewees from the other enterprises did not mention anything that could be identified as the old-boy network mechanism (Bac and Inci, 2010). Unlike formal networks which may be bound by legal governance structures or internal company regulations that encourage transparency of communication, informal networks face no formal restrictions and may be able to convey a rich array of information for those who are included and recognised as “important”, “prospective”, “appropriate” for a given position etc. If informal networks reveal information that would otherwise remain hidden, there may be far-reaching implications for promotion of employees, for instance. (c.f. Bac and Inci, 2010).

The absence of this type of informal network may be caused either by the lack of sensitivity of people interviewed to this issue or by the small size of companies in our sample. In these companies there can be more sharing of information compared to big companies, where a lot of information can remain rather hidden beneath the surface and can have far-reaching negative consequences, especially on women who are often excluded from the informal networks. The processes and relationships in the enterprises under study are more transparent for all players which is one of the important preconditions for gender equality.

One of the major differences between the two types of enterprises regarding the representation of women inside them lies in the corporate culture. This culture, with its formal as well as informal operational rules and principles, has an impact on the opportunity for female employees to be promoted to management positions. In the conventional enterprises emphasis on competition, job performance and results-oriented policies are often seen as stress factors for the promotion of women. The organisational culture of social enterprises oriented towards humanistic principles and values seems to be more in favour of job fulfilment for employees in general (and so women) and for a better work-life balance. This comes from the development of an environment that is more favourable to the advancement of women.

Formally, gender is not usually taken into account during the promotion processes in conventional enterprises, which means that attention is not paid to the social roles that might come along with the gender of a given person. However, even if the organisations (mostly social enterprises) do so, it can lead to discriminatory practices against women. An incidence of this would be when, before being promoted into a managerial position, female candidates are asked if they will be able to combine their work and family duties. The same question is not put to men in the identical life situation. Thus, the application of a gender perspective into the organisational processes does not always mean greater gender sensitivity and does not lead to gender equality in the outcomes. It is useful to distinguish three approaches. First, the gender sensitive or gender equality focused approach sees gender equality as an important element which is taken into account in the organisation processes and policies. Second, the gender neutral approach, considers gender equality but not as an important part of processes or policies. This approach is characterised by an opinion where the best way to assure gender equality is not to take gender into account because if we do not think or talk about it we cannot directly discriminate against anyone. The problem with this approach, however, is that groups and individuals are often indirectly discriminated against, and in the exact gender neutral framework, where seemingly equal/same conditions are set for everyone. Third, the gender blind approach, does not take gender equality into account at all as an important part of organisation processes or policies. The boundaries between the gender neutral and gender blind approaches are permeable, rather than delineated.

4.7. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AS A MODEL FOR CONVENTIONAL ENTERPRISE ?

Even if social enterprises in our sample are usually (rather informally) more sensitive to women's needs in terms of work-life balance, the same sensitivity is not usually (except for the Finnish enterprises) applied to men. Although work-life balance measures constitute a necessary condition to ensure that women have the opportunity to be promoted into management, this condition is not sufficient. This type of measure has to be accompanied by a gender-sensitive approach to the full range of internal organisational processes (from recruitment through training, remuneration to the career plans and promotion etc.) so that the mechanisms, operating in a given enterprise on its formal and informal level, do not disadvantage and discriminate against women or men.

We can conclude, that the study of twelve social and conventional enterprises across six European countries reveals sustaining gender inequalities and segregation. When comparing the two sectors, no major differences are to be found. Although the companies from the social sector usually provide better conditions for work-life reconciliation and, therefore, better working conditions for women to succeed in managerial positions, the level of segregation remains very high. Besides, the company size influences the fact there are rarely any company level policies to promote gender equality or to prevent gender based discrimination in access to decision-making positions. In addition, the flexible working arrangements and other types of work-life reconciliation measures are available on a basis of personal agreements rather than as a systematic company policy.

The companies in our sample invite women to managerial positions, but this can rarely be seen as an act of deconstruction of a gender stereotype. On the contrary, women in our sample succeeded mainly in leading female dominated teams in a female dominated sector and were often appointed to lower managerial positions with limited decision-making. In this way, the gender stereotypes were further enforced rather than revised. It is important to note that the women we interviewed were often the very people blocking the change and maintaining the status quo by reproducing rather than challenging the stereotypical assumptions about women's leadership abilities.

It is not the type of enterprise – conventional or social – which is the main differentiating factor but the gender regime, including gender equality legislation and the welfare state policy framework defined at national level. Other factors are the stereotypes and expectations of women and men at work and in families. All of these seem to determine the gender equality focus and the gender sensitivity of the rather small companies in this research.





CHAPTER V

Recommendations

This European comparative study has shown how the various measures implemented by corporate and political stakeholders contribute to the enhancement of women's participation in economic decision-making. Yet as shown in Chapter 2, small enterprises often lack a legal and policy frame to support the development of an internal gender equal corporate environment. Chapter 3 demonstrated the need for companies to develop work-life balance measures (as a necessary condition to ensure that women have the opportunity to be promoted into management) along with a formal and assumed gender-sensitive approach in order to not fall into the trap of indirect discriminations caused by a gender-neutral corporate culture.

Further to this analysis, representatives of conventional and social enterprises met on the occasion of three national workshops in each partner country, making 18 workshops in total, and formulated concrete recommendations intended for corporate stakeholders from both the social and conventional economy, as well as policy stakeholders involved in national and European public decision-making. This final chapter aims at gathering the recommendations under three sections depending on the stakeholders they are intended for: corporate, national and European levels. Even though the authors and project partners support the widely-shared recommendations from institutional lobbies (such as the European Women Lobby) or research institutes (such as the European Gender Equality Institute – EIGE), the present section hopes to bring into the public debate new suggestions that will tackle the topic of gender equality in the under-considered small and medium enterprises; the purpose of this chapter being to participate in the enhancement of women with regard to decision-making in all kinds of businesses, even the smallest and the most socially-oriented enterprises.

5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CORPORATE LEVEL

In its last Gender Equality in Power and Decision-making report of 2015, the EIGE called for institutional change in the corporate sector. It urged companies to create opportunities for women's advancement by challenging the corporate culture characterised by long hours, prevailing leadership styles, lack of transparency in recruitment and promotion practices. Indeed, implementing transformative solutions will be essential to the advent of more effective corporate governance, higher quality jobs and better financial performances. The results of the comparative study underline the need to set up this change in all businesses, no matter what the type or size. When it comes to participation in economic decision-making, the presumption that social enterprises are more gender sensitive and equal than conventional ones was not supported by our comparative research in six countries. The business entity does not matter, but rather the awareness and attitude of the management. Thus, the recommendations given in this section primarily concern both social and conventional enterprises – only a few recommendations at the end of the section are specific to social enterprises.

I Raising awareness on gender in management

In all partner countries (that is to say Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy and Romania), no matter how advanced or how weak gender equality policies in the companies are, there is a demand for raising awareness of the situation of gender equality in the enterprise. Figures and facts that reveal the actual situation should form the base for active measures. Diversity plans or gender equality plans should be introduced, put into practice and assessed on a regular basis. Integrating diversity and promotion of gender equality into the corporate strategy and into HR-policy will ensure that gender equality is on the agenda of the company and give important signals to





those in charge of implementing strategies and plans. Training should be provided to the staff members in charge of human resources management in order to increase gender sensitivity and understanding of what diversity can bring to the company. On the other hand, all employees should be aware of the diversity plan and actions.

I Adopting a gender-sensitive communication

One of the main factors hindering women's participation in decision-making is the remaining gender-based norms and social roles. The communication of gender in the corporate sphere as in any other sphere of society (public institutions, education and so on) is, therefore, an important lever to activate if one wants to avoid fostering and transferring stereotypes. Keeping that in mind, it is all the more important that companies adopt a gender-neutral language in its internal and external communication. In a gender mainstreaming perspective, as has already been implemented by the European Commission, the company strategy, as well as communication and other strategies, should be assessed by gender.

I Redefining the code of management

As underlined by the EIGE as well as this comparative study, leadership is often connected with power: assertiveness, dominance or rational thinking and stem from what is *"normatively understood as masculine characteristics and thus, commonly associated with men"*⁷¹. The picture of a manager is often stereotypical and portrays the manager as a person adopting dominant or assertive behaviour. Such representation of leadership makes it difficult for women – but also for men in conflict with these masculine expectations – to reach leadership positions. Therefore, the code should be changed and better adapted to the requirements of diversity in decision-making. A more diverse picture of management should be developed with portrayals of female and male managers working and taking care of their family responsibilities and/or adopting more participatory and collaborative ways of management⁷².

I Setting up measures with well-defined indicators

Quotas have been discussed in many European countries and remain, to a large extent, a clearly-dividing issue. Several studies carried out on the topic showed that binding legal or voluntary measures having been implemented by Member States or, more recently, by corporate boards had led to an increase of women's participation in decision-making⁷³. Corporate boards and companies are therefore strongly encouraged to set up measures including indicators, especially when they are performing in countries with no specific laws or voluntary targets (namely: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Companies set up in countries with quota laws could also contribute by implementing more ambitious measures which would provide for widening the array of targeted incentives and contribute to the public debate. Finally, business networks should support companies in increasing (gender) diversity in their staff in general, and in the management, in particular.

I Developing transparent and gender-sensitive recruitment and promotion systems

The importance of developing transparent structures and systems for recruitment, promotion and remuneration in the company was also mentioned in all countries compared as a sound track for improving the situation. Attention should be paid to the communication that is made about job and promotion opportunities so that they are effectively accessible to all employees. The criteria should not increase inequality but respond to both male and female aspirants. Companies should also ensure that juries in charge of recruitment are gender balanced. Several countries also suggested that companies set up targeted programmes, such as mentoring by female leaders and tailored leadership training courses to encourage women to take up managerial positions.

⁷¹ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2015a: 13.

⁷² Shrair. 2015: 37.

⁷³ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2015a: 56.

I Developing work-life reconciliation tools and new work practices

The Gender Equality Index 2015 recalls the huge gap remaining between women and men with regard to the amount of time spent outside the workplace: women still perform the majority of housework tasks⁷⁴. A great variety of work-life reconciliation measures (such as flexible working hours) and new work practices (such as teleworking) have already been experimented in the corporate sphere. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, these measures remain infrequent or informally implemented both in conventional and social businesses. Corporate stakeholders are, therefore, asked to systematise these informal arrangements into formal measures which will provide the necessary technical solutions, making it possible for everyone to access these measures (e.g. laptops available for teleworking).

Given the specificities of social enterprises, a few recommendations also addressed this particular corporate environment. It came out from the field consultations that principles of gender equality and diversity constitute an inherent part of social enterprises' responsibility. Social enterprises thus should mobilise their core values in order to support further development of best practices with regard to women's participation in decision-making. Social enterprises should introduce gender equality in the debate on social innovation at large. Social enterprises networks – among others, European networks – could help small social enterprises to find solutions, thanks to the share of best practices and the organisation of training courses, field visits, etc.

No major country specificities are visible from the corporate recommendations formulated. Yet the Czech Republic and Italy underlined, in particular, the need for further work-life balance arrangements and the introduction of more flexibility in paid work. The study confirmed the advanced character of gender equality in the Finnish corporate sphere. For Finland, recommendations are calling for pro-active measures in companies to detect potential gender discrimination and evaluate the impact of gender equality measures. Finnish recommendations also addressed the issue of promoting men's participation in family based childcare.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL DECISION-MAKERS

The recommendations on national level underline the need to identify and address the factors that foster and promote gender inequalities and stereotypes that cause horizontal and vertical segregations on the labour market. Although gender equality has been on the agenda in most European countries for a long time, the gender disparities in employment, pay and job quality remain significant. The lack of women in economic decision-making and the division of the labour market between male and female jobs should remain an issue of public concern in all EU Member States until sustained gender equality has been achieved on the labour market. Thus, the recommendations given in this section invite national public stakeholders to adopt legislation and policies to enhance women's participation in economic decision-making. Depending on the state of play in the six countries researched, as addressed in Chapter 2, the end of this section highlights country specific recommendations.

⁷⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2015b: 142.





I Raising awareness on diversity in decision-making

Raising awareness on gender equality should be implemented at all levels and in all political and economic spheres; yet, the main actions need to be performed at national level. Awareness raising campaigns on the added value of diversity in economic decision-making, and in companies in general, are advised in all countries in order to support local actions. Awareness raising campaigns targeted at parents, maternity wards, day care centres, schools, workplaces, etc. are crucial in order to dismantle the segregation currently at stake in enterprises. The issue should also be integrated into teacher studies and into the professional orientation of students at an early stage, in order to get a neutral and equal appreciation of professions.

I Promoting the best practices of SMEs

The national observatories and research carried out on the topic of gender equality often lead to the conclusion that there is still a long way to go. In order to avoid attributing blame, companies breaking the law should be sanctioned and companies promoting gender equality should be awarded or receive benefits. This is all the more important for SMEs that comprise the vast majority of employers in Europe but often lack information or support to implement gender equality or work-life balance tools.

I Encouraging quantitative measures in all companies

Although many targeted measures can be set up in companies themselves, national measures remain necessary to promote gender equality on a larger scale. The issue is addressed in very different ways depending on the EU Member State. However, whatever voluntary or legally binding measures were taken, an enhancement of the situation could be observed⁷⁵. In this way, all EU Member States are thus invited to take legislative initiatives and set up targeted measures. As pointed out in the EIGE report, progress could be taken even further by ensuring the implementation of these quantitative measures and organising clear, direct and effective information campaigns.

I Enacting new laws and policies facilitating work-life balance

Flexible forms of work for persons with care responsibilities should be implemented in family-friendly national policies, in order to create basic political frameworks for employers and employees and ensure a better distribution of housework and caring duties. As caring work is still mainly ensured by women, national public institutions should also look after the provision of quality childcare and elderly care solutions, as suggested in the last EIGE report⁷⁶.

Besides these transnational recommendations, several country specificities came out of the field consultation. Hence, in countries where no specific laws or voluntary targets have been enacted (in our sample: the Czech Republic and Romania), recommendations, in addition to those mentioned above, mainly urged national decision-makers to adopt quota laws to support the promotion of women into management. In countries having implemented targeted measures, two kinds of additional requests are found.

On the one hand, an enlargement of the companies falling under the national quota law was recommended. In Belgium, Flanders and the Brussels-Region were invited to engage in reflection on the relevance of issuing a decree for gender balance in social enterprises' decision-making (especially non-profit associations) like Wallonia did in 2014. In France, the 2011 Copé-Zimmerman Act, regarding balanced representation for women and men on boards of directors and supervisory boards, concerned only listed companies employing more than 500 employees or those whose net earnings or total balance sheet is very high. Public stakeholders were asked to complete the law by including additional requirements for smaller companies.

⁷⁵ The most significant improvements took place in countries that have launched or considered legislative action (e.g. France, Italy, the Netherlands) or that have had an extensive public debate on gender balance in corporate boards (e.g. Germany, the United-Kingdom) » in European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015a: 56.

⁷⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015a: 13.

On the other hand, assessments of the adopted laws were required. In Belgium, the field consultation led to the formulation of a recommendation calling for the assessments of the 2011 quota law and the 2014 Walloon decree in the years to come, in order to evaluate the relevance of these measures and eventually identify the needs of companies with regard to the implementation of these new laws. In Finland, national public stakeholders were asked to elaborate a funded system of gender assessment centres to monitor the impact of the quota law in order to reveal the problems (in implementation/the limits of the law) at the local and national levels.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKERS

Inequalities between men and women violate one of the five values on which the European Union is founded. Beyond principles, these inequalities contribute to an underutilisation of talent and a waste of highly qualified and skilled women. Given the current economic situation and the objectives of Europe 2020, the EU economy would widely benefit from enhancing gender equality. In 2015, the EIGE called for the promotion of legislative initiatives and targeted measures, a reinforcement of the public debate, an acceleration of the progress in work-life balance and further measures to fight gender stereotypes⁷⁷. In line with the EIGE's conclusions, the recommendations identified through the field consultations call on the EU institutions to keep women's participation in economic decision-making high on the political agenda.

I Coordinating awareness-raising campaigns on an EU scale

The EU should support campaigns that raise awareness about equal opportunities and encourage Member States to take action for equal access to economic decision-making. Effective communications about the European initiative to support women in decision-making positions in companies and organisations in the EU should be carried out. This effective communication should also apply more broadly to the benefit of diversity management, including all marginalised groups (marginalisation grounded on gender, disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation).

I Fostering the implementation of gender equality laws at national and EU levels

As underlined by the European Women's Lobby, all EU policies should be gender mainstreamed in order to ensure policies dealing with entrepreneurship, education or care, for instance, do not have a negative impact on the situation of women⁷⁸. With regard to women's participation in economic decision-making, the EU should speed up the implementation of the directive on quotas on boards⁷⁹ in all countries, especially in countries where the gender gap remains wide. Taking such actions would help achieve the Europe 2020 strategy, as it aims to foster job creation and gender balance and to create conditions for the development of sustainable policies at national level. Progress could be further aided by encouraging Member States to invest in accessible and affordable care services for children, the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as sound job quality policies⁸⁰.

I Developing funding specifically for gender equality

Gender equality legislation will not be reinforced or properly implemented without the allocation of resources and funds. The Europe 2020 strategy, the structural funds 2014-2020 and the next multiannual financial framework should be an opportunity to include and promote gender equality in Member States, through the development of local projects by CSOs, local public authorities, etc.

⁷⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2015a: 56-57.

⁷⁸ Shrair. 2015: 42.

⁷⁹ COM(2012) 614 final.

⁸⁰ The need for improving the quality of women's jobs was underlined by the European Trade Union Institute in a Policy Brief that showed job quality is an important factor affecting female labour market attachment. The authors conclude: "Improving the quality of women's jobs may reduce incompatibilities between paid employment and family formation, thereby leading to both higher female employment and fertility rates". Piasna A. Plagnol A. 2015: 5.





I Promoting role models and best practices of SMEs

The promotion of female role models from and in all European countries should continue. Shedding light on the career path and profiles of female managers, directors and entrepreneurs is fundamental to continue raising awareness. The EU should also actively participate in the dissemination of good practices set up by companies and organisations that support gender equality and women in management, especially when those practices are implemented by the smallest businesses that do not have the same chance to spread their innovations. Yet while communicating, it should take care to involve men in the reflection and the promotion of diversity.

I Gathering high-quality data on gender equality in SMEs

Even though gender issues have been on the scientific and political agenda for decades, further research and assessments are still needed in order to keep raising awareness and progressing towards equal opportunities, especially in the under-researched fields that are small businesses and social enterprises. Transparent systems of career growth and remuneration should be encouraged from European level by the publication of gender-disaggregated wage and position statistics and continuing assessment of the progress. Eurostat, the EIGE and relevant European agencies (such as Eurofound), in partnership with national research institutes, should be invited and financially supported to collect gender-disaggregated data on social enterprises as suggested by the European Women's Lobby⁸¹ and undertake research on gender equality in social businesses. It would be all the more interesting in the frame of the Europe 2020 strategy, since it has already been suggested that female management – characterised by more participatory practices – may be a key factor for more innovation and better company performance⁸².

I Strengthening partnerships with field players

In order to tackle horizontal issues, such as the fight against rigid and stereotypical gender roles and discriminations, it is necessary that the EU continue to liaise and work closely with European social partners, civil society organisations, women's networks and researchers active in this field. It will help the EU to monitor the situation and continue the dissemination of good practices. The role of field players, especially women's organisations and networks, is crucial in the path to female empowerment.

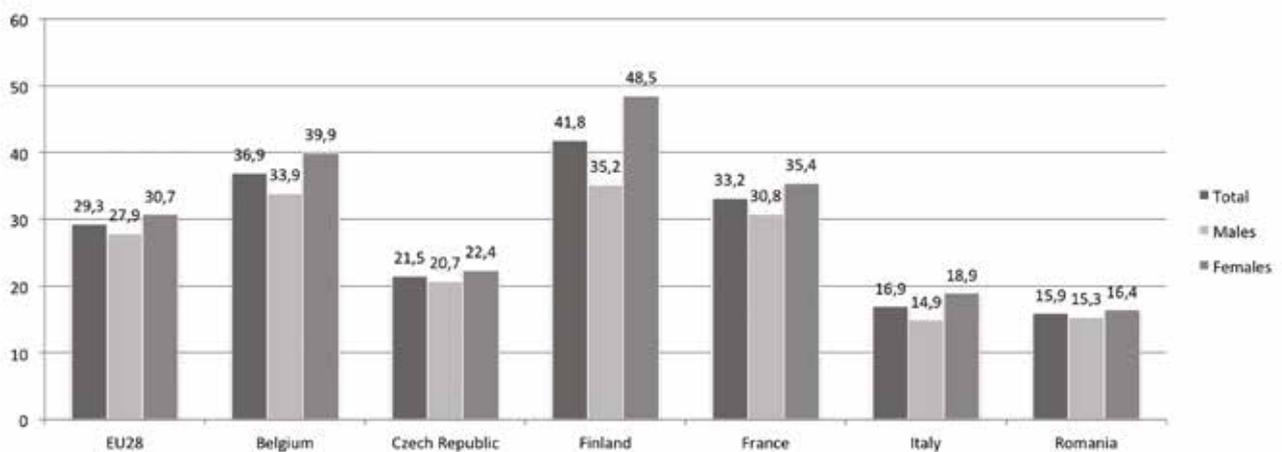
⁸¹ Shrair. 2015: 42.

⁸² Huysentruyt M. 2014: 21.

APPENDICES

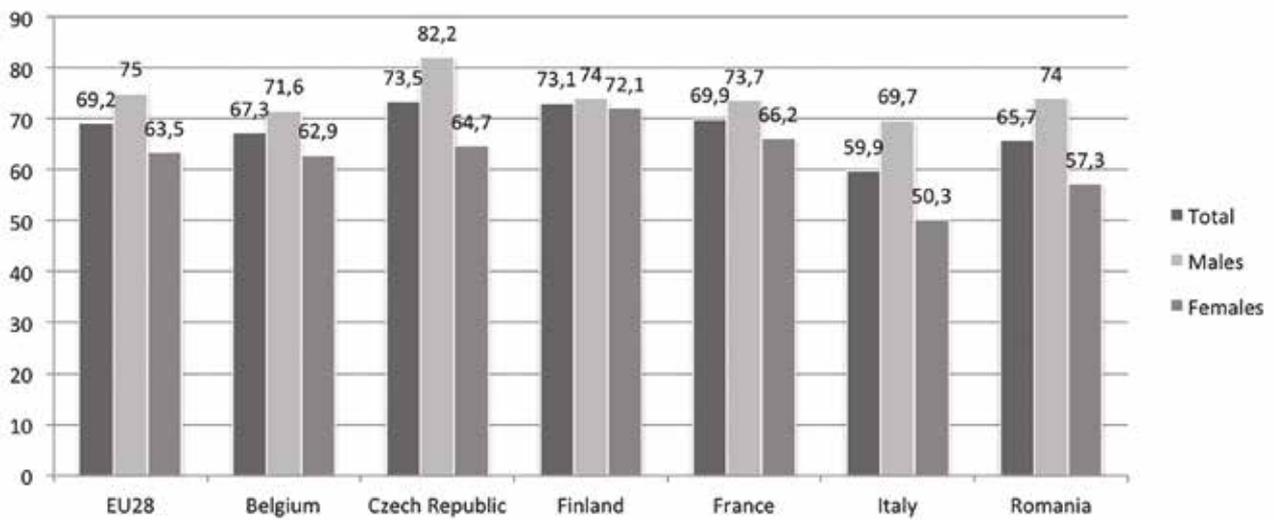
Appendix 1 - Population with tertiary education attainment by gender (from 25 to 64 years) in %

Source: Eurostat, 2014



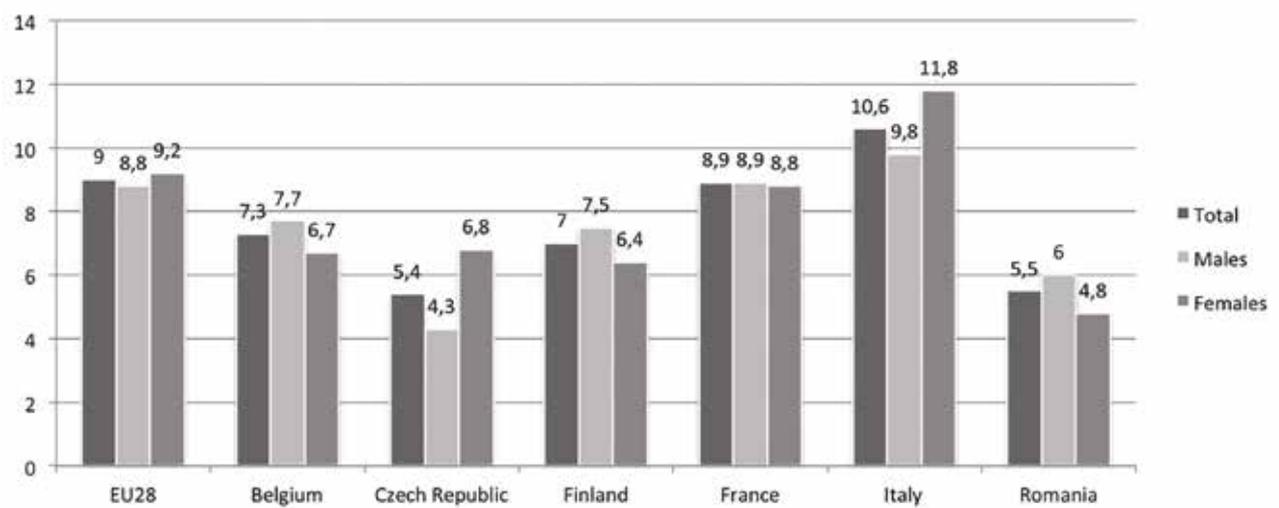


Appendix 2 - Employment rate (age group: 20-64 years old) - Annual averages in %
Source: Eurostat, 2014



Appendix 3 - Unemployment rate (age group: 25-74 years old - % active population)

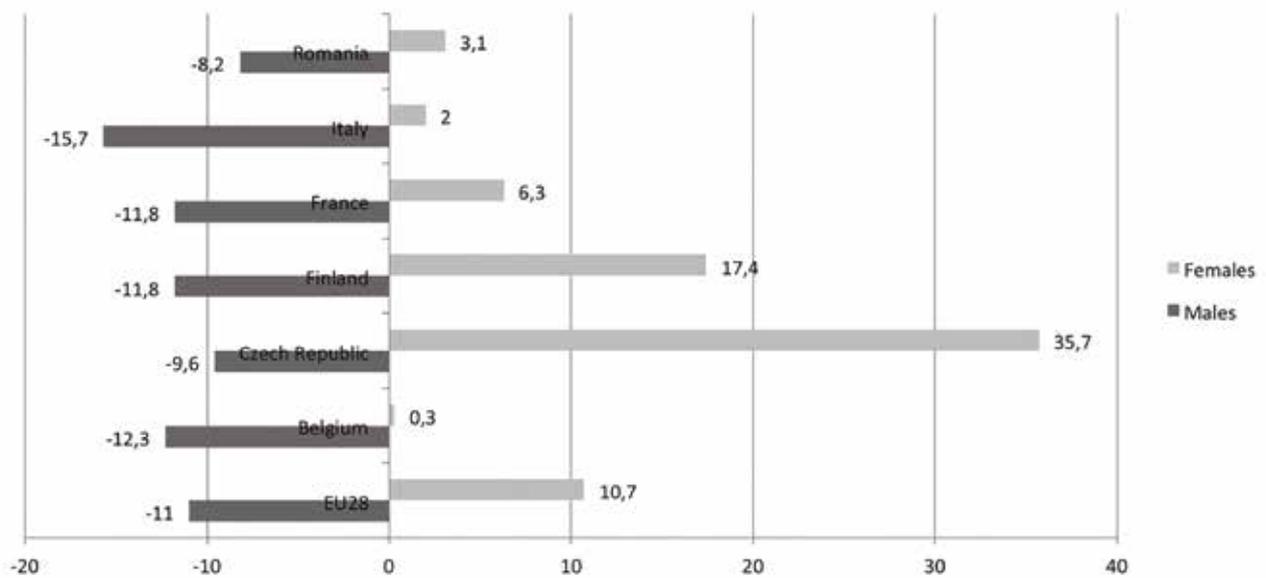
Source: Eurostat, 2014





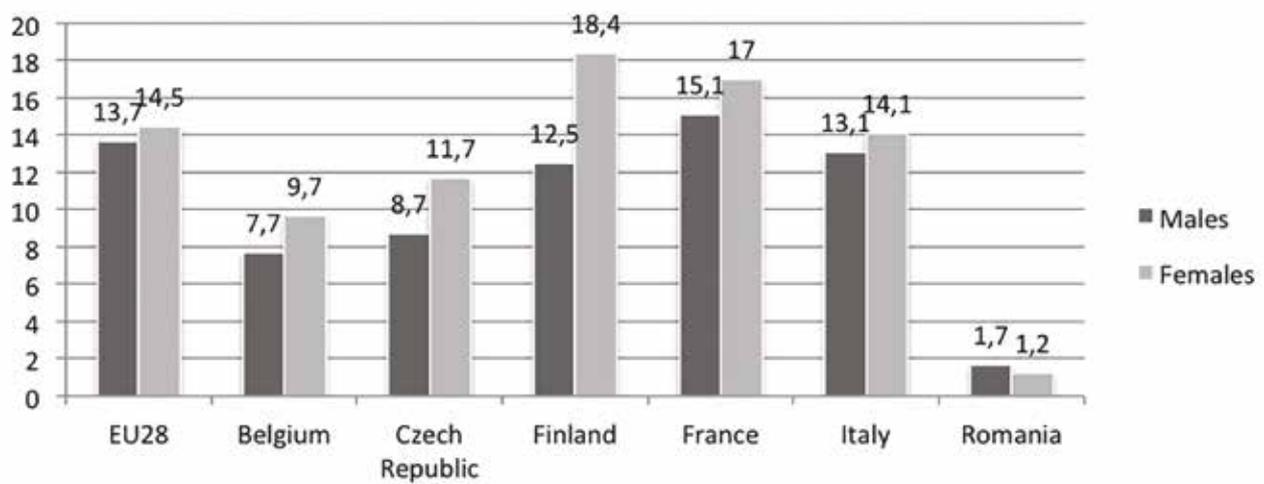
Appendix 4 - Employment impact of motherhood and fatherhood (difference in percentage points between employment rates (age group 20-49) without the presence of any children and with the presence of a child aged 0-6 years old)

Source: Eurostat, 2012



Appendix 5 - Fixed-term contracts (% total employees)

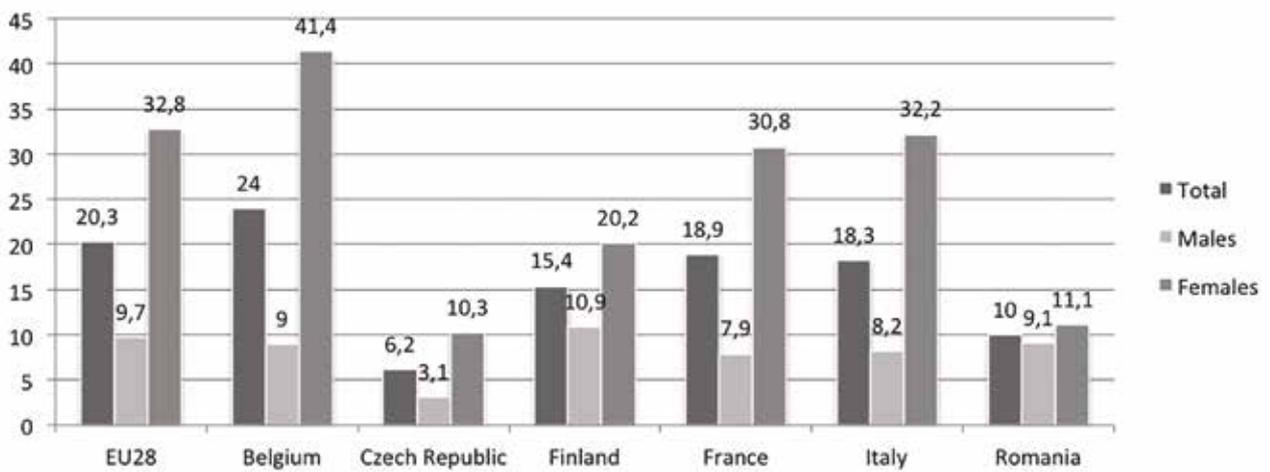
Source: Eurostat, 2014





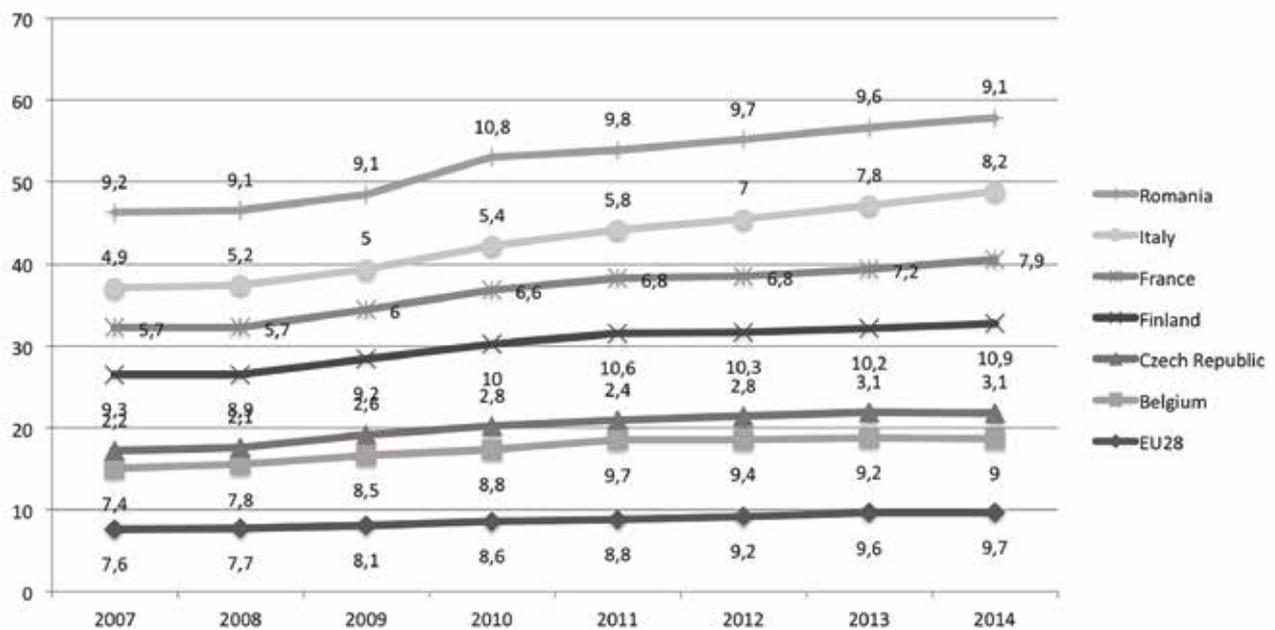
Appendix 6 - Part-time employment (% total employment)

Source: Eurostat, 2014



Appendix 7 - Part-time employment from 2008 to 2014 for men (% total employment)

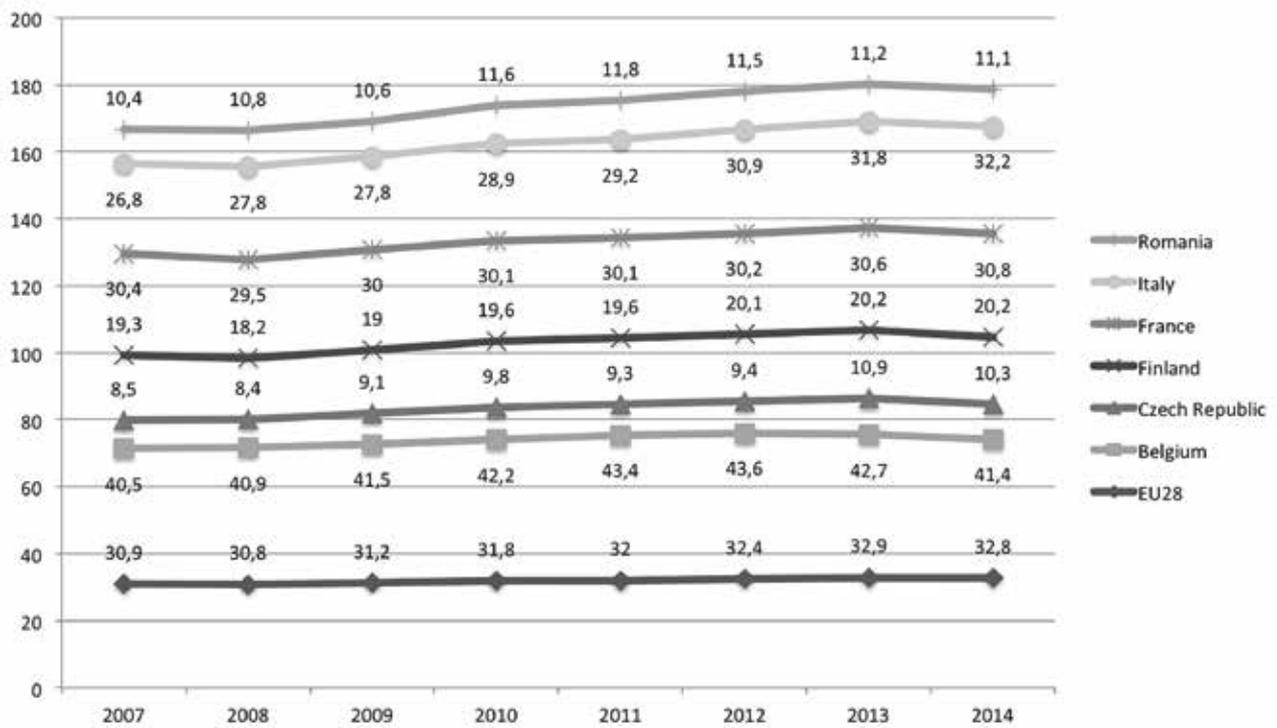
Source: Eurostat, 2014





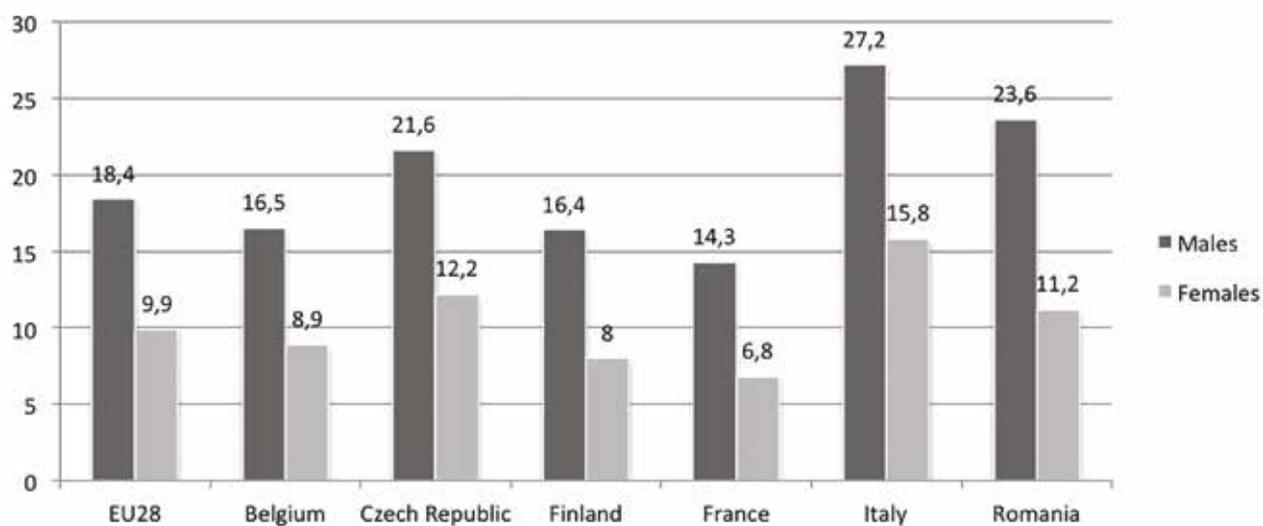
Appendix 8 - Part-time employment from 2008 to 2014 for women (% total employment)

Source: Eurostat, 2014



Appendix 9 - Self-employed (% total employment)

Source: Eurostat, 2012





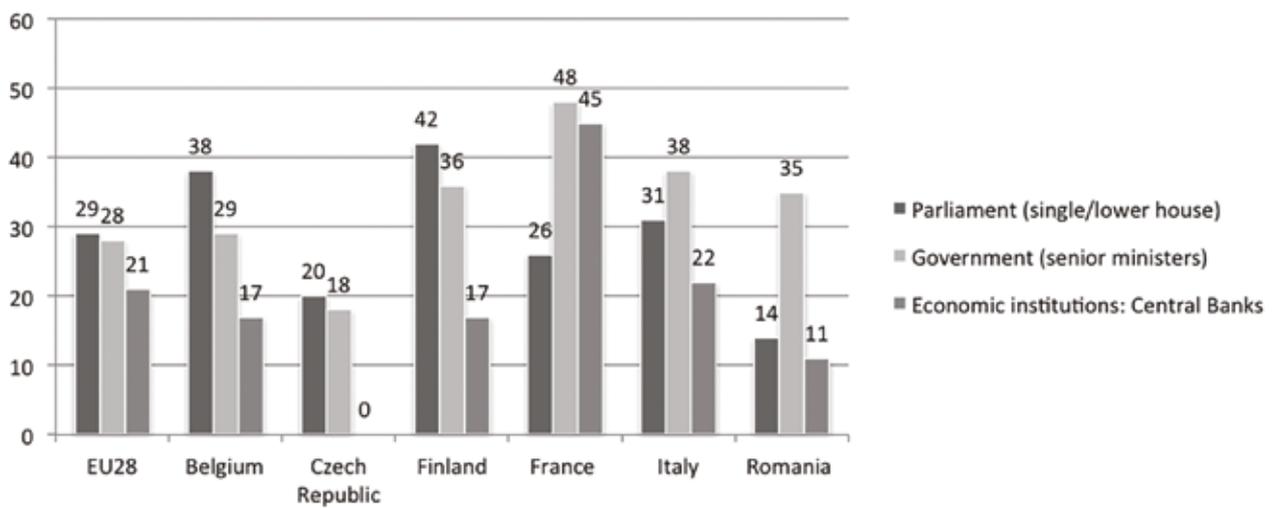
Appendix 10 - Gender pay gap (unadjusted)

Source : Eurostat, 2014

EU28	16.1
Belgium	9.9
Czech Republic	22.1
Finland	18
France	15.3
Italy	6.5
Romania	10.1

Appendix 11 - Women in decision-making positions

Source: Eurostat, 2015





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http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/146138_fr.html

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publications/docs/sbi-brochure/sbi-brochure-web_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/business-finance/supervisory-board-board-directors/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situation-europe/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/law/index_en.htm

http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/domaines_action/emploi/

<http://trends.levif.be/economie/people/femmes-les-pme-belges-ne-veulent-pas-des-quotas/article-normal-200407.html>

<http://www.aramt.ro/en/info-munca-temporara/>

http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/a_ces11042-2012_00_00_tra_etu_cs.pdf

<http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/articles-actualite/2015/12/07-conseil-epsco-egalite/>

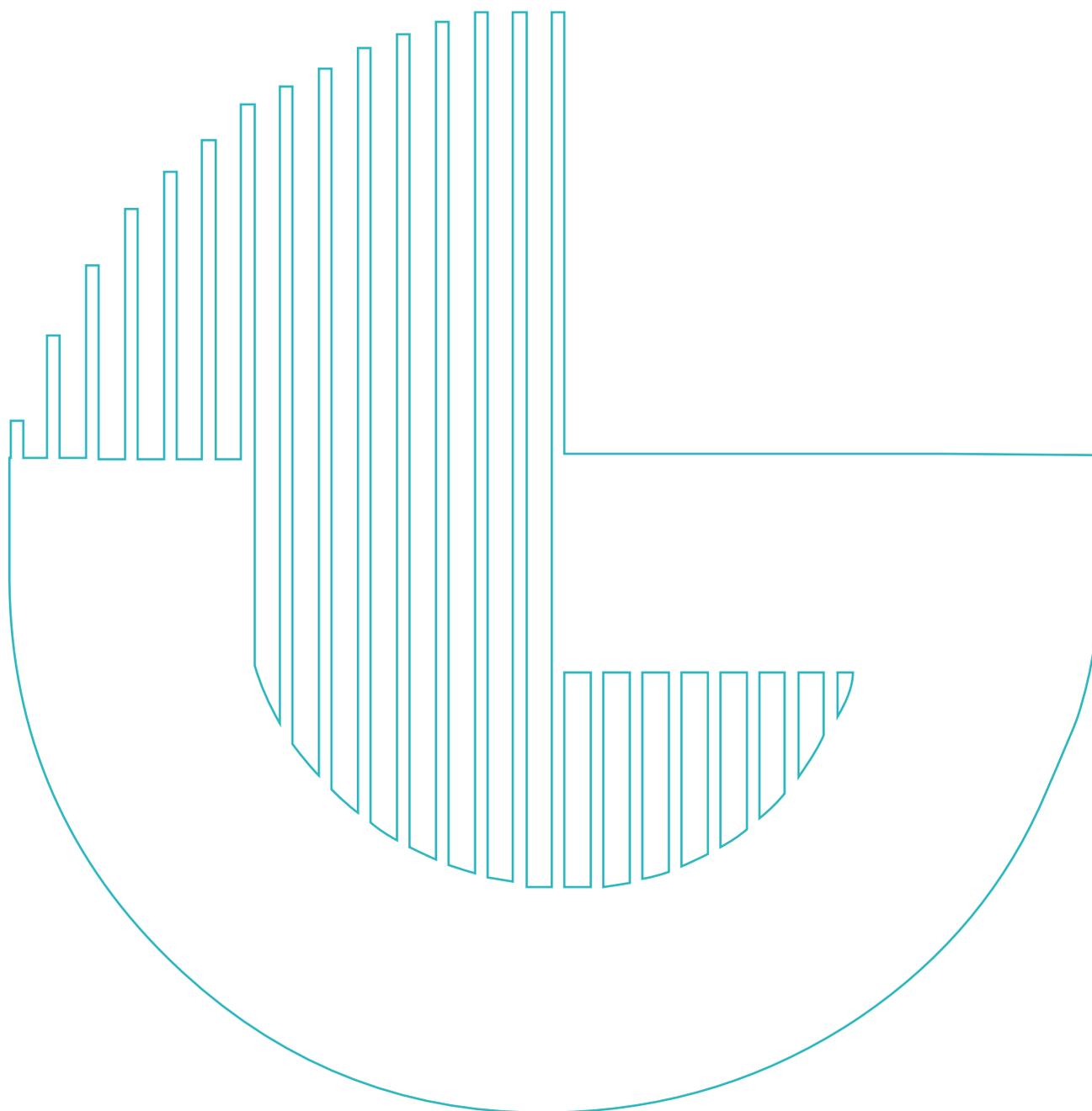
<http://www.eubusiness.com/topics/employment/women-boards/>

<http://www.inegalites.fr/spip.php?article1122>

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