

Q&A: Report on childcare provision in the Member States and study on the gender pension gap ^[1]

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Memo in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts:

1. Barcelona Targets

What are the so-called 'Barcelona targets'?

In March 2002 the European Council, meeting in Barcelona, agreed common targets to improve the provision of childcare in the Member States. EU leaders agreed to "remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age".

Since then, these goals have become known as the 'Barcelona targets' and their achievement has been at the heart of Europe's economic growth strategies (the Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy).

Are the Barcelona targets still valid today?

In March 2011, Member States re-affirmed their commitment to the Barcelona targets in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020). The European Council has made improving labour market access for second wage-earners a priority in the Annual Growth Survey which sets the main priorities for action to improve economic performance. This is to be achieved through suitable tax incentives and affordable, quality childcare services.

On 29 May 2013, under the European Semester, 11 Member States (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom) received country specific recommendations on female employment and on childcare availability/quality and/or full-day school places. In 2012, nine Member States (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom) received such recommendations. Back in 2011, seven of these countries had already received a recommendation (Malta and Slovakia were not part of the 2011 round).

Which countries have reached the targets?

Only 10 Member States (Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, Belgium, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom) have reached the Barcelona targets for the first age group (0-3 years), according to the latest data, covering 2011. Italy and Finland have reached an intermediate level of coverage of over 25%. And 15 Member States have yet to make substantial efforts to achieve the objective: in particular Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia whose coverage rate is 5% or less.

In the category of children aged from 3 to mandatory school age, only 9 Member States (Belgium, Sweden, France, Estonia, Germany, Slovenia, Denmark, Italy and the United Kingdom) have reached the target of 90% coverage regardless of the number of hours attended. Five other member states (the Netherlands, Ireland, Austria, Spain and Portugal) are approaching the target with an intermediate level of over 80%. 13 Member States have yet to make substantial efforts to achieve the target. This is particularly the case in Poland and Romania where the coverage rate is less than 50%.

The following graphic maps the progress of different countries with respect to reaching both childcare targets. The countries on the right of the vertical line have met the target for the youngest children, while those above the horizontal line have met the target for older children. Those on the upper right have met both (based on the latest figures from 2011).

Why have the Barcelona targets still not been met?

Cost and lack of availability are the main barriers that prevent parents from using childcare services, according to the European Quality of life Survey from Eurofound - the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions.

Cost is the main problem for 59% of people on average in Europe, followed by availability (58%), accessibility (childcare services located too far) and opening hours (41%) and the quality of childcare services (27%).

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2. Expert study on the gender pension gap

What is the study about?

The study sheds new light on the phenomenon of the 'gender pension gap'. It proposes a methodology to measure the gap and estimates gender differences in pensions for all EU Member States. It is the first such study of its kind. It was carried out by independent experts of the European Network of Experts on Gender Equality (ENEGE), financed by the European Commission.

What are the main results?

The gender pension gap is the difference in average pensions between men and women over 65, calculated in terms of pensions gross of tax (that is: before tax is deducted) for all EU Member States, using 2010 data from the EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC).

The main results show the gender pension gap is much wider than the gender pay gap. On average across the EU, the gender pension pay gap is 39%, whereas the average pay gap is 16.2%. The pay gap is explained by the fact that women receive less on a per hour basis. A given pay gap is magnified into a wider annual earnings gap, as women work fewer hours per year. In addition, women also work fewer years, due to career breaks and because they tend to retire earlier. This leads to a wider career earnings gap which, when filtered by the pension system, ultimately results in the pensions gap.

Region: Europe ^[3]

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