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Background Information

The Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship (hereafter the “2013 Gender Recommendation” was adopted by the OECD Council on 29 May 2013 on the proposal of the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC). Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right. It is also a keystone of a prosperous, modern economy that provides sustainable inclusive growth. Gender equality is essential for ensuring that men and women can contribute fully at home, at work and in public life, for the betterment of societies and economies at large.

OECD’s long standing work on gender equality

The OECD has long championed this cause. As early as 1980, OECD Members adopted the Declaration on Policies for the Employment of Women [[OECD/LEGAL/0186](#)] (hereafter the “1980 Declaration”) in which Adherents agreed to give priority consideration to the development of employment policies which offer men and women equal employment opportunities.

In 2010, building on its extensive work, the OECD launched the OECD Gender Initiative to examine the obstacles to gender equality in the fields of education, employment and entrepreneurship. This work led to the flagship 2012 publication *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now!* and an extensive work stream assessing policies to promote gender equality in different countries. The OECD’s online Gender Data Portal has become a leading global source for statistical indicators on gender inequalities in education, employment, entrepreneurship, health, development and public life, showing how far we are from achieving gender equality and where action is most needed.

The OECD’s strong focus on gender equality, in collaboration with other international organisations, has been crucial for raising the profile of the gender agenda internationally and securing strong commitments by G20 and G7 leaders. In particular, the OECD was instrumental in advancing the G20 target to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation rates between men and women by 25% by 2025.

A constant challenge deserving high priority in governments’ agenda

At the 2012 meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial level, Ministers welcomed the work carried by the OECD Gender Initiative to highlight the gender gaps in education, employment and entrepreneurship and mandated relevant committees to update, broaden and, where appropriate, strengthen the 1980 Declaration and replace it with an OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality. They also asked the Organisation to monitor and benchmark progress and report back regularly. See the [Chair’s Summary](#).

After going through an extensive consultation process throughout the Organisation, the Gender Recommendation was adopted by the Council at its 2013 Ministerial meeting. It sets out a number of measures that Adherents should consider implementing in order to address gender inequalities in education, employment and entrepreneurship.

It notably recommends that Adherents – through appropriate legislation, policies, monitoring, and campaigning – provide equal access to education, better enable female labour force participation, promote family-friendly policies, foster a greater uptake of unpaid housework and care work by men, work toward a better gender balance in public and private sector leadership positions, and promote entrepreneurship among women.

The 2013 Gender Recommendation also calls on Adherents to elaborate policy principles, guidelines, good practices and data on gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship, and to “further the Recommendation’s objectives through co-operation with all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, public agencies, trade unions, employers’ organisations and civil society”.

A comprehensive framework for comprehensive gender policies

The 2013 Gender Recommendation inspired and informed the development of the 2015 Gender Recommendation in Public Life [[OECD/LEGAL/0418](#)] (hereafter the “2015 Gender Recommendation”).

The 2015 Gender Recommendation complements and deepens the relevant high-level provisions in the 2013 Gender Recommendation regarding the effective governance and implementation of gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives in public life, as well as on enhancing women’s equal access to public leadership opportunities such as in parliaments, the executive, judiciary and public administrations.

Together with the All on Board for Inclusive Growth initiative, the OECD Gender Recommendations provide a comprehensive framework to help countries design and implement comprehensive policies that foster gender equality in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life and deliver stronger growth and greater inclusiveness.

For more information, please consult: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/>.

Implementation

2017 Report to the Council on the Implementation of the OECD Gender Recommendations

The 2017 report presents the progress made on the implementation of the OECD Gender Recommendations in a number of areas such as education, employment and entrepreneurship and provides a first assessment of government policies by drawing on specific examples from a variety of Adherents.

It shows that, while Adherents are increasingly prioritising policies that combat violence against women and sexual harassment in the workplace, the gender wage gap, and the unequal division of unpaid housework and care work, gender gaps persist across Adherents in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life opportunities and outcomes.

In order to ensure that public policy truly reflects – and results in – more inclusive societies, the report calls on the Adherents to build on recent progress through sustained campaigns, monitoring and reviewing policies aimed at gender equality, the introduction and/or expansion of legal measures and public investment and the exchanges of best practice.

Such good practices and policies include: the various STEM initiatives across the OECD; experiences with developing work-life balance supports with parental leave and ECEC for parents with children in e.g. Nordic countries, France and Korea; the many pay transparency initiatives to reduce gender pay gaps; different policy pathways towards greater representation of women in public and private leadership; efforts to obtain a better sharing of paid and unpaid work among partners in Germany; initiatives to improve access to finance for entrepreneurs; and, the efforts to promote good governance for gender equality in for example, Canada and Mexico.

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the 1976 Recommendation of the Council on a General Employment and Manpower Policy, for "creating and maintaining employment and improved conditions of working life for all those who are able and want to work, with the support of relevant economic, employment, manpower and social policies" [C(76)37];

HAVING REGARD to the 1978 Declaration by OECD Ministers of Education, and in particular to their statement that one of the aims deserving priority consideration was "to adopt positive educational measures which contribute to the achievement of equality between girls and boys, women and men" [ED/MIN(78)4/FINAL];

HAVING REGARD to the 1980 Declaration on Policies for the Employment of Women of the High Level Conference on the Employment of Women of OECD Member countries [C(80)76]; to the 1999 OECD Development Assistance Committee Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Co-operation [DCD/DAC(97)25/REV2] and, to the 2008 OECD Development Assistance Committee Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment [DCD/DAC/GEN(2008)1/REV3];

HAVING REGARD to the OECD framework for gender mainstreaming in its own Programme of Work and Budget [C(2001)173];

HAVING REGARD to the recommendations of the 2011 update of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises to fight gender discrimination in employment [C/MIN(2011)11/FINAL];

HAVING REGARD to the 2005 Recommendation of the Council on Principles and Good Practices for Financial Education and Awareness [C(2005)55/REV1];

WELCOMING the significant foundation already provided by several international instruments on various aspects of gender equality, notably the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women; and the principles embodied in the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979;

WELCOMING the reports delivered by the OECD Gender Initiative "Report on the Gender Initiative: Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship 2011" [C/MIN(2011)10/FINAL] and "Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM 2012" [C/MIN(2012)5] and recommending its consideration by Members and Partners in developing their policies to achieve gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship;

CONSIDERING that important steps have already been taken by governments, the private sector, social partners and non-governmental organisations to combat gender inequality in economic opportunities by introducing anti-discrimination laws in workplaces and society; legislating employment-protected parental, maternity and paternity leave; implementing family-friendly policies at work; and, tackling stereotyping in school through educational programmes;

CONSIDERING that significant gender disparities and biases nevertheless remain in educational and occupational choices; earning levels; working conditions; career progression; representation in decision-making positions; in the uptake of paid and unpaid work; in entrepreneurial activities; in access to finance for entrepreneurs; and in financial literacy and financial empowerment;

RECOGNISING that strong and effective actions by all actors are needed in both the public and private sectors to remove the remaining persistent obstacles to gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship and to measure and monitor the progress in achieving this goal together, including by supporting the efforts of developing and emerging countries;

RECOGNISING that further commitment by Members and Partners to improve gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship will contribute not only to greater equality of opportunities for men and women but also to strong and sustainable economic growth as the full potential of women will be taken advantage of;

HAVING REGARD to the 2012 Meeting of the OECD Ministerial Council that mandated the relevant committees to develop a Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship to replace the OECD 1980 Declaration on Policies for the Employment of Women [C/MIN(2012)19 and C/M(2012)7, Item 104 c)];

On the proposal of the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee in consultation with other competent OECD committees:

I. RECOMMENDS that through a whole-of-government approach and through means such as appropriate legislation, policies, monitoring and public awareness campaigns, Members:

A. adopt practices that promote gender equality in education by:

1. ensuring that boys and girls have equal access to good-quality education, equal rights and opportunities to successfully complete schooling and in making educational choices;
2. reviewing and where necessary adapting school and early childhood education curricula, teaching and school practices to eliminate gender discrimination and stereotyping;
3. making the study of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) financial and entrepreneurship issues, as well as education, arts and the humanities, equally inclusive and attractive for both boys and girls; promoting the development of stronger reading habits among boys and girls;
4. campaigning and raising awareness among young men and women, parents, teachers and employers about gender-stereotypical attitudes towards academic performances and the likely consequences of overall educational choices for employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, career progression and earnings;
5. encouraging more women who have completed STEM studies to pursue professional careers in these areas, for example by means of career counselling, adult education, internships, apprenticeships and targeted financial support;

B. promote family-friendly policies and working conditions which enable fathers and mothers to balance their working hours and their family responsibilities and facilitate women to participate more in private and public sector employment by:

1. designing tax-benefit systems so that both parents have broadly similar financial incentives to work;
2. securing availability of and access to affordable good-quality early childhood education and care as well as affordable long-term care for other dependants, including for example disabled children or elderly relatives;
3. providing employment-protected paid maternity and paternity leave to working mothers and fathers;
4. encouraging working fathers to take available care leave, for example by reserving part of the parental leave entitlement for the exclusive and non-transferable use by fathers;
5. providing incentives to fathers to use flexible work entitlements, promoting a more temporary use of part-time work among men and women, providing incentives for women to participate more hours in the labour force, and raising awareness of gender stereotypes to encourage a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work (household responsibilities) between men and women;

6. ensuring that all parents can participate in the labour market regardless of their partnership status, providing ample employment supports to sole parents;
 7. ensuring that policies that address the problem of unemployment do not discriminate either directly or indirectly against women;
 8. improving employment conditions and access to social support for informal workers, especially those in the most vulnerable categories such as home-based and domestic workers;
- C. increase the representation of women in decision-making positions by:
1. encouraging measures such as voluntary targets, disclosure requirements and private initiatives that enhance gender diversity on boards and in senior management of listed companies; complementing such efforts with other measures to support effective board participation by women and expand the pool of qualified candidates; continuing to monitor and analyse the costs and benefits of different approaches – including voluntary targets, disclosure requirements or boardroom quotas – to promote gender diversity in leadership positions in private companies;
 2. introducing mechanisms to improve the gender balance in leadership positions in the public sector, such as disclosure requirements, target setting or quotas for women in senior management positions; strengthening the flexibility, transparency and fairness of public sector employment systems and policies; and monitoring progress of female representation in the public sector;
 3. encouraging greater participation and representation of women at all levels of politics, including in government, parliament, local authorities, and the judiciary system;
- D. eliminate the discriminatory gender wage gap by: strengthening the legal framework and its enforcement for combating all forms of discrimination in pay, recruitment, training and promotion; promoting pay transparency; ensuring that the principle of equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value is respected in collective bargaining and/or labour law and practice; tackling stereotypes, segregation and indirect discrimination in the labour market, notably against part-time workers; promoting the reconciliation of work and family life;
- E. promote all appropriate measures to end sexual harassment in the workplace, including awareness and prevention campaigns and actions by employers and unions;
- F. reduce the gender gap in entrepreneurship activity by:
1. designing appropriate responses to gaps and market failures, including: policies to reduce barriers to women entrepreneurship, administrative burdens on firms and excessive regulatory restrictions; policies to support firm growth, internationalisation and innovation; support for the development and implementation of awareness campaigns, training programmes, mentoring, coaching, and support networks, including professional advice on legal and fiscal matters;
 2. ensuring equal access to finance for female and male entrepreneurs through actions that influence both the supply of and demand for finance by: easing access to finance for viable businesses owned by men and women; taking steps to improve the knowledge and attitudes of financial institutions; increasing awareness of finance sources and tools among women entrepreneurs; and, encouraging more women to join business angel networks or venture capital firms.
- G. pay attention to the special needs of women from disadvantaged minority groups and migrant women in relation to the aims set out above;

H. reduce the gender gap in financial literacy by developing and implementing initiatives and programmes aimed at addressing women's financial literacy needs, and in particular at fostering their awareness, confidence, competencies and skills when dealing with financial issues;

I. mainstream the gender equality perspective in the design, development and evaluation of relevant policies and budgets, for example by conducting systematic gender-impact assessments and generating appropriate data and evidence to build a benchmark for future assessments as well as a compilation of best practices for governments and government agencies;

J. strengthen accountability mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives across and within government bodies.

II. RECOMMENDS that Members further the objectives set out in this Recommendation through co-operation with all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, public agencies, trade unions, employers' organisations and civil society, and maintain the relevance of these objectives by taking the following measures:

A. where necessary further elaborate, implement and promote policy principles, guidelines, best practices and other instruments to achieve gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship; exchange policy experiences and good practices among Members and Partners in order to achieve their objectives in a timely and efficient manner;

B. ensure the collection, production and development of timely and internationally comparable gender-sensitive data and indicators; ensure that adequate resources are allocated to this important activity; and regularly provide available data for the OECD Gender Data Portal with indicators on Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship, while encouraging the full coverage of the indicators in the Portal;

C. ensure that the information collected is used to adequately monitor the progress made on gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship in national statistics and reports;

III. INVITES Members and the Secretary-General to disseminate this Recommendation.

IV. INVITES Partners to take due account of and adhere to this Recommendation and to collaborate with the OECD to exchange policy principles, guidelines, good practices and data on gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship.

V. INVITES Members to co-operate with developing and emerging countries to support their efforts to address the gender equality dimensions of poverty through women's economic empowerment, including by: introducing policy interventions to shift discriminatory social institutions and attitudes and practices, ensuring safe and affordable school environments, so that girls and boys can complete quality secondary education with the skills to enter employment; increasing the gender equality and women's empowerment focus of aid, especially in the economic and productive sectors; supporting the collection of data disaggregated by gender; putting into place public financial management systems that track allocations focussing on women's economic empowerment; and, meeting global and regional goals for gender equality.

VI. INSTRUCTS the competent bodies of the OECD to support the efforts of Members and Partners to implement the Recommendation through accessible data, analytical studies, and good practices to achieve gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship.

VII. INSTRUCTS the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee and other competent committees to establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Recommendation through gender activities as specified in their programme of work and budget; in consultation with other competent OECD committees, assess progress through benchmark indicators whilst making use of existing reports on progress with gender equality; and, report to Council no later than four years following its adoption and regularly thereafter.

About the OECD

The OECD is a unique forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The OECD Member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union takes part in the work of the OECD.

OECD Legal Instruments

Since the creation of the OECD in 1961, around 460 substantive legal instruments have been developed within its framework. These include OECD Acts (i.e. the Decisions and Recommendations adopted by the OECD Council in accordance with the OECD Convention) and other legal instruments developed within the OECD framework (e.g. Declarations, international agreements).

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- **Decisions** are adopted by Council and are legally binding on all Members except those which abstain at the time of adoption. They set out specific rights and obligations and may contain monitoring mechanisms.
- **Recommendations** are adopted by Council and are not legally binding. They represent a political commitment to the principles they contain and entail an expectation that Adherents will do their best to implement them.
- **Substantive Outcome Documents** are adopted by the individual listed Adherents rather than by an OECD body, as the outcome of a ministerial, high-level or other meeting within the framework of the Organisation. They usually set general principles or long-term goals and have a solemn character.
- **International Agreements** are negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others:** several other types of substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.