

*To the UN Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women*

*On provision of a reply to the information request*

The present answer is laid out in seven parts covering normative framework, education, economic and social policy, digital change, women's collective voice, mobility of women workers, leadership and decision-making. The measures listed below are aimed at ensuring the implementation of the multi-year programme under Resolution 2020/15 of the Economic and Social Council.

**I Strengthening normative and legal framework**

**(1) As to actions taken to ensure gender equality and to prohibit discrimination against women at work**

The Constitution of Latvia provides that all human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind.

The prohibition of differential treatment regardless of gender is furthermore enshrined in the Latvian legislation. For example, the Labour Law of Latvia, regulating employment relationship, the Education Law, regulating rights for education, and the Criminal Law that foresees criminal liability for infringement of the prohibition of discrimination. According to the Labour Law of Latvia everyone has an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair remuneration. Different treatment based on the gender of an employee is prohibited when establishing employment relationship, as well as during the employment relationship, in particular when promoting an employee, determining working conditions, remuneration or occupational training or further education, as well as when giving notice of termination of an employment contract.

In 2021, the Government of Latvia adopted the plan developed by the Ministry of Welfare *On the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021-2023*. The aim of the plan is to ensure an integrated, targeted and effective policy that promotes equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The plan includes initiatives that target employers and also broader society about issues of gender-based discrimination in work place, occupational sex segregation and gender pay gap and how to best resolve these issues.

**(2) As to actions taken for equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in both the public and private sectors**

According to the Labour Law of Latvia an employer has the obligation to determine equal remuneration for men and women for the same kind of work or work of equal value.

The plan *On the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021-2023* includes initiatives to reduce gender pay gap and raise awareness about this

issue in society. The Plan also foresees measures to address the elimination of gender stereotypes and challenge stereotypical understanding of gender roles, particularly in terms of work and private life. The measures include encouraging the involvement of fathers in childcare and household duties, as well as to promote opportunities for flexible working time and different employment forms, for example, dependent self-employment and part time employment, which are factors that contribute to increased pay gap.

There have been discussions and exchange of views with social partners and Government institutions about the best solutions for reducing gender pay gap in long-term perspective in the context of the new proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of EU to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.

### **(3) Measures taken to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women at work and provide means of effective redress in cases of non-compliance**

According to the Labour Law, a warning or a fine shall be imposed on an employer, if he/she violates a prohibition of differential or discriminating treatment in the employment relationship. In case of a differential or discriminating treatment at work a person has the right to bring an action in a court of general jurisdiction in accordance with the procedures specified in the Civil Procedure Law.

According to the Ombudsman Law, one of the functions of the Ombudsman is to promote the compliance with the principles of equal treatment and prevention of any kind of discrimination. If the Ombudsman has identified an act of discrimination, it has the right to apply to a court.

## **II As to strengthening education, training and skills development**

### **(1) Measures taken to mainstream a gender perspective into education and training programmes in order to facilitate the effective transition from education or unemployment to work**

According to the *Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027*, adopted by the Government in 2021, the goals of education policy development in Latvia shall be in compliance with one of the UN sustainable development goals which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Therefore, the framework education policy planning document explicitly states that in all types of education and training it is necessary to ensure integrated curriculum that promotes understanding of gender equality.

The plan *On the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021-2023* includes initiatives for young people about the topic of sex segregation in employment and the possibilities of future employment beyond gender stereotypes. For example, it includes measures for girls to acquire programming skills and events for boys to promote careers in education and care work for men.

In 2020, the State Employment Agency, in cooperation with the Latvian Information and Communication Technology Association, implemented a project for 18 – 29 years old women. The project aimed at promoting women's involvement in ICT professions and digital work. The project consultants provided information on IT training programs and career consultations, information was provided to 324 persons in total and 267 persons received career consultations.

### **III Economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment**

#### **(1) Steps taken to promote decent paid care and domestic work in the public and private sectors**

The provisions of the Labour Law, the Labour Protection Law and related regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers are applicable also to domestic workers who have entered into an employment contract. Thus, domestic workers who have concluded the employment contract can enjoy the same legal benefits and have the same legal rights and duties as any other employee in Latvia.

The plan *On the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021-2023* includes measures aimed at the overall advancement of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the labour market and education. Plan includes educational activities for young people tackling the issue of sex segregation, reduction of gender pay gap and gender-based discrimination in labour market.

#### **(2) Actions and investments made to support gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure and services**

Latvia implements social rehabilitation and social care policy since 1995. Family members of the elderly or disabled (including women who usually take care of family members in other countries) are provided with the opportunity to remain or return to the labour market without losing income or social security arising from employment status.

#### **(3) Specific measures implemented to promote women's entry, re-entry and advancement in the labour market**

The State Employment Agency offers its support measures to all unemployed considering their preferences, skills, previous work experience and education as well as specific eligibility criteria and needs (e.g. employment measures for persons with addictions or persons with disabilities), regardless of gender.

In 2020 the State Employment Agency started offering open online courses for persons at risk of unemployment as well as for unemployed and job-seekers. Some offers of e-learning via the State Employment Agency for employed and unemployed were provided before the Covid-19 pandemic, with the aim to diversify the offer of training courses and to meet the needs of all groups (including women on maternity leave etc.).

## **IV Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers**

### **(1) Measures implemented to promote the transition from informal to formal paid employment for women**

An employee has the right to request that the employment contract is made in a written form. The Labour Law states that a fine shall be imposed on an employer, if there is no written form of employment contract.

## **V Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment**

### **(1) Actions taken to support women's access to skills development and decent work in emerging fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics**

Although Latvia has one of the highest rates in Europe for the share of women in scientific personnel (scientists, professionals and project managers with a scientific degree) 49.6% (2020), Latvia still has to seek ways to support and increase the representation of women in science and technology. Particular attention should be paid to the fields of engineering and technology and natural sciences, where men outnumber women.

Currently in the adult education sector many projects are implemented under programmes Nordplus and ERASMUS+, in which one of the target groups is women.

The programme Horizon 2020 has had a major impact on science in Latvia with its gender equality plan, which will be mandatory for public authorities, private and public research organisations and higher education institutions applying to the programme.

Latvia is an associate member state of the European Space Agency (*ESA*) and women's support and gender equality is an *ESA* value, as evidenced by the agency's active work to improve the diversity of the working environment, strictly respecting equal opportunities goals and women in engineering and science.

## **VI Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership, and decision-making**

### **(1) Efforts implemented to support women's participation and leadership in trade unions, workers' organizations and employers' organizations**

In Latvia the Law on Trade Unions states that everyone has the right to freely, without any direct or indirect discrimination, establish a trade union and, in compliance with the articles of association of a trade union, to join a trade union and also not to join a trade union. Membership of a person in any trade union or the wish of a person to join or not to join a trade union cannot serve as basis for restricting the rights of a person.

## **VII Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment**

### **(1) Efforts undertaken to encourage private firms and institutions to mainstream gender equality considerations in policies and practices**

There are initiatives implemented by NGOs and private sector in encouraging women, empowering women, developing and popularizing mentoring movements in Latvia and Europe, encouraging women to participate in public life and socially responsible business.

Additionally, the Society Integration Fund of Latvia has implemented campaign called *Diversity is Strength*, which brings together employers that want to promote diversity in their work place.

## **(2) Action taken to increase investment and support for women entrepreneurs**

Other measures by the State Employment Agency include facilitating business and self-employment start-ups aimed at providing consultative and financial support to unemployed persons with the business skills and motivation to start business activities or self-employment and successfully work in the chosen field at least 2 years. According to the statistics of the State Employment Agency, most of the participants in business start-up and self-employment support programmes were women (about 70%).

The European Social Fund co-funded project *Support for Social Entrepreneurship*. The purpose of the project was to verify solutions for supporting social enterprises, and the total financing comprises 11,1 million EUR for the period 2016 – 2022. The project included awareness-raising measures about social entrepreneurship, as well as the development and enactment of a support system for social enterprises.