



Policy memo on gender equality in Luxembourg

Input to the UN-report for the 66th CSW session

The ministry of Equality between women and men was asked to contribute to an overview relating to the key areas for gender equality in order to prepare a report for the 66th session of the Commission on the status of women (CSW) from the United Nations. This memo provides a succinct overview of the measures, achievements and work in progress to ensure and advance gender equality in Luxembourg.

Global commitment of the government

The coronavirus crisis confirmed that the strength of Luxembourg's society lies in its cohesion and social policies. The government's priority is to support this cohesion by working against all types of discrimination and to give all citizens - regardless of gender, origin and age - the opportunity to participate in social life and to have access to a job that enables them to live in dignity. Thus, the government is continually working to support women's employment and to promote gender equality in public and private life. On the labour market, we are committed to reduce the pay gap between men and women, which is still around 4% in gross hourly earnings. Moreover, the government wants to promote a balanced representation of women and men at all levels of society and in particular in political and economic participation.

Several actions are also made and financial resources committed to fight against domestic violence in particular and gender-based violence in general. Together with the social partners and NGO's the government wants to overcome gender stereotypes and encourages to speak up and change mentalities to make gender equality a daily reality.



Strengthening the legal framework and uphold the principle of equal pay

In 2016, Luxembourg passed a law to enshrine equal pay for women and men in the Labour Code. Inequality has been elevated to the status of an offence, making perpetrators liable to fines. Where a difference in pay cannot be justified on objective grounds and is based on gender considerations, the employer is fined between 251 and 25,000 euros.

The Ministry of Equality has also developed information tools and a help desk on equal pay in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour. The Labour and Mines Inspectorate (ITM) has set up this special service to help employees.

The Ministry of Equality also offers to support companies on a voluntary basis in drawing up an action plan, particularly in the area of equal treatment. A tool to measure possible pay gaps is also made available by the ministry to all companies so they can find out and overcome inequalities.

Empowering women and enhance their role in economic and political life

At the economic level, the Ministry of Equality offers support to companies in implementing actions for gender equality in the workplace through its 'Actions Positives' programme. The aim is to encourage equality between women and men in terms of treatment, decision-making and work-life-balance. Participating companies establish concrete actions for the 3 pillars of the programme and are required to implement a regular self-assessment process. By now, more than 56,000 employees have benefited from targeted measures.

In addition to this action programme, the Ministry of Equality runs awareness campaigns, produces information material and develops training courses to promote equality.

The government also committed itself to systematically intervening to promote better representation of the under-represented gender in decision-making bodies. This applies to public institutions and companies in which the state is represented. The target was set at 40% of mandates for the under-represented sex. In 2020 Luxembourg achieved 40,19% of women representing the State in decision-making bodies of public institutions.



At the political level, the law provides for financial penalties if political parties present less than 40% of candidates of the under-represented sex on their electoral lists. This has contributed significantly to increasing the number of female candidates in recent elections. Such efforts are being continued.

National action plan, care services and a better work-life balance for women and men

The national gender equality policy is governed, on the one hand, by the provisions of the coalition agreement and, on the other hand, by the national action plan for gender equality. Thus, the new action plan of the Ministry of Equality identifies 7 priority policy areas and 99 actions to ensure gender equality in all areas of life. It is based on the government's commitments and has been subject to extensive consultation with the social partners. Equality policy is in that way a national cross-cutting policy. The action plan emphasizes on:

- overcoming stereotypes and raising awareness of the effects of gender stereotypes on professional choices;
- promoting equality in education;
- the fight against sexist and gender-based violence; and
- the development of gender mainstreaming actions at local level in the municipalities.

The government wants to ensure that both women and men alike can have a good life balance. Careers are changing over time and are marked by interruptions or adaptations according to the evolution of the family environment. On this point, the government allows women and men to benefit from the same rights and advantages to take parental leave, leave possibilities for family support, get support as informal caregivers or to benefit from flexible formulas to adapt working time.

Overall, the government is in favor of an equal sharing of work, paid and unpaid, between women and men. The recent reform of parental leave with an increase in the allowance has created an incentive for more men to give time to their family life. As a result, this leave with



flexible arrangements is taken as much by mothers as by fathers.

During the Covid crisis, the government offered both parents to apply for leave for family reasons in the context of pandemic. The goal was to avoid job losses, due to a pull of increased caregiving at home.

In general, these last years, Luxembourg has also extended free childcare services, regardless of parents' income. These measures support women's employment while allowing fathers to be more involved in family life. These work-life balance policies will be continued.

Training leaves and job opportunities

To ensure an ongoing gender equality at work, women and men are offered access to training hours. In the face of technological change, the government wants to encourage the possibility of acquiring new skills throughout life and supports training leaves for employees. The aim is to encourage women and men alike in their career development and have a fair distribution of positions and responsibilities. Furthermore, to achieve gender diversity in different professions, the government is developing awareness-raising projects and supporting the activities of NGO's to encourage more girls to enter STEM professions.

In the view of the Covid crisis, the government also gave a particular attention to the revaluation of jobs in the health sector. The planned upgrading will take place through vocational training. Collective agreements are more and more supporting workers' rights. In general and from the beginning of the pandemic crisis on, the government was heavily involved to cushion the impact of the crisis on society, the economy and the labour market.