



Declaration on Policies for the Employment of Women

**OECD Legal
Instruments**

This document is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. It reproduces an OECD Legal Instrument and may contain additional material. The opinions expressed and arguments employed in the additional material do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD Member countries.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

For access to the official and up-to-date texts of OECD Legal Instruments, as well as other related information, please consult the Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments at <http://legalinstruments.oecd.org>.

Please cite this document as:

OECD, *Declaration on Policies for the Employment of Women*, OECD/LEGAL/0186

Series: OECD Legal Instruments

© OECD 2025

This document is provided free of charge. It may be reproduced and distributed free of charge without requiring any further permissions, as long as it is not altered in any way. It may not be sold.

This document is available in the two OECD official languages (English and French). It may be translated into other languages, as long as the translation is labelled "unofficial translation" and includes the following disclaimer: "This translation has been prepared by [NAME OF TRANSLATION AUTHOR] for informational purpose only and its accuracy cannot be guaranteed by the OECD. The only official versions are the English and French texts available on the OECD website <http://legalinstruments.oecd.org>"

Background Information

THE HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN OF OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES,

CONSIDERING that men and women, as equal members of society, should have equal opportunities for paid employment, independently of the rate of economic growth and conditions in the labour market;

CONSIDERING that Member governments have a continuing commitment to provide equality of employment opportunity and pay for women and men;

CONSIDERING that the responsibilities of men and women for the upbringing of children are dependent not only on social and educational policies but on their capacity to provide income through employment;

CONSIDERING that men and women have the joint responsibility for the upbringing and care of children;

CONSIDERING that the participation of women in the labour market has risen and is likely to continue to rise in most Member countries, and has made and will make an essential contribution to economic and social developments;

CONSIDERING that constraints on economic growth in the medium-term will mean a challenge for governments to improve their policies in order to meet the aspirations of men and women for employment;

HAVING REGARD to the Declaration by Ministers of Education at the OECD in Paris, 20 October 1978, 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";

HAVING REGARD to the Recommendation of the Council on a General Employment and Manpower Policy of 5 March 1976, 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";

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the arrangements, notably of a constitutional nature, which in certain Member countries affect the competence of governments in relation to the following aims;

DECLARES:

A. The following aims should be given priority consideration in the formulation of the relevant policies of Member countries, bearing in mind the possibility of constrained growth of employment opportunities:

- i) To adopt employment policies which offer men and women equal employment opportunities, independently of the rate of economic growth and conditions in the labour market;
- ii) To adopt policies to deal with unemployment which do not discriminate either directly or indirectly against women;
- iii) To implement an integrated set of policies to eliminate segregation in employment and reduce differentials in average earnings between women and men by means of:
 - a) The prohibition by law of direct discrimination;
 - b) Positive action to reduce indirect discrimination in recruitment, training and promotion, and in other terms and conditions of employment;

- c) The reduction of persistent social biases and negative institutional practices which limit the range and level of occupations open to girls and women; and
 - d) The implementation of equal pay for work of equal value¹;
- iv) To give attention to the special problems of minority women in the relevant items herein;
 - v) To encourage the development, in co-operation with employers and unions, of more flexible working time arrangements (e.g. Part-time, flexi-time) on an optional basis, in order to achieve the more efficient functioning of labour markets and provide a wider range of employment choices to women and men; special consideration should be given to workers, both men and women, with responsibilities for children;
 - vi) To provide for part-time workers levels of pay and social security benefits which are proportional to those of full-time workers, and the same levels of working conditions and standards of protection;
 - vii) To endeavour to ensure that the provisions of taxation, social security and child-support systems do not bias the decisions made by both women and men as to how they allocate their time between paid employment and other activities;
 - viii) To stimulate and further the development of, and increased access to employment, training and "recurrent" education programmes, particularly for women whose skills need upgrading and for women re-entering the labour force, taking into account new technologies and industrial developments;
 - ix) To review the provisions of labour legislation, for example protective legislation for women, to ensure its consistency with the goal of equal opportunity in employment, and to improve working conditions and the environment for all workers;
 - x) To guarantee pregnant women and women returning from maternity leave protection from dismissal and the right to return to work without loss of earned benefits;
 - xi) To develop education so as to progressively eliminate traditional sex role stereotyping in curricula and to provide a full range of educational choices for young women and young men, both for further education and skill qualifications for employment;
 - xii) To use more actively those measures directly available to governments to expand equal opportunities for women, e.g. Recruitment, training and promotion in the public sector, employment exchanges, employment creation programmes and, in certain countries, regional development policies and public procurement;
 - xiii) To ensure that there are effective organisational arrangements for the coordination and implementation of policy over the whole range of relevant public policies which affect the equal employment opportunities for women; and
 - xiv) To ensure that the special problems of migrant women are given consideration in relation to all the aims set out above.

B. That the achievement of equal opportunity in employment and the elimination of wage differentials between women and men are dependent not only on government measures but on the concerted efforts of employers and trade unions.

C. That the pursuit of these aims by Member countries will be facilitated by strengthened co-operation through the competent bodies of the OECD, in particular by studies of women's employment in the context of emerging economic and social conditions, and by periodic assessments and evaluations of the implementation of equal opportunity and wage equality policies for women.

¹ As defined, for example, in ILO Convention No.100 and EEC Directives on Equal Pay.

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, Türkiye, 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).

All substantive OECD legal instruments, whether in force or abrogated, are listed in the online Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments. They are presented in five categories:

- **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.