

Equal pay for work of equal value

FINLAND-ILO Side event CSW 58

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- Equal pay or remuneration for work of equal value is a fundamental equality issue for the ILO and the Equal Remuneration Convention (No 100) combined with the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No 111), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (C 156) and Maternity Protection Convention (No 183) constitute what we call the key equality conventions of the ILO
- They form a package of standards that combined, provide a basis for promoting gender equality in the world of work and addressing discrimination at the workplace as confirmed by the 2009 International Labour Conference conclusions on Gender equality at the heart of decent work
- The difference in pay between women and men is on average of 22.9 per cent globally
- The ILO estimates that despite efforts to address this gap it would take more than 75 years to eliminate it at the present rate of progress
- The pay gap varies between regions with the European women's gross hourly earnings standing at 16.4 per cent below those of men in the EU 28 and 16.7 per cent in EU area (EA 17) and recent reports show that the gap it is widening in some countries for example in UK it has risen from 9.5 per cent to 10 per cent
- In Australia men are paid on average 26 percent more than women, up from 24 per cent 10 years ago. This is attributed to the sex segregation of jobs in the mining sector where there has been a mining boom and it's mostly men who dominate that industry that have benefitted from the large pay increases
- So you can immediately see the gender dimension of labour market segregation and the link between that segregation and equal pay issues
- This in turn, as we discussed yesterday in another CSW panel on unpaid care work, impacts on a family and their choices as to who should stay home and take care of the children, with most families naturally choosing for the higher earner (usually men) to take paid work and the lower earner (mostly women) to take on the unpaid care work which is in itself undervalued
- Another report said that even in countries that have closer pay parity it is usually young childless women who are closer to their male counterparts in pay, women who have families fall behind
- I've seen research not calling it a gender wage gap but a care gap as its caring and family responsibilities that have the greatest impact- but that discussion is for another time and perhaps another discussion
- So one can see the relationship between to the ILO convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities (C 156) (part of that package of ILS mentioned) which promotes the sharing of these responsibilities between men and women workers, not just women

- The other gender dimension on occupational segregation in the labour market is the concentration of women in occupations that are undervalued by society e.g. the caring occupations, as the Equal Pay Guide notes this translates into downward pressure on average wages in those occupations, having a discouraging effect on men who might want to enter those jobs, perpetuating the problem where women's average pay continues to generally be lower than men's in all countries and for all levels of education, age groups and occupations
- A positive story however is told when we bring in education into the mix, the Education for All Monitoring Report released on Monday this week was unequivocal on the impact of education on gender wage gaps: "the higher level of education, the lower the gap, even in countries where discrimination in the labour force means gender differences remain entrenched, as analysis of gender wage gaps in 64 countries shows." The report goes on to say that secondary education narrows the gap even more compared to those with primary education. In the Arab states women with secondary education earn 87 percent of the wages of men compared to 60 percent for those with primary education. In Ghana those with no education the gap is 57 per cent but those with secondary education the gap is 16 per cent and primary 24 per cent
- Apart from the common sense that workers should be paid the same remuneration for work they are performing that is of equal value, it is a productivity issue for business that workers are not rewarded for their skills and experience, for the responsibilities they have, working conditions etc. I read a report yesterday that a Trade Union Official from Sweden decided to make a point of this. Anna Nordstrom decided that the only way to get a pay rise was to become a man and change her name to Anders Nordstrom!
- Paying women less than men for the same work or for work that is of equal value is a common form of discrimination in employment.
- We must remember that equal pay for *work of equal value* is looking at the value of jobs and equal pay for different jobs, so we should not just compare jobs to the same jobs in a enterprise or sector but to other jobs and assess their value. ILO has methodologies to assess and objectively compare the relative value of work. We have a guide to developing **gender-neutral job evaluation systems**
- This is a complex issue and good data is vital to this work
- So as we continue the debate here at CSW to examine progress in achieving the MDG's and one looks at MDG 1 Target 1.B *Achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people* and Indicator 2 of MDG 3, *the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector*, equal remuneration for work of equal value combined with well-designed minimum wages will provide a decent floor to secure minimum standards for workers and their families (which has an impact on poverty)
- Along with a commitment to full employment and decent work equal pay must be part of the policy mix for governments, social partners, employers and workers and society as gender pay differences are an important indicator of progress in achieving gender equality