

BREAK GENDER STEREOTYPES, GIVE TALENT A CHANCE

Review of the national situation for the purpose of
the workshop in the NETHERLANDS

2009



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The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

The programme has six general objectives:

- (1) to improve the knowledge and understanding of the situation prevailing in the Member States (and in other participating countries) through the analysis, evaluation and close monitoring of policies;*
- (2) to support the development of statistical tools and methods and common indicators, where appropriate broken down by gender and age group, in the areas covered by the programme;*
- (3) to support and monitor the implementation of Community law, where applicable, and policy objectives in the Member States, and assess their effectiveness and impact;*
- (4) to promote networking, mutual learning, identification and dissemination of good practices and innovative approaches at EU level;*
- (5) to enhance the awareness of the stakeholders and the general public about the EU's policies and objectives pursued under each of the policy sections;*
- (6) to boost the capacity of key EU networks to promote, support and further develop EU policies and objectives, where applicable.*

For further information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_fr.html.

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FOREWORD

Does the European economy manage to make full use of its human capital?

The purpose of this document is to stimulate discussion of the above question from the perspective of gender equality.

This document has been prepared in the framework of “Raising the awareness of companies about combating gender stereotypes”, an EC initiative commissioned by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, under a contract managed by the International Training Centre of the ILO in partnership with the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBERS).

The initiative, which involves Chambers of Commerce and SME organisations in all EU Countries plus Iceland and Norway¹, aims at helping SMEs discern how overcoming gender stereotypes can have a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness.

The country reviews do not aim to provide an exhaustive picture of gender issues in the labour markets of the countries concerned. They aim rather to enrich with country-specific information the tools which the initiative offers to all those engaged in improving SME competitiveness and productivity. They provide comparable statistical data and qualitative information on the different ways in which women and men enter into, and make progress in, employment and occupations in the various countries. They contain information on existing legislative provisions, public and private initiatives and good practice. Suggestions on the impact of gender stereotypes are also provided, to initiate dialogue and action at enterprise level.

The final aim is to offer concrete suggestions on how SMEs in the selected countries can overcome gender stereotypes and tap into the business potential of applying gender equality principles in practice.

¹ In 2008: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain. In 2009: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom

1. STATISTICS

Table 1: Statistical data

Demography and Employment	Netherlands			EU27		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1. Total population 2007 (figure in '000)	8,088	8,269	16,357	241,652	253,437	495,090
(Figure in %)	49.4	50.6	100.0	48.8	51.2	100.0
2. Life expectancy at birth 2005 (%)	77.2	81.6		75.4	81.5	:
3. Fertility rates 2005 (%)	1.73			1.51		
4. Employment rate 2007 (%)	82.2	69.6	76.0	72.5	58.3	65.4
5. Unemployment Rate 2007 (%)	2.8	3.6	3.2	6.5	7.8	7.1
6. Activity rate 2007 (%)	84.6	72.2	78.5	77.6	63.3	70.5
7. Youth unemployment rate 2007 (%)	5.6	6.2	5.9	15.2	15.8	15.5
8. Long term unemployment rate 2007 (%)	1.2	1.4	1.3	5.6	6.6	6.0
9. Part-time work 2006 (%)	15.4	61.7	36.8	4.4	25.8	14.4
10. Employees 2007q04 ('000)	3,917	3,489	7,406	97,869	86,205	184,074
11. Self-employment 2007q04 ('000)	464	276	740	15,543	7,423	22,966
12. Entrepreneurs 2007q04 ('000)	253	68	321	7,587	2,375	9,963
13. Average hourly pay 2002 (in €)	15.50	11.84	14.22	13.79 ^c	10.40 ^c	12.56 ^c
14. Gender Pay gap in unadjusted form 2006 ^g	:			15		
14.bis Gender Pay gap in unadjusted form 2007	23.6			17.4		
15. Participation in decision-making 2007						
National Parliaments (%)	61	39	100	76	24	100
President in largest publicly-quoted companies (%)	100	0	100	97	3	100
Member of highest decision-making body in largest publicly quoted companies (%)	86	14	100	90	10	100
GEM Value 2007	0.859			:		
GEM Rank 2007	6			:		
16. Graduations of women and men in tertiary education 2004						
ISCED 5 (%)	43.4	56.6	100	40.8 ^c	59.2 ^c	100 ^c
(Ratio Women/Men)	1.3			1.4 ^c		
ISCED 6 (%)	60.6	39.4	100	56.8 ^c	43.2 ^c	100 ^c
(Ratio Women/Men)	0.7			0.8 ^c		
17. Single-headed households, 2005 (%)	18	17		14 ^c	14 ^c	
18. Children in childcare aged 0-2 years, 1-29hrs/30+hrs 2006 (%)	41/4			14/12		
19. Children in childcare aged 3 to mandatory school ages, 1-29hrs/30+hrs 2006 (%)	82/7			44/40		

NOTES: a - 2004, b - 2005, c - EU25, e - Estimation, g – The Pay Gap is the difference between men's and women's average gross hourly earnings as percentage of men's average gross hourly earnings (for paid employees), p - Provisional, : - No data

Sources:

- 1: Eurostat Database
- 2, 3: Eurostat News Release, "A statistical illustration of the situation of women and men in the EU27", 32/2007, March 2007 and UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/08, Table 1
- 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 European Commission, *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2008 compendium*
- 10, 11, 12: Eurostat Database
- 13: Eurostat, «Salaires bruts en Europe, Principaux résultats de l'enquête sur la structure des salaires 2002», *Statistiques en bref, population et conditions sociales*, 12/2005, Communautés européennes, 2005
- 14: European Commission, *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2008 compendium*
- 14 bis: European Commission, *Report on equality between women and men 2009*
- 15: European Commission, DG EMPL, Database on women and men in decision-making and the Human Development Report 2007/2008 (for the GEM rank and value)
- 16, 17: European Commission, *The life of women and men in Europe – A statistical portrait*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008
- 18, 19 (EU27 data): Commission of the European Communities, *Commission staff working document accompanying document to the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school-age children*, Brussels, 2008. {COM (2008) 598}

2. SITUATION AND STEREOTYPES

2.1. WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Over recent decades the Netherlands has experienced an unprecedented increase in the participation of women in the labour force. The female employment rate reached 69.6 % in 2007 (men 82.2 %), which is more than double the level of the 1970s². On the face of it, the Netherlands has performed over and above the Lisbon objective of a 60% female employment rate by 2010. However, the relatively high Dutch rate has a special feature. As indicated in Table 1, 61.7% of employed women work part-time as compared to 15.4 % of men. As many as 16.5% of employed women work for less than 12 hours a week.³ Thus in 2007, the average number of hours worked per working woman amounted to 24.8 hours per week compared to 37 hours for men⁴. Lately there has been a decreasing trend in the percentage of full-time employed women, from 35% in 2001 to 31% in 2007. The reality is that women work less in full-time jobs in the Netherlands than do women in most other countries of the EU.⁵

The availability of quality childcare has improved and government subsidies have increased, but childcare is still not an option for all parents. Compared to other European countries, the Netherlands does not perform well on the OECD Index for childcare coverage and maternity pay entitlement (only Spain and Italy score lower according to the OECD Employment Outlook 2007)⁶.

One of the most serious consequences of women's low labour market participation in the Netherlands is that women earn much less than men. National statistics show that women with their *own income* received an average of € 18.000 in 2006, just under 55% of what men earned.⁷ In relative terms, women earned 82% less than *the gross male hourly wage* in 2005.⁸ The 2009 European Report on equality confirms national data. In the Netherlands the pay gap between women and men is 23.6 (table 1, 14 bis). Part of this pay differential can be explained by differences in work, experience and education and between sectors. After taking account of these characteristics, an unexplained pay gap remains, namely of 6% in the private sector and 3% in the public sector. These figures indicate clearly that economic independence and decision-making power have a gender dimension: men have more than women in the Netherlands. Women are therefore also at greater risk of living in poverty than men, and this risk is greatest for single mothers.⁹

Research into the development of the Dutch part-time employment model concludes that unless effective

² 'Is part-time employment here to stay? Evidence from the Dutch Labour Force Survey 1992-2005', CPB - Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, Discussion Paper 100, CPB, de Hague, The Netherlands, February 2008.

³ 'Emancipatiemonitor 2008', Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau en Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag, Nederland, 2009.

⁴ Id.

⁵ 'Meer Kansen voor Vrouwen. Emancipatiebeleid 2008-2011', Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2007.

⁶ CPB, 2008

⁷ Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau en Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2009.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Id.

policy measures are implemented and a substantial shift in social and cultural norms takes place, full-time employment for women (or a trend towards more working hours and therefore better economic and social independence) is not likely to increase significantly in the Netherlands¹⁰. It may therefore not be surprising that the most recent Emancipation Policy of the Dutch Government focuses largely on increasing labour market participation by women *in terms both of the number of persons and of hours worked*.¹¹

A real challenge for the Dutch policy environment is to take measures that give men and women a real choice and at the same time ensure equality of treatment in the labour market. These include childcare provision, flexible working arrangements, and a focus on measures to make it attractive for men to combine work and care.¹²

2.2. OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Occupational segregation means differences by sex in employment occupations. Horizontal segregation refers to concentration in certain occupational groups (illustrated sometimes by the metaphor of the *glass wall*). Vertical segregation refers to hierarchical concentration, that is in positions of decision-making (often illustrated by the metaphor of the *glass ceiling*).

The segregation in the Dutch labour market is almost a mirror-image of the EU's. As indicated in table 2, in 2005 the rates of gender segregation stood at 26.2 for segregation in occupations and 17.5 for that in economic sectors. It is noteworthy, however, that horizontal segregation has not decreased in the Netherlands but since 2001 has increased slightly.¹³ That shows that the growth in women's labour market participation has taken place in sectors where women were already concentrated, that is in traditional female sectors such as the care sector.

Table 2: Country Segregation Index¹⁴

	Gender segregation in occupations	Gender segregation in economic sectors
Netherlands	26.2	17.5
EU27	24.9	17.8

Source: European Commission, *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis 2008 compendium*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰ 'The trend in female labour force participation. What can be expected for the future?' CPB - Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, Discussion Paper 93, CPB, de Hague, The Netherlands, December 2007.

¹¹ Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2007.

¹² 'Factsheet werkende vaders. Hoe kunnen mannen arbeid en zorg combineren?', E-Quality, Kenniscentrum Voor Emancipatie in de Multiculturele Samenleving, The Netherlands, Mei 2008.

¹³ Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2007.

¹⁴ The concentration of men and women in different occupations and economic sectors is measured with an occupational segregation index. Gender segregation in occupations is calculated as the average national share of employment for women and men applied to each occupation; differences are added up to produce the total amount of gender imbalance expressed as a proportion of total employment. Gender segregation in economic sectors is calculated as the average national share of employment for women and men as applied to each sector; differences are added together to produce the total amount of gender imbalance expressed as a proportion of total employment.

Table 3 gives a more detailed picture of the concentration of men and women in different sectors of activity and shows that Dutch women's 'choice' of jobs is clearly restricted and gender-stereotyped. 28.8% of employed women work in health and social work; many are also employed in retail trade, education, business activities and public administration. The top six sectors for women account for 71,5% of the total. Men's employment is much less concentrated by sector than women's (the top six sectors for men account for 45.2%).

Table 3: Concentration of men and women in sectors of activities (NACE 2 digit)¹⁵

% of women employed	NL	EU25	% of men employed	NL	EU25
Health & Social work	28.8	17.2	Construction	10.1	13.0
Retail trade	12.7	12.5	Business activities	8.6	6.1
Education	9.9	11.4	Public administration	8.4	7.2
Business activities	8.9	7.3	Retail trade	7.5	6.3
Public administration	6.3	7.3	Health & Social work	5.5	4.0
Hotels & restaurants	4.8	5.1	Education	5.2	3.8
Wholesale trade	2.4	2.6	Wholesale trade	4.3	4.1
Cultural & sporting activities	2.4	2.1	Agriculture	4.2	5.2
Agriculture	2.2	3.8	Land transport	4.1	4.2
Financial intermediation	1.9	2.2	Hotels & restaurants	3.5	3.4
Other service activities	1.8	2.6	Metal products	2.4	3.1
Manufactured food & beverages	1.4	2.2	Vehicle sale & repair	2.2	3.2
Construction	1.3	1.5	Manufactured food & beverages	2.2	2.5
Private households	0.1	2.3	Machinery	1.3	2.7
Top 6	71.5	60.8	Top 6	45.2	41.9

Note: Persons aged 15 years and over. No distinction is made between the private and public sectors. The top six relate to the EU average which may not coincide with the top six in each country. In the adaptation the sectors have been ordered according to country importance, but some important sectors might not appear.

Source: Adapted from "The concentration of women and men in Sectors of Activity", *Statistics in Focus publication (Population and Social Conditions, 53/2007 - NACE 2 digit)*, and for a comparison with EU aggregated data see "European Business: Facts and figures 2008", ISBN 978-92-79-07024-2 available from the Eurostat web page.

Table 4 shows that the occupational patterns of employment also differ considerably for women and men. Women work as shop salespersons and demonstrators; personal care and related workers; nursing and midwifery associate professionals; domestic and related helpers; and cleaners and launderers. The growth of the 'care sector' can be seen as a transformation of women's unpaid reproductive responsibilities into formal paid work – but work which is not well paid.

In comparison men are less concentrated. The main male profession is that of manager of small enterprises, at 6.5 % (for women the figure is only 3.8%). The other main occupational categories for Dutch

¹⁵ NACE is an international classification of economic activities. The digits indicate the level of disaggregation. ISCO is an international classification of occupations: the higher the value the greater the level of disaggregation.

men are motor vehicle drivers; building frame and related trades workers; production and operations department managers; and architects, engineers and related professionals. These are all traditional 'male occupations'.

Table 4: Occupational patterns of women's and men's employment (ISCO 3 digit)¹⁶

% of women employed	NL	EU25	% of men employed	NL	EU25
Shop salespersons & demonstrators	7.9	8.0	Managers of small enterprises	6.5	4.4
Personal care & related workers	7.3	6.6	Motor vehicle drivers	3.9	5.2
Nursing & midwifery associate professionals	6.0	2.6	Building frame & related trades workers	3.8	4.7
Domestic & related helpers, cleaners & launderers	5.9	7.6	Production & operations department managers	3.7	2.6
Administrative associate professionals	4.8	4.4	Architects, engineers & related professionals	3.5	3.1
Housekeeping & restaurant services workers	3.8	3.9	Shop salespersons & demonstrators	3.5	2.6
Managers of small enterprises	3.2	2.9	Machinery mechanics & fitters	3.3	3.5
Secretaries & keyboard-operating clerks	2.9	3.7	Building finishers & related trades workers	3.0	4.0
Other office clerks	2.1	5.2	Finance & sales associate professionals	2.8	3.3
Finance & sales associate professionals	1.2	2.9	Physical & engineering science technicians	2.7	3.6
Top 6	37.6	35.6	Top 6	25.1	25.5

Note: The top six are based on the EU average which may not coincide with the top six in each country. In the adaptation the occupations are ordered according to country importance, but some important occupations might not appear.

Source: Adapted from "The concentration of women and men in Sectors of Activity", *Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Conditions* 53/2007.

Turning to vertical gender segregation of the labour market in the Netherlands, the percentage of female company managers is strikingly lower than that of male managers. As indicated in Table 5, 73% of managers are men and 27% are women (2006). Women have a smaller chance of obtaining a management position than men in the Netherlands (in both private and public sectors) and even in the traditional female sectors (education and care) most management positions are occupied by men.¹⁷

Recent research¹⁸ shows that the financial sector has the highest percentage of women on boards of directors. In the retail sector, on the other hand, there are no appointed board members. Businesses with women board members are on average larger than businesses lacking them, that is to say the smaller the business, the less likely it is that women are found in top positions. To these figures can be added the fact

¹⁶ ISCO is an international classification of occupations. The digits also indicate the level of disaggregation: the higher the value the greater the level of disaggregation.

¹⁷ Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau en Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2009.

¹⁸ Lückérath-Rovers, M., *De Nederlandse "Female Board Index" 2007 - Analyse van de vrouwelijke bestuurders en commissarissen bij 122 Nederlandse beursondernemingen*, Erasmus Instituut Toezicht & Compliance, 2007

that in 2007 only 7% of the members of the boards of the 100 largest companies in the Netherlands were women, and that it is unlikely that the Lisbon target of 20% by 2010 will be reached.¹⁹

It is noteworthy that the above figures have changed very little the last five years. Also, just as in the case of horizontal gender segregation, vertical gender segregation in the Netherlands is higher than the EU average. These facts provide the basis for one of the strongest conclusions of Dutch emancipation policy, namely that female talent in the country is not being used to its maximum potential with consequences for women's emancipation, gender equality and economic growth.²⁰

Table 5: Distribution of managers by sex in EU Member States – (%)

	Women	Men	Women	Men
	2001		2006	
Netherlands	26.0	74.0	27.0	73.0
EU27	30.1	69.9	32.6	67.4

Note: EU aggregate for 2001 is the value for EU-25 and not EU-27.

Source: Adapted from the *Report on equality between women and men*, pp.32. (European Commission, 2008. ISCO 12 and 13).

2.3. THE ROLE OF SMES

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are socially and economically important, since they represent 99% of all EU enterprises, provide around 65 million jobs and contribute to entrepreneurship and innovation. However they face particular difficulties which EU and national legislation aims to redress by granting various advantages to SMEs²¹.

In the Netherlands SMEs are called *Midden en Klein Bedrijven (MKB)*. Using the European definition (less than 250 employees), 99.7 % of all Dutch enterprises can be considered SMEs. In 2006 SMEs contributed 58% of total corporate revenue and accounted for 58% of employees in the corporate sector²². The contribution to the overall economy compared to that of larger firms is – in EU terms – not particularly high. This might be partly explained by the fact that the Netherlands hosts a relatively large number of multinational firms.²³

In 2008 almost 107,400 people started an enterprise in the Netherlands, which means that in total 94,500 new SMEs emerged last year. That is an increase of 5% compared to 2007²⁴. The new enterprises especially develop in the services sector. Advisory services accounted for 16% and other services 40% of the new enterprises.

Currently approximately one-third of all entrepreneurs in the Netherlands are women. Overall the percentage of new female entrepreneurs decreased in 2008 (compared to 2007), with an interesting

¹⁹ Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau en Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2009.

²⁰ Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2007.

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm

²² http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midden-en_Kleinbedrijf

²³ 'SBA Factsheet Netherlands', European Commission Enterprise and Industry

²⁴ 'Rapport Startersprofiel 2008', Kamer van Koophandel, the Netherlands, April 2009

exception among the group of foreign entrepreneurs from Romania (of whom 74% were women) and Bulgaria (57% female). Most female entrepreneurs are involved in health and wellbeing, hairdressing, beauty salons and similar occupations, which confirms the gender stereotypes in the Dutch labour market. Recent research²⁵ shows that women entrepreneurs make significantly lower profits than men in all sectors of the economy. In two sectors men's average profit is more than double that of women, that is in the financial sector and in health care. Finally, research on the impact of the current economic crisis on SMEs concludes that the profit made by female entrepreneurs will decrease more than the profit made by male entrepreneurs²⁶.

2.4 GENDER STEREOTYPES

Men's and women's labour market participation in the Netherlands is largely determined by social and cultural norms and values relating to the gendered division of labour, family life and work life. These norms also influence the development of Dutch institutions including the government, private and public organisations.

Gender stereotyping exists in most sectors in the Netherlands. It diminishes the opportunities of men and women in the workplace, and reinforces inequalities in access to resources, power and respect. Generally speaking gender stereotypes are very hard to change. As indicated elsewhere in this report, women tend to work in jobs that involve caring and providing services for people while men largely monopolise managerial positions and manual jobs which involve using machinery or production processes regarded as physically onerous.

The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau of the Dutch government publishes a biannual *'Emancipation Monitor'* to examine whether society is developing in the direction envisaged in the government's emancipation policy. Some findings from the 2008 version give a good picture of the strong norms and values that influence gendered labour market participation²⁷:

- 40% of the Dutch population disapprove of a mother who works full-time;
- 33% of women and 50% of men in the Netherlands think that women are better suited to bringing up children than men;
- 50% of women and 75% of men think that it is best for young children (under two) to be looked after by their own parents.

The most prevalent stereotype in the Dutch labour market is that most labour market actors – be they women or men employees, government actors or employers in the public or private – see women primarily as parents, while the same attitude does not extend to men. As it has been put in Dutch: *'Mannen zijn mannen – vrouwen zijn moeders'*, which means *'men are men – women are mothers'*. One consequence is that women are seen as less attractive workers than men by employers (anticipating problems that may arise when women try to reconcile their family and work life, maternity and parental leave etc.).

²⁵ <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/C978CC6D-AC73-4B1F-8C79-E4686176FD5/0/2009vanwerknemernaarondernemerart.pdf>

²⁶ 'Vrouwen aan de start, Een vergelijking tussen vrouwelijke en mannelijke starters en hun bedrijven', EIM Business and Policy research, June 2008.

²⁷ Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2007.

On the other side of the coin, according to recent research, the *'think-manager-think-masculine'* stereotype is very real in the Dutch labour market. It means that the ideal manager is considered to be a powerful, dominant person, and that is mostly interpreted to be a man rather than a woman.²⁸

3. SUCCESS STORIES

In recent years a number of initiatives have been launched in the Netherlands to promote the use of available female talent in the business world. Some of these are executed and financed by government, some by non-government organisations and some by multi-stakeholders. They have varied aims: to support women in setting up a business, to help overcome gender barriers in salary negotiations and career development, and to pave the way for women to reach top positions in companies.

The Ambassadors Network consists of female and male top managers and entrepreneurs. The network aims to place the issue of women's business talent on the political agenda and in particular it targets top managers and board members of Dutch companies. The basis for its work is that diversity is not only about women – it is about good business. The network has recently published a good practice report with a focus on a commitment to gender equality on the part of prominent Dutch business people²⁹.

Women's Inc is a platform that enables professional women to meet and network and is also a recruitment site. It highlights the availability of many very qualified women for diverse functions in different economic sectors. The use of role models is a conscious approach adopted by the platform.

Two recent examples implemented by the Dutch government are noteworthy. One is the **"Dagindeling"** programme (literally translated 'the division of the day') carried out during the period 2002-2007.³⁰ It included 177 separate projects to improve the balance between work life and family and care work. One example of a successful project was the introduction of flexible working hours in the transport sector³¹. The project resulted in several concrete recommendations for companies, municipalities and other relevant stakeholders to make working hours more flexible.

MIXED was a cooperation venture between the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and seven expert organisations, and part of the EQUAL programme of the European Social Fund. It ended in 2005. It focused on the talent of individual female employees as well as on the institutional and organisational context in which gender stereotypes are being reproduced, that is the equal opportunity culture of the (33) companies involved. The final publication "Mixed cases" presented established good practice for the advancement of female employees in businesses and organisations.

An example of a multi-stakeholder initiative, **Top Brainstorm**,³² was established in 2007 to stimulate government, corporate business and employees to introduce more female talent at the top. The initiative is

²⁸ Stoker. 'Sekse en leiderschap. Over het feminiene voordeel en het masculiene vooroordeel', M&O1, The Netherlands, 2007.

²⁹ 'Benoemen en roemen. Benutten van vrouwelijk talent: good practices uit het Ambassadeursnetwerk 2007-2008', het Ambassadeursnetwerk, The Netherlands, 2008

³⁰ 'Naar flexibele tijden tussen 7 en 7 Resultaten en aanbevelingen uit het project Dagindeling ESF 3 om de combinatie arbeid en zorg makkelijker te maken', Ministerie van OCW, the Netherlands, October 2007

³¹ http://www.dagindeling.emancipatieweb.nl/uploads/2437/OCW_01_Nieuwsbrief_dagindeling_12.pdf

³² <http://www.talentnaardetop.nl/web/show/id=74381/langid=42>

led by a taskforce which comprises both men and women who are concerned about the low numbers of women in top positions in the Netherlands in comparison with other European countries. Top Brainstorm's main instrument is a charter: "Charter Talent to the Top" which was developed in close cooperation between the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers, Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV), the Social and Economic Council (SER), representatives of corporate business, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The Charter focuses on all employers, companies, institutions and public organisations in the Netherlands. Top Brainstorm actively encourages employers to sign the charter, thereby committing themselves to concrete measures to employ, develop and retain more female talent. Part of the charter is a catalogue of proven national and international best practice. A taskforce monitors the results on the progress made by the signatories of the Charter. Many businesses have signed the Charter: Accenture, Achmea, Aegon, Allen & Overy, Bain & Company, Baker & McKenzie, Capgemini, Dutch municipalities, the Dutch government, ING and many others.

As mentioned earlier, the Netherlands is a special country in that it hosts a relatively large number of multinationals. While obviously their experience is different from that of smaller companies, SMEs have quite easy access to the experience of larger companies since their findings are widely published. The **Talent to the Top** website³³ presents many such examples of best practice, one of which is the Dutch multinational Shell. Diversity & Inclusion is linked to Shell's general business principles, core values, people standards and functional plans. The standards have a set of indicators according to which progress is monitored. The proportion of women in senior leadership positions has increased steadily over the last decade (in 2007 reaching 13%) and an even more positive development can be seen in Shell's Board of Directors (23% of which were women in 2007).

In conclusion, both in the recent past and at present there is a wealth of initiatives in the Netherlands that focus on promoting female talent in the labour market in general and more specifically in the business world.

4. SUPPORT

Article 1 of the Dutch constitution reads: *All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.*

The legal basis for equality between men and women, that is to say equal treatment and equal opportunities for men and women, are international conventions such as the United Nations Women Convention (CEDAW), as well as EU and national legislation. Of special importance is the Dutch Equal Treatment Act (Algemene Wet Gelijke Behandeling) and the related law on equal treatment of men and women³⁴.

Following the International Women's Conference in Beijing, in 1995, the Netherlands choose to anchor equality in all governmental policies, that is the strategy of gender mainstreaming. In addition to gender mainstreaming, specific policies are developed to solve specific problems. Until 2004 the Ministry of Social

³³ Id.

³⁴ www.overheid.nl

Affairs coordinated the government's equality efforts; now the main responsibility lies with individual government departments.

The present government published the latest national emancipation policy in 2007: "Meer kansen voor vrouwen 2008-2011" (More opportunities for women). The new policy has a very strong focus on strengthening women's labour force participation and sets ambitious target for 2011. Some of the focus areas, among others, are important in the context of breaking gender stereotypes in SMEs³⁵:

- ❖ Encouraging and supporting female entrepreneurship
- ❖ Ensuring flexible working hours in order to combine care and work tasks
- ❖ To increase the number of women in top positions
- ❖ To decrease gendered occupational segregation
- ❖ To decrease gendered differences in salaries

In order to meet (or work towards meeting) the targets, the government has taken some concrete action. A taskforce has been set up with the mandate to suggest measures that would increase the average number of hours that women work. Flexible working hours is the focus of another initiative. The Ministry of Social Affairs has signed agreements with several municipalities in different parts of the Netherlands to start pilot projects.³⁶

³⁵ Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2007.

³⁶ Progress Report: 'Meer Kansen voor Vrouwen. Emancipatiebeleid 2008-2011' – from the Minister Dr. R. Plasterk to the chairperson of the Parliament (DE 72035), 28 November 2008

ACRONYMS

NL	Netherlands
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EU25	The 25 Member Countries of the European Union (from May 2004 to December 2006)
EU27	The 27 Member Countries of the European Union (as from January 2007)
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
NACE	Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSI	National Statistics Institute, Bulgaria
SME(s)	Small and Medium Enterprise(s)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme