
FAMILY FRIENDLY MEASURES AT THE WORK PLACE

Executive Summary

Introduction

Research on family-friendly measures at the workplace reveals that these instruments are the outcome of a long history of struggle, mainly by the women's movement, with antecedents in social and political thought, as well as in social and political policies and practices. These include feminist debates on marriage and the family, on paid and unpaid work, on careers, on state policies regarding families, women, and work and on gender in organisations, amongst others. Debates between neo-classical economists on optimal modes of household reproduction are also relevant here, as is research on family obligations and the life course, as well as on time use by family members. Changing family patterns including the growing phenomenon of lone parenting, and new forms of couple behaviour such as reciprocal marriages and equal parenting, with the more direct involvement of men in the family, also require consideration. Accounts of the labour process and of changes in the labour market are also pertinent, and include global shifts from manufacturing to service industries, different forms of labour contracts, and changes in supply and demand, which in some countries lead to high demand for very skilled workers and low demand for unskilled workers.

States, supranational states and other international institutions have acted on some of the petitions of the women's movement, and have integrated gender equality into their justice and rights discourses. Their positions are reviewed below. The continued interest in

- equality at work, and,
- family-friendly policies

in particular, derive also from concern with

- the effect on the economy,
- the sustainability of the welfare state (where it exists) of the low birth rates in advanced societies,
- the low participation rates of women in some labour markets, as well as
- the related effect of poverty on women and children.

Studies of organisations demonstrate that shifts in organisational cultures and the need for organisations to constantly change, particularly in response to changes in the labour supply, led

organisations to develop a number of different family-friendly policies or corporate plans, apart from those promoted by state sponsored policies.

The local context, including family values and practices, demographic changes, labour market participation, state social policy and industrial relations indicates that only specific groups of employers and employees will be interested in family-friendly measures at the workplace.

A Definition of Family-Friendly Measures

Currently, OECD (2002) defines family-friendly policies as 'those policies that facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life by fostering adequacy of family resources and child development, that facilitate parental choice about work and care, and promote gender equality in employment opportunities. In this definition families are defined as 'each household of one or more adults living together with and taking responsibility for the care and rearing of one or more children' whilst reconciliation policies are 'all those measures that extend family resources (income, services and time for parenting) and parental labour market attachment'.

Accounts of Utilisation of Paid and Unpaid Female Labour

The interest in family-friendly measures at the workplace emerged from the recognition of inequality and the discrimination against women at work. Accounts of this inequality and discrimination include histories of the subjection of women in the family that is said to support the economic rationality of capital accumulation. Women were seen to form a 'reserve army' of labour, where, as secondary earners, they are a disposable labour force working for lower wages. Socially constructed differences between full-time and part-time work further contributes to inequality. Family-friendly measures may eradicate these differences.

Economics of the Family

Neo-classical economics argues that the division of labour in which men are in paid employment whilst women work in reproducing household-related human capital is an optimal division of work, in which each specialises in his or her task, then trades with the other. This will be profitable and gains will be made for the family. However, the 'New Home Economics' school argues that there are long, as well as short-term effects of choices. Extreme specialisation leads to a decrease in the wage rate of non-working partner, loss of investment in her human capital and unwanted dependency. There is a 'threat' point over time, should the marriage

break up, the woman will be left more than vulnerable. It is being able to remain in employment, as with family-friendly measures, which is optimal.

Preference Theory

Hakim's (2004) argues that not all women wish to be in paid employment. Her preference theory finds that there is a heterogeneity of females, who can be divided into three groups, two of which contribute to polarisation in women's employment. The first are full-time homemakers, with cessation of work on marriage or maternity. The second are career-oriented women, integrated in male-dominated occupations with high earnings. The third and largest group are 'adaptive women' who are in paid work as secondary earners and homemakers, and who are likely to be most interested in family-friendly measures. Because of the differences between women, policy-makers and social partners should develop concomitant and flexible measures for different groups of females.

Individual or Family Preference?

Even family studies suggest that preference for the female in a family to be in paid work is not straightforward. McDonell (1990) asks whether the household or the individual should be the unit of analysis. Choice is not always rational, nor unproblematic: it should be seen within labour market dynamics. Some theorists ask whether there is an income effect (in periods of expansion, females work to add to household income), or a substitution effect (in recession, and falling male earnings, females work to supplement household income).

Family Obligations and Social Change

The decision to be in paid employment should be considered within the dynamics of family life and obligations and social change. It is found that gender and not employment status, is the reason for sexual division in the household. Although employment status affects domestic tasks more than any other variable, women are more likely to do domestic labour even if in paid employment or if men are unemployed. Being in paid employment exacerbates the burden of a 'dual' role on women. The life course, which is individual, and family biographies in relation to specific historic time, are important factor in relation to availability for paid work. Family obligations are cumulative, reciprocal and part of 'personal identity'. Moreover, the social nature of variations in assistance people give each other is patterned by

- class,

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- gender and
 - ethnicity.

In some cultures, groups of women would be unlikely to be favourably disposed to giving up these responsibilities or 'personal identities'. It is found that paternal involvement in early childcare is the only way to change present gender identity divisions.

Paternal Involvement

There is no clear-cut evidence currently however, that paternal involvement has direct effects or is a universally desirable goal. To be successful it needs to be consistent with family circumstances, values and reasons for take up. Young couples caught in a 'life-squeeze' are unlikely to move to 'complementary' marriages. Only highly committed fathers in role-reversed couples assume the overall responsibility that mothers do. There are difficulties:

- personal adjustment,
- threats to identity,
- conflict in relationships,
- lack of support from others.

For long-term stability of involvement there should be:

- community support for non-traditional patterns;
- mothers with a strong salary and investment in careers;
- fathers with flexible work places and who find children gratifying.

Finally, the demands of childcare (in terms of numbers and characteristics of children) need to be low.

International & Supranational Interest in Family Friendly Measures

International and supranational interest in family friendly measures developed from interest in:

- gender equity;
- poverty and social exclusion;
- child development and closing the generation gap;
- the elderly and social conditions (challenges faced by families to care for elderly and female poverty);

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- falling fertility rates and ageing populations, with the threat to economic growth and competitiveness;
 - problems with labour supply and the financial sustainability of social protection systems and
 - through a marginal interest in needs of other incapacitated adults.

Although arguments for these measures are made from the point of view of women (and latterly of men) especially regarding rights, and female poverty, they also derive from the need to have more females in the labour supply, as contributors to social protection, to reduce public spending on family-based support. With career-led preferences, 'voluntary childlessness' increases and human capital is underused (less reproduction). This may limit economic growth leading to a vicious circle, since where growth is high, there are more mothers of young children in employment, where it is lower, then less mothers work. Organisations argue that too generous provision of welfare discourages parents (mothers) to participate in labour market, leading to a reduced female earnings profile and gender equity objectives. A review of the measures of the thirty-three OECD countries and the effects of family friendly measures on their economies suggests that policy borrowing should proceed with caution.

The European Union

The European Union has developed a body of Recommendations and other soft law measures to support both equality and families, and now also to ensure economic growth and child development. These include:

- 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam - directing macro-economic labour market policies + capacity of EU to make Recommendations
- Article 137 EC extended to areas: improvement of working environment, working conditions, equality between women and men, equal treatment at work
- Amendments to Article 141 EC positive action within equal pay framework
- Apart from Health and Safety Legislation, Six Directives under 1989 Action Programme amongst which: employment protection to pregnant women (or recently given birth or breastfeeding) and on organisation of working time.

At the Essen Council Meeting of 1994, the five Essen Priorities dealt with growing unemployment and social exclusion (especially women and young people). There is a visible marriage of employment policies with economic policies and considerable use of 'Soft Law' Action Programmes (such as on sexual harassment) to achieve objectives. Remarkable

collective agreements between social partners (UNICE, CEEP, ETUC) such as the Directive on Parental Leave (96/34/EC) demonstrates the EU interest in achieving both equality and economic growth.

Some family-friendly measures have become fully-fledged policies as with CD 96/34/EC and the development of a parental leave framework, to policy for the reconciliation of work with family life. Others include the Equal Treatment Directive 76/207/EEC and recommendations such as on Childcare and Home-working, with interest in the well-being and development of children (and families). Older workers and their family obligations are given scant attention despite growing interest in age and age discrimination.

In keeping with the objectives of cohesion and convergence there has been concern with the effects of atypical work, part-time work and temporary work on workers and Directives have been developed to deal with these, such as the Part-time Work Directive 97/81/EC which combines human rights issues, with pressure to create jobs and reduce unemployment. The European Employment Strategy, following the 4th World Conference Beijing, 1995 - Declaration and Platform for Action and the Luxembourg Job Summit 1997 and National Action Plans (NAP) is based on the four pillars of employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. Other actions and soft law measures show that the work-life balance remains a crucial target:

- Fourth and Fifth (4th and 5th) Community Action Programmes on Equal Opportunities
- European Council (December 2000) – stressed importance of balanced participation by women and men in family and working life (2001/51/EC)
- Nice European Council 2000 – participation in employment one of 4 objectives to combat poverty and social exclusion
- Report on Social Exclusion 2005 reviews NAPs on Social Exclusion looks for policies on reconciliation
- Green Paper on Demographic Change 2005 urges 'birth-friendly policies'

There has been a catalyser effect of the European Social Fund and its projects, but the EU is still far from the Lisbon Agenda of a 60% female participation rate. In its reconciliation policies, equality is a fundamental principle, but the business perspective is strong. The interest in family-friendly measures is also about provision of services, viewed as business and employment opportunities. These fall under a number of policy areas - labour policy, child welfare policy, family policy, employers' needs, and equality policy. It is still the case, however,

that in most EU states, continental or liberal welfare regimes are premised on the 'natural' place of the family in social provision.

Organisational Cultures

Organisational cultures have been so masculine that early research spoke of 'organisation man', 'corporate man' and 'bureaucratic man'. There was little interest in the reproduction of organisation, including gendered rules of control, such as technical rules, socio-regulative rules, and strategic rules. Even in discussion of the flexible firm with a core male full-time, and peripheral female part-time, or 'flexible' worker, gender was largely absent. It should be asked whether working time arrangements [WTA] are facilitation or utilisation strategies. Some forced 'flexibility' may be detrimental to family life.

Family friendly working time arrangements are usually popular in firms in the services sector; those of a medium size (500); those with significant numbers (or majority) of females. The British Workplace Employee Relations Survey (1998) divides family friendly corporate policies into two: the category of services and the category of benefits.

Firms using these measures have:

- Benefited from retention of staff
- Enhanced motivation
- Facilitated recruitment
- Reduced absenteeism
- They also needed collaboration to ensure that colleagues do not feel any gains for themselves.

There are three theories to explain why firms use family friendly measures, namely Neo-classical Economics, Internal Labour Market theory and (Neo) Institutional theory.

Neo-classical economics cites reasons such as:

- Non-pecuniary benefits attract employees
- Increase profits (increase in productivity)
- Lower wage costs (associated with turnover/absenteeism).

Internal labour market theories find that measures:

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- Develop employee commitment
 - Invest in firm-specific human capital
 - Reduce difficulty in recruiting high quality workers for non-supervised tasks, and high trust work.

Institutional theory examines how organisations respond to the institutional environment i.e. trade union pressure or social policy and welfare regimes. The variables affecting actual availability of family friendly measures in a firm are:

- Workplace characteristics (the strongest predictor)
- Amount of postgraduates in firm
- Proportion of females in a firm – the demographic variable
- Presence of a human resources representative and/or union representative
- Labour market tightness (not a strong predictor)
- Training and quality circles increased parental leave availability but those with lot of discretion, had less paid leave and job sharing.

The Family Friendly Working Arrangements that positively influence productivity are flexibility in scheduling, which:

- prevents problems impinging on workplace performance
- reduces time 'on the job' dealing with family matters
- reduces absenteeism and turnover
- promotes work during peak personal productive time
- workers take leave during times that would be least productive.
- productivity enhanced through motivational variables
- increase effort/reduce shirking/work harder or smarter
- cooperate more fully in training, assisting and monitoring tasks
- gives a larger applicant pool amongst those with families

Other positive effects of family friendly measures on productivity come from other factors affected through interaction with labour:

- capital productivity if workers take better care of plant and equipment

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- better use of plant and equipment for additional hours of day and week
 - management efficiency enhanced through effects on monitoring/supervision
 - management efficiency enhanced if better managers or workers attracted to firm
 - greater commitment to firm-improved information flows
 - greater willingness to accept technological change

Though there is no evidence in prior research, possible negative effects of Family Friendly Working Arrangements on productivity include that:

- workers who do not stand to benefit from programmes may find them inequitable, with adverse effects on morale and productivity
- may seek employment elsewhere - turnover and reducing potential applicants from this group
- additional hours of monitoring may be required to implement programme
- some workers may take advantage of corporate and family programmes when they have no intention of staying with firm long term
- a sorting process may result in workers gravitating to companies with preferred combination of wages and benefit programmes i.e. single going for high wage/low support, families for a combination of wages and benefits
- productivity levels of different worker groupings may not be the same - so positive or negative effects on productivity.

Malta: Gender, Family and Work

In Malta, women have been in paid work since the 17th Century. In the 20th Century public service regulation and trade union action lead to 'protective' legislation. A considerable number of women recruited during World War II, mainly single females were dismissed after the war. Protective legislation and the marriage bar against married women remained till 1981. In 1974, and not rescinded to date, women could not replace a public post vacated by a male. In 1996, service prior to resignation became reckonable for assimilation. There has been both a waste of talent and a loss of rights to work, to pay National Insurance and to pensions. This is within a hegemonic 'maternalist' Catholic discourse, which is premised on a male breadwinner model and a family wage. There is tension between a progressive 'EU' equality perspective and social democratic/southern regime (now becoming liberal) welfare state.

Industrial Landscape

In the 1950s to 1980s, Malta's first phase of industrialisation with growth in mainly manufacturing industries was with female labour, labour intensive and low waged. The second phase, in the 1990s shows a switch to service industries in tourism, retail trade, professional services, and some IT related industries, especially micro-electronics. There is now a feminisation of work, with more work being organised around the separation of core and peripheral workers, and with atypical working hours and definite contracts. Presently, there is a divide between work-rich, high trust knowledge work and work-poor semi or unskilled work. Other work, such as caring, is becoming increasingly more feminised and even deskilled. In this scenario, both males and females, especially the poorly educated will suffer, and there is growing unemployment and job insecurity. Knowledge brokers (in IT and related industries) will do well but males will have more time for the long hours work culture in these industries. The question 'Who will benefit from family-friendly measures?' remains pertinent to ask.

Some statistics for Maltese females 2004 and 2005, show recurrent low activity linked to maternity and low educational achievement:

- Fertility rate is falling at 1.4%
- First maternity: largest group age 25-29
- Activity rate: 37.0%
- Employment rate: 33.7% (45,990)
- Unemployment rate: 9.1% (4,563)
 - Of whom 62.7% (2,862) are age 15-24
- Part-time as main employment 18.1% (8,316)
 - Of all part-time workers, females 67.0%
- Personal or family responsibility reason for inactivity - 62.9% (72,174)
- Inactive females: 78.0% married or previously married
- Time use on domestic labour: married women 6.3 hours, other women 2.5 hours on domestic work per weekday. Married men 2.1 hours per weekday, other men 1 hour per weekday;
- Early school leavers (18-24) not in education or training: 51.6 %;
- Low in vocational qualifications - 29.7% of those at MCAST, 30.8% of those at ITS;
- Of total population at-risk-of-poverty: females - 51.5%
- At-risk-of-poverty rate with social transfers: 15.1% (29,550) of all Maltese females

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- Highest female at-risk-of-poverty by percent of age group – age 65 years and older with 20.5%, younger than 15 years at 18.9%
 - In absolute terms (9,110) largest amount in age group 25-49 (13.7%)

Possible Reasons for Low Participation Rate

There are a number of reasons for the low female participation rate. These include the historical legacy of patriarchy, and the marriage bar; incomplete or unreliable data on women in the informal economy; the low education achievement of over half of all female school leavers; discourses of Catholicism; ideologies and obligations of care over the life-course; low paternal involvement; the 'southern' or Latin Rim welfare regime; and labour market structure and processes.

Education and the Propensity to be in the Labour Market

There have been consistently strong findings linking the propensity to be in paid work with educational qualifications, suggesting that Hakim's (2004) preference theory about the different groups of women seems valid for Malta. For example, Borg and Spiteri (1994) found that 62% of their sample with tertiary education was in paid employment, whilst of Camilleri's 56% of females with rudimentary qualifications, 75% are housewives. Conversely, of those with post-secondary education, 59% are in paid employment. Similarly Baldacchino et al (2003) find that those with post-secondary qualifications are twice as likely to be in the formal economy as those with secondary level education only, and three times as likely as those with primary education only. However, only 1.3% mention lack of marketable skills as reasons for withdrawal from the labour market, suggesting that the residual Catholic discourses of exclusive mothering and lack of adequate childcare facilities have a further effect on preference. Camilleri (2001) finds that there is a negative correlation between homemaking and the amount of children one has, and 52% of the sample homemakers had more than one child. The ETC (2003) on dropouts from the labour market found that the most commonly cited reason for dropout especially in the age bracket 21-30 was 'personal reasons' taken to mean family commitments. Unfortunately, the study did not ask for the educational level of respondents.

Will Family Friendly Measures be Introduced for 'Peripheral' Workers?

There is evidence that a number of employees already use some of the measures that help them reconcile work and family. However, it appears that in a number of cases these strategies suit employers (utilisation strategies) more than they do employees (facilitation strategies). A

staggering 28% of all jobs in Malta in 2005 were part-time. Women account for 67% of these jobs, of whom, 39% are married. Regarding atypical working hours (NSO 99/2001): large amounts of females are working 8 – 11 pm and 11 – 5 am shifts. There has been an increase of females working these shifts. It is also the case that 24% of all shift workers are female (NSO 115/2001). Whilst 52.1% of all male shift workers opted for this arrangement, only 41% of the female shift workers did, so that the remaining 59% did not chose the shift scheme. It is also the case that 12.1% of females (compared to 9.3% of the males) claim that atypical hours are inconvenient. It is clear that any changes in working time arrangements need to be made to suit both the employer and the employee.

Researching Family-Friendly Measures at the Workplace

In the Single Programming Document (SPD) and in the tender document CT 2760/2004 (Gender Mainstreaming: The Way Forward), the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality has identified a number of general objectives that should be integrated into the research design on family-friendly measures in five private sector firms. These include interest in:

- support for small and medium sized enterprises (of at least ten employees);
- support for Tourism Sector Actions;
- Social Inclusion Actions (to help individuals rise above the poverty line, especially lone parents);
- the Human Resources Action (to increase labour supply especially female Gozitan labour supply);
- lifelong learning and others.

The literature rehearsed above raises a number of further considerations in the selection of the five private sector firms that can be used as models for other Maltese firms.

The question of size of the firm is important since it appears that larger firms find it more cost effective to implement FFWA. Here, it would be useful for comparative and analytical reasons to have cases from some small, some medium and one large enterprise. Furthermore, the literature indicates that firms with a critical mass of females are more likely to be interested in FFWA. Budd and Mumford (2002) have found that workplace demographics are indicators of family-friendly practices.

This suggests that the gender composition of the workforce should be a variable in the choice. However, given the EU and local interest in promoting paternal responsibility, some examples of

firms with both female and male employees should help ascertain what can be done to encourage men to use FFWA, and what family and workplace benefits derive from take up of the measures. Reconciliation policies are a precondition for labour market gender equality and can only be achieved with equalisation of parental responsibilities in the home (Liff, 1997).

Another factor that seems to aid the introduction and success of FFWA is the presence of a Human Resources Manager or representative in the firm (Richardson, 2001). Again, it would be useful, firstly, to compare firms, which have a HR manager with those that do not. Secondly, learning about the specific challenges of those enterprises that do not have an HR manager, could help them find what alternatives could lead to the implementation of effective FFWA measures, even without such a post.

The question of the industrial relations climate, and how union representatives can aid the implementation and take up of FFWA, especially when these are negotiated in collective agreements, needs to be taken up in the research design. It would therefore be useful to include cases from enterprises where staff is unionised as well as others where they are not.

The literature (Budd and Mumford, 2002) also indicates that firms which invest in firm-specific human capital and training, and are seeking high levels of commitment, or who are having difficulty in recruiting high quality workers (labour market tightness), are more likely to also invest in FFWA. Comparing firms with different human capital profiles (i.e. high, versus low, trust firms) would be instructive. Here, including low trust firms is important if the concern with social inclusion, and therefore the employment of less-qualified workers, is to be taken seriously.

The challenge will be to develop Family Friendly Working Arrangements that can encourage both more and less qualified, as well as, better and less well-paid employees into the labour market.

Key Findings on Family Friendly Measures in Malta: The Employers' Dimension

The study's five firms were selected according to the criteria outlined in the terms of reference and criteria set out above. Owing to the purposive nature of the sampling approach, the firms selected are therefore not representative of all firms in the private sector.

The cases have produced one firm with mainly male employees, another with a mainly female complement, and three with a range from 35.6% to 57.7% female complement. The firms

come from manufacturing, education, banking and finance and one is an Independent Authority with a large number of professionals. A total 71.8% of the respondents are from the banking and finance sector, 12.8% from manufacturing (electrical), 7.7% from communications and 7.7% from other personal services.

Of these respondents, 84.6% were engaged on a full-time basis and 15.4% were engaged on a part-time basis, whilst 89.7% were on a permanent indefinite contract and 10.3% on a fixed term contract.

The Gozo firms that had initially indicated interest in participation were then not available due to seasonal demands, which also meant that no case from the hotels and restaurants service industry is represented herein.

The size of the firms ranges from nine (9) employees to a thousand seven hundred (1,700) giving a good representation of how small, medium and large firms deal with family friendly measures.

The work carried out in the firms ranges from plant/operator work with Employer 1; clerical (both back office and customer care) with Employer 5; professional (with Employer 2, 3 and 4), giving examples from low to medium to high trust firms. Participant occupations as categorised in accordance with ISCO 1988 ⁽¹⁾ featured 10.3% were senior managers, 12.8% professionals, 17.9% associate professionals and technical staff, and 59% in clerical grades.

Of all the employees with these firms, only 39 agreed to participate in the face-to-face research interviews. Additionally five Human Resources Managers or their counterpart participated in the face-to-face employer interview.

The following is a profile of the employers reviewed:

- Employer 1:
Private company engaged in import, assembly and installation of electric installations (air conditioning). 98 employees of whom 3% are female.
- Employer 2:
Independent Authority. 46 employees of whom 36% are female.

¹ International Standard for the Coding of Occupations, 1988

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- Employer 3:
Niche market bank with revenues entirely from non-local markets. 103 employees of whom 47% are female.
 - Employer 4:
Independent private language school. 9 employees of whom 67% are female.
 - Employer 5:
Leading banking institution. 1,700 employees, of whom 58% are female.

Women constituted 46% of the workforce of the employers reviewed (estimated at 1,956 human resources in total between five employers). There is evidence of both gender occupational segregation as well as gender occupational separation. At 9% of the total, women are significantly under represented in senior management positions. This is evident also in the larger firms, such as Employer 5, where over 57.7% of the workforce is female but only 0.48% of senior management is female.

Women prevailed in the clerical grades composing 58% of the back office clerical grades and 74% of the customer contact grades across the five employers. Females have a 40% share of the professional grades. Contrastingly, males constituted 100% of plant/machine operator grades, and 77% of elementary occupations. Employer 1 engaged 95 males and 3 females (3%), whilst Employer 4 employed 6 females and three males. With the remaining firms, the range of the female complement went from 35.6% with Employer 2 to 57.7% with Employer 5.

Participants' Caring Responsibilities

Of the participants, 69.2% had caring responsibilities. Of these cases, 18.5% had children under 2, 37.0% had children between 2 and 5 years of age, 44.4% had children between 5 and 16, whilst 40.7% cared for partners or independent adults, and 18.5% cared for others/dependent adults.

Communications

Every employer had a Mission Statement that was not publicly available in the case of Employer 1. Each employer (except for Employer 4) had a publicly available Annual Report. In none of the Annual Reports is the family friendly orientation of the employer devoted any direct or indirect reference.

Regarding HR Recruitment and Promotion Policy, Employers 1, 2, and 4 did not have a policy that was available to the public. Employer 3 did have one, but it was not made available for research.

Employer 5 had a Human Resource Recruitment and Promotion Policy document that was publicly available. Although the policy documents referred to diversity, there was no discussion of family friendly policies adopted.

None of the Firms made their internal social communications available for research purposes, and it appeared that only employer 5 used extensive formal internal communication.

Informal internal communication, usually through the Human Resource manager/executive does sometimes refer to the family developments of employees.

Employer 5 publishes a periodical of a social nature where health and other social issues are covered, and was a key source of information about availability of family friendly systems/benefits.

Family friendly employment systems did not feature in any public relations (PR) communications during the 12 months preceding the review.

Company Features

- Strengths:

With the exception of Employer 1, each Employer considered its employees and their skills to be major strengths. Additionally, Employers 1, 3 and 4 cited 'flat & flexible' organisational cultures, whilst Employer 5 referred to managing constant change. The client base and sector was seen as a strength by all employers.

- Weaknesses:

Employer 1 recognised that a predominantly male workforce may be a weakness but remained inclined to see this as inevitable, given its involvement in the construction industry. Smallness was an issue with Employer 4, whilst the vulnerability of a niche market was a concern for Employer 3. Employer 2 had a similar problem including limits on revenue. With Employer 5, there was less concern with the market climate but some concern with the age (older employees) and their ability to acquire new ICT skills.

- Opportunities:

All employers spoke about opportunities for adjustment to and benefit from local and international new markets. Employers 1 and 3 linked this to the availability of young, new, and skilled human

resources. Employers 2 and 5 were more interested in the opportunities offered by market changes.

- Threat/Challenges:

Whilst Employer 1 was concerned with dependence on the local market and cash flow problems; small Employer 4 did not find the 'local environment' a major threat. Employer 2 was concerned that changes in the local regulatory system may affect it, but was more concerned about the limited pool of suitable human resources. Employer 5 also referred to possible changes in the local regulatory system as well as other social and economic developments, which could pose a challenge.

Family Friendly Arrangements - Availability & Access

The Employers differed somewhat in the family friendly systems and benefits available to employees, as well as to which employees could benefit from the measures. Employer 2, the Independent Authority, was the Employer with most measures available, to all employees, which reflects the advances already achieved in the public sector from which the Authority has been established.

Employer 4, the smallest employer, offered only two (2) measures out of 16 possible choices. Employer 1 invariably made having caring responsibilities a pre-requisite for access to family friendly measures, as did Employer 5 when it offered a childcare subsidy/allowance to employees with children younger than 4 years of age. Otherwise, when measures were offered, they were available to employees without distinction of sex, status or caring responsibilities:

- Flexitime:

With Employers 2, 3 and 4 this was available to employees, without distinction. It was not available with Employer 5, whilst it was available for the female employees of Employer 1, provided they had caring roles.

- Reduced Hours:

Employer 5 had 7.2% of female employees working on Reduced Hours. No other employer offered this measure.

- Annualised Hours:

This was not available in any employer reviewed except with Employer 1, where either male employees (working part-time) or female clerical employees with caring responsibilities could use the measure.

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- **Exemption from Non-Scheduled Work:**
This was not available for employees of Employers 1, 4 and 5 but was available for employees of Employers 2 and 3, without distinction.
 - **Childcare subsidy/allowance:**
This was available only to employees of Employer 5 with children under 4 years of age.
 - **Part-time work:**
This was available to employees without distinction in Employers 2, 3, 4 and 5. Employer 1 employed 3 male part-time workers but called this arrangement 'annualised hours'.
 - **Telework/Homework:**
This was not available in Employers 4 and 5, but Employers 2 and 3 provided it to employees without distinction. Employer 1 made this available to senior management male employees, provided they had caring responsibilities.
 - **Job Sharing:**
This was only available, and to employees without distinction, in Employer 2.
 - **Parental Leave:**
This was not available in Employers 3 and 4. It was available to employees without distinction in Employers 2 and 5. Employer 1 had a system of entitlement which covered full-time female clerical staff, and male senior management, regardless of family status, and which was both utilising and facilitating.
 - **Short notice leave:**
This was available to employees without distinction in Employers 2, 3, and 5. Such benefit was also available, but to senior management (male) only in Employer 1. It was not available in Employer 4.
 - **Career Break with Committed Return:**
This was available, and to employees without distinction, in Employers 2 and 5 only.
 - **Sick/emergency childcare leave:**
This was available, and to employees without distinction, in Employers 2, 3, and 5 only.
 - **Professional Guidance (childcare, elderly care):**
The only employer to have this measure, which was available to employees without distinction, was Employer 2.
 - **Wellness-health promotion:**
Employer 5 offered this to all its employees, but no other employer did.
 - **Work-family support groups:**
Again, this was only available, to employees without distinction, in Employer 5.

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- Work-family newsletter:
Only Employer 5 had this type of communication.
 - Other:
Employer 3 mentioned on the job family coaching, which was available 'informally'. No other employer mentioned any other measure.

Recent Key Changes and Effect on Women's Aspirations

The five employers did not indicate any intent to change the gender composition and distribution of employees but they had implemented changes that appeared set to improve the position of female staff.

- Training and Career Development:
Employers 2 and 3 had increased on the job training, including in management skills that enabled women to move into middle management. Employer 5 shifted training to ipsative learning so that employees would become responsible for their own development. Employers 1 and 4 did not have career/training development plans.
- Leave:
The only change noted was with Employer 3 who increased summertime leave by 2 days.
- Flexible or Reduced Hours:
Employers 1, 2 and 5 had some version of this introduced recently. Employer 2 had additionally provided employees with laptop computers and Internet access for use in different locations. Employer 5 had introduced 'key' time for clerical grades, and considered this positive for the females involved.
- Promotion Opportunities for Staff:
Promotion opportunities featured significantly for Employers 2, 3 and 5. Employer 3 recruited mainly at junior positions allowing employees to be promoted internally. Employer 5 had a new recruitment and promotion process and new management positions making these more open to women with appropriate skills and aptitudes.
- Support for Non-work Sponsored Further Education
The only Employer to have made changes in the last five years was Employer 3, though these did appear to have direct impact on women's work aspirations.
- Other Changes:
Employer 4 referred to ISO 9001 accreditation that did not appear to have a bearing on women's aspirations. Employer 5 introduced gender specific development programmes, in which female staff took responsibility for their own personal development, supposedly widening their career

prospects within the organisation.

Commitment to Equality Measures

In all five cases the implementation of equality and family friendly measures received strongest encouragement from senior and functional management. In the case of Employer 5, the Board (with its international corporate dimension) provided strong encouragement. It also operated a gender focal point with a Head of Diversity having direct responsibility in HR management. Employer 2 had developed policies and procedures to ensure gender equality. Overall, male employees provided the weakest encouragement.

Regarding the measurement of variables of gender equality effectiveness, Employer 2 used five variables out of a possible seven suggested measures (²). Employers 1 and 4 used three measures, whilst Employer 5 used only two. Employer 3 claimed not to use any since the female complement at each level of organisation did not require adjusting and was always strong.

Measuring gender equality through looking at job applications was mentioned by three employers, followed by Performance Improvement, Staff Turnover, External Applications and Innovation/suggestions Schemes among half of all cases. Using Creativity Indices and Measures of Absenteeism ranked low with only two firms mentioning these methods of measurement of gender equality.

Attitude to Family Friendly Measures

A series of items relating to different aspects of attitudes towards family friendly measures and equality were put to HR managers for ranking on a Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree (five point Likert type scaling). All employers indicated a very strong support for both equality and family friendly measures. There was also a strong agreement that the measures target all women in the company, that they promote quality of life for all employees, and that they are well received by all employees.

The employers did not agree that men's skills are valued more nor that non-beneficiary employees may find the measures inequitable, or that workers may abuse of the system and benefits.

² See Section **Error! Reference source not found.** of this document.

There was agreement that managers in the company own the measures as an organisational issue, although it was felt that in some firms, senior managers need more knowledge of these measures, as well as more involvement. There was little agreement that employers may encounter negative outcomes from these measures.

There was also negligible agreement that measures should be targeted at the most able women only, showing a consistent positive attitude here, as well as a belief that these firm-specific measures are of benefit to all the employees without distinction, as well as to the firm.

There was a more luke-warm appraisal of the firms' communication strategies regarding measures, this appearing across a number of items testing for effectiveness of communication strategies.

Furthermore, a series of open-ended statements regarding attitudes revealed some fine distinctions between companies:

- In response to the statement that 'the number of women in the organisation will increase creativity and improve the quality of decision-making', only Employer 5 argued strongly in favour of gender balance in this regard. Employers 1, 2 and 3 valued quality of recruits and training on the job, but found this to be in itself sufficient to requirements, working well irrespective of the sex of the employees.
- Regarding the importance of encouraging women to move up the organisation and the active support that should be afforded to them, all employers except Employer 4 agreed with this. Employer 4 extended this obligation to include males. However, none of the Employers gave examples of how this is achieved in their employers.
- Asked to comment whether good working-time arrangements lead to a better life-balance and do not reduce ability to contribute to production, all Employers agreed. They felt that the arrangements improved the life-balance of both males and female employees and had an overall positive effect on their work. Employer 1 added that the arrangements should not be universally available but be linked to performance.
- Employer 1 was also the only employer who felt that in certain jobs, such as that undertaken by its company on construction sites, men were the preferred employees. No other employer agreed.

Finally, employers were asked whether separate measures should be available to non-beneficiaries to balance the level of rewards to different people in the company. Except for Employer 2, no employer agreed.

Effects of Family Friendly Measures

All employers reviewed agreed that family friendly measures result in:

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- Increased effort among beneficiaries
 - Enhanced management efficiency through improved motivation
 - Increased individual productivity among measures' beneficiaries
 - Overall increased co-operation among workers
 - Reduced staff turnover

There appeared to be weaker agreement that measures reduced absenteeism and led to better use of equipment at work. There was a very weak indication that the following effects had arisen from implementation of family friendly measures:

- Overall augmented quality of service to customers
- A trend among single, independent workers for higher wage positions
- Abuse of benefits among beneficiary employees
- Impoverished morale among non-beneficiary employees

The question of augmented quality should be seen in the light of luke-warm reception of the possible positive effect of measures on performance and productivity. However, the perceived neutral effect of measures on these factors could derive from the lack of variables to measure these effects, as much as anything else.

Findings on Family Friendly Measures: The Employee Dimension

Awareness of Benefits at Work

Out of a potential list of 14 different types of family friendly benefits that may be present in their workplace, employees featured better awareness about benefits like emergency childcare leave, flexitime, parental leave and short notice leave. These benefits have been vigorously promoted by State social policy, by the Employment & Training Corporation and through the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality media campaigns.

Women were typically more aware of systems available at their workplace than males. They were more aware of exemption from non-standard working time, job sharing, work family guidance, parental leave, career break with committed return, part-time work, emergency childcare leave, childcare subsidy, and flexitime. Males were more aware about childcare facilities and the compressed working week. Equal proportions of males and females were

aware of telework/homework, short notice leave, and wellness/health promotion. While awareness was higher amongst respondents with care responsibilities at home, no other differences in awareness across participant groups (such as age, occupation, level of education, amount of domestic work undertaken and employment characteristics) were evident.

However, employees of Employer 5, with its extensive internal communication system and insertion of benefits in its collective agreement, had higher awareness than employees in other employers.

Learning About Availability of Family Friendly Benefits

The Human Resources Manager or his/her delegate was the key source of information for most respondents across most benefits. Work colleagues were also an important source of information followed by newspapers/media. Female participants cited the Human Resources Manager or delegate and newspapers as sources of information to a far higher extent than men did (4:1 and 9:1 respectively). Males referred only to the Union Representative as a source of information. Work colleagues were also referred to slightly more by males than females, though females also used this source of information.

The employees of Employer 1 cited the most varied sources of information that included newspapers, work colleagues, family/friends, union representative and the HR manager/delegate.

The employees of Employer 5 used the HR manager more than other sources (such as colleagues, the newspapers of family/friends) and did not use the Union Representative at all. Employees of Employers 2 and 3 used the HR Manager/delegate or friends in similar proportions but used no other source of information. The employees of Employer 4 used only the HR manager/delegate.

Effects of Family Friendly Benefits on Career

Respondents agreed that family friendly measures led to a level of commitment to the present employer and role, but that this was not what had made them join the employer or move to the position. Loyalty was shown when respondents agreed that the benefits kept them with the present employer, and that they were ready to take on more responsibilities with the same employer rather than move to another employer.

A higher level of commitment and specific loyalty to the present employer because of measures appeared amongst employees who were:

- women, or
- married and/or living with a partner, or
- had caring responsibilities at home, or
- were employed on a part-time basis.

Personal Finances

Beneficiaries overall expressed a net gain in cash in hand as a result of family friendly benefits, accompanied however by a increase in the cost of care of children and a slight increase in residence cost. There was a reduction in travelling costs and in costs related to the care of adults. No change in utility and service costs was observed.

Across beneficiary groups, effects were felt practically singly by the employees of Employer 5, which suggests that larger employers may be more able to influence the financial situation of employees than other employers.

Workers of Employer 3 registered an increase in cash in hand and employees of Employer 4 registered an increase in childcare costs. Employees of the other employers claimed to have experienced no other changes.

Financial effects are felt practically consistently by females, with the exception of cash in hand – a benefit shared also by men. The beneficiaries who experienced benefits across all variables measured were typically married, had caring responsibilities, were 30 to 34 years old, or devoted between 7 to 9 hours to domestic work daily.

Less academically educated employees (up to A Level) seemed to fare better than other groups financially, though University level employees did register an increase of cash in hand, as well as an increase in childcare costs. Those with vocational level education registered the highest increase in cash in hand, which may reflect the salaries both in the Banks and with the Technicians employed by Employer 1.

Change in Life at Work

Respondents registered the following benefits of family friendly arrangements at work:

- Having control of when and how to work
- Increase in job satisfaction

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- A feeling of job security
 - Less frustration with organisational support, and
 - Less frustration with technical support

They did report a very slight increase in work related stress. Evident were the difference in responses across men and women. Females only registered a marked increase in job satisfaction. They felt more in control of when and how to work than comparable males. They experienced less work related stress compared to males and a higher level of job security than males.

Part-time workers perceived the most positive effects of the measures on five of the six effects measured. Respondents with caring responsibilities reported better control of when and how to work, more job satisfaction and more feelings of job security than those with no caring responsibilities. They also reported, however, more work related stress and more frustration about technical support.

An Employer effect was also evident. The effects of control on when and how to work were felt most by employees of Employers 1 and 5. The effect of job satisfaction was felt most by employees of Employers 4 and 3, less by those of Employer 5, and not all by those of Employers 1 and 2. Work related stress had decreased for employees of Employer 1 but increased for employees of Employers 3 and 5. The feeling of job security was reduced for employees of Employer 1, and felt most by those of Employers 5 and 3. The employees of Employer 2 did not register any changes in working life as a result of the measures.

Changes in Working Time

A total of 72% of beneficiaries said that there had been no change in working time in the last four weeks compared to the time when no family friendly measures were provided. Another 20% had registered a reduction in working time, contrasting against another 8% who were working between 5 and 10 hours more weekly.

Enablement of Work

Out of 39 respondents in the study, 23 were recipients of one or more family friendly benefits at the workplace. Of these, a substantial 30.4% claimed they would not have otherwise been able to take up paid work had the family friendly arrangements not been available.

In all cases the respondents were women, married/or living with a partner, employed on a full-time basis and doing more than 5 hours daily domestic work. In 57.1% of cases, beneficiaries

had to care for adults at home, whilst in 28.6% they were single parents with care child responsibilities.

Effect on Working Life

Family friendly system beneficiaries reported a number of effects in their working life as a result of these measures. There was good integration with other work colleagues, and more opportunity to also be in touch with their social world. There was an improvement in the work-life balance and in their quality of life, with respondents more positive about their social life. However, there was a small deterioration in health and increase in conflict at home.

There were some differences in the effect of the measures across the beneficiary groups. Across employers, employees of Employer 1 saw improvement in their contact with work colleagues and their social world, as well as in their social life and overall quality of life. Employees of Employer 3 showed a slight improvement in their quality of life, work-life balance and health. Employees of Employer 4 reported major improvement in contact with work colleagues and quality of life, as well as good improvement of their social life and home relationships. They did report a deterioration in their health. The employees of Employer 5 showed some improvement in their contact with work colleagues and with their social world, a slight improvement in their quality of life and work life balance but a slight deterioration of both their health and home situation (increase in conflict at home).

Regarding gender, females report an improvement in all areas of (work and social) life except for a slight increase in conflict at home and a deterioration of their health. Males registered better improvement in both work-life balance and quality of life than females, reporting no conflict at home nor a deterioration in health. However, there was less improvement in their contact with their work colleagues and their social world (which may have already been good).

Regarding educational level, employees with vocational qualifications reported the most consistent improvements across all effects measured, including improved health and no conflict at home. University graduates reported an increase in isolation as a result of telework, considerable deterioration in their health and some increase in conflict at home.

With the exception of a deterioration in their health, less well-qualified employees (ordinary and advanced level academic standard) registered a slight increase in contact with work colleagues and their social world, as well as in their quality of life and work life balance (though not for the least qualified group).

Regarding performance, beneficiaries did not claim improvement but neither did they report any decline. They reported better work conditions, and no differences from non-beneficiaries in their conditions of work in terms of deadlines, pay, respect and general 'deal'. They did report longer working hours.

Although there was no statistically significant difference between beneficiary groups, some observations can be made:

- Beneficiaries with Employer 4 expressed better results such as increased output, higher productivity, better quality work and higher creativity;
- Beneficiaries with Employer 3 reported an increase in autonomy and better work conditions;
- Employees with Employers 1 and 2 reported higher pressure to perform with the measures;
- Beneficiaries with Employer 5 reported increased hours of work but better work conditions, and some slight improvement in autonomy. These employees agreed less than others that non-beneficiaries did not have better working conditions overall, suggesting that they were reluctant to claim no difference between beneficiary and non-beneficiary groups;
- Beneficiaries who were married or lived with a partner perceived improved performance, output, throughput, quality of work and creativity at significantly higher levels than their single counterparts;
- Those with caring responsibilities worked for longer hours than they used to before, as did those on indefinite contracts.

Beneficiaries of the family friendly measures reported a positive effect on their families that applied to their partners, dependent children, grown up children and other adults at home. No respondent referred to caring for dependent adults.

The most positive effect was on dependent children followed by other adults at home and grown up children. There were no statistically significant differences across respondent beneficiary groups. However, gender differences show that females found more positive results for all persons in the family than did males.

Employees of Employer 4 also found very positive results on dependent children and other adults at home, whilst employees of Employers 3 did so to a lower extent.

Separated persons not living with a partner also reported very positive results on dependent children, grown up children and other adults at home. Regarding educational level, those with A Level standard reported a small positive effect on all family members, whilst those with

University education showed a very positive effect on dependent children and other adults at home. Participants working part-time also found a more positive effect on their partner, their dependent children and other adults at home than did those working full-time.

Non-beneficiaries

Information about Availability of Family Friendly Systems

Non-beneficiaries had a very high level of awareness about emergency childcare leave (80% of non-beneficiaries), followed by flexitime and childcare facilities (67% and 53%). Term time working, exemption from non-scheduled work and service-oriented programmes were least well known. Men were only more aware of short-notice leave and wellness-health promotion.

Non-beneficiaries with caring responsibilities at home were significantly more aware of systems than those without caring responsibilities.

Interest in Family Friendly Systems

Non-beneficiaries indicated interest in various family friendly systems. Sick/emergency child-care attracted the highest level of interest, followed by career break with committed return, childcare subsidy and childcare facilities in declining order. Least interest was shown in annualised hours, exemption from non-scheduled work and compressed working week.

Flexitime attracted statistically significantly higher interest amongst females. Females were also more interested in term time working, childcare facilities, after school programmes, childcare subsidies, part-time work, job sharing, parental leave, career break with committed return, emergency child-care leave, and professional guidance.

Males were much more interested in telework/homework than females, as well as in work-family management training and other services rather than benefits.

Career break with committed return attracted higher levels of interest from participants aged 30 to 44 compared to other groups. Emergency childcare leave attracted higher levels among participants aged 40 to 49 years. The age group 40 to 44 years consistently demonstrated the highest interest in specific benefits (mean score of 4, where 5 is maximum) than any other age group, though this was not statistically significant.

Attitudes towards Family Friendly Systems

In response to statements to test attitudes towards family friendly systems/benefits, the respondents showed a net positive attitude. The most positive attitudes related to the series of

statements regarding the responsibility of the employer in the implementation of family friendly systems. Participants also agreed that such systems made workers more productive.

Differences featured across respondent groups. Employees of Employer 5 felt it was easy for an employee to work through a system compared to those employed with Employer 1. The same group also attributed higher levels of importance to the responsibility of the employer, and agreed that benefits stimulate better productivity amongst beneficiaries.

Those on indefinite contract or with caring responsibilities also thought that systems were 'easy' for employers to run. Employees of Employers 3 and 5 felt that employers should spend money on systems/benefits. The highest level of agreement with this came from employees with caring responsibilities at home, in a part-time job or receiving benefits.

Workers who were never married and lived with their parents were the least likely to link benefits to worker performance, nor did they feel that employers should help families. Those who were married or had caring responsibilities did think that the employer had an obligation to support families but that this should be linked to worker performance.

Employees of higher academic standing had a higher level of agreement that benefits should be related to performance, also agreeing that recipients of benefits over the long term become unable to hold a job.

Job Satisfaction

Fourteen items summarised into four variables and one overall factor measured the participants' job satisfaction on different job related aspects. Participants were most satisfied by the information received from the employer and to a lesser degree with their pay, the closure and variety of tasks. Some differences across response groups appeared in relation to employer only and these related to variety, task closure and pay.

Employees with Employer 4 showed highest satisfaction with task variety, closure and pay whilst those with Employer 2 were least satisfied. Employees of Employer 4 and of Employer 2 were also the most and least satisfied overall, respectively.

Discussion

This study of five employers purposefully selected by sector, size and gender composition produced some interesting results. It shows that whilst there has been a shift in attitudes regarding gender equality and family friendly measures, there are still limitations in firm-specific

attitudes and measures available, which are independent of employer sector, size and gender composition.

Occupational Segregation and Separation

There is evidence of gender occupational segregation and gender occupational separation. This has impact both on the pay structure of the employer and its employees' salaries, as well as on the firms' technical, socio-regulative and strategic rules.

It is not only in old technologies, as in the electrical installation and manufacture sector that males tend to be the dominant gender, but also in the new technologies, such as ICT specialisation, that remain closed to females. When females do acquire the new technological ICT skills, these seem to lead them to the processing and clerical grades in banking and finances rather in the more specialised and highly paid jobs. It is not clear whether it is lack of educational qualifications and aspirations, or lack of job mobility opportunities that limit the movement of females into more specialised jobs in these fields.

The glass ceiling is still a reality in these employers though the number of women in middle management and in professional categories should produce more senior managers in a few years time.

Where the employers have referred to equal opportunities in their training programmes, it would be worth considering how much non-work time employees have to give to this, especially in those employers that are pushing 'personal development' or self-directed/ipsative learning. 'Social limits on groups', especially female, non-work time training and education, mean that a subtle form of gender discrimination can determine on who can improve their profile and compete (supposedly 'equally') for the higher trust occupations.

The promotion of non-work time training and development is another form of occupational separation and is antithetical to a good work life balance. It is likely to increase deregulation of jobs, to individual performance based contracts, less open to scrutiny for Equal Opportunities. In this scenario, trade union membership will be weakened leaving states and the supranational EU with limited power to influence social and employment policy. It is possible that in the long run some of these policies may appear to be contrary to competitiveness and employability policies.

Cultures of Organisation

Employers are organisationally weak with regard to equal opportunities and family friendly measures. Annual reports do not have a Gender/Equal Opportunities dimension. Employers do not audit Equal Opportunities, nor do they use Equal Opportunities as an audit measure. Typically, human resource recruitment and promotion policies where they exist, are at best, gender neutral. Indeed, none of the employers had made any plans to change the gender composition of their labour force.

Despite a positive attitude to family friendly measures, few employers actually had records of the family status and caring responsibilities of employees. This may be because the majority of employers believed that where measures were available, they should be available to employees without distinction of sex, status or caring responsibility. While this is extremely democratic as an approach, it may mean that with limits on the amount of employees who may benefit, non-target groups will benefit at the expense of those with specific family responsibility.

This was also evident in the SWOT analysis where the issue of gender was rarely referred to despite the fact that it was relevant to a number of items, such as the shortage of specialised human resources in the communications and electronic fields, the challenge of ICT for older workers, and the vulnerability of the industry in the local and international market.

Availability of Measures

The availability of family friendly measures is limited and demonstrates that legal obligations in employment need to be extended to cover workers in the private sector, and also to be enforced.

Part-time work was the only measure offered across all the employers. Flexitime was available in four firms, whilst the fifth had reduced hours, which may have been a proxy for flexitime.

In the case of parental leave, it was shocking that two employers (3 and 4) did not offer this benefit. Similarly, short notice leave and sick/emergency childcare leave are not universally available in the private sector. Nor is exemption from non-scheduled work, with only two employers claiming to permit this.

Employers 2 and 5, with more high trust employees, are the only two employers to offer career breaks with committed return. Employer 1, also with some high trust occupational categories and a declared weakness in sourcing appropriate young and qualified labour supply, did not offer this measure, possibly because it was the only employer with a preferred male workforce.

The technical rules of the employer were linked to its socio-regulative rules, even when it came to awarding benefits, which were closely linked to function in the employer (and therefore also to gender).

It is of concern, especially given the age profile of the children that employees in the sample having caring responsibility, that neither annualised hours (also known as term-time work) and job sharing are available in any of these employers.

Respondents with care responsibilities at home had a number of young children. Indeed 18.5% had children younger than 2 years, 37.0% had children between 2 and 5 years of age, 44.4% had children between 5 and 16, whilst 18.5% were caring for dependent adults.

Despite having better internal and external communication systems and more apparent awareness of diversity issues, large employers did not appear to be better facilitating employees' work life balance, nor did employees register more satisfaction with jobs in the larger employers.

Employees' Awareness of Benefits at Work

There was a marked distinction in attitude to family friendly measures between males and females, as well as between employees who had caring responsibilities and those who did not.

This suggests that males need to be better targeted if there is to be more paternal involvement in child rearing, and a better reconciliation between family and work, for males also. For both males and females, it appears that knowledge about benefits is needs led, that is coinciding with caring responsibilities. This may be less than optimal for long-term planning both of families and of employers. Employers may find that employees who have not made life-course plans are less able to adjust to new demands at both work and at home. On a national level, encouraging younger people to plan for both work and a family before they are in employment may lead to a higher participation rate as well as to stable fertility rates.

No other differences feature in the awareness of measures across client groups, which suggest that so far, media campaigns and other methods of information exchange have reached employees of different ages, with different educational backgrounds, occupational categories and employment characteristics equally well.

Learning about Availability of Family Friendly Benefits

Human resource managers or their delegates are an important source of information. This is especially true for female employees, suggesting that the training in Equal Opportunities of

these key personnel and the present media campaigns of NCPE, ETC and others need to continue, and be extended to target male employees also.

Trade union representatives may have a very weak role in disseminating information regarding family friendly measures. Males are more likely to use the union representative than females, who do not use this source of information, possibly due to fewer females being trade union members overall. Trade unions may however, wish to consider strengthening the equal opportunities dimension of their work. Even in situations of decentralised bargaining, trade unions may offer very useful advice and still retain an important role in the industrial landscape. This is especially so when family friendly measures are performance-linked. The individualised contracts of decentralised bargaining often lead to new forms of discrimination inequality, which trade unions can prevent by encouraging employees to ask for advice even when they are not covered by collective agreements. Trade unions are also important in helping employees learn. It was interesting to find that in the research case studies, it was beneficiaries who agreed that benefits should be performance-linked, whilst non-beneficiaries did not agree that benefits should be dependent on performance. It indicates a strong work ethos on the part of beneficiaries, who also appreciate the firm-led accommodation to their needs.

It appears that since employees have much better knowledge of those family friendly measures that have been long promoted by State sponsored media campaigns and changes in employment law, than other measures, the state social policy/equality machinery is still very important in this field. Employers and their organisation do not appear to be investing any resources to this dimension of organisational and market growth, neither at the national level nor at the level of the firm.

Effects of Family Friendly Benefits

Employer Effects

Both employers and employees found that where they existed, family friendly measures were beneficial.

It is apparent that provision of measures leads to firm-specific loyalty from the beneficiary.

It is encouraging to note that non-beneficiaries were interested in family friendly systems and had a positive attitude toward them. However, the level of interest and knowledge of non-beneficiary males is deeply disconcerting since it implies that these men think they will never (have to) use the measures themselves.

Regarding effects, employers referred to a number of positive elements like increased effort among beneficiaries, management efficiency, increased co-operation among workers and reduced staff turnover.

There were no negative effects such as the abuse of the benefit by beneficiaries, or impoverished morale among non-beneficiaries. This is an important message to pass on to other employers, who may be concerned about introducing new systems. The results indicating positive attitudes toward systems from non-beneficiaries and the interest of non-beneficiaries in particular measures such as career breaks with committed return, should encourage employers to develop more flexible working time arrangements for all employees. These would suit modern life long education and leisure patterns as well as address the work-life family balance.

It is of concern that due to the lack of audit strategies most employers could not say whether there was reduced absenteeism and better use of equipment at work with the introduction of measures.

Similarly, the lack of audit tools led employers to be unable to determine whether the measures had increased performance and production, though it appeared that the production of the beneficiaries had increased. More importantly, it was impossible to determine exactly whether there was an augmented quality of service to customers.

The auditing of family friendly measures, in such a way that results can be fed back into a Research and Development loop, satisfies essential demonstrative purposes in addressing different stakeholders within the firm: Board, shareholders, top management, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike, showing the positive/negative effects of the system. The audits should, as a minimum, include a study of company Artefacts, Beliefs and Values, Assumptions, and Commitment to Equality (Ownership, Resources) as described in detail within this study. The use of a Family-Friendly Index should be an integral part of the audit exercise.

Employee Effect

Consistent with the literature, it was found that employees who found that family friendly systems had most positive effects on their careers overall were typically female, or married or living with a partner, or had caring responsibilities at home.

Clearly, the systems are being effective for the target groups both in terms of equal opportunities and in terms of work life balance, since both males and females with caring responsibilities of any type, found the systems effective. However, efforts to encourage males, and employers of males, to recognise their obligations to the family, and their work life balance

requirements still need to be made, since females tended to be the major beneficiaries as well as the most positive ones.

The financial effects of family friendly systems are generally positive, though some groups mentioned increased costs of childcare. It was not possible to explore whether these increases were offset by increases in disposable income. Here, it is important to note that 30.4% of recipients of benefits said that they would not have been able to remain in employment had these systems not been in place. This indicates that an increase in availability of benefits would increase employment amongst certain groups.

Importantly, less well-educated beneficiaries as well as those with vocational qualifications reported increase in cash in hand. Combined with employers' and employees' agreement that family friendly benefits should be available to all classes of employees, it does seem that this group of employees, especially women, might be encouraged to enter and remain in the labour market with the more extensive availability of family friendly systems. Where the international literature has shown that employers are more likely to offer the benefits to highly educated staff only, in Malta there seems to be a more egalitarian or democratic approach, which if transferred to other firms, could positively influence the female participation rate. That persons with this standard of education and in middle-level trust jobs are responsive to family friendly systems is a good indicator of the advantages of developing and extending schemes to include these groups.

The positive effects of family friendly systems on life at work, giving employees more control of when and how to work, less frustration with organisational or technical support and more job satisfaction and security are important findings that are consistent with international findings. They also conform to changes in organisational and managerial styles that are moving away from hierarchical top-down models to more participative and flat models. Where in the past only high trust employees had these types of control over their work (indeed, professions were defined by this type of discretion) this is now extending to middle and low trust work, and is providing employees with high levels of satisfaction.

The positive effect of the benefits on beneficiaries' families, especially on dependent children but also on other adults at home, should be of special interest to advocates of family friendly systems. This matches the direction of EU and OECD planning for child well-being and development, with its promotion of family friendly systems as one way of encouraging both 'birth-friendly' systems and child well-being. In this study, the positive effect of the systems on the families of separated persons not living with a partner, especially on the dependent

children, also shows that as a method of reducing social exclusion and addressing family and child poverty, family friendly systems are indeed an effective policy.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The five case studies have provided some interesting findings on how employers manage family friendly systems, on employer attitudes to family friendly systems and to equal opportunities and on employee attitudes. The effects of such systems were mainly positive both from the employer perspective as well as for beneficiaries. Non-beneficiaries had positive attitudes and showed a level of interest that augured well for the extension of systems. Few, if any, negative effects were recorded.

There were some differences across employers in terms of availability of benefits, in attitudes and in effect on employee.

The recommendations that follow are made to specifically address issues raised by these case studies only.

At the national machinery level

- Engage the support of Employers' Associations and Trade unions for policy development
- Provide training to private sector HR managers and/or their delegate in Equal Opportunities HR Recruitment and Promotion Policies
- Equal Opportunities Audits and Family Friendly Index .
- Continue with present level of media campaign
- Additionally develop campaigns to target specific groups such as males in families, as well as both females and males who have not yet made any life-long family plans.
- Monitor the Equal Opportunities and family friendly policies of private sector employers through regular research and audit, and publish the results of the findings so that prospective investors and employees can learn which employers are Equal Opportunities compliant and which are not.
- Award 'kite' awards to employers that have an Equal Opportunities Policy and who integrate Equal Opportunities in their Business Plans and/or who have Equal Opportunities HR Recruitment and Promotion Policies.
- In the long-term, only employers that have this recognised level of Equal Opportunities and Family-friendly policies should benefit from state aid, such as in participation in trainee schemes, in loans and other national aid to industry. Non-complaint employers should not benefit from these programmes.

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- There should be an effective policing of overtime regulations and applicability of work-time flexibility stipulations to ensure that workers' rights are protected.
 - Legislate to give employers due notice on return of employees – by increasing the notice period for parents on parental leave to three months.
 - Legislate to make sure there are no age barriers in recruitment (which would work against returning mothers).

At the level of the Employer

- Develop Equal Opportunities/Family Friendly planning, recruitment and promotion policies.
- Train HR managers/or their delegates in these and encourage also other 'work family reconciliation policy promoters'.
- Develop Equal Opportunities and Family Friendly Audit systems that would be able to measure effect on staff turnover, production and creativity, absenteeism and others.
- Include Equality Audit results with Annual Reports.
- Enhance the role of performance assessment in pay and promotion decisions for all workers.
- Useful successful application of family friendly measures to attract new, even single, employees to firm. These non-pecuniary benefits may be as important as wage structures in attracting and getting better quality employees.
- Use family friendly measures such as telework, to encourage less hierarchical structures and more employee responsibility (high-trust) at work.
- Use family friendly measures to have better use of human resources (at time optimal for the better performance), for use of space and plant, and of equipment.

Develop new systems of management that are suitable for work that leads to non-supervised performance (high trust and high value added).

GENDER PAY REVIEW

Executive Summary

From the time women entered the labour force, they generally received lower earnings than men. Gender pay inequalities seem to be both universal as well as resistant to social, cultural and economic changes. They persist despite the changes such as:

- the increase in women's participation in the labour market
- the various legislative measures taken to protect women from occupational discrimination
- the higher educational levels achieved by women, and
- the various efforts to encourage and implement gender mainstreaming and to foster a culture of gender parity.

The gender pay gap measures the difference in the average gross hourly earnings between men and women (aged 15-64 who work at least 15 hours a week), across the whole economy and all establishments (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). Differences in earnings between men and women may arise from difference in the:

- composition of the male and female workforce – composition effect;
- remuneration of men and women with similar characteristics – remuneration effect; and
- labour market participation behaviour of men and women – selection effect.

Context

Historically women contributed to the economy in roles that were beyond those of wives and mothers but different in many ways from that of men. In pre-industrial times, all family members (including women and their children) gave their share within the family unit of production either within the home or close to it. Maltese women performed a wide range of work activities that contributed significantly both to the household and to the economy. Despite their hard work however, their earnings were lower than those of men although they were necessary for a family's upkeep.

In the early industrial-period, young unmarried women (and children) were employed in the cotton and textile mills. Participation of women in the labour market was also remarkably low compared to that of men. Women's activities concentrated in a small number of fields, exemplified by manufacturing (textiles, clothing and tobacco) and services (especially domestic

services, education, nursing and clerical). Until World War II women's employment trends did not change much, with war calling on women to undertake previously male jobs to make up for the loss of manpower during war times. Since the 19th century, international data show an upward trend in women's earnings compared to men's, with earnings among women in the 1980s equating to well over 70% of men's income. These ratios are considered fairly stable, changing only slightly until the present day.

In Malta, trends parallel the above account. After the war and up to the beginning of industrialisation the participation of women in the labour market in Malta remained at a remarkably low proportion averaging 17-20% of the working population. The expansion of the industrial sector in the 1970's (especially in the textiles and clothing sectors) attracted many women to the labour market. During the 1960's and 70's, the hourly wage rate of female workers was significantly lower than that of males, although in real terms, women's hourly pay rates increased by 9.9% annually between 1966 and 1975 (contrasting against the 6.5% registered among men's hourly pay rates for the same period). By 1975, women's earnings had increased to around 71% of male earnings.

In female-dominated industries, annual earnings of workers were lower than those paid in male-dominated sectors. This feature prevailed despite that women's employment was an important source of foreign exchange earnings considering that the majority of Malta's exported manufactured products came from female-dominated industries.

Women were paid less than men not because they were less productive: less pay was justified by two assumptions:

- that women did not need to earn as much as men since they were not the breadwinners, and
- an assumed potential threat to the traditional gender roles and balance of power within the family if women earned as much as men.

Cross Border Reality

Unequal pay for men and women appears to be a universal phenomenon, at least in the economically advanced countries. Nevertheless, pay gaps narrowed in all countries since the 1960's, although increase in women's earnings did not occur at the same time. The 1995 European Structure of Earnings Study (ESES) established that women in the EU earned around three-fourths of what men earned. The widest gap at the time featured in the Netherlands and Greece while the greatest parity featured in Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden and the

former East Germany. A Eurostat (2001) study established that women's earnings increased in relation to those of men in most member countries, albeit not significantly. Besides, in those countries where the gap was widest in 1995, there was relatively little increase in the years that followed. Data published in 2005 suggests that such gaps, across all EU countries, generally narrowed, although wide discrepancies between countries still feature. Such gaps are widest in Austria (at 26%) and the smallest in Luxembourg (at 11%). In 2005, the average difference in earnings in EU (³) stood at 17.4%, slightly less than the 2003 ratio (18.6%).

Among the new Member States, Czech Republic features the widest pay differentials, estimated at 25.1% in 2002. Contrasting, Malta had the narrowest pay gap, standing at 3.6%. Equally significant is the notion that among the new Member States, the average differential is the same as that for the EU 15 and Norway, standing at 17.4% (while the average gap across all Member States is estimated at 17.5%).

Variations also feature across countries within different sectors such as between the private and public sector in each country as well as between the different economic sectors. Among older Member States, the difference in earnings between men and women was generally smaller in the public sector than in the private sector – reaching an EU-level 11% in the former, contrasting against an estimated 22% in the latter. Such gap is also wider in female-dominated sectors, and does not narrow with education, experience or qualifications. On the contrary, wider wage gaps prevail between men and women who occupy senior positions. Gender pay gaps also widen throughout the work cycle largely due to career interruption. Nevertheless, such gaps are significantly narrower in the case of workers who are equally qualified, work in the same sector, company size and comparable region – with such gaps featuring narrowing trends since the 1970's as a result of improving levels of education among women and the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation.

The concentration of women in atypical employment is one of the major reasons behind a prevailing gender pay gap, even when men and women are within the same age group and with similar qualifications. In certain countries, there is no difference in the gender pay gap between part-timers and full-timers, whereas such gaps may be wider among full-timers than among part-timers in specific countries. In Denmark, Finland, Belgium and Greece gender pay inequalities among part-timers is relatively small suggesting that if most men had to work part-

³ EU 15 and Norway

time, there would only be an insignificant gender pay gap. Nevertheless, comparisons related to the hourly earnings of women in part-time work and men in full-time jobs provide a clearer indication of the impact of part-time work on women's earnings.

Although most countries collate pay statistics regularly, certain difficulties challenge international comparisons owing to variations in statistical sources and the methodologies involved in compilation and computation. In different countries, calculations are based on hourly, weekly, monthly or annual earnings, although most countries calculate hourly wages. For a number of reasons, the earnings ratio calculated on a weekly or annual basis is higher than when hourly earnings are taken into consideration. Equally significant is the notion that certain countries take into consideration only full-time employees, thereby skewing observations as part-time workers (typically women and associated with lesser-paid jobs) are excluded. This leads to an underestimation (or possibly the reverse) of the gender pay gap, possibly by as much as 1% to 3% in most countries.

In addition, countries may differ in how they define wages, with allowances and other benefits not accounted for uniformly across different countries. Equally significant is the notion that a number of countries do not have data related to the differences in earnings between men and women for the whole economy, whilst variations in the way tax and benefit systems operate in different countries prevail. These aspects allow for only general comparisons to be made across countries, albeit such provides a fairly representative picture of the existing pay gaps across nations.

The Maltese Context

For a number of years gender equality in the labour market featured priorities on the agenda of social policy makers in Malta, resulting in the implementation of a number of positive steps intended to strengthen women's social and economic condition, such as:

- the elimination of the marriage bar which prohibited married women to continue working upon marriage;
- the introduction of parental leave for government employees;
- the possibility of working flexible hours in a limited number of work places;
- the commitment of the Employment and Training Corporation to encourage and promote gender mainstreaming;

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- the establishment of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality for Men and Women (NCPE)
 - a series of legislative measures largely driven by Malta's obligation as an aspiring EU member to bring its legislation in accordance with the EU's *acquis communautaire*.

Difference in earnings among men and women witnessed an improvement over the past five years, wherein wage gaps declined from 11.1% in 2000 to 4.6% in 2005. This decline also features general improvement in the earnings gap between men and women engaged in the private sector, falling from 14.2% in 2000 to 6.9% in 2005. The same earnings gap dropped from 2.6% in 2000 to an almost negligible situation in 2005 among men and women engaged with the public sector. Remarkable improvements also feature in respect to the gender pay gap across different economic activities: the gender pay gap dropped from 19.8% in 2000 to 10.1% in 2005 among workers in manufacturing enterprises, while the gender pay gap among counterpart workers in the services sector dropped from 9.4% in 2000 to 6.1% in 2005. These figures, however, do not provide a detailed picture of trends among occupations of equal worth and equal value – and account for an aggregate of trends that tend to conceal important developments pertaining to narrower worker groups, such as the influences arising from career breaks, experience and educational attainment. Paralleling European findings, the largest observed gaps in Malta relate to the better-paid occupations, with a remarkable deterioration in the gender-pay-gap observable among men and women in senior roles/occupations between 2000 and 2005. This observation is a stark contrast against that related to men and women in plant / machinery operator roles, wherein the largest drop in the gender pay gap over the same years was registered.

Pay Equality Legislation

Legislation against pay discrimination on the basis of sex features in a number of countries, with some enshrining such principles in their respective constitution. In various countries, law provides for pay equality for work of equal value. In a few countries, most notably France and Sweden, legislation of a 'proactive' type was enacted, obliging employers to provide evidence of their efforts to implement the concept of equality at their place of work.

In many countries, law provides a right for victims of discrimination (which still exists despite the legislation) to take their employer to court although the way it is done varies from one country to another.

Malta is signatory to various ILO Conventions, including Convention No. 100 (1951) that obliges equal remuneration (ratified in 1988) and Convention No. 111 (1958, ratified in 1968) concerning equality of employment opportunity and conditions of work regardless of gender. In 1976 the principle of equal pay for equal work became universally relevant to all workers and differentiated wage scales for men and women were abolished (Article 14 of the Constitution). More recently, Malta's Constitution was amended (in 1991) to include the prohibition of any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, this in line with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In 2003, Malta enacted the Equality for Men and Women Act, while the enactment of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (at the end of 2002) further set provisions for equal remuneration not only for equal work but also for work of equal value.

Factors in Gender Pay Differentials

Despite gender equality and equal pay legislation, gender pay disparities persist, this largely as a result of the multi-faceted nature of the gender pay gap, which is attributed to a variety of factors both inside and outside the labour market, exemplified by:

- women's lower investment in human capital;
- women's concentration in certain occupations and economic sectors;
- women's over-representation in lower paid professions;
- traditional gender stereotypes;
- motherhood and career interruption;
- women's concentration in part-time employment;
- occupational discrimination.

About three-quarters of the current wage differential between women and men can be explained by variations in their labour market participation in terms of age and experience/length of service. Gaps in earnings between women and men of the same age, with the same education and level of qualifications are largely explained by women availing maternity and childcare leave, working fewer hours and having lower individual bargaining power. Contrastingly, men are more likely to have an uninterrupted career with their pay either unaffected or increased. Often women return to a job with lower status and pay after childbirth and child rearing – considered as a factor that equates to about 7% 'penalty' per child.

Due to their particular circumstances, women tend to opt for jobs that enable them to combine their occupational and domestic duties effectively – leading to a relative concentration of women in jobs that require shallower levels of overtime (if any). Equally significant is the notion that women tend to feel compelled to pass opportunities linked to extra income.

Women are also more likely to engage in part-time work basis and remain in such for longer periods compared to men – a significant observation particularly relevant in the case of organisational cultures that feature long working hours as an integral part of regular work. In addition, part-time work also tends to offer lower pay largely due to labour market discrimination rather than to lower levels of human capital among part-time workers. Women also tend to lose salary and status opportunities by tending to opt and accept flexible work conditions that are typically tied with lesser-paid jobs/roles. Although flexible/part-time work assists in reducing the gender pay gap by allowing women to combine work with caring responsibilities more effectively, this seems not to be the end result. Contrarily, flexible and part-time work are considered as a way of avoiding more basic changes in traditional gender roles as they enable women to enter the labour market while still maintaining their responsibility for unpaid caring work. These trends bear consequences on the entire life's propensity of women in work.

Occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical (Hakim, 1979) also affects women's wages by limiting them to lower-paid jobs and by excluding them from certain occupations. Despite its gradual decline since the 1970's, occupational segregation remains a significant reality in various developed economies as women tend to remain concentrated in certain occupational sectors performing particular jobs (horizontal segregation) that tend to offer lower financial rewards than those dominated by men. Women, characteristically, are also under-represented in higher status and more financially rewarding jobs (vertical segregation) even within female-dominated fields.

The persistence of occupational segregation and consequent gender pay inequalities may be the result of a number of factors, exemplified by:

- men and women occupying similar posts but employed by different companies with different human resource strategies (e.g. fine restaurants tend to employ waiters who are well paid while casual diners are more likely to employ lesser paid waitresses);
- men and women occupying similar posts within different industries e.g. women are more likely to work in the textiles sector where pay is low, while men are more likely to work in the petroleum industry which pays higher wages, and

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- men and women appearing to have similar jobs but not having the same degree of authority and responsibilities.

Within occupations, enterprises or sectors, gendered differences in pay structures exist, even though these may feature a level of subtlety. These give rise to gender pay inequalities, largely as a result from:

- earnings beyond the basic pay stipulated in the pay scheme such as through overtime, seniority or merit. Such systems often tend to disguise the real differences in earnings. It is these 'additional payments' that very often lead to pay differentials between men and women;
- the size and ranking of pay differentials across sectors, industries and occupations (the wider the pay dispersion, the wider the gender pay gap);
- the nature of wage-fixing systems – centralised wage-fixing systems are known to lead to narrower gender pay inequalities while fragmented systems provide more opportunity for gender bias to occur, and
- the system used to grade and evaluate jobs.

A gendered evaluation of jobs is often a significant factor leading to the under-evaluation of women's jobs, particularly when occupations tend to be gender oriented. The gendering of jobs is typically the result of latent behaviour beyond the domain of law, with employers associating occupations with sex stereotypes in all stages of job design and development – from internal job characteristics to pay levels and associated rewards. Employers' devaluation of women's work depends on the conscious and unconscious sex stereotypes that both employees and employers take with them to the workplace – relating to a set of attributes and characteristics that 'gender' the job. Traits typically attributed to female workers include dexterity, care and the ability to handle emotional situations – all of which are typically assigned a lower value than those characteristics normally attributed to men. Such features are also reflected in wage systems that traditionally tend to measure only the physical and mental aspects of work, excluding considerations related to factors such as caring or working with people.

Gendered beliefs about men's greater competence (and status) unconsciously shape the expectations that participants themselves have of their own competence and performance (self-fulfilling prophecy). ⁽⁴⁾ Gender pay differentials, in turn, may partly be attributed to the

⁴ Expectation states theory

differences in the pay expectations of men and women. Indeed, women's expected earnings are typically significantly lower than those of men both at starting point and at career peak, although the differences at career peak are greater. Such expectations are shaped by various influences among women, including the perceived salary earned by others in the same job, women's awareness of gender pay differentials, women's recognition that they will be 'penalized' for interrupting their career (family development) as well as for having jobs that are more family friendly.

Equally significant is the notion that women's lower estimation of their work may be a result of women's own attitude towards negotiation and bargaining. Unlike women, men tend to negotiate better deals than they are originally offered, even at the start of a career. Some analysts attribute this observation to socialisation: women perceive to be seen as 'bitchy' or pushy if they negotiate on the conditions for a job they wish to occupy.

Women come to the labour market with different tastes, expectations, qualifications and experience. They are also less likely to invest in training, job search and formal education. These factors put a justification for a pay differential when women feature a lower level of formal education, lower qualifications, less work experience and seniority. This set of influences only explains part of the pay gap – a direct consequence of women's constrained freedom in making choices due to social and cultural expectations imposed on them. Such influences, thus, limit the choice in the development of human capital in a country like Malta, where culture and society retain a significant influence on the role of women.

While women's lesser experience, their career interruptions and job tenure have a significant impact on pay differentials, it is more difficult to explain the gap by gender disparity in qualifications since women who are as equally qualified as men, still earn less than their male counterparts.

Job Evaluation Systems

Both trade unions and labour market/gender equality authorities regard such systems as effective tools in combating gender pay discrimination. Nevertheless, problems associated with the introduction and implementation of such schemes prevail, exemplified by:

- the time consumption and cost involved in operating such systems;
- the significant training required for persons operating such evaluations to ensure a true understanding of pay discrimination and a conviction that it needs to be abolished.

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- the extent to which it is possible, in practical terms, to compare jobs that fall in different bargaining areas such as blue- and white-collar occupations;
 - methodologies involved in the comparison of very different jobs using common and objective criteria;

the market value presented by such systems within a perspective wherein men and women are not equally represented in the public and private sectors of the economy.

Effective Protection?

Many are the countries where law permits victims of pay discrimination to seek justice, although such cases are typically seldom. Nevertheless, situations where women succeeded in demonstrating that their jobs were evaluated differently from men's jobs are known. Such, however, is not the case in Malta, where a review of the decisions taken by the Industrial Tribunal in Malta between 2003 and 2005 indicates that none of the cases related to gender pay discrimination. The observations do not imply that all women in Malta are receiving equal pay for equal work. Court cases may be uncommon for a number of reasons, such as:

- a difficulty to prove discrimination,
- the duration of court proceedings,
- fear of losing one's job, and
- the fact that in almost all cases, the Industrial Tribunal is chaired and operated by men.

Divergent interpretations prevail in respect to what constitutes discrimination. Discrimination may be defined as differential treatment that cannot be justified by objective factors such as level of education, work experience, type of occupation and economic sector. From a different standpoint, women receive lower wages than men not because they are less productive or less skilled but because they are *women*. Workplaces that are female-dominated offer lower financial rewards as women make up most of the workforce (supply-demand relationships). Thus, women remain underrepresented in posts that carry more responsibility and higher pay not because of some inherent limitation on their part but because of barriers and limitations imposed by men. This approach also considers the concentration of women in temporary and part-time employment as a reflection of discriminatory practices.

Despite the protective legislation that is in place, evidence suggests that occupational discrimination is rife. Indeed, the direct effects of labour market discrimination may explain

more than half the pay gap. Nevertheless, as women's preferences also play a role in different occupational choices, the demarcation between choice and discrimination presents a significant challenge. Yet, evidence points towards a series of institutional barriers that exclude women from certain positions or that hinder women from being promoted or from receiving training solely on the basis of gender.

A number of models attempt to elucidate gender disparities in pay as a consequence of discrimination and why they persist. Nevertheless, empirical research did not determine which model is closest to labour market realities, although such models are not mutually exclusive. Models of discrimination try to explain that part of the pay gap that cannot be explained by gender differences in human capital.

One such model relates to an employer's 'taste' for discrimination (Becker, 1973) wherein male employers would not hire women to perform certain tasks that are not deemed appropriate for the 'weaker' gender. In addition, male workers may agree to work with women in subordinate positions but not in similar or superior ones. Such 'tastes' also influence behaviour in social contexts – men may find no problem in buying clothes from a female sales assistant, but may think twice before buying a car from a woman or hiring a woman as an attorney. The latter constitutes an additional implication on employers who may not be sexist themselves – but merely driven by organisational growth and profitability. In such a context, employers discriminate against women in order to accommodate the tastes of male employees and targeted customers. Thus, such employers tend to offer lower status and lesser-paid jobs to women, who, in turn, present a potential (perceived) threat to male employees and undesirable in providing services to targeted customers.

An additional model (Phelps, 1972) asserts that employers may decide not to employ, promote or train women on the information that the average woman is less productive and scores less in job stability. As a result, individual women may suffer discrimination even if they do not fit the stereotypical average. Such discrimination often leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy as any woman who is not provided with the same opportunities as men typically opts to leave her job for a better opportunity, thus confirming the employer's set of perceptions about female labour.

Fighting Discrimination

One significant aspect about discrimination is that discrimination is very often subtle, possibly unconscious at times. As a result, discriminatory practices are difficult to document and possibly remove. Women may be denied equality of treatment due to existing gender

stereotypes that are often also embraced by women themselves. One main obstacle remains the lack of recognition or the refusal to acknowledge such discrimination not only by employers but also by trade unions. The latter are typically reassured that the law, together with collective agreements, provide enough protection against gender inequality or discrimination.

Gender Pay Gap in effect, is not the result of sex discrimination but stems from the objective realities of men and women in the labour market (differences in human capital and labour market participation). Occupational differences of men and women in the labour market in the course of their career present an insurmountable issue that effective bargaining cannot effectively address.

National Strategies: Answering Gender Pay Gaps

Despite the optimistic impression projected by the EU's employment strategies and guidelines imposed among Member States, the National Action Plans (NAPs) of many Member States do not feature gender pay equity as a central aspect.

Malta's first NAP recognises the gap that persists among women's and men's earnings, acknowledging its relatively minor level of 10% - or some six percentage points below the EU 15 average. The same NAP recognises the persistence of both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation. Nevertheless, Malta's NAP considers the low rates in women's employment and self-employment as more pressing issues. Indeed, Government's response to the present labour market situation reflects such concern with the wider picture of gender discrepancies in the labour market.

In consequence, there are no specific measures that directly address the gender pay gap within Malta's NAP, which assumes that women will 'automatically' receive equal earnings once they have greater access to all areas of the labour market.

For this to happen, a number of challenges need to be overcome:

- Cultural expectations – traditional gender roles and the breadwinner ethic;
- Support structures for ALL mothers (not only those of small children), and.
- Women in the private sector – issues related to parental leave, flexible or reduced hours of work.

Addressing gender pay gaps presents no single or straightforward solution. While the biggest challenges remain those of attracting more women to full-time employment, rendering gender

neutral atypical work and the reduction of positional inequalities between women and men during their work life. It is acknowledged that legislation remains effective and important but not sufficient, as are initiatives that tackle occupational discrimination.

Factors outside the domain of the labour market play a significant role in determining pay disparities, exemplified by traditional notions about women's roles that conduce to family/work conflict. These call for urgent and effective action in being addressed seriously, particularly if a nation intends to attain sustainable gender pay parity. In addition, it is crucial for initiatives to be implemented in promoting objective appraisal of jobs, requiring independence from sex stereotyping that effectively undervalues the tasks performed by women.

In this respect, social partners need to undertake a collective effort in developing an effective solution to this persistent social injustice. Co-operation in many European countries was weak and largely futile, indicating that co-operation should extend beyond collective bargaining and involve joint participation in:

- dealing directly rather than through other policy initiative with matters of pay;
- job evaluation design and application;
- developing national wage and equal pay policies
- analysing centralised versus decentralised bargaining.
- reducing any negative effects in cases of decentralisation, and
- ensuring a more equal balance between men and women at the negotiating table.

In combating gender pay differential, ILO Committee of Experts acknowledges the need for more detailed information, in order to establish the extent and nature of gender pay differentials as a starting point. Such detailed information should relate to women's

- economic activity
- hours of work
- educational level
- qualifications
- seniority levels

This recommendation translates in a need to compile statistical data of a high quality and that offers a wide coverage of pay data by:

- ensuring that statistical data cover all industrial sectors and occupational groups (such as part-timers and other peripheral occupational groups);
- gathering detailed information on occupations that enables full comparisons between what women and men do;
- providing information on supplementary earnings such as bonuses, fringe benefits and overtime pay, which might widen the gap if they are more common among men than among women.

Research & Findings

In order to address the key issues identified above, a total of 608 computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI) with randomly selected persons in gainful employment and resident in Malta and Gozo were conducted during the months of June and July 2006. Complementing this work was a set of 20 qualitative interviews undertaken with selected (quantitative) interviewees in order to expound further specific aspects related to the subject under study.

Of the total quantitative interviews and associated records, 21 were invalidated for different reasons. The findings presented herein relate to the remaining 587 quantitative interview records and the accompanying 20 qualitative in-depth discussions.

The sample comprised a total of 239 women (40.7%) and 348 (59.3%) men, featuring a mean age of 33.7 years. Almost 22% of the respondents were engaged with Governmental institutions while employment with the private sector accounted for 65% of the survey participants. The majority of participants (84.2%) were engaged in a full-time job - 91% of male respondents work on a full time basis whereas 74.1% of female respondents occupied a full-time job. Contrastingly, 8.9 % of male respondents worked on reduced hours or part time basis whereas the number of female respondents working on the same bases is three times as much (25.9%). The majority of research participants (85.9%) occupied only one job while 77.5% worked through an indefinite contract. More males than females have a term contract, typically shorter than 6 months whereas more female respondents have a contract of up to 3 years compared to males.

Among respondents who experienced an unemployment spell, women were more likely to find a job within 12 months than men. The time period spent in a job search shortened progressively with the education level of respondents, although the percentage of male

respondents having a diploma or University degree who found a job within 6 months was slightly higher than for females. There is no statistically significant difference between the number of jobs changed by male and female respondents. Nevertheless, qualitative research suggests that both men and women change jobs to improve their pay and conditions of work although individuals with little or no qualifications tended to change jobs more often.

A prevailing majority of male participants who featured a qualification up to a Diploma or University degree are employed in the Private Sector, whereas 50% of male respondents featuring a post-graduate degree were employed with the Government. Only 31.8% of such men featuring the same level of academic attainment are employed with private companies. Contrastingly, the majority of female respondents having any type of qualification are employed with the government sector.

The majority of male and female respondents are happy with their working hours although more male respondents would like to reduce their working hours when compared to females. Indeed, 18.4% of female participants work up to 5 hours weekly over their normal working hours whereas 37.4% of men work between 5 to 10 extra hours per week. More than half of female respondents working overtime are not paid for the extra hours compared to just over a third of male respondents. Although occupations that offer opportunities for extra hours and extra income may be available to both males and females, the problem is that it is much more difficult for women, especially those living with a partner and/or mothers to take such opportunities. Anthea, a sales representative, admits that it is difficult for wives and mothers to cope with her working hours, a point also made by Carla who is a front officer with a parastatal organisation ⁽⁵⁾. She cannot imagine a married woman working the long hours of overtime she is expected to work. It is not uncommon for Carla to be informed only one hour before that she has to work overtime. It is even more difficult for women to work the long hours of security guards. There are guards who work 48 straight hours in remote areas day and night. Such long hours are even difficult for married men and present an even more significant challenge for women with young families. As John (a security guard) confesses, there was a time when he broke himself and nearly broke up his family when he worked from 5.30 in the morning until 9.00 in the evening six days a week. He hardly ever saw his three children and he 'could not take it any longer'.

⁵ Names of such interviewees are fictitious and intended to conceal the true identity of the research participants.

Caring Responsibilities

Over a third of respondents claimed to have caring responsibilities at home. The vast majority of respondents claimed to spend time in domestic work with the mean time devoted to such work being shorter (on a weekly basis) among male respondents than among women. Time spent on domestic work varied across occupations with professional and associate professional men devoting the longest time to domestic work while, among women, it was clerical, plant and machine operator or shop and market service workers or women in elementary occupations who devoted most time to domestic work. Among women, time spent on domestic work also varied with age with older women spending more time in domestic work, whereas the same did not feature among men. As highlighted in the literature, caring responsibilities have a direct influence on the career prospects and pay structure of workers. The impact of caring responsibilities on the worker's careers and remuneration is directly dependant on the number of hours spent providing for these responsibilities. The higher the respondent's responsibility at work the lower the number of hours spent in domestic duties.

Career

Men are more likely to have been employed with the same company and performing the same role for more than 15 years than females. Indeed, the average stay with any employer varied between men and women interviewed – standing at 9.9 years among men and 5.7 years among women. Female respondents working with non-profit making organisations have the highest means in terms of time spent with the same company whereas male respondents working with commercial partnerships have the highest means in terms of time spent with the same company.

A proportion of men also featured a career break shorter than 1 year, contrasting against the career break typically availed by women that features a longer duration. Indeed, 6.7 % of female respondents took a career break ranging between 10 and 15 years, while another 16.7% of female respondents availed of a break longer than 15 Years. Typically, women avail of such break for child birth/care reasons. Employers react by offering some form of arrangement, with the most popular being part-time work for both men and women.

Research also established that 13.3% of male respondents and 12.6 % of female respondents are looking for a new job, this largely with the intention of identifying a new opportunity with better working conditions.

Equality & Protection at Work

The majority of research participants do not feel that they were unfairly treated by their employer, particularly when comparing their situation with that of members of the opposite sex. The majority of respondents who suffered an unfair treatment are those typically working in private companies (males: 47.3%, females: 52.3%). Men highlighted their basis of contract as the stronger reason for suffering unfair treatment while females consider their sex as the stronger reason for unfair treatment from a range of prompted reasons. More than half of respondents tried to redress an unfair treatment. Of these, both men and women preferred to complain with the employer on their own (82.1%) or simply adjust to the new conditions (54.8%). Among men, the majority of those who chose not to redress the unfair treatment did so because they feared further discrimination from their employer while most women who chose not to redress the unfair treatment did so because they feared further discrimination apart from not finding the employer available to discuss the situation.

Qualitative research also supported the observed poor proportions of workers who consider themselves to have been unfairly treated by their employer or by prospective employers. The bases of injustice vary, gender discrimination being one of the factors involved. Unfair treatment is suffered both by those in the private sector as well as by workers engaged in parastatal or governmental organisations – with workers often opting to do nothing about it. When deciding to redress a perceived injustice, such action often excludes the industrial tribunal, although instances of redress action may include legal advice among others. Trade unions also did not feature much as a protective measure against injustice.

One of the cases concerned Carla who claimed to have been sexually harassed by a watchman and reported the case. Instead of transferring the watchman, management transferred her and she was advised to seek psychological help owing to a suspected psychological condition. Whilst not wanting the watchman to lose his job, Carla much desired to keep working at the same site, seeking advice from sources outside the employer (as exemplified by NCPE). Eventually, the watchman in this case was transferred to another post a year later.

Apart from her experience of sexual harassment, Carla also complained that at work she has added responsibilities for which she is not paid. Although Carla is the only woman in her section, and her male colleagues do not accept such conditions, Carla does not consider this as a gender issue. The difference in treatment is between the old and new employees. Carla is still on probation (employed on contract with a parastatal organisation) while the older workers are seconded by the government and their employment is more secure.

Unfair treatment was also evident in relation to promotion and recruitment practices. Although many of those interviewed opined that employers associate jobs with a specific gender, it was Anthea who was directly discriminated on the basis of her sex by a well-established food importing and distributing company. Anthea is a sales representative who claims to have applied for a job with this company whose policy is to employ male sales persons only. This was specifically stated in the letter of refusal she received from the company informing her that her application was not considered on grounds that she is a woman. Anthea did not feel that she should take any action to defend her case because she accepted that this was company policy. Paul also mentioned the same company, claiming that a few years ago (when the company still employed women in sales), management terminated the employment of one of the female sales representatives simply because she was getting married.

The issue of gender discrimination did not feature much in relation to promotions in the qualitative research. Gender may feature in an indirect way where promotions are concerned such as when women are employed on a part-time basis, working reduced hours, or availing of a career break. Certain cases, however, revealed that promotions are not awarded on the basis of merit, experience, qualifications or commitment but are a question of personal preference. This is especially the case in low paying jobs within the private sector.

Gender Orientation

Women are more likely to consider their job to be suited for both men and women than their male respondents, with physical strength being the main reason underlying such opinion. Contrastingly, men identified communication and leading skills as the main reason for which their job is more appropriate for women while female respondents selected patience as the main reason for which their job is more appropriate for a woman.

Almost all qualitative research interviewees indicated that certain jobs are more suitable for either men or women. There were quite a few men who believed their particular job not to be suitable for women as in the case of deliverymen, security guards, labourers and maintenance workers. Other interviewees also commented on what they regarded as male work even though they did not consider their work as gender specific such as Victoria who works at the bank. The main reasons identified were, as highlighted by the statistical data, that physical and strenuous work is better performed by men or in other cases because it is more dangerous for women to be alone in remote areas day and night. There were fewer jobs considered to be unsuitable for men. Anthea feels that women are better at sales and Corinne argued that

women could be more capable of obtaining certain information as journalists although she did not consider journalism to be a woman's job.

Interviewees largely believe that many employers have a specific gender in mind when they advertise for jobs or recruit workers. Dorian claims that his company never employs women for delivery work as it involves carrying heavy loads. Joseph does not know of any female drivers employed with the employer where he works. Sexist recruitment practices do not necessarily reflect suitability however, because as discussed elsewhere in this document, there are companies that despite the anti-discrimination legislation, continue to discriminate against women because of marriage and motherhood. Although Anthea believes that women make better sales representatives because they have better persuasive skills than men, she was herself the victim of sex discrimination by a company whose policy it is not to employ female sales representatives.

Certain jobs, as shown in the review of published works, attract one sex more than the other even if such jobs are open to both sexes. Such is the case of security work (male) and tourist guiding (female). Gendered orientations at work do not stop upon recruitment but are also reflected in the tasks and responsibilities assigned to men and women. For example, Corinne, a journalist, believes that women have to work harder in order to prove themselves. At her place of work, it is common practice for men to be assigned coverage of 'hard' news such as politics and the economy while women are sent to cover the softer news such as entertainment, fashion and culture - this despite the fact that the head of news is a woman. Corinne does not feel this is intentional but rather ingrained in our culture.

The majority of respondents highlighted that their employers do not provide support schemes for workers with caring responsibilities. Employees working with Government organisations are the ones who benefit most from the different types of caring facilities highlighted in the quantitative research. A gendered mentality is also reflected by workplaces (apart from government institutions) that offer unpaid parental leave that is not extended to fathers.

Male research participants are more likely than their female counterparts to consider women to be less committed to their work. Women, on the other hand opine that part-timers have access to training and promotion with private sector companies. It is also women who are more likely to perceive part-timers as being equally interested in training compared to full timers. Less than half of male respondents and over half the female respondents consider part-timers to be equally committed to work as their full-time counterparts.

Leave

Female respondents are more likely not to have vacation leave or sick leave when compared to male respondents. Qualitative research suggests that those workers who do not have vacation or sick leave are those who work on an hourly basis such as casual workers or in the case of tourist guides because they are freelancers. Since women make up the majority of casual and temporary workers, they are less likely to have such benefits compared to men.

As expected, there are employers who adhere strictly to the 19-hour limit to avoid meeting leave obligations. Celine claims that at the fast food restaurant where almost everyone is employed on an hourly basis, management is extremely careful not to let any worker exceed the 19 hours workweek.

Research also showed that some employers abuse the system even further as revealed by John – a security officer. Some companies employ security guards on a part-time basis when actually they would be working much longer hours. In order to conceal this, the worker is issued with three separate payments.

While workers may have the option of availing themselves of vacation and sick leave, they may still encounter problems such as to get approval for their leave. Others such as Carla who is employed with a parastatal organisation complained that vacation leave has to be booked months before and approval is not given until the last minute. Besides, in order to avail herself of vacation leave, an employee has to find a replacement – often proving to be a difficult challenge that results in vacation leave not availed of if such replacement remains not found. A similar situation is faced by Natasha – a freelancer who does not benefit from vacation or sick leave benefits but must also find someone else to replace her in her job. Often she faces the awkward situation when she gets ill (an unplanned situation) requiring her to find a tourist guide to replace her in a matter of hours.

Parental Leave

Female respondents are more likely to avail of parental leave although the majority of both female and male respondents are not entitled to such leave. Outside the civil service sector (where both male and female workers are offered the possibility to take parental leave), certain workers are offered maternity or other forms of leave at the discretion of the employer. Among the interviewees, banking or some parastatal organisations' female workers claimed to be entitled to parental leave although in none of the cases is such benefit extended to men. Corinne (the journalist) claims that women are offered one year unpaid maternity leave. Sonia,

who is currently on unpaid maternity leave from the bank, states that a mother can take one year unpaid leave and in special cases, she can be granted two years instead of one. However, this is subject to approval and is granted only under certain circumstances such as in the case of having children with disabilities.

Parental leave has its obvious benefits especially when the alternative is for the parent, usually the mother, to resign from the job. Research showed how mothers who avail of parental leave face certain repercussions upon returning – such as reduced opportunities for training and promotion. Although workers on unpaid parental leave do not lose their job, they may be transferred to another post – as was the case of interviewed teachers or bank employees. Sonia is sure that after her maternity leave she will be transferred to another branch according to the exigencies of the bank although she will not lose her grade or her pay. Sonia does not regret taking maternity leave because she looked forward both to the break from work as well as to spending time with her baby daughter. However, since her husband works in the private sector, she was the only one who could take the unpaid leave option. As Sonia's salary is higher than that of her husband, she would have preferred to continue working herself and for her husband to take parental leave if he had the option.

Remuneration & Pay

The study established that the mean basic pay (weighted average) stood at Lm 419.00 monthly (⁶) – varying across a number of situational contexts as exemplified by gender, education and employment. Indeed, the weighted average basic pay stood at Lm 444.15 monthly for men and Lm 374.28 for women. Almost invariably, such pay was higher among men than among women, with some rare exceptions observable. Significant is the observation that although the majority of part-timers are female, males engaged in part-time work also earn more than their female counterparts. These observations, however, differ from the pay differences reported by other sources as this research pertained to all persons in employment, even if working for less than 15 hours weekly.

Apart from analysing the basic pay difference between men and women, the study showed how the majority of both male and female respondents did not negotiate their pay but had their pay established by the employer alone or in agreement with a trade union – a finding affirmed by

⁶ Varying between Lm 402.38 and Lm 435.62 monthly at a 95% confidence interval. This statistic is considered as statistically close to the quoted average wage of Lm 432.25 (Ministry of Finance, 2005) and Lm 433.09 (National Statistics Office, 2006).

both qualitative and quantitative research. More women than men claim to have had their salary established by their employer. Contrastingly, more men than women claimed to have had their pay set in terms of a trade union agreement. A proportion of employees claimed that upon recruitment they were asked what salary they expected. When Damian applied for work as security guard, he told the management that he would not work for less than what he is actually earning. However, his target salary is only reached after long hours of overtime. Contrastingly, Victoria claims to have managed some negotiation with the bank's personnel manager over her pay, even though the bank does not normally negotiate pay – with a resultant net pay improvement following a consideration by the bank that her job will require more responsibility, study, travelling abroad and longer hours of work (even during weekends) as a result of the bank's automation of processes.

Quantitative research also showed that more men than women were offered a promotion - with fewer men than women who refused such a promotion. Sonia claimed that now that she has a baby, she might refuse a promotion if this would entail longer working hours as she prioritises her family. However, it should also be noted that family responsibilities may not be the only reason behind women's refusal to accept promotion. Anthea, a young, unmarried woman who works as a sales representative was offered a promotion, which entailed office work instead of work on the roads. Anthea loves her work and did not want to give it up for office work. Celine had also refused a promotion since at the time she was studying for her exams.

Both male and female respondents having received a promotion consider performance and commitment as important factors that resulted in them earning their promotion. Men also associate these factors (commitment and performance) with better pay prospects while women tend to associate more hours of work with better pay prospects. Commitment was also a factor mentioned by a number of interviewees during in-depth interviews – quoted as the factor that employers look for when promoting their employees, in context with the type of work involved. In the private sector, better pay also depends on how the company is doing financially. In non-manual occupations, such as those of bank employees, qualifications and promotions are directly linked with higher pay prospects. In other occupations such as sales, having the necessary skills to deal with people and persuade customers to buy are more important than qualifications. In certain places of work, prospects for better pay depend only on promotion. Yet, other workplaces offer promotions largely in response to personal preferences as the experiences of some interviewees showed. For certain categories of workers, better pay depends largely on the number of hours worked as is the case of security guards who work

long hours of overtime, or tourist guides who work freelance. There are others, such as journalists who may increase their pay by working everyday instead of on alternate days.

There are workers whose prospects for better pay are very bleak and depend only on statutory cost of living adjustments. Workers such as Maria and Joseph who are employed with parastatal organisations as a general hand and driver respectively, improving their qualifications is not an option they consider especially now that they have reached a certain age. They do not have any opportunity to work extra hours or for promotion. They are both willing to work more hours if given the chance.

Beyond the Basic Pay

Both men and women employed in lower level occupations such as security guards, delivery persons, maintenance workers, drivers, general hands, sales persons and labourers claim to receive a very low income that in certain cases can be significantly enhanced by overtime or commissions. Certain categories of workers, especially those engaged in elementary occupations; however, hardly have any opportunity to supplement their basic income, particularly those who work with government departments or parastatal organisations.

Within the private sector overtime work depends not only on the nature of work but also on market demand. For example, Dorian, a deliveryman with a private company used to work overtime frequently until recently, when his employer started facing stiffer competition from firms importing similar goods. Yet, security work offers many opportunities for overtime – a factor that counteracts the prevailing low pays featuring among security guards especially those employed by security companies. Such is the response of employers to harsh competition among security firms that often depend on winning contracts through price-based awards of competitive tender processes. In securing such contracts, security firms had to cut down on salaries, offering workers a flat rate that can be as low as Lm1.25 to Lm1.37 per hour, although some instances of Lm 1.00 hourly are known, pushing such workers into workweeks of 65 or 80 hours. A basic workweek will earn the security guard little more than Lm 200 monthly.

Commissions and performance bonuses provide another form of supplementary income, a feature prevailing among workers in the private and parastatal sectors – a feature among 12.8% of the survey participants. Indeed, performance bonuses (averaging Lm 181.91 monthly) form a significant management tool featuring in the case of workers engaged with Governmental entities, publicly listed companies or employers involved in the service sector.

Commissions (averaging Lm 155.56 monthly) prevailed among private enterprise workers, particularly those engaged in some form of sales function within manufacturing or service firms.

In-depth interviews, however, revealed no particular differences between males and females regarding bonuses or commissions awarded to employees although bonuses are more common among workers with more responsibilities at work. Anthea receives a commission on sales – a common feature among sales representative and workers engaged in sales functions. Anthea claims to receive a commission that is equal to her basic pay. Michael, a university student employed with an exchange bureau on a part-time basis claims to have already benefited from two of the various incentive schemes offered by the company for workers to earn extra income. Both incentives are tied to the workers' ability to convince customers to exchange larger sums of money. Bank employees also benefit from a number of incentive schemes such as subsidised loans, sponsored work-related studies, health insurance schemes as well as performance bonuses. Performance at the bank is tied to the amount of work accumulated, measured in terms of sale of financial products and number of accounts opened among others. This may put women employed on reduced hours at a disadvantage as they can devote less time to accumulate work. Sonia disagrees, claiming that such is not necessarily the case as a woman working 30 hours a week may still manage to perform better than an average full-timer if she works hard enough.

Earnings Difference

A discrepancy between workers' perceptions concerning the gender pay gap and the social reality revealed by the statistical data is evident. Almost all workers participating in in-depth interviews regardless of gender, occupation, social class and level of education denied that men and women receive different earnings. Michael, a pharmacy student who works as a clerk on a part-time basis declares that he never encountered any differences in pay in any of the work places where he was employed during the past five years. Victoria, a bank personnel manager, claims that there are no pay gaps at the bank across employees of different sexes. James, a senior tradesman with a parastatal organisation believes that men and women who do the same work receive the same pay, while Celine, who worked in a fast food chain for two years, claims that men and women employed in the same grade are paid the same rates.

A quantitative analysis of the gross pays received by research participants, inclusive of commissions, performance bonuses and overtime (discounted for vacation leave and sickness

leave entitlements) revealed that the weighted mean total earnings stand at Lm 557.31 monthly (⁷), varying between men and women. As established earlier, the gross earnings are higher for men (Lm 608.92 monthly) than for women (Lm 467.33) – a consistent feature across all age groups, occupations, sectors of activity and basis of employment except for some rare cases. The same holds when such gross earnings are divided by the hours worked (minimum required and overtime, less hours potentially availed for vacation or sickness), showing how the weighted average hourly gross earnings stand at Lm 3.26 hourly for men and Lm 2.79 for women.

Despite the general perceived 'equality', some interviewees (participating in the in-depth interviews) hinted at gender differences in earnings that result from factors beyond the standard pay rates of male and female employees occupying similar posts and performing similar duties. Noel, a project leader, believes that although about 40% of project leaders are women, these would probably earn less than men because it is men who are assigned the high profile projects. Women are also more likely to be working on temporary assignments. He believes pregnancy to be the main issue, projecting women in a difficult situation. A married woman may suffer the consequences of motherhood while a single woman may be seen as too independent and as more likely than men to make an abrupt move such as emigrating or leaving her job for other reasons.

Differences in the total time worked are also apparent. The study established that male research participants typically work an estimated 267 hours annually more than their female counterparts. Such higher annual hours featured among men across all respondent contexts – education, sector of employment, job basis and occupations, providing one strong contention as to why women earn less than men.

Natasha, a young freelance tourist guide, also highlighted how women stand in a disadvantaged position. Although women and men are not paid different rates, the earnings of a tourist guide depend on the number of hours worked (since most guides work freelance). A guide will lose work opportunities if she repeatedly refuses assignments. As Natasha explained, if an agent requests the guide's services and the guide refuses on repeated occasions, the agent will turn to someone else. This puts pregnant women and young mothers at a disadvantage since they are more likely to be unable to work. In certain cases where the guide is employed on a full-

⁷ Or a range between Lm 524.46 and Lm 590.16 monthly at a 95% confidence interval.

time basis with an agency, she may be offered office work during her pregnancy or early motherhood although such cases are not common.

Promotions

Promotion opportunities are another source of gender inequality in earnings. Victoria, who worked her way up from a clerk to a manager over a span of twenty years with the same bank, believes that the bank offers incentives to all those who want to continue studying. Obtaining the desired qualifications is very often linked to promotions. Victoria appreciates the encouragement she receives from the bank – the qualifications she had before simply precluded her from continuing to advance in her career, which would have been even more hindered if she availed herself of a career break.

Being a part-timer also reduces one's chances for promotion. Michael, a part-time worker, claimed that unless he became a full-time employee, he will never be offered the opportunity for a promotion – illustrating how women are often in such a disadvantage as part-time work is a more common situation among women.

Comparing Salaries of Workers In Similar Occupations

Most of the workers interviewed in qualitative research claimed that there were no differences in pay among workers doing similar jobs at their place of work. Differences in pay existed between different grades or between workers who have different levels of seniority. There were those who compared their salaries to workers employed in similar occupations with other organisations or those who compared workers doing similar work in different sectors such as the state or private sectors.

Equally noteworthy is that interviewees often had no perception about what others earned – possibly a result of being encouraged to 'mind their own business and not to be bothered with what others earn' as Maria explained. Indeed, it was only recently that Maria learned that her friend (who is also a general hand) earned a higher income than hers. Her friend does exactly the same work but while Maria is a parastatal employee, her friend works for a government ministry. On the contrary, Joseph, who works as a driver with a parastatal corporation on secondment by the government, claims that the corporation's conditions are slightly better than those of the government. At the same time, Joseph believes that drivers in the private sector have a higher income. Maria's husband is also a low-paid worker, performing maintenance work within a Government department although his pay is a little higher than hers.

Contrastingly, security guards receive very similar rates of pay largely due to the harsh competition that exists between companies competing for the award of tenders. Salaries for such guards, however, may be better among agencies requiring security work – this in response to their different market contexts. Comparing her job with that of other sales persons in other companies, Anthea feels she has better working conditions. For those who work on an hourly basis, such as tourist guides, earnings depend on the number of hours worked, albeit such hours depend on the demand for languages spoken by the guide. Uncommon languages (like Japanese or Russian) enable guides to demand higher rates for their services.

Compared to her peers in her newsroom, Corinne has the highest pay – earned as a result of seniority. Journalists at her place of work receive the same pay regardless of whether they are graduates or not. Compared to journalists working for Government owned companies, her salary is lower although she believes that other non-Government journalists receive more or less a similar salary.

Generally, the issue of pay discrepancy among workers performing similar jobs did not feature as a controversial issue among interviewees. None of the workers identified pay discrepancy especially on the basis of gender as a source of injustice or discrimination although many workers are still not content with what they earn.

Roles & Responsibility

The study also confirmed how women are typically engaged in clerical roles, whereas more men than women occupy professional roles. The study also confirmed (as established in other works) how men are more likely (than women) to occupy a senior managerial occupation. Males are also more likely than females to have employees reporting to them.

Caring responsibilities are considered to have a huge impact on the role and occupational level of individuals. Indeed, the proportion of female respondents without caring responsibilities who have a professional role is more than double that of female respondents having caring responsibilities.

A total of 26.7% of research participants incur job related expenses exemplified by fuel and mobile phone. Nevertheless, whilst the proportion of interviewees who receive some refund was significantly lower, no statistically significant differences can be observed between men and women in paid employment. Such observations were also affirmed by in-depth interviews, with workers claiming that some costs incurred are never refunded. Certain security companies provide uniforms to their guards while others just provide a company tie, while the guard has to

acquire the rest of the uniform from own funds. Security guards also have to pay a license fee renewable every year. Some employers require their security guards to report to work in Gozo monthly. Martin was not informed of this during the interview. His employer pays the ticket and adds 1 hour pay at the end of the month. It costs Martin Lm 5 to go to Gozo and the management presents challenges in refunding the ticket, while no petrol allowance is awarded.

Anthea, who works as a sales representative is provided with a company car and given a petrol allowance. This allowance remained unchanged, despite the fact that the employer bought new cars (that consume more fuel) and that the price of fuel recently increased, with such allowance becoming insufficient to cover such fuel costs in a short period of time. Anthea is also given a Lm 10 bonus every three months for mobile calls expenses which she also claims is insufficient. Unlike Anthea, Dorian (a deliveryman) does not incur expenses on a regular basis. However, he is not given an allowance for driving heavy vehicles. Neither does his employer insure goods or Dorian against the possibility of goods being stolen from Dorian's vehicle. In the case of theft, Dorian has to pay for the stolen goods himself. Dorian is also responsible for collecting money from establishments he visits, posing an additional security risk. Furthermore, if Dorian is involved in a car accident, all damages have to be paid by him.

Work at Home

Quantitative research suggests that more men than women are able to perform part of their duties at home. Male respondents claim to dedicate more hours to job-related work at home compared to their female counterparts. Over half of male respondents and less than half of female respondents would not request any remuneration from their employer should they be requested to stop working from home.

Conclusions

Over the past years, policy makers in Malta gave gender equality in the labour market a marked priority, with various efforts aimed at empowering women and strengthening women's social and economic situation. A series of social, economic and legal measures were effected in an endeavour to promote gender mainstreaming and to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities in employment with regards to recruitment, training, promotion, responsibilities and pay.

Although the literature points to a significant improvement in this direction, it also suggests that what has been done so far both locally and abroad is not enough since women remain

disadvantaged in respect to a number of factors when compared to their male counterparts, not least where earnings are concerned. As indicated in the international literature, the factors associated with the persistent inequalities in the earnings of men and women are found both within the labour market (such as sex discrimination) as well as outside the labour market and more specifically tied to women's domestic and caring role within the family. Although both sets of factors play a determining role in reinforcing the status quo, it is the latter, which appears to be the more salient feature since very often it also underlies the gendered or sexist practices within the labour market.

This study suggests that, caring responsibilities bear a direct influence on the career prospects and consequently on the earnings of individuals. As expected, it is female workers who dedicate more of their time to domestic and caring responsibilities with over a third of women spending between 1 and 3 hours daily and a significant 10% dedicating 8 hours or more to domestic/caring duties every day. Most men spend less than an hour performing such duties while only 3% of male workers devote 8 hours or more to domestic or caring responsibilities, with such times typically shorter when job responsibilities are more intricate.

Both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation is evident in the Maltese labour market. Published works show how the concentration of women in 'female' occupations affects their earnings by excluding them from other, better-paid occupations while their concentration in lower level jobs affects their earning in a more direct way. This study affirmed how women tend to take up clerical roles and are less likely to occupy senior managerial occupations than men.

Caring responsibilities play a major role, affecting the likelihood of workers occupying higher status and better paid jobs. Among female respondents, the percentage of those having a professional role and no caring responsibilities is more than double the proportion of women with caring responsibilities engaged in professional roles.

Going up the ladder is inevitably tied with either seniority or promotion, the latter often tied to the perceived level of worker commitment, performance, skills and qualifications. The study suggests that men often stay longer with the same employer, and are thus more likely to move up the ladder on the basis of experience and commitment. Men thus not only tend to have more promotion opportunities than women but are also more inclined to accept them. Qualitative research showed that, however, workers may not necessarily refuse a promotion due to caring responsibilities.

Career breaks are one of the major factors influencing the promotion opportunities and earnings prospects of workers. Not only are women more likely to break their career than men but their breaks tend to be longer. Firstly, it is noted that women have more opportunity to avail themselves of parental leave than men. Whereas both men and women employed in the state sector are entitled to parental leave, in those few workplaces outside the state sector such option is only open for women. It should also be pointed out that workers may take career breaks for other purposes such as study or migration leave. Indeed, it is pertinent to note that none of the men in the sample who broke their career did so in response to childcare responsibilities, contrasting against the case of women.

This puts women at a disadvantage since during their break from work they lose on training and promotion opportunities as well as on experience and seniority although there are those few who take the initiative and seek to follow some form of training or study courses during their absence from work. Should they choose to return to the labour market after years away from work, age is another factor that may work against them.

The most common alternative to career breaks offered by employers is part-time work, notwithstanding that a few respondents mentioned flexi-time. It is women who generally take this option, with only 9% of male respondents claim to be working on reduced hours or on a part-time basis – contrasting against the 25.9% of female respondents. The study also affirmed how part-timers receive lower rates of pay than full-timers not because of human capital variables but because they may be perceived by employers as being less committed and less productive than their full-time counterparts. Furthermore, it is even more difficult for part-timers to advance in their career since they are less likely to be perceived as career-oriented. At the same time, it is worth noting that males who work on a part-time basis still earn more than female part-timers on average – affirming observations made in the review of international literature.

The study suggests that both men and women consider certain jobs as gender-specific. Among the respondents, women were more likely to consider their job as gender-neutral. Both men and women consider physical strength to be the main factor determining the greater suitability of a job for men. With regards to female-specific jobs, men indicated communication and leading skills as the main reason considered to make a job more suitable for women while females considered patience as the main factor which makes a job more appropriate for a woman. As also indicated in the qualitative research, employers very often have a specific gender in mind when they recruit workers partly based on gendered perceptions of suitability

such as heavy and strenuous work for men and clerical or caring work for females. Such gendered perceptions may also have an impact on employers' decisions to give promotions.

Qualitative research also showed how despite the anti-discrimination legislation, employers may still employ sexist policies in management, such as excluding women from certain jobs either because they are married or have children or because they will do so in the future. Interviews as part of this study also indicated that in certain work places, women are assigned certain tasks while men are asked to perform others, deemed superior. Women have to work harder to prove their worth.

Despite the significant plethora of rights and protective mechanisms, it is regrettable that some categories of workers have their rights trampled on. Of those who claim to have been unfairly treated, the majority work in the private sector. The contract basis was considered to be the strongest source of unfair treatment among men while women indicated sex as the major basis of discrimination against them. From the qualitative data, some cases of sex discrimination also emerged. The study also showed how workers may not undertake actions to redress undesirable conditions of work, particularly among workers in the private sector who feel powerless in attempting to change things. Workers may still be threatened with redundancy if they join a trade union. For these workers, particularly in elementary occupations in the private sector, unfair treatment does not necessarily pertain to sex but to basic rights such as pay, security and safety as well as union representation.

Within the above context, it is not surprising that despite the measures taken to address gender inequalities within the labour market, male respondents have higher weighted mean monthly pay (Lm 444.15) than females (Lm 374.28), with the biggest discrepancy featuring in the private sector. Men's higher earnings remain constant regardless of level of education, job level and basis of employment. Men having a primary level of education earn an average salary of Lm 362.67 while females earn Lm 268.80 on average monthly. While men having a post secondary level of education have a weighted mean pay of Lm 426.47, their female counterparts earn a weighted mean of Lm 330.70 monthly. Males engaged in elementary occupations have a higher weighted average basic pay (Lm 323.55) than females having the same type of responsibilities (Lm 254.88). In most cases, both males and females did not negotiate their pay, which was established as standard generally either by their employer or by their employer in agreement with a trade union.

The stark discrepancies in the earnings of women and men as revealed by the statistical data do not appear to be reflected in the perceptions of workers themselves as the qualitative

research suggests. Qualitative research, indeed, established that regardless of sex, occupation, social class and level of education, people were of the opinion that there are no differences in the earnings of men and women. Differences in earnings are believed to exist only between those occupying different grades or levels of seniority. This is probably due to the legal standardisation of pay rates of men and women occupying the same grade and performing the same duties within the same organisation or work place. Gender differences in earnings that emerge out of factors beyond the standard pay rates of males and females occupying similar posts and performing similar duties are less obvious. The concentration of women in lower-level and less paid jobs; their concentration in part-time work; employer discrimination based on stereotyped perceptions in relation to recruitment, promotion and training; career breaks and the assignment of lower profile tasks to women are easily overlooked as underlying causes of gender differences in earnings.

These conclusions are based on a study involving both quantitative and qualitative fieldwork, exploiting a representative study of Maltese persons in gainful employment with only a marginal level of sample error (estimated at less than $\pm 5.0\%$). The use of triangulation further warrants the reliability of the methodologies used throughout. Nevertheless, the statistics provided herein cannot be used as a basis for comparison with other statistics relating to the gender pay gap, as the methodology involved in the measurement of pay is reliant on a completely different approach. Indeed, the methodology used herein also considers the effect of payments outside the basic pay – exemplified by commissions and performance bonuses, along with overtime payments.

Nevertheless, caution should be exercised in the interpretation of pay differences across sexes. Work of equal value is virtually impossible to identify at a sampling and fieldwork conduct stage, owing to the unavailability of secondary information relating to personal details of people in employment. Indeed, such details including years of experience, levels of skill exercised at work and the availability of pairs of such persons in employment (men against women in same jobs of equal worth) along with the identity of such persons is not accessible through public sources.

Recommendations

Despite the seemingly mistaken perceptions of workers, the statistical data suggest that gender pay inequalities persist and that eradicating them is not an easy task. The cases of pay discrepancy are various but the findings, in line with the literature reviewed, seem to suggest

that the biggest challenge is the development or strengthening of structures and schemes, which enable more women to participate more fully in the labour market on a par with men. Equality and anti-discrimination legislation is an essential framework for addressing the much bigger hurdle of bringing about changes in traditional perceptions of gender roles within the domestic sphere.

If women are to participate equally in the labour market and to have equal labour market opportunities and consequently equal pay to men, they cannot alone remain burdened with the conflict of having to combine work and family responsibilities. Providing the necessary structures to enable an acceptable work-life balance for both men and women are important as much as it is crucial for both men and women to recognize the merits of participating equally both in the domestic and public sphere.

The gender pay gap has to be addressed within a wider framework of attracting more women to the labour market and enabling them to remain within it if they so wish. Government has the responsibility to ensure that the general objectives set out in the National Action Plan (ETC, 2004) and the National Reform Programme (MEU, 2005) are attained. However, the National Action Plan and the National Reform Programme do not target the gender pay gap directly. It is assumed that gender inequalities in pay will be reduced or eliminated once more women decide to enter the labour market. However, although a higher percentage of women in the labour market will probably contribute to reducing the earnings gap between men and women, it also depends on how women participate in the labour market. Having a higher percentage of women working on a part-time basis, for example will not significantly reduce the gap. Having a higher percentage of working women on unpaid parental leave will still put women at a disadvantage.

Therefore, it is important for policy makers to:

- establish the causes underlying the low level of female participation in the Maltese labour market;
- establish what women themselves consider to be viable incentives to leave their home and enter the labour market;
- make it more financially viable for both partners to work (although certain incentives are already being offered);
- enable more women to take up full-time rather than part-time employment;
- encourage more men to avail themselves of parental leave;

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- provide incentives to the non-state sector to offer opportunities for parental leave to both female and male employees;
 - develop structures and schemes which offer a real alternative to parental leave, and
 - ensure that equality and anti-discrimination laws are respected.

Together with the other social partners, Government should seek to address the gender pay gap more specifically by:

- encouraging more workers to become unionised;
- ensuring that more workers are covered by collective agreements;
- giving more priority to addressing the gender pay gap in collective bargaining;
- encouraging the establishment of standardised pay structures outside the public sector;
- seeking to establish a system of job evaluation that enables the objective appraisal of jobs with special attention to reduce the wage gap between male- and female-dominated sectors of employment;
- carrying out job evaluation exercises for both full-time and part-time employees;
- introducing measures to increase the pay of jobs that are deemed to be under evaluated;
- discouraging personalised agreements between employers and employees outside collective agreements, and
- addressing the less obvious, underlying causes of the gender pay gap more seriously.

This involves serious discussions on how to enable more women to participate in the labour market on a full-time basis without having to interrupt their career due to lack of support systems. The social partners have to devise ways of making full-time work a feasible option for both men and women without this being detrimental to:

- (i) family needs and responsibilities and
- (ii) productivity.

Among the possibilities that have to be considered seriously are the provision of:

- CHILDCARE
For parents to be able to contribute to the economy they have to be partly relieved of the conflict between the demands of their job and the demands of their family especially in the case of small

children. For childcare to be a viable option, the social partners have to be sensitive to workers' needs and seek to establish:

- Location that the workers consider to be the most practical – a factor that calls for further research.
- Affordability: unless childcare is affordable, the labour market will only attract women who give more priority to their career than to income. Very often, these women are already in the labour force.
- Opening hours of facilities: This problem is not only faced by parents of pre-school children but also by those who have school age children below a certain age (such as 12 years).

■ FLEXITIME

this system which is already in practice in certain sectors of employment merits further investigation in order to evaluate its strengths and limitations and to seek ways of utilising it to the benefit of both workers and employers.

■ HOME WORK AND TELEWORK

Like flexi-time, this system that is still being explored in the Maltese labour market has a number of benefits for both workers and employers that still have to be exploited.

■ LEAVE FOR CHILD SICKNESS

This option should be seriously considered for all workers with young children along with those parents who provide evidence that they do not have any support from relatives in the case of child sickness. Workers are very often constrained to avail themselves of vacation leave or (if possible) to abuse of their own sick leave when their children are sick. It should also be taken into consideration that for many workers emergency vacation leave is not an option especially if it involves more than one day. There are also workers such as teachers who do not have vacation leave.

Targeting Traditional Gender Roles

No effort by any policy stakeholder will have the desired effects unless a much more fundamental hurdle is overcome. Policies dealing with labour market discrimination, equal pay legislation, and the provision of parental leave, income tax incentives and numerous other measures aimed at gender mainstreaming cannot be exploited effectively unless factors arising outside the labour market and more specifically within the domestic sphere are addressed seriously. Admittedly, equality legislation and anti-discrimination policies have been decisive in reducing abuse and in promoting greater parity between men and women. However, it is traditional notions about the role women and men within the family and the conflict between the demands of work and family responsibilities, which continue to be the major underlying

source of gender inequality in the labour market and consequently of the gender pay gap. Designing policies and enacting laws are admittedly much easier than changing cultural values and social expectations tied to the roles of women and men in society, especially when traditional social forces seek to perpetuate the status quo. However, until women continue to be perceived as the homemakers/carers and men as the breadwinners, women will be unable to contribute to the economy and to reap the advantages of paid work equally with men.

Malta experienced rapid social and cultural changes over the past few decades and the seeds for change were sown. However, this enormous task cannot be the endeavour of the State alone. It is a project that involves civic society as well as the private sector. It has to target various social groups such as:

- children and young people
- young parents
- employers
- educators
- employees as well as
- general audiences

through a nation-wide educational campaign aimed at eradicating gender stereotyped perceptions and practices both within the domestic and the public sphere.

CAREER PATHS OF GRADUATES

Executive Summary

Malta's University student population is a significant aspect within Malta's educational system – evidencing a strong expansion in the tertiary sector that parallels trends in Europe.

Noteworthy is the gender distribution changes registered among University students since 1991, showing how – slowly but surely – women are an increasing feature of the University student population in Malta.

Indeed, Malta's virtual triplication of student population at University is considered as positive evidence of an evolving workforce. This growth is largely considered the result of encouraging systems implemented by Government inclusive of a free system and incentives, along with a consistent financial and moral support provided by Maltese families, encouraging their offspring to further their academic studies at University.

Expenditures related to Malta's University students are estimated at 45.1% of the Gross domestic product per capita – a significant 8 percentage points above the European average (Schmidt, 2005). Such expenditures include salaries to academic staff, research programmes, student allowances and other investments. Despite such positive trends, Malta's student enrolment remains relatively low. This being the only distinguishing feature of Malta's system when compared to tertiary systems of advanced economies.

Whilst women are becoming an increasing feature in the University of Malta – a feature that is also common among European economies, differences in the choice of courses and careers prevail. Indeed it is a common observation that women tend to concentrate in specific areas of study (nursing and education) whilst shying off from other academic paths – as exemplified by engineering and architecture.

The Typical University Student?

Without generalising, the average student (as established by Debono et al in 2005) lives with parents, of whom, the mother is occupied in a domestic role while the father is gainfully employed in a white-collar role. It is also pertinent to note that fathers engaged in blue-collar work roles are becoming a more common feature among Maltese university students.

Segregation of students in certain academic paths is by no means a characteristic limited to Malta. Evidence suggests that such segregation is a universal aspect in advanced and developing economies, unrelated to a nation's historical context or women's status in society.

A prevailing male orientation is evident among engineering and architecture graduates and students. It is interesting to note that whilst a male prevalence persists among students in architecture, women are slowly becoming an increasing feature among engineering students. In contrast, the prevalence of female students in education is augmenting, although notable is the increasing female participation across all other areas of study.

Despite the positive trends in University population, changes in the overall employed graduate population in Malta are shallow – architecture & engineering remain male dominated sectors, while female graduate participation in pharmaceutical & educational roles remains shallower than the typical output from the University of Malta. This aspect is considered a result of graduate women leaving paid work at a higher rate than their male counterparts do – possibly for career breaks if not a complete abandonment of paid work. Nevertheless, rapid changes feature in certain sectors of Malta's graduate workforce, exemplified by the increasing female participation in the legal profession and women graduating in science degrees.

These aspects of horizontal segregation tend to resist policies implemented by governments that encourage participation and universalism, largely addressing vertical segregation at any work place. Indeed, the segregation of gender across fields of study is reinforced by strongly ingrained stereotyped beliefs and expectations, along with subtle 'barriers' arising from lack of female or male role models in certain occupations. Gender domination of courses is also known to possibly encourage or discourage men and women accordingly, enhancing informal networks among students and word of mouth.

Tertiary Sector Expansion

Expansion of tertiary education in Malta features also a significant growth in the non-university sector, exemplified by (MCAST). Whilst administering shorter, vocational training, the latter is known to have been significantly popular with young women. Parallel are the trends among vocational education systems in EU countries, where expansion is the result of a process of democratization and modernization that prevailed over recent years. Such processes are considered as responsible for attracting young women into vocational education as opposed to more academic, University education, leaving specific training paths with a dominating male participation.

The size of a tertiary education system also plays a role – limiting access to the few 'elite' groups from relatively homogenous socio-economic features. Larger systems tend to attract 'masses' – eliciting wider interest in society and attracting students with lesser abilities, lower interest in intellectual development and less developed educational and occupational aspirations, resulting in thinned out gender segregations.

A final factor is the catalytic role that women in university education play in attracting other women, consciously or involuntarily as they represent a role model with whom prospective recruits associates themselves.

Labour Market Trends

Differences in the jobs and career paths taken by men and women provided a strong contention for labour market analysts for a long time. A degree of gendered occupational segregation remained consistent since the turn of the past century – until the 1970s when rapid occupational expansion in managerial and professional occupations initiated as a key characteristic of modern economies. Indeed, female representation in managerial roles in advanced economies moved from 14% in 1950 to 39% in 2000, while female representation in professional roles advanced from 45% in 1975 to 53% twenty years later (Wootton, 1997).

Largely facilitated by state legislation, these trends evidence restrained vertical segregation, yet leaving a number of occupations virtually gender stereotyped – social workers, nurses, primary school teachers, computer system analysts, engineers. Nevertheless, vertical segregation persists, perhaps more strongly in certain occupations, wherein women more often occupy lower level occupations even if women dominate the sector. Such trends are also common in Malta.

An analysis of gender across occupations in formal employment shows how women outnumber men only in the case of clerical occupations, whilst occupying a significant but not dominating share in professional, technical, associate technical and service or market occupations.

More significant is the notion that women in clerical grades account for 24% of female labour in Malta, while women in professional and technical/associate professional grades account for 30.9% of female labour. Men in the same types of occupations account for only 23.6% of male labour. An additional 9.6% occupy senior positions, a stark contrast against the 5.5% of women in formal work who occupy similar positions.

Segregation – An Attitude?

Gender segregation in occupations is not a random process. It starts at a very young age when young boys and girls – aspire to become an astronaut, a medical doctor, a top model or a fashion designer. Toys are selected to reflect these aspirations – space vehicles, a toy stethoscope, creating dresses for the favourite doll or even organising a catwalk for a line of dolls. At a later stage, selected aspirations are subject to an evaluation process, often ending up to be reflected upon as too ambitious. The space helmet is replaced by conventional car models – projecting a sign of a potential engineering aspiration. Soon car models finish lining up a showcase – trophies reminiscent of a child's ambition that became a teenage challenge in O-level mathematics, physics and associated academic paths. It is here where teenagers adopt a new outlook on their aspirations – that by now are less pronounced.

Some men and women may be aware of their capabilities and tend to adopt a new ambition. Others, typically young men, will reconcile with their tall ambitions and push themselves through every challenge. Possibly this mechanism explains why men feature more career certainty than women, who in turn, are less likely to realise their childhood dream careers. Indeed, young women may revert to a different career path in recognition that their previous selection, despite being popular, was not the result of much thought – finding out, after much consideration, that such aspiration did not fit their interests or presented overwhelming obstacles that cannot be matched by their capabilities. Often, girls face discouraging feedback from parents, school peers or indeed realise that their choice is in conflict with the expectations tied to their femininity. It is here when teenage girls think with their 'feet on the ground', and lower their ambitions – often underestimating their talent.

Perhaps it is here where contention lies. Baldacchino in 1997 asserts that gender, social class and experience may not impinge on career paths or choices of graduates as extensively after graduation. Darmanin (1997), however, notes that there is a lack of insight in career paths and choices of graduates prior to taking up University studies, shaping the outcome up to graduation and beyond. One has to question whether it is men or women who are keenest to continue with their studies.

The Implications of Career Paths

A failure to achieve an aspiration is considered a serious loss of human potential at personal and economic levels: an economy suffers a lack of return on investment when skilled graduate workers (particularly when a state funded educational system is involved) disappear from the labour pool for some reason or another within a short span of time.

Various are the factors that push women into not achieving their aspirations to their full potential. From a personal context, women may be afraid of success, are less of risk takers⁽⁸⁾, nurture lower levels of academic self-esteem, are more motivated by sensational achievement but face higher levels of home-career role conflict.

Yet, other contextual aspects enhance these personal factors among women. Experiences at school and with the family, along with family attitudes, the community, culture, a perceived role in childcare (and consequences arising from potential careers aspired) and plans for a family and life (that are largely shaped by the values nurtured) provide some of these aspects that influence choices among women pursuing tertiary education. Considerations related to a job's aspects also play a role, with flexibility and employability being key considerations, although demand side factors are not neglected. These factors shape a woman's own perceptions about her competence in certain fields – pushing her into choosing one academic field of study as opposed to another.

These evidence none but a central role that the family reserves when a child is forming aspirations whilst growing up. Disappointingly, guidance and counselling services at schools, in practice, may not be effective in helping young women making choices.

Equally important is how careers remain gendered because of interplay of external factors – such as the level of education required for specific careers, expansion or decline of certain jobs and individual preferences. Social attitudes about gender roles and stereotypes also play a role – shaped by culture, an internalised gender identity, perceived own competences and personality traits. Yet, discrimination plays a role – starting from deprived or lack of opportunities for socialisation with members of the opposite sex in specific gender oriented industries (girls and construction, boys and primary school teachers), and enhanced by a

⁸ gender distribution among the self-employed sets out evidence for this assertion

disapproving society and an overwhelming sense of competition – not to mention a desire to excel as well as the satisfaction from challenging work.

Life after Graduation

Research among Maltese graduates shows how, initially, a significant proportion of graduates find employment with public service, although a part of such human resources will later move into the private sector when opportunities arise. Definite contracts (if not part-time employment) are also common within the first year of employment, with indefinite contracts becoming more common at a later stage. Sectoral gender segregation is also noticeable – public sector tends to attract more female graduates than males, while the converse holds in respect to the private sector and fresh graduates.

Nevertheless, a proportion of such graduates are likely to be underemployed – engaging in work that is well below the skills attained by graduates through their university studies or in work that is totally unrelated to their area of qualification. Such is a growing aspect in developed economies – arising from the increasing skill level output by Universities that outperforms the skill requirement augmentation among employers. It is also known that employers often consider attitudes towards work, competence, previous experience and communication skills as more valuable assets than academic attainment – albeit this is often a subjective aspect among employers

In Malta, oversupply is evidently on the rise. Whilst in 2001, 10% of graduates claimed to be in a job unrelated to their academic qualification (Debono et al, 2003, 2005). In 2005, this proportion rose fourfold. Analysts claim such trend is the result of credential inflation – a trend that prevails as Maltese society augments the value of graduate qualifications, whilst providing employers with an overwhelming supply of qualified human resources. These resources, in turn, are offered jobs that previously could be aptly manned by lesser qualified men and women. Such situations place women in a more disadvantaged position, involving undue pressure that pushes graduate women to accept jobs below their educational level and loose interest in achieving higher-level ambitions

Underemployment, however, is a feature among younger graduates, virtually disappearing as graduate men and women accumulate experience and skill, particularly if their employment remains uninterrupted. Indeed, this constitutes one significant aspect on the employability of graduate women who consider returning to paid work following a career break – primarily as workplaces continue to evolve in terms of skill requirements & intricacies. Similarly, graduate

underemployment undermines the employment prospects that are more appropriate to non-graduate human resources.

Graduate Unemployment

Graduate unemployment is also an important aspect of the early days of graduate life. Rising graduate unemployment is a common feature of all advanced economies – and is significantly more common among creative arts and design graduates. In 2005, registered graduate job seekers in Malta primarily featured a business related degree, while studies show that around a quarter of graduates were searching a job within the first year after graduation – irrespective of their status in respect to paid work

Some attribute graduate unemployment to reduced public sector recruitment – while other considers such unemployment because of University's inability to prepare human resources for work place realities as prevailing these days. What is also evident is that a number of graduates remain optimistic in their job search, avoiding clerical posts whilst continuing with a search for a professional occupation.

Employment Conditions

Research suggests that there are no real differences among graduate men and women in considering job conditions. Whilst graduates in Malta start their employment by earning salaries close to the national average, it is a common reflection that a degree is no longer a passport for outstanding and immediate remuneration levels. This is perhaps a key antecedent to the dissatisfaction featuring among fresh graduates when asked about their earnings.

Equally significant is the observation that graduate men typically earn higher salaries than their female counterparts, a gap that widens with status and qualifications, but resultant from various factors. It is known that a significant proportion of graduate women engage in part-time work, possibly in the public sector, rendering average annual salaries among graduate women lower than those of graduate men, who in turn occupy more managerial posts or are engaged in the private sector.

Moreover, whilst graduates feature overall satisfaction with the attained work-life balance, their challenging job, relationships at work and career prospects, they tend to be concerned about stress arising from work – perhaps a response to the changes and adaptations they make in facing new workplace rigidities and responsibilities

Opting for further studies is often the result of intents for securing better paying and challenging jobs – although differences in commitment to work among men and women are apparent. It is here where women and men distinguish themselves in advancing in their careers – as employers reward dedication, responsibility and performance perhaps beyond academic attainment.

These reflections place women at an additional disadvantage – arising from a perception that work and family roles are incompatible. Guilt feelings about potential neglect of children and a reluctance to abandon a valued career (and income) frequently feature among graduate women after settling with a partner. Often they adjust their career intent on balancing the 'equation' – opting for a part-time role or abandoning the career if reconciliation of family with work is not feasible.

Work – Family Roles

Research suggests that decisions about work and family roles are dealt with differently across sexes, as by Hakim in her work in the 1990s. Moreover, the decision making process is influenced by a more complex network of factors, pushing women (particularly those considered as drifters) to compromise on their 'maximum' goals in both work and family spheres and satisfy the requirements related to both areas. Such is the case of the female medical doctor who opts to further her studies in medicine and later renounce to a full-time role for a part-time yet better rewarding career, or the female banker who negotiates family roles with her partner in recognition of a rewarding yet rigid role with her employer

Yet, some women executives leave career goals at a maximum, prioritised and valued – possibly in response to personal or economic circumstances. These choices are largely influenced by women's early socialisation, childhood experiences and upbringing, instilling an awareness and an attitude towards occupational gender discrimination, along with a practical attitude in solving career and family challenges. Nevertheless, options are often limited in number.

Women executives in Malta are no exception – facing difficult choices between family and career and making that choice following an acute consideration of the limited options open for them. In connection with this, Malta's social policies support the role of a working mother, but not that of men and women as independent individuals. This is reflected by the mean age of men and women leaving paid work – showing how women tend to opt for a formal dependence on their partner: the single breadwinner model.

The prevalence of this model remains a significant challenge on the effectiveness of rapid regulatory changes happening in our country – an effectiveness that is enhanced by rapidly rising social wants. These contrast against the prevailing expectations of society on professional women – intelligent, motivated, assertive, and independent and career oriented, yet still fitting feminine stereotypes as women.

It is these stereotypes that perhaps render parental leave yet unpopular among fathers, despite from such right being available to public sector male employees, with women opting to safeguard and facilitate the development of their partner's career. One has to take into consideration the self employed females and the private sector employees.

Perhaps it is appropriate to consider a series of challenges that call for an urgent redress. The underutilisation of qualified women, the lost return on investment Malta is suffering when qualified women move out of paid level, the marginalisation of qualified women – and the associated logarithmic decline of work prospects that women suffer in considering a return to the labour force. These factors call for investigation relating to other factors, exemplified by the persisting economic dependence on partners and the hindered development of potential of qualified women, without neglecting the frequent role overload and stress suffered by dual role women.

Findings from Research

Respondent Profile

Field research as part of this study involved the interviewing of 351 University graduates (interviewed during a six-week period in the months of July and August 2006). An analysis of this sample shows that:

- 51.6% of participants were women;
- 39.8% of participants were younger than 30 years of age, 34.9% between 30 to 39 years of age, while 19.3% were aged 40 to 49 years. A further 6.0% of participants were 50 years or older;
- 64.3% of participants participated in formal education up to a University Diploma or First Degree Level while another 35.4% participated in formal education up to a post-graduate level. A remaining 0.3% participated only up to a post-secondary level of formal education;
- 60.1% of the survey participants had a baccalaureate qualification or equivalent, 19.8% featured a Master's degree, 12.4% had attained a diploma, while a further 5.3% had attained a University Doctoral;

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- A total of 30.1% of participants had attained their qualifications within 2 years prior to the study, a further 18.4% had attained their highest qualification between 2 and 5 years prior to the study, another 27.4% had attained their highest qualification between 5 and 10 years prior to the study, while the remaining 24.1% attained their highest qualification 10 years or more prior to the study;
 - 26.9% of participants were qualified in educational subjects, 24.3% in managerial sciences, 17.9% in technology & engineering, while 17.3% were qualified in medicine & healthcare. The remaining 13.6% were qualified in the arts, law, social sciences, veterinary sciences and other fields of study;
 - 56.6% of participants were married, and/or living with partner, while 36.5% were never married, single living with parents. Another 6.0% of the survey participants were never married and lived alone, while the remaining participants featured different family statuses;
 - 46.1% of participants claimed to have caring responsibilities at home. 50.0% of such participants had one type of caring responsibility at home, while 43.7% featured two types of caring roles, while the remaining 6.3% of participants featured 3 such responsibilities at home;
 - On average, 40.8% of participants spent less than 1 hour in domestic work, 42.3% spent 1 to 3 hours, while the remaining 16.9% spent more than 3 hours;
 - 83.1% of participants who lived with a partner had their partners engaged in a paid job;
 - 94.6% of participants were engaged in a paid job, while the remaining 5.4% were inactive;
 - Of the participants engaged in paid work, 72.4% of participants occupied professional jobs (employed or self employed), 14.2% occupied senior manager jobs or directors' roles, while 7.0% were engaged in associate professional or technical occupations;
 - 48.0% of participants in employment were engaged with government organisations, 26.6% were employed with private companies or sole traders, while 12.1% were employed with parastatal companies. The remaining participants (in employment) featured jobs in non-profit organisations, commercial partnerships or publicly listed organisations;
 - Of the participants in gainful employment, 89.3% were employed on a full-time basis, 7.4% were employed on a part-time basis, while the remaining 3.3% were employed full time with reduced hours.

Partner Profile

Partner's Pay

A total of 40.6% of research participants had a better pay than their partner's, 31.8% declared that their partner's pay was better, while 27.6% had a similar pay. Indeed, 52.0% of female participants claimed that their partner's pay was better than theirs. Conversely, 66.7% of male respondents had a better pay than that of their partner's. Participants engaged in professional, associate professional and high managerial occupations, together with participants employed in

full-time jobs had a better pay overall. Indeed, the disparity in pay narrows significantly between male and females engaged in managerial occupations and similarly high rank positions.

Career in Paid Work

66.9% of participants' partners intended to pursue a career in paid work. 55.6% of male respondents' partner would pursue such a career, while 79.7% of female respondents answered positively in this regard. While the interest to pursue a paid job decreased with respondents' age increase, the majority of their partners were already engaged in paid work.

Partner's Job

52.4% were professionals (employed or self employed), 15.3% were senior managers or officials, large business owners or directors, 13.2% were clerical employees, while 7.4% were associate professionals or engaged in technical occupations. While male and female partner job profiles were similar overall, male partners were more likely to be involved in senior managerial posts, large business ownership or directorship than their female counterparts who were more likely to be engaged in clerical roles.

The qualitative research ⁽⁹⁾ suggests that most participants have partners with full time jobs in clerical, executive or professional occupations. However, in cases where it was felt that one of the spouses should stop working because of childcare/domestic responsibilities, it was the wife who stopped. Not all wives resigned however, since there were participants whose wife was on unpaid leave. In one of the cases reviewed, the wife, who is also a graduate, was according to her husband willing to take major childcare and household responsibilities and to switch to part-time work in her husband's accounting and auditing firm. For her husband this was a 'natural' decision even though his wife is a B.Sc graduate. The partners of the female graduates were in paid employment except for one, who is a retired police officer and therefore his graduate wife is the main breadwinner.

Partner's Education & Qualifications

37.1% of partners had obtained a diploma (university) or a first degree, while 24.2% had a post-graduate level of education. Conversely, 14.9% had secondary schooling, while 10.8% had post secondary schooling.

⁹ Involving twenty in-depth interviews with selected quantitative research participants

32.6% of partners attained a university degree at Baccalaureate level, 13.5% attained a Master's qualification, while 8.8% attained a diploma or equivalent level of education. 37.8% of participants declared that their partner had a lower level of qualifications ranging from vocational certification to less than O level equivalent, although the majority had A or O level qualifications. Male partners typically attained higher levels of education than female partners. Indeed, while female partner qualifications were most likely to be at a diploma or Baccalaureate level, male partners attained higher educational levels, especially at Masters' level. This was more likely in the case for younger respondents (aged 30 to 39 years). Education levels were similar amongst male and female partners with a level of education below a diploma level.

Tasks & Chores Required at Home

Overall participants and their partners shared most of the responsibility for tasks and chores typically required at home, although somewhat stronger responses were obtained in relation to administration, motor vehicle care and children's transport for additional education activities (private lessons, ballet, music among others) for activities that were more likely to be conducted by partners. Indeed, female respondents showed significantly higher responsibility towards helping their children with homework and home care jobs such as laundry, ironing of clothes, home cleaning, cooking, shopping, caring for dependents or ill at home and their children's recreational activities. Male respondents were more likely to be responsible for home maintenance, motor vehicle care and administration tasks.

The qualitative interviews further suggested that when male graduates had a partner engaged in full-time housework/childcare, such men claimed to give some help with the children such as taking them to private lessons or similar errands, although the main responsibility lay with the wife. A few cases of female graduates were observed wherein, female graduates shared these responsibilities with their supportive husbands who gave a significant contribution to household responsibilities. In other cases, however, female graduates carried the entire domestic burden on their own.

Parents' Profile

The profession or job occupied by the graduates' fathers influenced the job occupied by their children. The level of qualifications also increased as the father's level of education increased, although the level of qualification attained by their father had no significant effect on graduates. Conversely, the level of participants' qualifications increased as mothers occupied higher ranked

jobs. However, the level of their mother's education and qualifications had no significant influence on participants' job.

Overall, however, qualitative research did not offer support to such assertion. The parents of most graduates interviewed were not graduates themselves, except for one interviewee whose parents both featured a master's degree and occupied professional occupations. In the majority of cases, the mother of the graduate was a homemaker, while in quite a few cases the mother did not work even before marriage. Among some of the in-depth interviewees, the mother resigned upon marriage because of the then imposed marriage bar or in line with cultural expectations. In quite a few cases, the respondent was the only graduate in the family including brothers and sisters.

Work

Employment Period

Since their first graduation at University, participants were employed for median of 7 years, had been with their employer for 5 years and occupied their present role for 3¼ years.

Male graduates were in employment for longer periods, spent more time with their employer and spent more time in their present role than their female counterparts. The difference in the employment period between male and females averaged 3½ years, with such disparity narrowing slightly in relation to the time spent with their employer and the time spent in their present role.

Employment History

55% of participants claimed that their present job was the only job they ever had, while a further 24% claimed that this was their second. Conversely, 18% of participants declared to be either in their third or fourth job, while only 3% of participants had an experience of more than four jobs. Moreover, a change of job was less common amongst respondents who were younger than 30 years, qualified in education or medicine & healthcare, within less than 10 years from completion of studies, spent 5 to 9 hours in domestic work and were engaged in professional occupations. 77.7% of graduate participants still considered themselves to be engaged in the same industry or sector since their first graduation.

Whilst some participants in the in-depth interviews never changed jobs, qualitative research suggests that the majority of graduates do not remain in the same job since they started working. In most cases, a job switch did not involve drastic changes in the field of employment. There were cases of graduates (especially those involved in education) who

worked in a number of schools, taught at different levels, taught different subjects or switched from teaching to counselling or from teaching to lecturing at university. There were cases of graduates who changed their job to improve their pay or working conditions especially upon graduation. Some graduates were noted to have changed jobs as the post they occupied was not completely in line with their area of specialisation. In certain cases, a graduate would leave a job to start an own private practice.

The Inactive Graduate

Present Status

Out of the inactive graduate participants interviewed in this research, 44.4% were homemakers or mothers, 27.8% were studying, and 11.1% were househusbands or fathers, while the remaining 16.7% were involved in other arrangements. Most homemakers or mothers had finished their studies for over 10 years, having the majority of their partners engaged in a paid job. 83.3% of these participants were previously engaged in a paid job.

Of the inactive graduates, 90.9% of respondents resigned from their employment, while 9.1% stopped for health reasons. 44.4% of the participants that resigned claimed career or study purposes, while another 44.4% had family commitments or maternity. Only 11.1% had actually stopped in view of job conditions.

Benefits & Paid Work

Flexitime, sick or emergency childcare leave and short notice leave were the main benefits that could be offered to inactive graduates to encourage them to consider moving back to paid work. Indeed, while these graduates would consider these conditions in line with other typical benefits, they considered after-school childcare facilities or programmes as the least interesting benefits.

Job Occupied Last

60.0% of inactive graduates were involved in professional occupations in their last job, 20.0% were associate professionals or engaged in a technical occupation, while 13.3% were clerical employees. Indeed, 68.4% of these graduates worked full time in their main job, 21.1% were part timers, while the remaining 10.5% worked full time with reduced hours.

Moreover, while 95.2% of these graduates worked with an employer, 76.2% were engaged on a permanent-indefinite contract, 19.0% were engaged on a casual basis while 4.8% were employed on a permanent-fixed term contract.

84.2% of these participants were not seeking a job, while another 15.8% were seeking a job albeit not registering with ETC. Respondents who were seeking a job were younger than 30 years, had a Baccalaureate qualification and had completed their studies within 5 years prior to this study.

Job Vacancies & Potential Information Sources

Three participants did not succeed to find a job following their own efforts of a job search – with the main reason relating exclusively to the unavailability of jobs. In seeking a job, such graduates typically relied on newspaper adverts followed by other sources of information about vacancies.

Pursuit of Further Employment

Circumstances under which these graduates decided not to pursue further employment related primarily to family responsibilities (33.3% of responses) while other reasons related primarily to the further studies.

At Work

Employment & Sector of Activity

92.5% of participants in employment were employed with an employer, 5.7% were self-employed without employees, while 1.9% were self-employed with employees. Of the graduate participants in employment, 89.8% occupied a full-time job, 6.9% were occupied a part-time job (as main job), while the remaining 3.3% were employed full time with reduced hours.

54.7% of participants in work were engaged in the governmental services sector, 30.3% in the commercial services sector, while 11.4% were engaged in the manufacturing sector. Differences across gender were also apparent: 46.3% of male participants were engaged in the governmental services sector, 38.4% in the commercial services sector, while 10.4% were engaged in the manufacturing sector. Conversely, 62.7% of the female participants were primarily engaged in the governmental services sector, 22.5% in the commercial services sector, while 12.4% were engaged in the manufacturing sector.

Part Time & Reduced Hours

Of the respondents working in part time or full time with reduced hours, 55.1% chose such basis in response to their caring responsibilities at home, while another 14.7% in response to their continued studies. Another 14.7% claimed that they could not find a full time job. A case in point is Amy, a 49-year old single mother of twin daughters. Although Amy's daughters are

now 20 years old and quite independent, Amy has other caring responsibilities – her mother is an elderly woman who needs her help. Her sister is dying of cancer and Amy helps her and her two children. She also gives some of her time to her father’s cousin who has recently gone blind by keeping her company in the afternoon. When her father was alive and wheelchair-bound, Amy also used to spend time with him. Consequently, Amy was constrained to take up part-time employment as a tutor although she would have liked to work on a full-time basis.

Basis of Main Job

80.6% of working participants occupied a job with a permanent indefinite contract, while 12.4% and 7.0% were employed on a permanent fixed term contract and on a casual basis, respectively. The duration of these contracts ranged from shorter than a year (32.6% of responses) to 1 to 2 years (16.3% of responses), while 39.6% of responses were for contracts longer than 2 years.

Hours Worked

Participants worked an average minimum of 36.6 hours in their typical workweek. Participants engaged in a full time job with reduced hours worked for 20 hours on average, while part time workers spent 16 hours on average in their job. Male graduates worked marginally longer weekly minimum hours than their female counterparts. Such observation prevailed across all respondent groups, albeit some differences prevailed:

- male respondents aged 30 to 49 years worked longer minimum hours than their female counterparts;
- female participants with caring responsibilities worked fewer minimum hours weekly than other respondents;
- fewer hours were worked by female participants who spent more than 7 hours in domestic work daily. The longer the time devoted to domestic work, the shorter the hours women spent in their paid job;
- female graduates whose partner was engaged in a paid job worked less hours (approximately 8.5 hours) on average than other respondent groups.

80.3% of respondents were happy with the number of hours they worked in their main job, although 13.4% sought to decrease these hours (while 6.4% sought to increase them). Participants aged 40 to 49 years and those employed part time were most likely to seek to increase their hours of work.

48.0% of graduates worked additional hours on top of their weekly minimum. Additional hours worked increased as the level of the respondents' qualifications increased, while full time workers were more inclined towards working additional hours.

Additional hours averaged 7.8 hours weekly. Male graduates worked longer additional hours (2 to 3 hours on average) on a weekly basis than their female counterparts. Only 3.9% of participants worked on a shift basis where arrangements on permanent basis were marginally more common, of whom, 60.0% were engaged in shifts worked morning or afternoons, while another 30.0% had morning, afternoon and night shifts. Conversely, only 10.0% of these participants had day and night shifts.

Qualitative research also suggests that the longest hours worked featured among the self-employed graduates. One case concerned a husband and father whose long hours of work do not permit him much time with his family. Another involved a pharmacist who has her own community pharmacy and feels that her working hours are too long – precluding her from pursuing further studies and response to her keen interest in art.

Flexitime

76.7% of participants did not benefit from flexitime (flexible hours, flexible workweeks) in their main job. Of the graduates who benefited from such arrangement, males were more common. Colin (who works at a Government institution) used to work flexible hours when his wife was pregnant. Some in-depth interviews claimed that flexitime is a suitable alternative to a career break if it was available. A female graduate claimed that her husband had started undergraduate studies but could not continue since flexible hours did not feature in his job conditions.

Second Jobs

25.6% occupied a second job, where responsibilities held related primarily to professional occupations (68.3% of responses) and senior managerial occupations (11.0% of responses).

Second jobs featured quite often among in-depth interviewees, with such jobs mostly related to their main occupation – such as private lessons in the case of teachers; private practice in the case of accountants or bank employees and counsellors. Other graduates sat on boards or committees related to their field. There were others whose part-time work involved a completely different activity especially if it involved work in their partner's activity. There were those who were involved in more than one secondary activity.

Apart from the opportunity of earning extra income, part-time work offers graduates the possibility of engaging in activities that interest them but that they could not take up as a main occupation, exemplified by media activities or arts.

Employee Responsibilities

68.7% of the participants did not have employees reporting to them. The number of employees reporting to participants varied considerably, although the median response related to under 3 employees across all job levels. While males reported higher responses in this regard, employees engaged in professional occupations were most likely to report to these graduates.

Job Satisfaction

Participants were rather positive regarding different aspects of their job and their satisfaction. Indeed, participants were typically satisfied with the variety and closure of tasks, with a relatively lower level of satisfaction featuring in respect with information provided about their work and pay earned. These accounts evidence a typically high level of motivation among employed graduates in their main work, a feature that is also supported by the outcome of qualitative research as part of this study. Most of the in-depth interview participants were satisfied with their job, with some even described their work as challenging or even as fun. Some find satisfaction in the work itself, as is the case of restoration – wherein the graduate involved claimed to find a great deal of satisfaction in the restoration of artefacts that are of national importance. Others find satisfaction in the results obtained such in counselling, pharmacy or teaching. Yet, some graduates expressed their dissatisfaction with pay or with working conditions such as working hours or rude clients.

Highest Attained Qualification

55.8% of participants perceived that the highest qualification they attained was entirely relevant to their present or last job. Contrastingly, 33.6% perceived that their qualification partially relevant, while the remaining 10.6% thought that it was not relevant at all. Research participants quote different reasons, with a lack of drive from management for improvement topping the list of such reasons. A politically driven administration at the workplace, restrictive conditions at government organisations, futile promises regarding benefits or conditions, difficulty to re-integrate in a profession after a career break and the settlement for a less satisfactory job in view of financial needs were other reasons behind why graduates occupied jobs where their qualification was not relevant at all. Among in-depth research participants, it was those who did not take up vocational courses who were mostly engaged in a career line that is different from their studies e.g. an administrative officer who graduated in history.

Career in Future

61.8% of research participants (in paid employment) would not consider switching their line of profession or career in the future. Participants would mainly consider career prospects within the sector of activity and the remuneration associated with the job. Importance was also attributed to the future of the profession and future of the sector of activity and opportunities for further training. Other aspects that were considered of a certain importance related to job satisfaction, respect and motivation, new stimuli, new goals, avoidance of routine, job security and the opportunities arising from new industries. Other mentions related to family opportunities, health and physical strength.

66.1% of participants considered switching their basis of employment in future, in view of their intention of building a family and of dependents living at home. Participants somewhat also considered the importance of personal and family remuneration. The take up of new business opportunities, higher job satisfaction, flexibility and the need for change also featured as other considerations. Other considerations pertained to the caring responsibilities and the reduction of long work hours also in view of age or health aspects. Indeed, female respondents were more concerned about building a family, dependants living at home and family remuneration than their male counterparts.

In-depth interviews suggest that those who would like to change their career are largely those who are not completely satisfied with the choice they made. They would like to have pursued other interests and are disappointed that they did not follow their dreams. Some had been discouraged by their family, while others only considered other possibilities after starting their academic training. In other cases, the interviewee could not follow a particular course because it was not offered during his/her university days. Some in-depth interviewees were seriously considering taking up further studies and actually changing their career, albeit this is a significant challenge as such graduates need to start anew.

Family Friendly Measures

Observed family friendly measures varied significantly at work, with the more frequently observed benefits comprising parental leave, part time work, short notice leave, sick/emergency childcare leave, career break with committed guaranteed return and flexitime in diminishing order of incidence. Indeed:

- parental leave was more likely to feature among female respondents, respondents aged 30 to 39 years, respondents with a university diploma or equivalent, participants with less than 2 years from completion of studies and unmarried participants living with parents;

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- part time work was more likely to feature among female respondents, respondents aged 30 to 39 years, married participants living with partner, participants with 1 caring role, participants spending 3 to 5 hours in domestic work, participants with a partner that is not engaged in a paid job, participants involved in a commercial partnership and full time workers;
 - short notice leave was a less common feature among male respondents, respondents aged 30 to 39 years, respondents with a university diploma or equivalent, participants with 2 to 5 years from completion of studies and married participants living with partner;
 - sick/emergency childcare leave was marginally less likely to be available for male respondents, while a career breaks with committed guaranteed return was less likely to be available for their female counterparts.

Benefits & Job Change

In considering family friendly benefits as an alternative to a job basis change or exiting the work force, graduates expressed an interest in a number of such systems, exemplified by flexitime, sick/emergency childcare leave and study leave. Most respondents will not consider such benefits on their own and were inclined to consider a range of such systems together. Nevertheless, graduates were less interested in benefits like professional guidance, after school childcare facilities or programmes and job sharing. Differences across sexes also prevailed in such levels of interest, with female graduates featuring higher levels of interest for flexitime, childcare facilities, after school childcare facilities, childcare subsidy or allowance and parental leave than their male counterparts.

Choice of Career

Choice of Course Pursued

In selecting the course to pursue at University (and subsequent career), graduates considered primarily the expected employment opportunities, followed by the course content and expected future income. Other influences featured at a less important level, exemplified by media, counsel recommendations, family tradition and the appeal of the courses to specific sex. Equally significant, in selecting a course, students seldom considered the less stringent requirements for other courses or the more demanding nature of other courses.

Other important issues related primarily to personal disposition and interest towards the subject or the respective associated jobs. Female respondents were somewhat more concerned towards work and life balance than their male counterparts. The importance of this balance was most likely to be felt among younger participants with a baccalaureate qualification.

Among 79.3% of the graduates interviewed, the interest in the academic courses chosen started at an age between 11 and 25 years. Science, technology and engineering graduates, along with social sciences graduates typically featured older ages when such respondents actually started being interested in the respective field of study.

In-depth interviews demonstrated how some graduates dreamt of becoming artists or flight attendants when they were younger but later on realised these were just dreams. There were those who were never certain of what they really wanted even after graduating while others always knew what they wanted to do. Most graduates chose their particular course because they were interested in the subject or in the vocational career attached to it as in the case of teaching. Family also featured as a strong influence on the choice of course – a proportion of interviewees admitted that their family discouraged them from taking up certain courses, regretting it later. In one case, Jake (aspiring law) was encouraged to study accounts by his family since the family business would benefit more from having an auditor than a lawyer. Another graduate was encouraged to take up university studies after her sister (who has a disability) could not continue studying. While graduates mentioned other factors considered in making their choice, such as career prospects or working hours, these did not appear to have been a highly determining factor.

Participants were satisfied overall with the academic life they experienced in attaining their highest level of education. They were more satisfied in relation to the contents of the course and training, while they were less satisfied regarding the university or institutions' facilities that supported their studies and the lecturers and the academic staff and the relevance of the course contents with their present or last job. Participants were somewhat less satisfied in relation to the opportunities for work after graduation.

Qualitative research also affirmed that graduates considered the content of their course as relevant and even as having given them more recognition and credibility. Yet some graduates felt that experience and personal skills were more important in the course of their work.

Employment Prior to University Studies

68.1% of participants were not employed in gainful work prior to their undertaking of university studies. Participants who worked before their studies were likely to have been employed in

clerical jobs (43.1% of responses) or professional (¹⁰), associate professional and technical occupations with 15.6% and 14.7% of responses.

In 41.5% of the cases, the employer at the time of commencing studies was a private company or sole trader, while 37.5% were employed by a government organisation. Moreover, while 45.4% of employers were involved in the commercial service sector, 30.6% were employed in the government services sector, 12.0% in the manufacturing sector and 10.2% in the hotel & catering sector. In-depth interviews also established that graduates might remain with the same employer after graduation particularly if such studies related to their line of work. In other cases, the graduate chose to remain with the same employer intent on gaining the necessary experience – particularly when this led to earning some form of warrant or certification licence. In other cases, particularly when the employer sponsored such studies, graduates chose to honour contractual obligations and remain with such employer.

71.6% of the participants employed prior to their studies, occupied a full-time job, 26.6% were employed on a part-time basis, while the remaining 1.8% were employed full time with reduced hours. Moreover, 65.1% of participants (who were employed prior to their studies) were engaged through a permanent indefinite contract, while 20.8% and 14.2% were employed on a casual basis and a permanent fixed term contract, respectively.

Employment Period

Among respondents employed prior to starting their studies, the typical graduate had been in employment for just under eight years and was employed with an employer for an average of 6.8 years. Male graduates had been in their employment for a longer period before starting their studies, contrasting against their female counterparts: female respondents worked for an average of 5 years while males worked for 10 years prior to commencing their studies.

Moreover, while female respondents had been with their employer for an average of 4.3 years, males had been for 8.6 years prior to commencing their studies. Indeed, while a shorter period of work was observed for female respondents across all age groups, the number of years in employment prior to commencement of studies increased as age increased for both male and female respondents.

¹⁰ Prior to taking up post-graduate studies

Financing of Studies

Few were the research participants who received financing for their studies, not counting the students who benefited from the student scheme operated at the University of Malta. In 9.4%, 8.8% and 7.8% of the cases, the studies were funded by either the employer, self-funded or funded by parents, respectively while only 4.1% had won a scholarship. Another 12.9% of the participants funded their studies through a mixture of the above. Male respondents were observed to fund their own studies or benefit from employers' funding of studies more often than their female counterparts. Such was also the case of those aged 30 years and over, with a diploma or Masters qualification, were single living alone or living with a partner not engaged in a paid job, or participants engaged in clerical or managerial occupations. No further differences were observed between male and female participants.

63.0% of participants who attained their highest qualification through employer funding or part of a University of Malta scheme did not have to spend time employed with their sponsoring employer after their graduation, as opposed to the remaining 37.0%. Should the latter have opted not to stay with their sponsoring employer for the contracted time, 32.3% were required to refund costs (17.6% required to refund the entire training cost while the remaining 14.7% were required to refund pro-rata in accordance with the time spent with employer). Conversely, 35.3% of these participants had to pay a fine, while 14.7% would have sustained no consequences in this regard.

Unpaid Leave

Of the graduates who worked before undertaking studies leading to their highest qualifications, 9.2% availed themselves of unpaid leave for any period beyond 1 month prior to commencing their studies. A mixture between family, career or study commitments led to this spell of unpaid leave that typically lasted 2½ months overall.

First Job after Graduation

45.7% of graduates had to seek a job after graduation. Of such graduates, 49 respondents (or 31.0%) spent a period of time unemployed while searching for a job after their graduation. Female respondents were more likely to spend time unemployed than their male counterparts. On average, this unemployment period was 3 months long.

In searching a job, graduates relied on newspaper adverts, assistance from the ETC job centres, friends or acquaintances and the Internet (25.5%, 17.8%, 12.1% and 12.1% of responses, respectively), while other methods were accounted for by the remaining 32.5%.

A proportion of graduates participating in in-depth interviews claimed to have had already a job upon graduation either because they were sponsored by their employer, or because they studied on a part-time basis. Of those who did not have a job, the majority did not find it difficult to find a job upon graduating, although less fortunate cases were also observed. In one of the cases (a B.Com graduate), the interviewee expressed frustration with being refused jobs on the basis of lack of experience – compelling her to set up her own business.

Of the respondents who had to search for a job following graduation, 13.3% refused a job offer while searching for a job. While no particular reason prevailed on others as to why such respondents refused such offers, progression opportunities of the job, lack of variety of tasks within the job and the pay offered featured as the more common reasons.

Career after First Job Following Graduation

Only 15 respondents or 4.3% of participants spent time unemployed after their first job following their graduation – often as a result of a resignation (75%) or dismissal/redundancy (25%). On average, they spent 4 months searching for a new job. Resignation was primarily related to various circumstances of which the furthering of studies, maternity, job conditions and the engagement in other jobs topped the list of reasons claimed by interviewees.

Career Break

Following their graduation, only 7.2% of participants availed themselves of a career break. On average, this break was of 26 months long, prevailing among women, aged 30 to 39 years, within 10 to 15 years from completion of studies, married and living with partner and employed full time with reduced hours or on a part time basis.

Family responsibilities (mainly childbirth and care) accounted for the primary reason behind such a break (60.0% of responses). Among other respondents, a holiday, break or gap year featured as the key reason (16.7% of participants taking a career break), while continuing of studies were the reason for a break among 13.3% of such participants. Unsurprisingly, women availed of such a break for family responsibilities and study, while men availed of a break for study or recreational purposes. Female respondents availing of such a break were more likely to be aged 30 to 39 years, within 10 to 15 years from completion of their studies, married or living with their partner, presently employed part time or full time with reduced hours.

The only alternatives offered by employers prior to setting off on this break were mainly parental leave followed by a career break with committed or guaranteed return and part time

work. Yet, such participants still availed of a career break mainly in belief that they are in the best position to raise their kids and of building a stronger family that should not be compromised by work.

Participants strongly agreed that this career break was indispensable for the upbringing of their children, while it served to build and establish a stronger family. While participants were most likely to plan this before, it was also significantly beneficial in building life competencies. To a lesser extent, participants also believed that dependents (ill, disabled or parents) could only live better with their help during this career break. Female respondents opined more strongly towards the indispensability of their career break than their male counterparts. During this break, 56.0% of participants received help that facilitated their life, with most of this help forthcoming from parents and partners (39.1% and 64.3% of cases respectively).

While 60.0% of such respondents had ended their career break – of whom, 76.9% landed a job immediately upon ending their break possibly due to arrangements set prior to leaving the employer or through a planned approach adopted in ending such a break. Another 15.4% of respondents took them less than a month to find a job while 7.7% found a job within three months.

Experiences following their return to paid work were typically positive especially towards their ability to find a job, the acceptance of their applications or for matching their previous pay. Nevertheless, returnees claimed that they did not manage to find a job that offered them very good prospects for promotion or a better-paid job when they returned to work after a career break. Male participants were marginally more positive in relation to finding a job that offered prospects for a promotion than their female counterparts, although both men and women showed negative responses in this regard.

In-depth interviews also support the notion that career breaks were largely availed of in response to childcare responsibilities. The decision for a woman to break her career is largely based on traditional notions of the female carer and the perceived inability of the male to take care of children. In other cases, it is the man's higher income that was also of consideration or the higher occupational level he occupied, making his career not worth breaking. One female graduate claimed that she reluctantly had to break her career on the decision of her husband. On the other hand, the male participants whose wives were on a career break claimed that such wives had willingly decided to take the break on their own.

Some interviewees pointed that should flexitime or adequate childcare were available, they would not have had to break their careers, despite the prevailing philosophy that children are better brought up by their parents.

Future Career Break

92.3% of participants were not planning to avail themselves of a career break. Conversely, participants that planned such a break intended to stop working for 1 year on average. The main reasons for this career break also related to family reasons, with childbirth and childcare topping such reasons, particularly among female respondents. An interest towards other activities such as a break for studies or a gap year featured among both male and female respondents.

Family friendly measures as alternatives to a career break were perceived rather unconvincing, with some types of alternatives would not be considered at all. Parental leave, childcare facilities, sick or emergency childcare leave and flexitime attracted higher positive responses as an alternative to a career break. Indeed, in-depth interviews revealed that often women showed no intention of breaking their career, particularly when they were still single or did not plan of having children. Other women felt that they would be able to juggle their work and family responsibilities especially since their work permitted flexible hours and long holidays, as in the case of teachers.

Future Job Change

14.5% of participants were looking for a new job, with higher incidences prevailing among part time workers and respondents with no caring responsibilities. Participants looking for a new job considered various factors as significantly important in accepting a new job offer, primarily related to pay, designation & type of job, career prospects, nature of tasks, long-term prospects for employment, and flexibility in their job. Nevertheless, participants were rather unconcerned with location and recommendations by family or friends. Across sexes, fringe benefits were more important to men, while women valued designation and type of job, career prospects, long-term prospects for employment, sector of activity, reputation of company, and prospects for further training.

Further Education & Lifelong Learning

58.6% of participants were willing to take up further studies, primarily a Masters degree. 57.5% of these respondents would pursue their studies locally, while the remaining 42.5% would pursue studies with institutions based abroad. The basis of such programme is very likely to be part time – a case for 64.2% of such respondents.

Working full time and studying part time, (especially through distance learning courses) would help participants attain their academic goals. The benefiting from flexitime, training leave and annualised hours were other options considered to render further studies more feasible an option.

Promotion, Discrimination & Unfair Treatment

67.1% of participants were never given a promotion during their employment following their graduation, with such responses prevailing among the younger graduates. The remaining 32.9% of participants were given a promotion, primarily in response to their work performance. Other reasons for promotion related to seniority and mobility in grades at work and qualifications attained before job. Both male and female respondents attributed their promotion primarily to performance at work.

In-depth interviews also support such observations, with a portion of the interviewees having been promoted in the course of their career, especially upon completion of further studies. Automatic promotion also featured in some cases when the graduate engaged in further studies. Other research participants featured no possibility for promotion – such as the self-employed or a bank employee who already occupies a high-level position and claims that the bank would probably not offer him a promotion as that would mean losing the experience he has in his particular activity. A few other cases claimed that they were not interested in promotion especially since it involved a switch from teaching to administrative work.

13.6% of research participants were denied a promotion by an employer in an unfair manner. Men were more likely to be denied promotions unfairly than their female counterparts, with such observation being also relatively more common among older graduates. The main reasons related to political beliefs, nepotism, corruption & discrimination, futile promises, unjust promotions following seniority and unclear career development paths. Despite individual cases of sexual discrimination and racism, no differences in reasons for unjust denial of promotion featured across the sexes of interviewees.

Conclusions

Employment

It appears that as a category of workers, graduates are to a large extent engaged in full-time employment, and so are their partners. Only a relatively small proportion of respondents were employed on a part-time basis or worked reduced hours. The majority of graduates are engaged in professional work while others occupy senior managerial posts, owned or directed businesses or performed associate professional or technical work. In general, the findings suggest that those who invest in tertiary education are more likely to be participating in the economy and to occupy the higher-level jobs. Almost one fourth of graduates are also engaged in a second job.

Male graduates are in general more likely to have been employed for a longer period and to have been in their present role with their current employer than females. On the other hand, females who were employed for a longer time and have been with the same employer and in the same role for longer periods are those engaged in part-time work or reduced hours. This suggests that it is more difficult for women than for men to pursue their career without either interrupting it or alternatively without having to make adjustments to their working hours and at times also to their line of work.

Indeed, those graduates who in the future envisage switching their basis of employment, consider doing so as a consequence of caring responsibilities although they claim that they would also take into consideration the remuneration received from the job as a result.

Similar to the responses obtained from those who are currently unemployed, graduates who are economically active considered flexitime, sick/emergency childcare leave and study leave as alternatives to leaving their job or changing the basis of their employment. Childcare facilities, after school childcare facilities and parental leave were, understandably, desired more by younger graduates while flexible hours was the preferred choice of women under 30 or over 50 years old.

Inactive Graduates

Those graduates who are not currently in paid employment stopped working or chose not to start working largely due to caring responsibilities or to continue their studies. It is interesting to note that a few of the observed homemakers are men. Such inactive graduates indicated that they would consider entering or returning to the labour market should they be able to work

flexible hours and if they had the possibility of taking emergency or childcare leave, albeit they did not consider after school childcare facilities as a strong incentive.

Satisfaction at Work

Although overall graduates expressed satisfaction with various aspects of their job, a significant majority would consider changing their line of work in the future. This was especially the case with young female graduates and especially among those who are not engaged in full-time employment. This indicates that these graduates are not content with their line of work, possibly as this falls short of their life's ambitions/aspirations. This could be due to not making the right choice of career or course possibly due to unavailability of course or discouragement from parents or friends. They could also be in a line of work temporarily – a result of a number of factors such as having to switch from full-time to part-time work in a different area or inability to find employment in there area of specialisation, hoping to succeed some time in the future.

Most graduates were satisfied with the content of their course of study although they were less satisfied with the support structures and facilities available at the university as well as with the academic staff. They also expressed less satisfaction with the relevance of their studies to their present job.

Choice of Course

Most graduates claimed that their choice of course was mostly influenced by the content of the course as well as the career prospects and future income with other factors such as family tradition with the attraction for sex-specific courses being less influential. However, women tended to give more consideration towards being able to achieve a work-life balance than males, evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative research forming part of this study. Yet, interest in the course content appears to have taken precedence over factors such as shorter working hours or holidays. At the same time, one notes that over one fourth of the respondents graduated in educational subjects. Consequently, they chose to take up courses leading to a career that does not entail long hours of work and that permits parents to fit their working hours more or less with their children's school hours. In certain cases, there is also the possibility for parents to send their children to the same school where they work.

Parents

It is noted that a significant number of graduates have parents with less than O level education. Although many graduates claimed that their father occupied a high-level job, there are a significant number of graduates whose father is engaged in lesser intricate occupations. This reflects the expansion in educational opportunities that Malta witnessed in the past years and suggests that there is a significant degree of intergenerational mobility. As expected, more than half the participants do not have working mothers.

Partners

The partners of the majority of graduates are also likely to have a university education although over a third of graduates declared that their partner did not feature such levels of education. The partners of most graduates are also engaged in higher level of occupations and intend to pursue a career – a commoner feature when the partner is a man. Almost half of the wives of male graduates do not intend to follow a career, a consequence of wives having to give up their career due to childcare responsibilities.

Home & Family Commitments

Although graduates do not appear to dedicate a great deal of time to housework, with the majority spending between 1 and 3 hours daily, almost half of the respondents featured caring responsibilities. Furthermore, although many graduates claim to share these responsibilities and duties with their partner, it is women who have the greatest share of responsibility where childcare and daily house chores are concerned.

Career Break

The majority of graduates did not avail of a career break since their graduation. Nor do they plan to take a break in the future. Those who did take, or plan to do so, mentioned family commitments as the major reason behind their decision although other reasons were of mention, such as study or holidays. Again, graduates highlighted flexitime and sick/emergency childcare leave as possible alternatives to interrupting their career or that of their partner. On the other hand, there were those who despite the availability of other alternatives, still decided to sacrifice their career to bring up their children themselves. For these respondents, a career break was considered indispensable for the upbringing of their children believing that their decision would contribute to the building of a stronger family. Furthermore, those who ended

their career break claimed to find no difficulty to re-enter the labour market although they did suffer certain consequences such as having less prospects for promotion or better pay.

Some Recommendations

In view of the above, it is recommended that efforts be made on various fronts. If female graduates are to be provided with the opportunity to feature a 'return on investment', they cannot alone remain burdened with the conflict of combining work and family responsibilities. Providing necessary structure to enable an acceptable work-life balance for graduate women is important in enabling them to exploit the full potential in which they invested during their academic studies.

More significant is the notion that women remain segregated within certain spheres of study – a feature that is the result of a community culture at different levels – family, peers and guidance, resulting in poorly informed decisions that may well push women out of the labour market at some time in the future. This may be the case when women consider breaking a career for family reasons – is it the mistaken career that pushes a women to value more family life?

In this respect, policy-makers, may initiate efforts that stimulate Maltese society to take positive steps that at least address aspects of the horizontal segregation, along with building enabling structures that permit women to truly choose between a career break and a feasible uninterrupted career. Such efforts must:

- help future graduates make more informed choices regarding their future career;
- evaluate current academic courses in order to assess their relevance to job requirements particularly to fields with different areas of specialisation;
- attract students to the less popular courses in order to avoid a concentration of students in courses such as education and health care increasing the risk of flooding already saturated job markets;
- encourage employers of graduates to provide more family-friendly measures to both men and women in order to further decrease the number of graduates, especially women who have to opt for part-time employment, reduced hours or career breaks to balance their work and family demands. Flexitime and emergency child care leave appear to be the options which are most desired by graduates who would otherwise not interrupt or adjust their career;
- encourage more men to avail themselves of these measures where available in order for domestic roles to be equal, thus enabling more women to invest more time in their career.

TELEWORKING PILOT PROJECT

Executive Summary

Work methods are changing rapidly in today's world of work – with tasks increasingly becoming independent of the traditional place of work. This change is largely the result of the increasing reliance on computing and advanced telecommunications as an integral part of jobs. Significant improvements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) are seemingly daily occurrences in to-day's society, exemplified by advances in the Internet and broadband access, along with improvements in the access, cost and quality of mobile telephony and other wireless communications services. These augmented information and communications technologies enable a consistent change in the way many people work, shop, play and live. The implications of these changes are wide, varied and with deep reaching effects.

Yet, most organisations and individuals do not take advantage of this new 'location independence' of work – continuing to rely on costly, environmentally damaging commuting and work related car travel that features compromised productivities. This is largely attributed to the slow change of traditional organisations and associated cultures emerging from the industrial revolution – typified by self-contained, integrated structures operating in stable environments. Such organisations depended on a centralised physical location (office buildings and production plants), featuring a functional structure with boundaries defined by the physical structures and contractual relations, along with a rigidly centralised bureaucratic system.

Changes in:

- the competitive situation (internationalisation of markets, globalisation, demographic changes and shortened product lifecycles);
- the socio-economic aspects in
 - labour (ageing & demanding workforce),
 - market (prioritised quality aspects of service/products, globalisation of standards and internationalisation of demand), and
 - society (attitudes towards environment),
- the prioritisation of the innovation potential of ICT

force organisations to break from this traditional model and adopt new forms of work and management. Yet, the most impacting aspect is the innovation potential of ICT, arising from the declining costs of software and hardware, paralleled by the advent of the Personal

Computer, enabling most knowledge, data and service workers and managers to operate a PC on their desks.

Other factors like:

- the availability of user-friendly software enabling easy, fast and efficient use of the IT infrastructures;
- the increasing availability of business information from both internal and external databases providing essential information that supports a tenable competitive market position;
- the explosive development in technology and increasing convergence of telecommunications and computing (ICT), leading to the Information Society

perhaps are the more important factors that triggered the recent resurgence of interest in teleworking and new organisational forms. Such factors enable workers in location-dispersed and location-independent organisations to co-operate in the output of goods & services – involving the adoption of telecooperative approaches in managing resources (telemangement) and provision of services (telework). Indeed, both approaches are integrally reliant on ICT support.

Public agencies and institutions promote telework in recognition that various benefits accrue from the adoption of such flexible work arrangements – with results visible in terms of social, economic and environmental implications. This sets out a stark contrast against the initial reluctance among human resources in respect with telework, largely as a result of a level of scepticism demonstrated by trade unions. It is recognised that today, workers across Europe are increasingly keen to experiment and adopt telework as their standard way of participating in a nation's labour force. Such trend is expected to leave its mark in near future society, shaping the way people balance their work and life commitments in a rapidly evolving context that features unique jobs enabling the attraction and retention of skilled human resources (who would be otherwise unavailable).

Defining Telework

The search for a universally accepted definition of telework, suited for research, is a source of considerable contention and debate. As telework is an area of rapid change, clarification and definition of what telework means needs an urgent redress. The absence of a universally accepted definition renders measurements of extent and growth of telework difficult and incomparable between studies.

Nevertheless, some agreement seems to exist in respect to the meaning of telework as a term: a form of work arrangement that combines the concept of distance from the traditional workplace and the use of communication technologies. Indeed, the International Labour Organisation defined telework in 1990 as:

- work is performed in a location remote from central office or production facilities, thus separating the worker from personal contact with co-workers there; and
- new technology enables this separation by facilitating communication (ILO, 1990)

Rather than adopting a precise definition, researchers identified the key criteria that exemplify teleworking – relating to six definitional dimensions that comprise:

- Communication
- Content
- Location
- Organisation
- Time
- Travel

Trends

Various are the justifications why teleworking occupies a high priority in the European Union's agenda – evidenced by policy statements, programmes of encouragement, awareness campaigns and financial aid to innovative projects that proliferated in recent years. These efforts recognise the importance of an estimated 10 million teleworkers who contributed to Europe's Gross Domestic Product in 2000. Indeed, telework is estimated to relate to 6% of the European Union workforce (European Foundation for Quality of Living & Working Conditions, 2000). Equally significant is the observation that 4.9% of all European workers teleworked more than 25% of the time in 2000.

Telework is unevenly distributed in the European Union, featuring:

- Prominence in Nordic countries;
- Increased take up in North-Central European countries;
- Central-Mediterranean countries are still experimenting with telework as a means of work arrangement;

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- The gap in telework take-up between countries with 'high teleworking' and countries with 'low teleworking' is possibly increasing rather than decreasing.

The above compares well with the situation in the US, where an estimated 21.5 million workers related to their primary job through a telework arrangement, whilst an additional 3 million persons teleworked in their secondary job. An estimated 1.2 million people worked at home in the US for both primary and secondary jobs. These statistics indicate how an estimated 10% of the total US workforce teleworked from home (BLS, 1997).

National variations within the EU also prevail. Countries with high levels of eWork tend to group into two broad categories:

- advanced high-tech economies such as Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, using ICT technologies for a wide variety of eWork practices profusely;
- countries in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe such as Italy, Spain, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, featuring very high levels of outsourcing that is sometimes rooted in economic systems that favour small firms or environments with a significant informal economy.

Significant are the observations pertaining to the low apparent levels of eWork in Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal – observations that are, in part, the result of such countries' being classified as a single region. In contrast, larger economies (Germany, France and UK to a lesser extent) feature a lesser significant level of eWork owing to their sheer size, bringing the EU average down altogether.

In 2000, home-based teleworkers were a more common incidence in the Netherlands than in any other EU member state. This observation reflects a strong tradition of home-based working in this country, combined with an advanced use of IT and a relatively strong social protection system that encourages employee status. Also notable is Denmark's relative use of home-based telework arrangements – an aspect that featured highly in public debates associated with the negotiation of innovative collective agreements to cover this form of work by trade unions in the recent past.

Considered in its early stages of development, telework is frequently offered to workers on a voluntary basis – largely in line with a common belief that any positive results may not accrue when telework is imposed on unwilling employees. Trade Unions typically strived to ensure the voluntary principle in collective agreements where teleworking was introduced.

However, from a legal standpoint, it is debatable to what extent the employer can impose telework on the employee unless the parties concerned – employer, employees and trade union – agree on whether teleworking is applied.

Equally significant are the efforts exerted by Trade Unions to ensure that employees retain a right to return to traditional work arrangements following a spell in telework: the principle of 'right to return' is exemplified by specific clauses in a large number of collective agreements throughout Europe. This is particularly relevant in cases where teleworkers experience changes in domestic circumstances – marriage or relationship breakdowns or when if they have to move to a smaller house. Of Concern is the case when, in practical terms, an employee may not be in a position to refuse telework (in economic terms) especially when such offer is not accompanied by any alternatives except for the loss of a job.

Full-time Vs. Part-time Telework

Initially introduced in a number of contexts as a 'full-time' form of work, telework presently prevails as a 'part-time' feature in the labour landscape, largely as a result of employers opting to introduce a form of flexibility in otherwise regular, full-time jobs. 'Full-time' telework is considered as a significant antecedent for drawbacks commonly associated with work away from the centralised office/plant locations, exemplified by lack of social interaction, isolation and difficulties in combining work with family life, along with physical and psychological problems among teleworkers.

These drawbacks were significantly subdued in countries where telework was introduced as an 'alternate' feature in full-time regular work, as was the case of Germany. Indeed, work arrangements among German teleworkers feature the faculty for workers to work from home one or two days weekly, whilst working at the normal place of work on the other working days. Despite a seemingly suitable arrangement, this form of telework does not realise the full potential accruing from telework as employers still incur costs in maintaining and operating centralised facilities whilst employees do not benefit fully from optimally reduced commuting.

Telework in Malta

Malta's transformation into an Information Society is considered as a primary force behind the take up of telework among Maltese workers and employers. More significantly, Malta's ICT Strategy (2004 – 2006) is considered as an important stimulus in the Country's propelling use of technology and associated advances in Malta's workforce efficiency, intent of connecting three

quarters of Maltese households to the Internet by end of 2006. The same strategy, amongst other features, is intent on promoting the application of ICTs in day-to-day work activities, whilst catalysing the use of ICT as an effective management tool for strategic and tactical planning among Maltese enterprises. The effective promotion of ICT as a culture among Maltese SMEs provides an additional motivation among Maltese employers to adopt telework in increasingly ICT dependent jobs. This adoption is further encouraged by Malta's present ICT milieu (National Statistics Office, 2003):

- an estimated 38.0% of Maltese households feature a desktop computer among the items used by household members, while 31.3% of Maltese households had access to Internet;
- 30.5% of households had experienced basic computer training – with proportions receiving such training varying with age, and
- 26.8% of the Maltese population used the Internet and 25.7% of the Maltese had a personal e-mail address. In addition, an estimated 2.9% of the Maltese used the Internet to find information related to work or business, while 2.3% used the Internet to send work carried out at home to the work place. These proportions translate into 58.0% of Internet users utilising the Internet as an information source related to work or business, while 47.1% of Internet users use the Internet to send work carried out at home to the work place.

Telework take-up is further encouraged by the Maltese enterprise context:

- 97% of Maltese enterprises used ICT in 2003, of which, 94% used Internet in ordinary business activities, and
- regular use of computers and Internet featured among 46% and 30% of employees respectively.

Recognition of telework in Malta features among all levels of labour policy embodied in Malta's National Action Plan for Employment (2004) and included in various policy documents issued by various labour related authorities. Telework is considered not only as an innovative form of work arrangement that supports an enhanced work-life balance, but as a form of employment that presents work opportunities for human resources who are otherwise unable to engage in regular paid work – exemplified by women, persons with disabilities and persons with caring responsibilities. Nevertheless, conflicting remain the statistics published by National entities in respect to the adoption of telework among Maltese employers – quoted at 11.4% of enterprises in 2003 (National Statistics Office, 2005) or 3.8% of employers in 2005 (Employment & Training Corporation, 2005). Telework remains a significantly common incidence among the larger employers, contrasting against the level of telework take-up among small enterprises that

engage less than 50 employees. Equally significant is the notion that telework largely relates to roles comprising management, professional, and associate professional jobs.

Deciding to Telework

In becoming a significant feature in Europe's labour context, telework is considered a direct result of the evaluations undertaken by both employers and workers in adopting a flexible form of work arrangement as a contractual relationship.

In implementing telework, employers require various conditions in place, exemplified by:

- established information and communication technologies that support flexible working and mobile working;
- a recognised need to optimise efficiencies related to travel – especially where the public transport option is impractical and inefficient for many business purposes;
- accurate employee and job selection, together with carefully defined terms and conditions for teleworkers;
- clear specification of deliverables and work conditions, corresponding hours of work, pay parity with on-site workers and annual leave;
- due considerations to insurance provisions pertaining to health and safety;
- due considerations of technical requirements and security in the teleworker's home in order to guarantee a secure and efficient working environment, and
- addressing management styles adapted to suit this mode of work.

In contrast, in deciding to engage in telework, workers consider the following aspects ⁽¹¹⁾:

- the possibility of reduced status as a normal employee within an organisation;
- lack of promotion opportunities – teleworker is virtually invisible;
- the benefit from a perceived higher status – being specially selected as teleworkers (contrasting against the possibility of reduced status);
- missing the social interaction of the workplace ('social isolation') and the contact with the organisation;
- suitable physical space and conditions for work at teleworkers' home;

¹¹ Shafizadeh et al, 1998.

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- savings arising from reduced travelling, with more time at hand for leisure, home or social activities, and
 - additional costs that teleworkers will bear, exemplified by extra energy consumption (heating, lighting).

Supporting Telework

The growth of telework is considered a direct result of supporting economic, environmental and social factors. Economic sustainability of telework is related to national levels of added value, the development of human capital and employment, the resultant augmented personal wealth and the paralleling competitive resilience of a Nation's enterprises. Indeed, the overall economic success of enterprises is considered as one of the results of telework and other flexible work arrangements adopted by EU companies enabling opportunities for working mothers and other persons otherwise unavailable to participate in paid work.

The main environmental influences of teleworking are those typically related to transport, along with other benefits that accrue from the use of ICT intensive telework (e-work), including:

- the impact of air quality as a result of reduced transport-related emissions (carbon dioxide and other pollutants);
- actual or avoided consumption of energy (from reduced transport requirements);
- reduced congestion as a result of avoided and/or time-shifted trips;
- long-term changes in the building environment as a result of changing design of offices and homes in response to teleworking.

Unlike the economic and environmental dimensions, the social sustainability dimensions are hard to quantify, as there is no uniform way such can be measured. Indeed, social dimensions relate to attitudes, opportunities and other intangible aspects that are not easily quantifiable – as exemplified by social inclusion, quality of life, work-life balance, health and community.

Teleworking offers significant benefits for employers, the workforce and society. Employers typically benefit from:

- cost savings (facility costs, supervision costs, transport costs);
- increased productivity from telecommuting workers;
- improved motivation;
- lower absenteeism;

-
- skills retention;
 - organisational flexibility;
 - flexible staffing;
 - more loyal, motivated and less stressed workforce;
 - organisational resilience in the face of external disruption;
 - enhanced customer service.

Balancing these benefits is a series of disadvantages presented by telework to employers, comprising:

- inadequate management systems and cultures that fail to adapt to flexibility that telework can offer;
- lack of confidence among managers in their ability to manage at a distance;
- lack of faith in teleworkers' commitment among managers – possibly supported by managers' perception that home-based workers tend to under-perform;
- significant training and retraining costs.

Contrastingly, benefits for individual teleworkers include:

- augmented independence;
- enhanced autonomy in terms of organisation and working time arrangements;
- reduced travel time and costs;
- better balance between working time and leisure time;
- improved work opportunities in other geographic locations;
- access to work for people with specific difficulties (especially people with disabilities);
- less disruption to family life;
- more time devoted for personal development and consequent augmented qualification leading to enhanced employability;
- improved working environment and reduced work stress.

Telework also features a range of disadvantages for employees, including:

- isolation and marginalisation within the employer company;
- less support for personal development and limitations in social life;

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- overlapping of working time and free time;
 - effective reduction of leisure time;
 - reduced job security, less contractual force and more precarious work;
 - risk of de-skilling;
 - less suitable working environment;
 - increased work stress as an employee juggles time between work and social commitments.

Society thus benefits from telework in different aspects, including:

- increased job opportunities;
- reduced commuting and consequently reduced pollution, road casualties and travelling time, along with reduced wear & tear of infrastructure and automobiles;
- reduced adverse effects on health;
- reduced energy consumption.

Nevertheless, society faces a number of disadvantages arising from telework, including increased:

- social dispersion and gender disparities;
- unprotected jobs;
- costs & usage of technological infrastructures,

along with reduced service-related jobs.

Given that the benefits and disadvantages of teleworking are intertwined together, the development of telework has to be assessed in its entirety. In particular, the impacts of disadvantages on teleworking need to be meticulously evaluated in order to achieve best practice. This holistic approach will lead to the recognition of the best tradeoffs between production, employment and the quality of work, and telework regulation.

Telework – Research in Malta

Field Work

Face to face interviews were administered with a sample of two sub-populations – a selection of 9 employers ⁽¹²⁾ and a selection of their respective teleworkers. Of the 9 employers reviewed, 44% were established for the past 20 years or less, while the remaining 56% had an experience of over 20 years in the market. Equally significant is the notion that 56% of the participating establishments were governmental organisations, while another 22 were private companies, leaving the last two employers each being a parastatal and a publicly listed company.

The Employers' Point of View

The eighteen teleworkers participating in the research accounted for only 0.6% of the total employees engaged on a permanent basis within the nine establishments reviewed (which accounted for 3,196 full-time jobs). A significant observation is that the majority (77.8%) of such teleworkers were women, typically engaged in clerical or administrative or data processing occupations (45% of the telework women interviewed). The men engaged in telework and interviewed in this study were largely engaged in some ICT specialisation

Typically, teleworkers spend some 27.8 hours weekly working away from the employers' location. Whereas 27% of teleworking time was spent on ICT specialisation (mainly by men), 22% of the time was spent on secretarial/administration by females.

Implementing Telework

The adoption of telework in Malta is a recent phenomenon, with such arrangement adopted by the reviewed organisations between 1999 and 2006. Such implementation is typically championed by top management – with reviewed organisations indicating that the establishments' directors, head of departments or government policy were the primary initiators. Two of the interviewed organisations encountered opposition for the adoption of telework, although this was claimed to be somewhat weak and originating from the finance department or line managers who raised opposition primarily in view of perceived difficulties in managing teleworkers.

¹² from an initial sample of 120 enterprises that were known, through previous research, to have employed teleworkers

Undertaking a pilot scheme before full-implementation was a feature among 83% of the research participating establishments. Outcome of such scheme related to an appraisal of the resultant customer satisfaction, management satisfaction and quality of work.

Employers typically engaged teleworkers through a selection process relating to presently employed staff within the establishment. Such selection occurred directly by management (top-down approach) or through an application process initiated by members of staff. Indeed, no external recruitment featured. Independently from the ability to do the job competently, employers evaluated prospective teleworkers primarily in respect with:

- maturity,
- availability of time to devote to work and
- self-sufficiency.

Employers also mentioned a satisfactory record of accomplishment of the employee, the duration of employment, if the worker is already working in other arrangements with the company and the conditions of the arrangement, all as additional considerations taken before engaging a teleworker formally.

Conversely, employers considered:

- unreliability & untrustworthiness, lack of maturity and self-discipline to work without supervision often resulting in inefficiencies or abuse of the system, together with other similar negative personal characteristics leading to low productivity,
- distractions at home, the prioritising of other work (domestic and non);
- the inadequacy of telework for specific job positions within the company, such as managerial duties, in which teleworkers were considered to be generally less effective

as indicators about a person's unsuitability to be engaged through a telework arrangement.

Managing Performance of Teleworkers

Employers assert that managing performance of teleworkers involves monitoring through regular phone discussions between managers and employees, along with the adoperation of mutually agreed deadlines or targets.

Significant is the observation that the majority of teleworkers did not receive specific training, with only one establishment claiming to offer special training to its teleworkers. This lack of training may be a direct result of participants' inability to identify or use a specific method for

identifying teleworkers' training needs, albeit establishments indicated that regular staff appraisal meetings typically identify any such training needs. Indeed, while employers expect teleworkers to be already trained, it is often the teleworker who is expected to ask for any specific training.

Training methods used by the reviewed employers vary, ranging from courses provided by local institutions, computer based training, in house training programmes and self-training using manuals. Conversely, since teleworkers were primarily engaged through the selection of staff from within the organisations, they would already have received on the job training, however not specific to telework. Indeed, establishments reviewed claimed that training offered to teleworkers does not differ from that provided to other regular human resources.

The day-to-day communication between teleworkers and their managers mainly involves phone conversations and electronic mail almost on a daily basis. Face-to-face meetings and electronic chat are a rarer incidence, typically happening weekly, while organisation intranet is used somewhat less frequently.

Face-to-face meetings are considered as the most effective means of communication between teleworkers and managers, followed by electronic mail. Phone conversations and organisational intranet followed, also considered rather effective in this regard.

Employers consider teleworkers to perform marginally better than regular human resources do overall. Indeed, employers quote better aspects about telework as exemplified by employee turnover and absenteeism, productivity, quality of work and complaining behaviour. Nevertheless, team effort was the only issue where teleworkers compared slightly worse than regular human resources. Equally significant is the notion that teleworkers were not seen to raise any particular complaints. Indeed, only two establishments claimed to receive complaints from their teleworkers, with such complaints concerning mainly technical problems, reliability and suitability of technology used, the segregation from the work environment and not feeling part of a team. One other case reported a complaint of fewer rights enjoyed by teleworkers when compared to regular human resources.

Overall, employers were typically satisfied with telework as a work arrangement, with various advantages quoted by reviewed establishments. Indeed, employers believe that the most important of such advantages concerned the retention of skilled human resources, followed by the improved human resource motivation. Organisational flexibility, reduced costs, quality of work, access to human resources with disability & caring responsibilities, reduced commuting/transport challenges and reduced demands on space were also considered as rather important

issues. Employers quoted other relevant issues, exemplified by the enhancing of relationships between company and employee and the retention of women in ICT.

Conversely, employers quoted poor quality of work, employee loyalty and technical challenges as the most important potential disadvantages arising from telework. Issues related to reliability, social isolation, security challenges and equipment costs were also considered somewhat important in this regard.

The Future of Telework – The Employers' Opinion

Employers reviewed provided no significant indication of a strategy implementation to make changes to the current composition of telework arrangements. Indeed, the probability of extending the number of teleworkers, extending telework to new occupations/roles and encourage telework to other employees is rather minor. However, while reducing roles/occupations in telework was perceived to be a slight probability, reducing the number of employees or abandoning the scheme altogether was seen as somewhat improbable.

The Teleworker – A Profile?

A total of 18 employees engaged in telework with the above employers were interviewed. The following points highlight the features of the typical teleworker as established by this review:

- 77.8% of participants were women;
- median age of participants stood at 30 to 34 years;
- 77.8% of participants were married, living and/or with partner;
- 81.3% of participants claimed to have caring responsibilities at home, of whom, most related to children at home. Conversely, 16.8% of participants had other caring responsibilities such as caring for parents;
- 35.3% of participants spent 5 to 7 hours in domestic work daily, 17.6% spent more than 9 hours, while the remaining participants spent less than 5 hours daily. 35.2% of participants spent less than 3 hours in domestic work daily;
- 50.0% of participants had a diploma or higher level of education;
- 55.6% of participants were employed with government organisations, while the remaining 44.4% were employed with parastatal or private companies;
- 50.0% of participants were involved in the communications sector, while 22.2% were involved in government services. Other sectors of activity included the banking, finance & insurance sector, hotel & catering, manufacturing of electrical appliances, transport and wholesale & retail;

-
- 66.7% of the participants were employed on a full-time basis, while the remaining 33.3% were employed on a part-time basis;
 - 66.7% of participants were employed on an indefinite contract, while the remaining 27.8% and 5.6% of participants were engaged in fixed-term contract jobs and casual jobs respectively;
 - 47.1% of participants were professionals, 35.3% were engaged in clerical occupations, while 17.6% were high ranking officials, senior managers, large business owners, directors;
 - 52.9% of participants were engaged with their company for more than 10 years, while 35.3% and 11.8% were engaged with their company for 1 to 3 years and 7 to 10 years, respectively.
 - 35.3% of participants were engaged in telework for 1 to 3 years, 29.4% for less than one year, while the remaining 35.3% were engaged in telework for more than 4 years;
 - 33.3% of participants were involved in IT/ITC, while 27.8% had administrative roles. Other participants were involved in customer care, human resources, marketing and other roles.

Teleworkers typically spent 56.6% of their workdays at the employer's central location/office, while another 28.6% were spent at home. On average 16.7 workdays per month were spent in teleworking activities. While the majority of participants spent most of their time at traditional, central office (employer) locations, work from home featured more commonly among:

- female teleworkers and participants with children aged 5 years or younger (especially younger than 2 years), or
- teleworkers aged 40 to 54 years, or
- teleworkers employed with private companies in part time or casual jobs.

Directly as a result of such patterns, teleworkers typically reported a spectrum of different consequences in travel time involved for work reasons. Indeed, while the average travel time ranged between 3 to 6 hours weekly, most teleworkers reported a decline in the total travel time as a consequence of telework – with 50.0% of the teleworkers interviewed claiming to have experienced a noticeable decline in car travel, while 22.2% reporting an experienced decrease in bus travel related to work. The more significant benefits/changes prevailed among women aged 30 to 39 years, typically married with children.

As an additional benefit, two teleworkers reported that their car was used by other members of the household when they were working at home. Nevertheless, 54% of the teleworkers who worked at home for whole days also claimed that they had to make additional journeys to transport children and to shop. Indeed, such teleworkers were typically women, aged 30 to 54,

married, living with a partner, and responsible for children younger than 2 years of age. Equally significant is the observation that since starting telework, teleworkers did not suffer any work related accidents (even if these involved driving for work related reasons).

Teleworkers interviewed typically worked 5-day week, although two teleworkers claimed to work 6 days weekly. These teleworkers claimed to have no caring responsibilities at home and spent less than 1 hour in domestic work daily.

Equipping the Teleworker

In being capable of delivering their work, teleworkers were typically equipped with desks, fixed line telephony and mobile telephony (in declining order of incidence). Nevertheless, teleworkers had desks, fixed line telephones, filing cabinets and desktop computers available at their employers' offices. Moreover, while filing cabinets were more available at the employers' offices, laptop computers and mobile phones were more available at home.

Sharing of desks was an uncommon observation, with only one participant claiming to have her desk shared at the employer's office in her present job. In conducting their work, teleworkers typically made a significant use of fixed line telephony, followed by Internet, mobile phones and organisational intranet in declining order of incidence. Male teleworkers featured a marginally higher inclination towards the use of mobile phones and laptop/portable PCs, while a higher use of Internet prevailed among female teleworkers.

A total of 82% of teleworkers interviewed claimed to have a separate permanent area available for telework activities at home. The remaining 18% claimed that such segregated area was not feasibility owing to lack of space at home, along with restrictions imposed by their lifestyle and home chores, requiring the teleworker to be in different places at home during different times of the day.

Impact of Telework

Teleworkers typically agreed in that telework resulted in a net improvement of their life at both home and work. They claimed positive aspects accruing from telework, exemplified by the possibility of working at home when ill and cannot travel to the office, along with the improved work conditions and augmented levels of autonomy put to work. Nevertheless, teleworkers felt that their work output was similar to what they used to provide before adopting telework. Equally significant is the observation that the majority of teleworkers did not feel that full-time,

regular workers in similar jobs commanded more respect, got a better deal or that such regular workers were paid better on an hourly basis than teleworkers.

It is significant that, during the month prior to the interview, 33% of the interviewed teleworkers participants were ill and could not go to their work/office yet worked at home. The duration of the sickness period varied from one day (one teleworker) to a maximum of 10 days (one teleworker).

Most teleworkers also asserted that telework enabled them to retain their job, the position they held and to stay with their employer. While most teleworkers experienced an increase in service costs and utility costs at home, together with marginal increase in residence upkeep and cash in hand, teleworkers benefited from a marked decline in travelling costs and a marginal decrease in the costs related to care of children and adults. Teleworkers also noted that since starting telework, they experienced a considerable increase in the requirements for printing of documents at home.

Social & Domestic Aspects of telework

Teleworkers considered that having control of when and how to work was the most significant achievement, flexing their work schedule at home and devoting more time to work in the evening or in the weekends. While indicating a net augmented job satisfaction, teleworkers perceived having a lesser opportunity for long breaks, albeit they claimed to suffer from less work related stress.

Despite this form of work, 72.0% of teleworkers did not change the total number of hours worked weekly. A further 22.0% of teleworkers claimed to have effectively decreased the number of hours devoted to paid work weekly, while only one research participant claimed to have increased her working hours weekly since becoming a teleworker. Reduction in hours worked was a more common incidence among part-time teleworkers.

If offered alternative paid work, most teleworkers (56% of participants) were adamant in not changing unless the alternative involved telework. Such teleworkers featured:

- ages between 40 and 54 years, or
- caring responsibilities at home (parents), or
- more than 5 hours daily devoted to domestic, or
- a post secondary level of education or less.

More significantly, teleworkers claimed to be unable to be engaged in paid work unless it was telework, with such teleworkers featuring:

- employment in a professional role, or
- an experience of more than 6 years with the present employer/company, or
- no employees reporting to them.

Such an assertion was largely backed by reasons relating to care of children at home (over 50% of such teleworkers), while other issues related to own poor health/illness and a caring responsibility for other adults at home.

Overall, teleworkers held positive opinions about the effect of telework on their work life. They claimed an overall improved balance between life and work, an improved quality of life, apart from other improvements related to their social life, exemplified by less conflict at home and a net improvement in their health. Indeed, in respect to the latter, teleworkers claimed that telework eased the stress caused by a full-time job and having to cope with children, claiming that telework improved domestic harmony. Other teleworkers claimed that telework enabled them to manage asthma and the adequacy of their work environment.

As a result of telework, 83.3% of teleworkers changed the time devoted to home or domestic work, albeit such changes were shallowest among male teleworkers, or teleworkers living with a partner or teleworkers with child caring responsibilities at home. Such changes meant that the time devoted to home chores increased primarily in relation to caring of children, followed by the caring for elderly or disabled relatives at home, helping children with homework and other needs of children.

Equally significant are the reasons teleworkers quoted in respect with reduced conflict at home. A perceived better handling of childcare along with greater presence at home (and the capability of undertaking more domestic tasks) were quoted to be the key reasons for reduced conflict at home an overall improved harmony in the family. With fewer interruptions to work and less problems, relating to the access to ICT equipment, teleworkers also claimed that their work performance improved with an overall decline in work related stress.

Teleworkers also quoted an overall positive effect on other members of the household, particularly in respect with dependent children.

As a result of telework, meeting relatives and friends were the two activities that teleworkers claimed to have increased. Nevertheless, differences were noticeable among different teleworker groups, such as the increased integration (meeting) with friends or an increased usage of cafeteria, pubs and restaurants prevailed as a response among teleworkers with no caring responsibilities at home.

Discussion & Conclusions

It is significant that teleworking as an arrangement featured only among a small minority of the workforce within the nine companies (0.6% of the total employees engaged with these establishments). In the absence of external recruitment, this observation may evidence that teleworking activity is influenced mainly by the teleworkers' needs rather than a drawn out organisation's strategic plan. The overriding factor for females to engage in telework is likely to relate to caring responsibilities involving own children or parents. On the other hand, ICT specialisation was the main proponent for men to engage in teleworking. Nevertheless, the use of a pilot scheme among five establishments participating in the research indicates that some formal planning was undertaken.

It is also noteworthy that in the majority of cases, no opposition was forthcoming when teleworking was to be introduced. When opposition did occur, it was more likely to come from line or finance managers, possibly indicating that such management resources were not prepared to manage workers who are most of the time out of sight.

The research also indicated that one of the most important ingredients leading to the success of teleworking is communication – an essential aspect not only to the management of teleworking but also to the successful execution of many of the tasks involved.

Managers' responses relating to unsuitable qualities such as lack of self-discipline, distractions at home and giving priority to domestic work reflect a belief that teleworking is perceived as a secondary activity carried out by people whose primary responsibility is to their families. However, such responses also give us a richer insight into these managers' views of the challenges posed by work carried out from home. Managers see a requirement for self-discipline reliant on external reinforcement.

Teleworkers' performance is managed primarily through regular phone discussions with managers and by mutually agreed deadlines or targets. Less apparent are approaches

involving on-line monitoring, regular progress meetings (with their respective manager) and team meetings.

It is clear that a wide variety of methods is used, with no single method emerging as uniquely appropriate for the remote management of home-based workers. Indeed, this evidence suggests that it is unusual for a manager to rely on any single approach. It seems that in most cases, the primary method of management is supplemented by additional measures when these are deemed necessary.

For most employers:

- retention of skilled human resources,
- reduced costs,
- quality of work,
- access to human resources with disability and caring responsibilities,
- reduced commuting, and
- reduced demands on space

were perceived as the most important benefits of telework. Remarkable are the managers' observations relating to poor quality of work, employee loyalty, technical challenges and social isolation, often cited as the main disadvantages of teleworking.

Most managers revealed a high level of satisfaction with teleworking. According to them, teleworkers performed marginally better than their on-site colleagues did. Teleworkers are also likely on balance to produce quality work, take less time off and tend to stay longer with the organisation. It is possible that some of the advantages cited are not a result of the teleworking situation itself but rather stem from the fact that only the most experienced and trusted staff were selected for teleworking. The fact that no teleworkers are recruited from external sources may be indicative of this situation.

Notwithstanding the high level of satisfaction, it is somewhat surprising that the probability of extending the number of teleworkers, extending telework to new occupations/roles and promote telework to other employees is minimal. It seems that rather than adopting a proactive approach to teleworking, companies are prone to devise teleworking schemes in an ad hoc manner, depending on prospective teleworkers' needs. However, it is also significant that companies are not envisaging any reductions in the number of teleworkers or abandoning the teleworking scheme altogether.

From a different standpoint, teleworkers were found at all organisational levels from senior management to the lowest grade of clerical work, featuring in a diverse range of occupations. It is significant that 78% of teleworkers participating in the research were women, supporting the commonly held view of teleworking as an overwhelmingly female form of work. Also of importance is the fact that 81% of participating teleworkers claimed to have caring responsibilities at home, with 83% of such teleworkers having caring responsibilities related to children at home, whereas 17% had caring responsibilities for parents. It is also noteworthy that 67% of teleworkers were employed on a full-time basis.

Research suggests that teleworking was economically beneficial in most of the cases, generally resulting in improved work performances, diminished absenteeism and improved employee retention. However, in most cases, these benefits are offset by additional costs such as home equipment, service and utility costs. It is also significant that the majority of respondents were aware that teleworking was an important factor in staying with the organisation.

Reduced absenteeism is also a result of the new level of discretion afforded to teleworkers in conducting work at home – particularly when they are too ill to travel to work. The transport dimension adds on to the positive aspects of telework, with reduced travelling and commuting largely perceived as benefits by teleworkers, albeit partially offset by additional domestic journeys. Reduced travelling was quoted to contribute positively to the environment (particularly in the works reviewed in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**, page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**). Nevertheless, telework did not result in more efficient use of space as equipment tended to be duplicated, largely as a result of the augmented need by teleworkers to print documents at home.

This research also showed that teleworkers felt that on balance, teleworking was beneficial for them. It appears that the positive social impacts also outweighed negative ones. The social inclusion dimension seems to be positive on balance. Teleworkers with caring responsibilities felt that teleworking maintained their employment opportunities – which are otherwise unfeasible owing to family or domestic demands. The quality of life dimension also proved to be positive, with almost all teleworkers interviewed asserting that their quality of life improved as a result of telework. This is substantiated by the observation that the majority of teleworkers did not experience an increase in working hours.

Most respondents also felt that telework improved their work-life balance. From a health point of view, most participants felt that teleworking bore beneficial effects. It is also evident that teleworkers are creating more 'quality time' when they want it. They take breaks especially

when children demand their attention. Through a better quality of life and work-life balance, teleworkers are more flexible and can match their work to their 'body clocks'.

Teleworking thus fosters vital skills, enhancing people's abilities and employability by enabling them to act autonomously and manage their time effectively.

Recommendations

Various are the justifications why telework occupies a high priority in the European Union's agenda – evidenced by policy statements, programmes of encouragement, awareness campaigns and financial aid to innovative projects that proliferated in recent years. These efforts recognise the importance of an estimated 10 million teleworkers who contributed to Europe's Gross Domestic Product in 2002. Despite the fact that telework in Malta is present in some organisations, as evidenced by employers' surveys carried out by National Statistics Office in 2003 and Employment Training Corporation in 2005, there are no official statistics to benchmark Malta against other European countries.

It is significant that Malta's National ICT strategic plan aims at having three-fourths of all Maltese households connected to the Internet by the end of 2006. Efforts within Malta's ICT Strategy, directly or indirectly, support the development of a culture that encourages the adoption of telework as a feature within Malta's employment landscape. Indeed the importance of telework is recognised at National levels in respect to the labour market matters – as embodied within Malta's National Action Plan for Employment published in 2004.

Government should continuously strive to promote telework at a national level. This promotion may be augmented by providing a definition of telework that will form the basis for the changes that are required in labour legislation relating to telework. Changes to legislation relating to Occupational Health and Safety, and atypical forms of employment will be required to embody this form of work. It is also recommended that the Government should implement, where it is deemed appropriate and beneficial, teleworking schemes within the civil service.

In contrast, employers can implement a series of approaches. They may enable flexible working and mobile working by supporting staff with information and communication technologies just as an initial step, reaping already quoted benefits as exemplified by reduced office costs and improved human resource performance. Employers also need to urgently address the need to travel and commute. The public transport option is often impractical and inefficient for many business purposes, opening opportunities for organisations to create ways

to increase efficiency and reduce time and money wasted on travel. Such can be attained through:

- enabling routine flexible working and mobile working, by supporting staff with both good ICT and appropriate management and expectations,
- reviewing how meetings take place: the frequency, duration and location, and
- reviewing occupancy of desks and space requirements to identify the savings that can come from remote working.

There are issues that require careful consideration by employers who wish to implement teleworking. By implementing appropriate changes to management procedures and by providing good technological and management support, these issues can usually be resolved.

Employee and job selection is probably the most important aspect in ensuring success of the teleworking programme. This will require the development of selection criteria to identify the personal qualities of good teleworkers and ensure the selection of self-motivated, self-disciplined individuals that are able to cope with the lack of social contact inherent in this form of work.

Furthermore, the terms and conditions for teleworkers will need careful definition. Aspects such as deliverables, corresponding hours of work, pay parity with on-site workers, annual leave and superannuation will all require a clear specification.

Additionally, other issues such as insurance provision call for contention. Therefore, health and safety must be a paramount concern. Technical requirements and security in the teleworker's home also need to be analysed and assessed in order to guarantee a secure and efficient working environment.

Finally, and probably most importantly, management styles need to be adapted to suit this new mode of work. In the past, management methods relied on the fact that an employee can be physically observed at work. In telework, this 'over-the-shoulder' management technique cannot be used and must be replaced with 'management through deliverables', possibly calling for retraining of managers who to date are effective only in managing human resources physically present in the employers' premises.

From a different standpoint, various issues may affect teleworkers and these call for an immediate redress. A major concern for any teleworker is the possibility of reduced status as a normal employee within an organisation. Since a teleworker is not physically present in the

organisation, he or she may not be seen as an equal to the on-site employees. The consequences of this lower status may result in lack of opportunities for promotion. Conversely, teleworkers may occasionally benefit from a perceived higher status just because they were specially selected.

Some teleworkers may miss the social interaction of the workplace. This daily interaction with other people is a major reason for many individuals going out to work. The removal of such interaction may prompt employees to lose motivation and perceive a job as no longer worthwhile.

Additionally, the teleworker needs to have a suitable physical space and conditions for work at home or in his/her remote location outside the employers' premises. Furthermore, teleworkers often benefit financially from teleworking due to reduced travelling, albeit other benefits accrue that are difficult to quantify in monetary terms, such as more leisure time. Against this setting, however, there may be financial costs to the teleworker that need to be balanced, such as additional costs incurred in heating, air-conditioning, lighting and electricity. Depending on the contracted conditions of work, some or all of these expenses may be claimed back from the employer.

Local Trade Unions should follow the example of their counterparts across Europe, whereby a changing attitude towards teleworking is emerging. Trade Unions across Europe are increasingly engaging in a constructive dialogue about telework, exemplified by a number of position papers and reports published by different employee associations. As early as 1996, trade unions were looking at teleworking as a challenge (Bibby, 1996). In the same year, workers were reported to be 'interested in telework as an opportunity to manage their time better, combining work and leisure activities in a more effective way, despite the potential isolation of workers from the daily activities that occur at the work place' (ETUC Policy Statement, 1996). This statement presented a cautious yet positive approach in adopting telework as a legitimate work arrangement, as bolstered by a reiteration that:

'teleworking should neither be condemned out of hand nor glorified. The crucial question is how it will be organised — preferably in such a way that the 'tele' aspect of the work in question is placed in a complex setting that stimulates human skills and activities'

(ETUC, 1996).

In view of these arguments, trade unions should acknowledge the benefits that accrue from teleworking. It would be beneficial if they accentuate these advantages, without neglecting the

disadvantages, to employers and employees and strive to include teleworking clauses in collective agreements.

Teleworking may be thought to be the post-modern panacea for all organisational and work problems. Although it promises much, it needs to be carefully considered and be successfully applied. Therefore, Government, employers and unions do need to prepare and plan, and teleworkers need to ensure that this is really what they want.

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