

The promotion of equality must not be confused with the simple objective of balancing the statistics: it is a question of promoting long-lasting changes in parental roles, family structures, institutional practices, the organisation of work and time, their personal development and independence, but also concerns men and the whole of society, in which it can encourage progress and be a token of democracy and pluralism.

– From definition of gender mainstreaming, *Europa*, portal site of European Union

## Regional Profile

# Europe: Framework for Equality

The Commonwealth's three European member countries are Cyprus, Malta and the United Kingdom (UK). All are members of the European Union (Cyprus and Malta since 1 May 2004). In general, their social and economic indicators are better than for many other Commonwealth countries.

## Priorities and Action

Figures for 2001 show Gross National Income per capita for Cyprus at US\$12,320, for Malta at US\$9,210 and for the UK at \$25,120. There is no, or very little, absolute poverty, and literacy rates are high, along with school enrolment.

Cyprus, Malta and the UK have recorded a high investment level of public expenditure on education – respectively, 5.4%, 4.9% and 4.5% of GDP in 1998 – 2000. The percentage of public expenditure on education for pre-primary and primary level in the UK was 33.2%, for secondary level 46.7% and for tertiary level 20.1%. For Cyprus, the expenditures were 34.7%, 50.6% and 14.8% respectively. For Malta they were 28.9%, 42.8% and 8.2% respectively.

Life expectancy is over 70 years with women generally living longer than men; the infant mortality rate is no higher than 6 per 1,000 live births.

All three countries have been ranked in the high human development section of UNDP's Human Development Index: Cyprus at number 30, Malta at 31 and the UK at 12. All three are island states. The UK is the largest at 243,305 sq km, with Cyprus at 9,250 sq km and Malta at only 316 sq km. They contrast, moreover, in population size – the UK has over 58 million people and the other two have less than a million each – as well as in the size of their economies (in 2001 the UK was the fourth largest economy in the world).

The status of women and their position in economic life has improved significantly in the past few years. All three countries in the region recognise that women make a crucial contribution to the economy in their roles as both workers and carers. With the increasing

number of women entering the workforce, they are fully committed to equal opportunities in the labour market, encouraging family-friendly employment policies, and to improving childcare and other facilities to encourage those parents who wish to work to do so.

Malta alone has concerns in this area. Its National Development Plan for Economic and Social Cohesion (Malta 2003–2006) suggests that critical measures are necessary if it is to attain the employment target rates in the European Employment Strategy of 71% for men and 60% for women by 2010. At present, its percentage of females participating in the economy is a little over 30%.

In all three countries, flexible forms of employment, such as part-time and temporary work, have yet to be developed fully.

## Women in Public Life

Some advances have been made in female representation in political and decision-making levels. A campaign in Cyprus to encourage more women candidates has doubled the number of women MPs from 5.4% in 1999 to 10.7%. The UK has maintained 18% of women in the House of Commons (Lower House of Parliament) since 2001. With changes in the make-up of the House of Lords (Upper House), female representation has reached 16% there. The UK has passed legislation encouraging political parties to put forward more female candidates for election.

Malta, however, records a slight decline in the number of women in Parliament from 9.2% in 1999 to 7.7%.

All three countries are making efforts to attract and appoint more females to leadership positions in the public sector.

## Violence Against Women

Eradicating violence against women in all its forms (including domestic and sexual violence) and bringing offenders to justice

is a priority for the Commonwealth's European members. Domestic violence accounts for 23% of all violent crime in the UK. In all three countries, a combination of new legislation, projects encouraging reporting and handling victims, training, especially of the police, and provision of safe houses are among the various initiatives introduced.

## Regional Platforms for Equality

As with all other countries in the EU, Cyprus, Malta and the UK are working towards the implementation of the EU Policy Framework for Gender Equality 2001–2005. The framework seeks to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between women and men, as set out in Article 3(2) of the Treaty of Rome (1957) which set up the original European Economic Commission, the EU's 'ancestor'. It has also become an important element in Europe's external relations and the development of policies of co-operation.

The framework's strategic objectives are in the following areas:

- Promotion of gender equality in economic life;
- Promotion of equality in participation and representation;
- Promotion of equal access to and full enjoyment of social rights;
- Promotion of gender equality in civil life; and
- Promotion of the change of gender roles and stereotypes.

In 1996, the gender mainstreaming approach was introduced to take into account women's concerns, needs and aspirations and ensure they were regarded with the same importance as men's concerns in the design and implementation of policies. While the European Commission reports that considerable progress has been made regarding the situation of women in its member states, gender equality in day-to-day life is still being undermined by the fact that women and men do not enjoy equal rights in practice. It notes: 'Persistent under-representation of and violence against women, *inter alia*, show that there are still structural gender inequalities.'

The EU has undertaken a review of the following key aspects of policy at Community level over the past few years:

- The legislative *acquis* in the area of equal opportunities and the relevant case-law of the European Court of Justice;
- The Community commitment and follow-up to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action;
- The implementation of past Community programmes on equal opportunities for women and men and, in particular, of the medium-term Community action programme (1996–2000), which reinforced the gender mainstreaming strategy;
- The Structural Funds<sup>1</sup> contribution to gender equality over the last 10 years through specific actions, in particular the NOW initiative<sup>2</sup>, and the new regulations (2000–2006), as well as the valuable contribution of the European Employment Strategy since 1997;
- The initiatives in the field of external relations, development co-operation policies as well as the promotion and protection of the human rights of women;
- The new directives provided by the European Parliament and the Council; and
- The strengthened provisions of the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty on equality between women and men (Article 2, Article 3, Article 13 and Article 141 of the Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaties establishing the European Communities.

The UK, together with Canada and New Zealand, also belong to the 30-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose members share a commitment to democratic government and the market economy.

The OECD has a global reach through its work that ranges from economic and social issues to macroeconomics, trade, education, development and science and innovation. Dialogue, consensus, peer review and pressure are at the very heart of OECD especially in a globalised economy. Sharing the benefits of growth is also crucial as shown in activities such as sustainable development, gender

equality and aid.

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is the principal body through which the OECD deals with issues related to co-operation with developing countries. The mandate of the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) covers three principal areas:

- It contributes to improving the quality and effectiveness of development co-operation. The knowledge, insights and experience of both women and men are required if development is to be effective, sustainable and truly people-centred. Hence, progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment is vital for improving economic, social and political conditions in developing countries;
- It provides strategic support to the policies of the DAC: it acts as a catalyst and provides professional expertise to ensure that gender equality perspectives are mainstreamed in DAC work, reinforces this priority in members' programmes, and supports partner countries' development efforts;
- It meets the needs of members of the DAC and GENDERNET by providing a unique opportunity to exchange innovative and catalytic thinking on strategies and practices for integrating gender perspectives and women's empowerment to support partners' own efforts in all spheres of development co-operation.

DAC's work in the area of gender equality is carried out primarily through GENDERNET, formerly known as the Working Party on Gender Equality.

GENDERNET brings together gender experts from bilateral and multilateral development agencies as well as civil society, to define common approaches, share good practice, innovative ideas and state-of-the-art research on gender-related topics.

GENDERNET provides strategic support to DAC members to take gender equality into account in development policies and practices. It contributes a gender equality perspective to work conducted by other DAC subsidiary bodies, for example on conflict, peace-building and reconstruction; governance; poverty

reduction; statistics; evaluation and environment; as well as to other relevant OECD bodies.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Section is a member of GENDERNET.

## The Way Forward

In Europe, individual efforts by Commonwealth countries to advance gender equality have resulted in many gains, notably in the areas of education, health, employment and childcare, research and policy setting, and socio-political leadership. However, with the regional agreements in place now, especially the EU Policy Framework on Gender Equality, standards will become mandatory across the region. These agreements will facilitate collaboration, flows of resources and capacities, monitoring and evaluation on the attainment of targets, whether they be global, regional, national or the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Members of GENDERNET are instrumental in mainstreaming gender equality throughout their own agencies. The Network also organises thematic workshops involving OECD partner countries, the United Nations system, research institutes and civil society organisations. It participates in advocacy events bringing together experts from both OECD and partner countries.

Within the Commonwealth, the European members can play a leading role to spearhead gender equality initiatives as well as provide developing member countries with existing resources, both technical and financial, to advance their gender mainstreaming goals.

Commonwealth, EU and OECD members can play a crucial role in raising gender issues in global arenas on sensitive issues such as global trade, investment and development processes where the gender equality perspective is still considerably weak or marginalised. Such collaborative actions have direct and indirect impacts on the lives of ordinary women and men in Commonwealth developing countries and their economies.



Negotiations at the World Trade Organisation and Financing for Development (Monterrey) conferences, the programmes for Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries and of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and reviews of the MDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action make it clear that global partnerships at all levels are critical.

National governments and policymakers, practitioners, and development agencies alike, are challenged in the implementation of gender mainstreaming as gender issues are cross-cutting, complex and long-term. Commonwealth members, both from developed and developing regions, by gaining a better understanding and appreciation of the global issues can also arrive at common win-win solutions that do not lead to the unsustainable loss of resources, livelihoods and human dignity by any one party.

## Country Reports

On the following pages are summaries of reports submitted by the Commonwealth's European member countries on the progress of women and gender equality.

### End Note

1 The Structural Funds are the EU's main instruments for supporting social and economic restructuring across the EU. They account for over a third of the EU budget.

2 The Employment NOW Initiative of the EU aims to bring women into the labour market, reduce unemployment among women and improve the position of women already in the workforce.

# Cyprus

## COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
<b>POPULATION*</b>			
Total population (000)	701	734	757
Female population (% of total)	50.2	50.1	50.1
<b>LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION</b>			
Female labour force (% of total)	38	38	39
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	2.5	3.7	4.2
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	90	6.5	4.6
Male	2.3	1.7	1.3
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	87	81	95
Male	87	71	95
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	80	93	89
Male	79	90	87
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	13	20	25
Male	12	13	19
<b>HEALTH</b>			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	79	80	80
Male	74	75	76
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	10	9	6
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	...	...	...
Male	...	...	...

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

\* World Bank Atlas 1991 (for 1990 figures), 1997 (1995) and 2002 (2000)

## Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Cyprus has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Violence Against Women
  2. Women and the Economy
  3. Women in Power and Decision-making
  4. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
  5. Education and Training of Women
- Followed by: 6. Women and Health; 7. Women and Armed Conflict; 8. Human Rights of Women; 9. The Girl-child; 10. Women in the Media; 11. Women in the Environment; 12. Women in Poverty.

## A Decade of Action

Cyprus is an island country divided following the invasion and continued illegal occupation of the north by Turkish troops in 1974. On 1 May 2004, Cyprus became a member of the European Union. The country acceded to CEDAW in 1985 and to its Optional Protocol in 2002. The National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR) is a system of four bodies under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

Cyprus is ranked at 30 in the Gender-related Development Index in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*.

## Violence Against Women

Emphasis has been placed on the development of an appropriate legal framework in efforts to eradicate violence against women. Domestic violence was addressed specifically in The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law (1994), subsequently amended in 2000. Among other things, the law clarifies that rape can be committed within marriage, sets up a fund to meet the immediate needs of victims, and also provides for the establishment of shelters. It has special provisions protecting children who have been victims or are in danger of abuse.

An Advisory Committee on Family Violence has also been established to monitor family violence, and related services and structures set up to handle it.

Members are drawn from the public and private sector. The committee has produced a manual for inter-departmental procedures on how professionals in social welfare services, the police, the health and education services, the Law Office and relevant NGOs can work together.

Confidence in the investigation and judicial system is believed to be behind the increase in reports of family violence each year. The Attorney-General has decided to establish an electronic data bank at the Law Office for Family Violence Reporting so that processing will be facilitated.

The police undergo specific training so they can assist women, children and other victims of violence. They also operate a Central Bureau for handling issues concerning prevention and combating of family violence and of child abuse. A 24-hour help line for victims is operated at Police Headquarters.

Cyprus has passed legislation to combat trafficking of people and signed a number of bilateral agreements on co-operation with neighbouring countries. The Commissioner of Administration (Ombudsman) has recently investigated the status of the entrance and employment of alien women who come to Cyprus to work as 'cabaret artists' and a report submitted to Government.

### **Women in Power and Decision-making**

Despite the large number of women involved in politics, women are under-represented in government. At the time of reporting, there is only one woman among 11 Cabinet ministers. After parliamentary elections, 10.7% of those elected were women. After local elections in 2001, 19% of those elected as municipal councillors and members of other local areas governing bodies were women.

Women are present at all levels of the professional staff in the civil service – reaching 37% for the entire Civil Service, with the percentage at the senior officers' levels increasing from 5% in 1995 to 28.1% in 2003.

The Government, political parties and women's organisations have declared



their support for improving the gender balance in public life in order to meet the goal of a minimum of 30% female representation before 2005. The NMWR and NGOs have launched campaigns to encourage women to come forward as candidates for election, and to persuade voters at large of the importance of women's participation in public life.

Recent research, however, indicates that both female and male voters seem not to fully trust women representatives in politics, confirming that society is still conservative.

### **Women and Poverty, and the Economy**

Conditions of extreme poverty and poor living standards are very scarce. Poverty is therefore only identified in terms of what is locally perceived to be an acceptable standard of living. Among the most vulnerable groups in this respect are single mothers and retired older women. The Government is very sensitive to the needs of single parents, the majority of whom are women.

In order to safeguard human dignity while promoting social inclusion and long-term independence from public

funds, appropriate legislation has been passed and employment incentives together with support services offered.

The Single Parent Organisation, which is an NGO, has been established to identify special problems facing these women, provide support and act as a pressure group to improve their status. Improvements have been made to the social pension and the tax system reformed to specially benefit families with children. An allowance is also paid to all mothers residing in Cyprus who have at least four children and have ceased to be eligible for child benefit when all their children have exceeded the age limit. It is not payable to mothers on social or any other pension.

Women have benefited from the increase in employment opportunities over the past decade, accounting for almost 44% of total employment in 2002. The continued increase in the educational level of both females and males has resulted in a rising share of employment in higher skilled professions, such as managers, professionals and technicians. In 1992, employment in these occupations accounted for 23.9% of female employment; in 2002, this had risen to 28.4%.

## Gender Mainstreaming

The concept of gender mainstreaming was incorporated for the first time in the five-year National Development Plan (1999–2003) under a special chapter on Women and Development. It is seen as important for gender issues to be integrated into critical sectors of Government, as well as the private sector and civil society.

Based on a three-year plan on gender mainstreaming developed by an EU expert, the NMWR, in collaboration with the British Council in Nicosia, has organised training on gender mainstreaming for the Gender Focal Points of ministries as well as awareness sessions on gender mainstreaming for high-ranking officials.

National Women's Machinery

A Permanent Central Agency for Women's Rights was established in 1988. It was renamed the National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR) by the Council of Ministers in 1994. The NMWR is a system of four bodies under the leadership of the Minister of Justice and Public Order, with the Permanent Secretary of the ministry as deputy.

The four bodies are:

- The Council for Women's Rights, headed by the Minister of Justice and Public Order, and consisting of representatives of the 13 major women's and trades union organisations;
- The Inter-ministerial Committee, headed by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, consisting of the Competent Officers for Women's Rights appointed in all ministries and the Planning Bureau;
- The National Committee for Women's Rights, which consists of all the members of the Council for Women's Rights, all the Competent Officers for Women's Rights and more than 50 other organisations which promote gender equality;
- The General Secretariat of the NMWR, which is the Government Equality Unit, headed by a Secretary-General who is an officer of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. The Secretariat provides administrative and scientific support for

the National Machinery and promotes and implements its decisions.

The NMWR is fully funded and staffed by the Government. Its budget covers mainly the cost of its programmes and activities, as well as subsidies to women's organisations, academic institutions and other organisations for undertaking relevant projects. The budget was increased from €44,000 in 1995 to €366,000 in 2003.

The General Secretariat of the NMWR consists of 2 professional officers who are assisted, when required, by external experts. Steps are being taken to further evolve the Government Equality Unit within the frameworks of EU frameworks for gender equality.

In addition to the NMWR, other bodies have been put in place in the public sector to promote gender equality. These include: a Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman, *sic*), National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights, Advisory Committee on Gender Violence, Gender Equality Committee on Employment and Vocational Training, and Investigation and Assessment of Work Committee under the Equal Pay Legislation.

## Partnerships

A large number of Cyprus' women's organisations, trades unions and other NGOs are members of the NMWR which supports their projects and activities. These organisations contribute to the improvement of women's position in society in various ways. For example, the Cyprus Federation of Business and Professional Women has observer status on the Board of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Other organisations have been very active in the field of human rights and peace. The first bi-communal women's group of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots is Hands Across the Divide. An International Eco-Peace Village was set up in 1998, with Commonwealth Secretariat support, to work for broader peace in the divided country and elsewhere. It focuses on the training of women and youth in ecological issues, sustainable development, in conflict prevention and peace, as well as in conflict resolution.

## Concerns for the Future

Despite some progress, women still lag behind men in taking up decision-making positions. The Government will continue to seek a gender balance in political life as well as in the public sector.

Further efforts are also being planned to combat violence against women through implementation of legislation, and the collaboration and co-ordination of government departments and NGOs in handling these cases.

Women still face an uphill struggle to play a greater role in the economy. They continue to face discrimination, including in obtaining equal pay, despite a number of laws guaranteeing equality. Measures for the effective implementation of such legislation, the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities, and the improvement of vocational training, especially for women, will continue.

# Malta

## COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
<b>POPULATION*</b>			
Total population (000)	353	372	390
Female population (% of total)	50.6	50.5	50.5
<b>LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION</b>			
Female labour force (% of total)	25	27	28
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	2.3	2.3	5.4
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	11.1	9	7.3
Male	12.1	10.2	8.7
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	98	99	98
Male	99	100	98
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	79	78	80
Male	80	79	79
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	12	23	28
Male	14	22	22
<b>HEALTH</b>			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	78	79	81
Male	73	75	76
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	11	10	5
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	–	–	–
Male	–	–	–

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

\* World Bank Atlas 1991 (for 1990 figures), 1997 (1995) and 2002 (2000)

## Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Malta has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Women and the Economy
2. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
3. Women in Power and Decision-making
4. Women and the Environment
5. Violence Against Women

Followed by: 6. Education and Training of Women; and 7. Women and Health.

## A Decade of Action

Malta was accepted as a member of the European Union on 1 May 2004. The country acceded to CEDAW in 1991. Its National Women's Machinery (NWM) comprises the Commission for the Advancement of Women, which is an advisory body, and the Department for Women in Society, which is the commission's executive arm. Malta is ranked at 31 in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*.

## Gender Mainstreaming

It is Government policy to implement gender mainstreaming as the main strategic tool to achieve *de facto* gender equality. Responsibility and accountability for gender equality has been placed on all senior officials in public service and the NWM conducts training and awareness campaigns.

The NWM and the Management and Personnel Office in the Office of the Prime Minister are working towards a mentoring scheme for senior female public officers, developing the gender focal points structure, and opportunities for study and for women who wish to return to work.

A gender impact assessment project is also under way at the time of reporting. The first phase covered senior social policy, education and health officials. The second phase included a workshop on the theory and practice of execution of gender impact assessments and policy formulation. Recommendations on

embedding the gender mainstreaming approach in policy practice and in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of public services are expected.

### **Women and the Economy**

At about 30%, women's participation in the labour market is among the lowest in European countries. The Government is turning to the implementation of support facilities to increase women's economic productivity.

Such support facilities include child-care centres and family-friendly measures. For example, public service employees (women and men) are entitled to one year's parental leave and a three-year career break. Reduced hours of work have also been introduced in the public service. All women, irrespective of whether they are in the public or private sectors, are entitled to 14 weeks' paid maternity leave.

Although the gender gap in education has narrowed considerably and to date females outnumber males at tertiary level, women tend to be 'crowded' into courses such as education, health and law. One concern, shared with other European countries, is that few women take up science and technology studies.

Gender wage differentials across the board also reflect this occupational 'segregation', and many women are in low-income earning positions or participate in the informal economy. A 2002 survey suggests that women earn on average 80% the wages of men in broadly similar occupational categories.

The Malta 2003–2006 Plan addresses these issues as part of a wider strategy to enhance the country's economic and social development. It does so by providing for financial independence and a career progression for women, using their skills and potential to maximise the country's economic growth and bridge its welfare gap.

### **Violence Against Women**

APPOGG, an agency that falls under the umbrella of the Ministry for Social Policy, offers services to victims through its Domestic Violence Unit. It also works with

offenders in a special programme. APPOGG's shelter, Ghabex, opened in 2000 as an emergency shelter for women and children who were victims of domestic violence. APPOGG runs a 24-hour support line and offers legal and counselling services.

Since 2003, APPOGG has embarked on an annual campaign against domestic violence. In 2003, it highlighted the negative impact on children who witness violence in the home. It chose this topic so as to remind victims that their children were also victims and that they should come forward to report domestic violence.

Government financial support is also given to NGOs to accommodate homeless women and children.

### **Women in Power and Decision-making**

Female political representation is low. Six women were elected to the 65-seat Parliament in the 2002 general election. Two of them were appointed as Minister and Parliamentary Secretary respectively. One woman MP chairs Parliament's Committee on Social Affairs.

In the Public Service, men make up 86.8% of the posts in the top five pay scales, and there are no women at all in the top three scales.

## **National Women's Machinery**

The Commission for the Advancement of Women was established in 1989. It was an advisory body and its executive arm was the Secretariat for the Equal Status of Women, later upgraded as the Department for Women in Society. Together, the Commission and Department make up the NWM. The Department is in the Ministry for Social Policy.

The NWM is expected to be restructured soon in line with provisions set out in the legislation on gender equality (2003), in order to ensure better co-ordination of the government programme for mainstreaming gender issues and provide for statutory obligations envisaged in the new legislation.

Notable successes for the NWM have been the Equality for Men and Women Act (2003), which protects against discrimination in a wide range of areas and against sexual harassment; and legislation on employment and industrial relations which protects women's rights.

The NWM works closely with the Ministry of Education, University of Malta, National Statistics Office and with the Management and Personnel Office in the Office of the Prime Minister in order to implement the Government's commitment to mainstreaming gender in the public service.

## **Partnerships**

Civil society and the NWM collaborate in many areas. The NWM works with the National Council of Women, Gender Issues Committee of the University of Malta, the Women in Business Association, the National Commission of the Family, and the Commission for Persons with Disability, among others.

The NWM is in partnership with Socrates/GRUNDTVIG under EU programmes on political education and learning for gender mainstreaming implementation.

## **Concerns for the Future**

Areas of concern are the high inactivity rate among women of working age (72%). Malta's National Development Plan for Economic and Social Cohesion (Malta 2003–2006) suggests that the Government will have to take swift action if it is to approximate the employment rates in the European Employment Strategy of 71% for men and 60% for women by 2010. This requires 4,000 women entering employment each year compared to 900 women as at present.

Other areas of concern are single parenthood, and lack of legislative protection for women living in domestic violence situations.



# United Kingdom

## COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
<b>POPULATION</b>			
Total population (000)	57,600	58,300	58,900
Female population (% of total)	51.3	51.2	50.9
<b>LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION</b>			
Female labour force (% of total)	42	43	44
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	6.0	6.8	4.8
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	..	..	..
Male	..	..	..
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	98	99	106
Male	90	97	100
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	81	93	95
Male	77	90	94
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	29	52	64
Male	31	47	54
<b>HEALTH</b>			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	79	79	80
Male	73	74	75
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	8	6	6
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	..	..	0
Male	..	..	0.1

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics  
 Note: .. Data not available

## Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of the United Kingdom has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Women in the Economy and Women in Poverty
  2. Violence Against Women
  3. Human Rights of Women
  4. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
  5. Women in Power and Decision-making
- Followed by: 6. Women and Health; 7. Women and Armed Conflict and Education and Training of Women; 8. Women in the Media; 9. Women and the Environment; 10. The Girl-child.

## A Decade of Action

The economy of the United Kingdom (UK) is among the largest in the world (ranked 4th in 2001). The country ratified CEDAW in 1986 and its Optional Protocol in 2004. The principal mechanism in its national women's machinery is the Women and Equality Unit (WEU) located in the Department for Trade and Industry. The UK is ranked at 9 in the Gender-related Development Index in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*.

## Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is recognised as a key tool to tackle barriers to equal opportunities for women. The WEU has developed two gender mainstreaming tools, Gender Impact Assessments and Diversity, Policy, Services which provide a methodology for policy makers to assess whether their policies will support equality of opportunity and to challenge them to question the assumption that policies and services affect everyone in the same way.

The Government is working to apply Equality Impact Assessments to legislation, policy plans and programmes, budgets, reports and existing policies and services. It recognises that such assessments should be done at an early stage in the decision-making process so that policies can be changed, or even discarded, if necessary.

## Box 50.1: More Women in Public Life

An important part of the UK Government's work to create a more equal society, is to ensure that the diversity of women's experiences, their perspectives and their voices are reflected in public life.

Action is being taken to increase the number of women in political and public life. The 2001 general election returned 118 women as MPs (representing 18% of members). Since changes in its composition in 1999, women now make up 16% of the House of Lords. And in 1999, women represented 24% of the UK members in the European Parliament.

With the aim of increasing the number of women in political life, the Sex Discrimination (Election of Candidates) Act 2002 was introduced. This Act enables political parties in the UK, if they wish, to adopt positive measures to reduce inequality in the numbers of women and men elected as representatives of their parties. The Act is permissive, not prescriptive. It is for political parties to decide what action, if any, they choose to take in selecting their candidates for election. There are no quotas, and therefore no sanctions if no action is taken to redress any gender imbalance.

During its passage through Parliament all main political parties supported the Act and pledged to work with their parties to take advantage of the Act's provisions.

**Table 50.1: Women in Political Life, UK**

Proportion of women in the national government (June 2003)	31.5%
Proportion of women in the National Parliament (June 2003)	18%
Proportion of women in the regional parliaments (where appropriate)	
Wales (2003)	50%
Scotland (2003)	39.5%
N. Ireland (2002)*	13.8%

\* The N. Ireland Assembly was suspended in October 2002

Initiatives have also been taken to increase the numbers of women in public bodies, as well as people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities. There has been a steady increase in the number of appointments held by women from 26% in 1992 to 34% in 2001. In 2001, at least 440 appointments were held by disabled people, and of these 197 were held by women.

All appointments are made on merit and are monitored by the Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments. The aim is to increase women's representation to 45–50% of the public appointments made by the majority of government departments by the end of 2005. Each Central Government department has an individual plan of action, including specific time-based targets for increasing the proportion of appointments held by women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities.

Government commitment to reduce gender inequalities was announced in 2002 as a Public Service Agreement: 'By 2006, working with all departments, the Government will work to bring about measurable improvements in gender equality across a range of indicators, as part of our objectives on equality and social inclusion.'

These objectives are supported by specific targets and indicators set out in the document *Delivering on Gender Equality* (2003). They cover areas such as child care, equal pay, flexible working, public appointments and domestic violence, and the WEU works with departments to help in the delivery process and also report on progress.

*Delivering on Gender Equality* also sets out the broader context of work across government departments to make a positive impact on gender equality, including skills, training, education, ill health and transport. The breadth of these initiatives shows that gender mainstreaming has started to become a reality in many departments.

### Women and the Economy

The Government recognises that women make a crucial contribution to the economy in their roles as workers and carers. It is committed to equal opportunities in the labour market, encouraging family-friendly employment policies and to improving child care packages to encourage parents to return to work.

The proportion of women in the labour force is increasing – in 1971 women of working age (16–59 years) made up 38% of the labour force, and this increased to 44% in 1996 and 45% in 2002. Women also made up 66% of the number of people who came into the workforce in the year to May 2002.

Measures to improve women's participation have included the Small Business Service, which has led the development of a cross-government strategy for women's enterprise, focusing primarily on women starting and growing their own businesses; the New Deal for Lone Parents, which encourages lone parents to take up paid work; a work/life

balance of family-friendly policies which includes more flexibility in working hours; reducing the pay gap between males and females; and child care facilities which will encourage women in particular to return to or take up work.

Poverty among women is higher among those who are lone parents and single pensioners. The Government's annual report on poverty, *Opportunity for All*, sets out strategies for tackling this and other forms of poverty. Initiatives include family and child care tax credits, and pension credits; schemes to put lone parents in work; the setting of a higher national minimum wage; and a national child care strategy.

Efforts are also being made to break

the cycle of deprivation from early, with greater spending to get real growth in education; Sure Start programmes to strengthen families and local communities with a range of support services for children living in deprived areas; and the Connexions Service which presents teenagers with information, guidance, personal development opportunities and work-related learning.

In the UK's worldwide commitments, the focus on poverty elimination and, by extension, the elimination of gender discrimination was consolidated into law by a new International Development Act that came into force in 2002. Implementation of this policy is based on a 'twin track' approach that combines

*Women are working to break through the glass ceiling in male-dominated sectors such as law, banking and business*

specific activities aimed at empowering women with a commitment to place gender equality concerns into the mainstream of development programmes.

The Department for International Development (DfID) spending across all sectors on activities that include the promotion of gender equality and the removal of gender discrimination has increased significantly in recent years. In 2001/02, from a total bilateral commitment of £1,425 million, some £230 million of activities had gender equality as either the main goal or a significant objective.

## Human Rights of Women

The Government is working to secure women's rights and put an end to all forms of discrimination against women. The UK also promotes women's enjoyment of human rights and freedoms by negotiating resolutions and other documents in international fora.

The UK considers CEDAW a critical instrument in securing women's rights and submits periodic reports very four years to the UN CEDAW Committee. Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation has also been enacted. This is backed by policy mechanisms such as the WEU's report *Delivering on Gender Equality* (2003), which sets out specific targets and initiatives across government, covering key delivery departments and government priorities for action. It also sets out the broader context of making a positive impact on gender equality.

Women's rights are also promoted at EU level – where the WEU is part of an advisory committee on equal opportunities – and at other international fora where, for example the UK is an elected member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

## Violence Against Women

Violence against women is a complex social problem with wide implications, causing poverty, ill health, social exclusion and loss of life. In 2001, a Ministerial Working Group on Domestic Violence was set up to co-ordinate policies across

government, develop effective interventions, raise awareness about domestic violence and dispel the tolerance culture around it.

Increasing safe accommodation choices for women and children is another key priority. In April 2003, a new £153 million programme called Supporting People was introduced to help victims of domestic violence live more independent lives in the community. A consultation paper has also set out proposals for preventing domestic violence from happening in the first place; these range from sentencing and providing anonymity for victims in court, to making breaches of a non-molestation order a criminal offence and putting murder reviews on a statutory footing.

Other initiatives include a new national 24-hour free help line for women and children, a pilot scheme introducing routine antenatal questioning about domestic violence both before and after pregnancy, a review of legislation on sexual offences and penalties, and better police training.

Domestic violence accounts for 23% of all violent crime and roughly one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.

## National Women's Machinery

The principle mechanism of the UK's NWM is the Women and Equality Unit (WEU) established in 1997. It started out as the Women's Unit in the then Department of Social Security but in 1997 moved to

the Cabinet Office. In 2001, it was expanded and renamed the Women and Equality Unit. In 2002, WEU moved to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The WEU is one of the UK's main policy mechanisms to secure equal rights between women and men. The DTI's Secretary of State is a Cabinet minister and also Minister for Women and Equality. There is also a Deputy Minister for Women and Equality.

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales also have programmes and structures which deal with gender equality.

The WEU has achieved a number of advances in recent years in its priority areas. In 2002, for example, its equal pay questionnaire came into effect. This questionnaire is intended to help individuals who believe they may not have received equal pay to request key information from their employers to establish whether this is the case and, if so, the reasons why. Workplace disputes of this nature should thus be easier to resolve as the matters in dispute would have been identified in advance.

The WEU has responsibility within government for policy on women, gender equality, sexual orientation and the co-ordination of policy. It therefore works closely with colleagues across Government, including with the Department for International Development in the field of international progress on gender issues.

## Partnerships

Three of the principal non-governmental organisations the WEU works with are:



## Box 50.2: The Women's Budget Group

The Women's Budget Group (WBG) is an independent UK organisation that focuses on the relationship between women, men and economics. It brings together feminist economists and gender and social policy experts from academic institutions, NGOs and unions, as well as independent researchers and analysts. The objective is to work towards a vision of a gender equal society in which women's financial independence gives them greater autonomy at work, home, and in civil society.

The WBG works towards this by developing analysis and leading debate on:

- The gender implications of economic policy;
- The social dimensions of economic policy;
- Incorporating a consideration of the unpaid economy into economic policy;
- How economic policy might free women and men from stereotypes;
- Raising awareness and expanding understanding within the UK Ministry of Finance and other policy-makers and opinion formers on the gender implications of economic policy;
- Promoting, encouraging and enabling the use of gender mainstreaming and in particular gender-responsive budget analysis; and
- Contributing to and learning from international experience and progress on the application of gender-responsive budget analysis.

The main product of the WBG's consultative approach to gender mainstreaming in public policy is a gender analysis of the national budget, both in terms of the budget process as well as the content of the actual budget documents.

The basic principle is to ensure that government first recognises that economic policies have differential and unequal impact on women. The next step is to ensure that truly equitable policies are reformed in ways that take into account the limitations that women's socially enforced roles, responsibilities and opportunities present to their full and equal participation in the economic, political and social life of the UK.

Since 1989, the WBG has commented each year on the annual fiscal budgets produced by the UK Government. Its main role until 1997 was to provide constructive criticism from outside government of the likely gender effects of its policies. Since then, its focus has changed to attempting to influence government policy more directly through regular meetings, seminars and workshops with the UK Treasury. The Treasury has already accepted the argument for gender awareness in policy formation.

The WBG website is: [www.wbg.org.uk](http://www.wbg.org.uk)

- Women's National Commission – a government-funded non-departmental public body which represents over 230 organisations and works to present women's views, priorities and concerns to the Government;
- Equal Opportunities Commission – also government-funded and works to eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote equal opportunities for women and men; and
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – a non-departmental public body, which works to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good practice.

The WEU also works with other agencies, NGOs and the voluntary sector. It continues to consult a wide spectrum of NGOs and academic experts, thereby facilitating the greater involvement of the NGO sector in many areas of government policy.

## Concerns for the Future

One of the top areas for concentration over the next five years is the work/life balance. This would include tackling the long hours culture and flexible working hours for parents with children under six (since April 2003 parents have had the right to require employers to seriously consider such a request). It is expected that measures such as these could enable

55,000 new mothers to return to work early.

The Government also wants to ensure that affordable, accessible quality child care is available in every neighbourhood.

This would give children a good start in life and ensure that parents, especially women, have increased opportunities to improve their participation and productivity in the workforce. About 1.1 million children have benefited to date from the 1998 National Childcare Strategy.

The pay gap between females and males has steadily decreased from 30% in 1975 to 19% in 2002. The Government wants to reduce that gap further. Already, the statutory national minimum wage, introduced in 1999, has helped reduce the gap because around 70% of the beneficiaries are female.

The Government is working towards creating a society that will not tolerate, excuse, or ignore domestic violence. A new ministerial group has been set up to ensure co-ordinated action across government structures.

*Giving British youths the chance to learn about democracy, good governance and government as well as the role of the Commonwealth*

