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# WOMEN ALIENATED FROM THE JOB MARKET

There are currently 13.5 million women in the job market, that is 48% of the working population. Whilst the rate of employment among mothers with one or two children over the age of 5 is very high (89%), it does drop with the third child (43%), particularly when the youngest child is under 3 years of age.

**Level of qualification is the second main factor, after family composition, that determines female employment.**

Low-skilled women, regardless of whether or not they have children, find it more difficult than their male counterparts to find employment, and full-time employment in particular. In 2011, the rate of employment among women aged 20-29 with no qualifications stood at 29%, as opposed to 52% for men in the same position.

There is also evidence of a high level of professional segmentation, with the top ten roles performed by women alone accounting for nearly half (45%) of all positions held by women.

Finally, the most female-dominated roles are often associated with two characteristics, these being part-time hours and poor levels of qualification.

**These restrictive and unfulfilling working conditions are largely correlated with more frequent absences from the workplace owing to the birth of children.**

Other factors relating to withdrawal from the labour market include the practical and financial constraints associated with childcare arrangements and the cost of 'combining' family life and professional life, which lies almost exclusively with women.

It would appear, however, that the vast majority of women who are alienated from the job market are in such a position against their will. It is not so much the appeal of parental leave that drives them to resort to the latter as the

difficulties associated with retaining a job, which can be a cumulation of various factors such as pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination, a shortage of suitable childcare, harassment and incompatible working hours, among others.

Faced with the difficulties of coordinating certain moments in the lives of their employees, the involvement on the part of employers is still rather feeble, more often than not coming in the form of financial support, and offers far less flexibility in terms of working hours, despite the wishes of the employees concerned and the fact that such flexibility would contribute to their well-being in the workplace.

## AVENUES FOR ENCOURAGING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ENSURING FREEDOM OF CHOICE

As far as the Delegation is concerned, it is important to promote equal opportunities not only between men and women but also within the female population itself. It is important, also, to reduce the growing divide between skilled women who are prospering and those who are less skilled and finding themselves in an increasingly precarious situation.

### ✦ Fighting discrimination in access to employment and professional pathways

**Priority should be given to two key levers** in order to encourage high-quality professional integration for all women, **these being diversity and the promotion of invisible skills.**

The ease, or indeed lack thereof, of accessing employment depends firstly on the individual's basic training. It is therefore important to implement an active diversity policy aimed at young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds from as early as primary school, combining regions, training bodies,



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sectors and businesses.

In order to promote diversity in the professional integration of young women, it is also important to...

- promote pathways and roles in the scientific and technological fields, which offer strong employment potential, among girls by highlighting personal practical accounts;
- develop cooperation initiatives with the professional sphere, Consular chambers and regions (apprenticeships, work-study programs, etc.) and set quantifiable development objectives for girls in such sectors;
- involve advisers from local bodies and the Pôle Emploi employment agency in the implementation of such initiatives;
- support young women pursuing careers in male-dominated roles through tutoring and sponsorship initiatives.

The professional integration of women into sectors with greater employment potential also requires access to ongoing training or APL whilst ensuring that such roles are appropriately adapted to such diversity.

Increasing the visibility of the discrete skills and expertise applied by women on a daily basis is essential and should lead **to the level of qualification of a large number of female jobs being reassessed.**

The Delegation also places particular emphasis on preparing women for their return to work following a period of maternity leave in two ways:

- **anticipation**, by means of appropriate training courses, ability assessments, etc. prior to the end of the period of parental leave;
- **support**, as part of a pathway tailored to the individual, including solutions to childcare needs and involving all players (Regional Council, CAF, OPCA, the Pôle Emploi, local bodies, businesses, etc.).

➤ **Developing and diversifying childcare options are an essential condition for enabling women to work whilst raising children.** There is currently a shortage of some 350,000 childcare places.

**Strengthening the partnership between stakeholders** in the framework of departmental plans for developing childcare facilities is the first avenue of action and pursues a three-pronged objective:

- to take into account the need for childcare facilities that operate longer hours and identify services that might be able to meet this need, notably by means of relay childcare (at the parents' home or at the home of a childminder);
- to reinforce consultation between the departments of the Ministry of Education and regional authorities regarding the pre-schooling of children from 2 years of age, notably in the framework of 'gateway classes' based within or close to nursery schools;
- to continue to improve the information families receive regarding the various childcare options available, their availability and the associated costs.
  - **Encouraging involvement on the part of companies**, by contributing to the funding of childcare facilities in return for places being reserved for their employees, for example, is also essential.

➤ **Encouraging the joint management of family responsibilities between both parents is another major lever.**

As far as the Delegation is concerned, **there are four joint initiatives** that would help facilitate this:

- making the joint management of parenthood an objective of family and social policies;
- increasing the importance placed on parenthood in the professional sphere is a major issue not only with regards to fighting alienation from the job market but also in terms of promoting equality among men and women.

The Delegation advocates making the issue of coordinating personal time a compulsory clause in triennial industry-wide negotiations on professional equality and encouraging and supporting good company practices with regards to the day-to-day organisation of the workplace;

- **drawing on the success of the paternity leave system.**

Nearly 70% of fathers currently take full paternity leave, that is 11 consecutive days, and it has been proven that establishing an early bond between father and child encourages the father to play an active role throughout their lifetime.

In order to encourage this movement, the issue of continued pay during this period of leave should be included among the themes broached in the Compulsory Annual Negotiation (NAO – Négociation annuelle obligatoire) and social partners should be encouraged to incorporate it in collective agreements.

Furthermore, rather than extending maternity leave, as has been encouraged by a draft European Directive, the Delegation would be firmly in favour of extending paternity leave by two weeks, subject to the latter being taken at the end of the period of maternity leave in the case of the mother returning to employment;

**encouraging the circulation of good practices with regards to promoting parenthood among male employees.**

Managers and HR departments have the power to lead by example in this matter and this factor should be taken into account in their assessment. The Ministry for Women's Rights could also incorporate this section into its website devoted to professional equality.

*Striving for better professional integration for women means both reinforcing their social status and guaranteeing their financial and personal independence.*