

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2009 / 2010

Employment & Training Corporation

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FOREWORD BY ETC CHAIRPERSON

It has now been six years since the Gender Equality Unit within ETC has been up and running, and equally six years since the first Gender Equality Action Plan was published by the Corporation.

These past six years have represented a learning curve for the Corporation in this field, as it has reviewed and fine-tuned its initiatives and developed other more innovative ones. Recognizing that true gender equality across the lifespan and the whole labour market will ultimately require a cultural shift in mentality, the Corporation has nevertheless committed itself to contribute to bringing this shift about. We are doing this both through a meticulous examination of the services offered by the Corporation as well as working with other stakeholders to raise awareness, to challenge preconceptions and to extend horizons.

In the coming year, ETC efforts will be focused on improving the quality of its services from a gendered perspective, and to strengthen our understanding of the obstacles to labour market participation and what ETC can do about them, within our remit. ETC will also reach out to employers through the launch of a number of initiatives designed to demystify family friendly measures at the workplace and to assist with their design where necessary. Work-life balance is becoming increasingly important to both women and men, as the importance of more flexible approaches to both breadwinning and family caring becomes apparent.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the point that the Corporation's activities will by no means be confined to those enlisted activities in the Action Plan. Rather, ETC will continue to learn along the way, adapting to the dynamics of changing labour market environments and shifting demands. I trust that ETC will make a significant contribution in encouraging greater participation, retention and advancement of persons within the Maltese labour market, especially women. We are convinced that this plan will be enriched by the contribution of our key stakeholders and we look forward to continued collaboration in this important field of gender equality.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The scope of this Action Plan is to provide a detailed outline of ETC's strategic gender equality objectives. This document therefore sets out ETC's revised gender equality scheme for 2009-2010 and also includes an update of progress made over the past years since 2005.

Although significant efforts have been made at national level to introduce new policies aimed at improving the employability of women in Malta and increasing their labour market participation, large disparities persist between male and female employment and unemployment levels. Female employment still stood at 38.6 percent in the third quarter of 2008. Although this rate has been steadily increasing over the years in spite of the fact that Malta continues to lag behind the European average of 62.5 percent.

ETC believes that the female labour reserve holds strong potential for the development of the Maltese economy, and will continue to endeavour to support this potential. The themes discussed in this fourth Gender Equality Action Plan all derive from extensive internal and external consultation. Internally, the Gender Unit consulted with the Employment Services Division, the Training Services Division, the Supported Employment Unit, the IT Department, the Finance Department, the Marketing Department and the Labour Market Information Section. These Divisions were invited to comment upon how their respective divisions can assist in boosting the take-up of ETC services by women with a view to raising the female participation rate. The Corporation renewed its commitment to intensify its efforts to close the gap in service outcomes between women and men even if these gaps do reflect labour market realities.

Sessions have also been held with ETC staff on how the performance indicators in respect of service levels by gender can be improved. These sessions yielded positive outcomes as a number of potential initiatives and focus areas were established, and staff awareness of the responsibility of each employee to uphold and actively promote the equality agenda was reinforced.

The draft version of the ETC Gender Equality Action Plan 2009-2010 was distributed to the Corporation's various stakeholders as well as to members of the general public for their feedback and suggestions regarding the improvement of the ETC's proposed services, initiatives, and overall approach to the subject matter. This Consultation was part of the Corporation's commitment to forge closer links with its stakeholders in a bid to provide an optimum service for its clients.

The outcomes of the consultation process were duly recorded and closely considered prior to the final publication of this Plan. The Gender Unit would like to thank all individuals and organizations involved in the consultation process for their invaluable contributions in shaping the final version of the ETC Gender Equality Action Plan 2009-2010.

2.0 WOMEN AND MEN IN THE MALTESE LABOUR MARKET

This section opens with an overview of women and men in Europe. It goes on to provide an overview of the trends in male and female employment in the Maltese labour market over the past few years. Statistics for Europe are derived from Eurostat while those for Malta are derived from the Labour Force Surveys.

2.1 A Glance at Women and Men in Europe

Wide-ranging positive developments have been reported in the progression of females in some of the pivotal areas of the Lisbon Strategy over the past years. Eurostat data illustrates that gains of over seven percentage points have been made over the past ten years, as women's employment rate in Europe came to stand at 59.1 percent in 2008 – just short of the 60 percent target for 2010. The European forecasts for 2020 expect female employment to rise to 63.4 percent. The overall gap between male and female employment has narrowed since 2000 and stood at 14.2 percent in 2007. The gap between male and female unemployment has also narrowed, with a drop in women's unemployment from 9.7 percent in 2002 to 13.7 percent in 2008. There have been further gains in the proportion of women attaining at least upper secondary education, standing at 81.4 percent among young women in 2007 compared to 75.7 percent among young men.

Alongside these positive developments, one may also note that although women have taken up more than 7.5 out of the 12 million new jobs created in the EU since 2000, inequalities persist (2008 Commission Report on Equality between Women and Men). Women continue to predominate in lower value-adding sectors, with a persistent gender pay gap averaging 17.4 percent in 2007, and low representation in managerial positions. Female entrepreneurship is estimated to represent only 30 percent of all entrepreneurial ventures in the EU. Occupational and sectoral segregation is still evident in the EU. There remains a marked gap in the number of hours worked by men and women, who have been found to work 41.7 and 34.3 hours per week respectively, although there tend to be marked discrepancies between countries (European Foundation, 2009). The prevalence of part-time employment among women – which tends to be four times as great as among men - is an important explanatory factor in this regard.

It is broadly agreed that efforts will continue to be necessary for the Lisbon employment rate targets to be met, particularly that of 50 percent for persons aged 55 and over, as employment rates tend to be significantly lower among older women. To this end, gender equality is, at European level, supported through a number of key legislative instruments and policy initiatives. The European Commission actively monitors Directives in the area of gender equality and equal treatment. Negotiations at EU level with the social partners occur on a regular basis on matters relating to gender and work-life balance. Policy instruments such as the European Employment Strategy seek to raise employment rates through mainstreaming gender equality across the strategy. The European Council's European Pact for Gender Equality encourages further action at both EU level and national level to minimize gender gaps and stereotypes. The European Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women

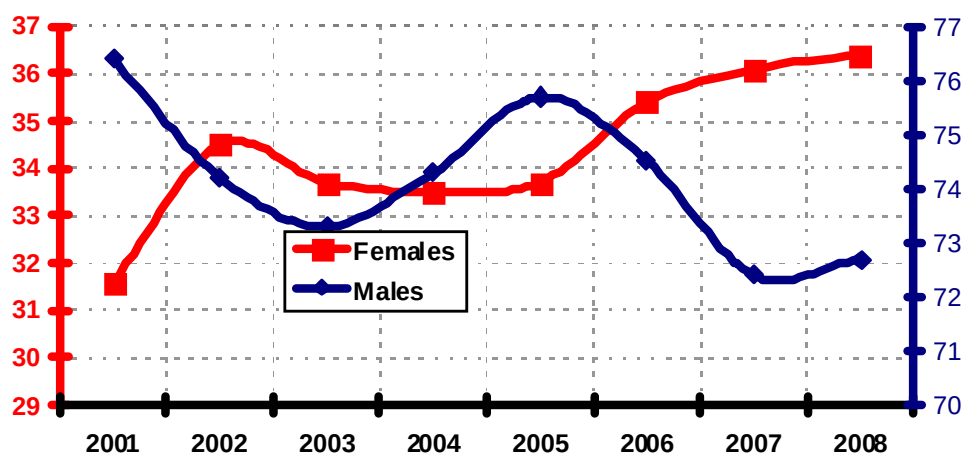
and Men 2006-2010 was developed to push forward the equality agenda, bolstering its partnerships with member states and other stakeholders. Work-life reconciliation measures; childcare; decreasing the gender pay gap; and increasing women's representation in economic and political decision-making are all considered to be crucial components in further achievements regarding gender equality.

2.2 Employment Trends in Malta

2.2. i Employment

According to statistics published by the National Statistics Office for the period April to June 2009 employment rates for males and females continue to differ quite markedly. That for men stood at 71.5 percent while that for women stood at 37.6 percent. Nonetheless, it must be noted that these figures represent a slow but steady improvement over previous years. This improvement is due to a great extent to the rise in female educational achievements, to legislative changes introduced in recent years (see Annex 2) and to a firm policy commitment to promote gender equality in Maltese society.

Figure 2.1 Employment rate by sex: Decembers 2001-2008



Source: Labour Force Surveys

Differences are most marked among older age groups. Between April and June 2009, the gap between male and female youths was around 4.4 percent. However, when it came to older age groups, this gap grew to 4.37 percent (aged 25 to 54) and 32.3 percent (those aged 55 to 64). Employment rates by age group are as follows:

Table 2.1 Employment rates by age groups

Age Group	Men %	Women %
15 – 24	45.4	41.0
25 – 54	89.3	45.6
55 - 64	44.7	12.4
Total	71.5	37.6

Source: Labour Force Survey, April to June 2009

The data suggests a persistent difficulty in reconciling the responsibilities of work and family life, and the possible scarcity of family friendly measures and affordable childcare. In the fourth quarter of 2007, the Labour Force Survey found that 47.3% of working age women cited ‘personal or family responsibilities’ as the reason for their labour market inactivity, compared to 1.4% of men.

Table 2.2 Inactive population by reason for inactivity

Reason	Males %	Females %	Total %
Awaiting recall to work (persons on lay-off)	0.2	0.1	0.1
Own illness or disability	11.7	3	5.9
Personal or family responsibility	1.4	47.3	32.3
Education or training	21.4	10	13.7
Retirement	57.5	14.4	28.5
Belief that no work is available	0.6	0.5	0.5
Other reasons	6.5	23.6	18
Has already found a job which will start later	0.7	1.1	1

Source: Labour Force Survey, October to December 2007

Research commissioned by ETC in 2008 entitled “Work Life Balance Measures- An Employer’s Perspective”, suggests that the top three major stumbling blocks identified by employers in implementing family friendly measures have been the lack of knowledge or capability of management to implement these measures (27.3 percent), the perceived costs of implementing such measures (26.2 percent), and finally the lack of adequate knowledge and information about the benefits of such measures (19.4 percent).

This reality may also explain different forms of work by women. Full-time employment with reduced hours for instance, has continued to be availed of predominantly by women, with 5.0 percent of females making use of this family friendly measure compared to 0.4 percent of males. 94.6 percent of male employees are engaged in full-time employment as opposed to 76.7 percent of female employees. In fact, 18.3 per cent of working women work on a part-time basis, compared to 5.0 percent of males. While full-time employment among women starts to decline at age 35, part-time employment rises markedly at this age.

2.2. ii Unemployment

In late 2008, unemployment among women was 2.7 percentage points higher than that of men, standing at 8.1 percent and 5.4 percent of working age women and men respectively. This is almost a reverse of the position in December 2000, when 5.4 percent of working age women, and 7 percent of working age men, were unemployed, a trend which was repeated once again in the second quarter of 2009. The rise in unemployment in 2008 among women was likely to be due to widespread changes in the low value-added manufacturing sectors this past decade. As illustrated in the table below, unemployed women are more likely to be in the younger age brackets than their male counterparts.

Table 2.3 Unemployed persons classified by age groups

Age Group	Women %	Men %
15-24	43.2	36.4
25-34	17.1	21.0
35-44	20.0	16.3
45-54	13.6	19.1
55-64	6.1	7.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Labour Force Survey, April to June 2009.

Women's job search spells tend to be shorter than those of men. 37.8 percent of all unemployed women have been looking for work for less than five months, compared to 29.6 percent of unemployed men. On the other hand, over half of unemployed men may be deemed to be 'long-term unemployed' (i.e. twelve months and over) compared to 33.7 percent of women. It is not clear whether this is due to the fact that women find work more easily; whether they are more open to considering different forms and hours of work; or whether they become discouraged and withdraw from the labour market.

ETC was particularly concerned to note, in the Labour Force Survey for October to December 2007, that female jobseekers are considerably less likely than their male counterparts to seek assistance from ETC. Only 53.2 percent of female jobseekers are likely to contact ETC in their job search compared to 87.8 percent of men. This issue will be looked into much more closely in the months to come and will be further addressed where possible.

Table 2.4 Percentage of Male and Female jobseekers using ETC services

	Men %	Women %
Registering for employment at ETC and receiving unemployment benefit or assistance	41.9	13.2
Registering for employment at ETC and not receiving unemployment benefit or assistance	20.5	14.1
Not registering for employment at ETC and not receiving unemployment benefit or assistance	37.6	72.7
Total	100	100

Source: Labour Force Survey, October to December 2007.

In respect of job search methods, the same Labour Force Survey illustrated that 84.1 percent of female jobseekers were most likely to ask friends, relatives and trade unions if they knew of jobs, while 87.8 percent of men were likely to contact ETC, though 79.2 percent of male jobseekers would also ask friends and relatives. The next most popular method for both women and men was to apply for work directly with employers.

2.2. iii Occupational Segregation and the Gender Pay Gap

Occupational segregation is evident in the local labour market. The sectors concerning education, health and social work, community services, social and personal services activities continue to be predominantly female. Conversely, the manufacturing, construction, agriculture, hunting and forestry sectors continue to be predominantly male. The construction industry representing 9.0 percent of male employment but only 1.1 percent of female employment.

Table 2.5 also highlights the persistence of a gender pay gap that is visible in most sectors though lower than it tends to be in other European Member States. The largest wage difference between males and females may be noted in the financial intermediation sector.

Table 2.5 Average gross annual salary for employees by economic activity

Economic Activity	Males		Females	
	No.	Average €	No.	Average €
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	1077	11261u	159u	11910u
Fishing	64u	22648u	-	-
Mining and quarrying	556u	12587u	67u	17710u
Manufacturing	17103	13683	5210	11479
Electricity, gas and water supply	3582	15838	151u	12680u
Construction	6429	13123	511u	10791u
Wholesale and retail trade, repairs	11639	13593	6810	11049
Hotels and restaurants	7767	12030	5018	9484
Transport, storage and communication	9686	16257	2866	13466
Financial intermediation	2404	18148	3281	15371
Real estate, renting and business activities	5786	17191	3798	12091
Public administration and defense; compulsory social security	8869	15988	4667	13797
Education	4107	16468	8495	14048
Health and social work	4947	15433	7098	12934
Other community, social and personal service activities	4225	14786	2175	11849
Private households with employed persons	60u	6600	-	-
Extra-territorial organizations and bodies	132u	14054	123u	14308u

Source: Labour Force Survey, April to June 2010.

In terms of vertical segregation, women still tend to lag behind in legislative, managerial and senior official positions with only 4.9 percent of females occupying such positions compared to 9.5 percent of men. Occupations within these sectors also exhibit a sizeable gender pay gap. (Table 2.6)

Table 2.6 Average gross annual salary for employees by main occupation

Occupation	Males		Females	
	No.	Average €	No.	Average €
Armed Forces	1043u	12363u	92u	10270u
Legislators, senior official and managers	6886	24571	2362	18620
Professionals	9436	20328	9479	16855
Technicians and associate professionals	14584	16346	8723	14044
Clerks	7678	12999	11967	11283
Service workers and shop and sales workers	11744	12449	9878	9541
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	629u	10661u	155u	10429u
Craft and related trades workers	13719	12117	550u	11440u
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	8416	12617	2563	10829
Elementary occupations	14298	11260	4660	8379

Source: Labour Force Survey, April to June 2009.

3.0 RECENT AND FORTHCOMING ETC INITIATIVES

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first section, it provides an overview of recent ETC initiatives in favour of gender equality, followed by forthcoming initiatives in the subsequent section.

3.1 Recent Initiatives

3.1. i Profiling, Interviews and Jobsearch Assistance

Over the years, ETC has undertaken a number of measures to improve the quality of its services to all of its clients. Between 2005 and 2006, ETC initiated an exercise aimed at prearranging the profiles of all its male and female registered long-term unemployed persons in an effort to improve its job matching services. All long-term unemployed persons, both male and female have been called for **compulsory interviews** during which such persons were obliged to apply for two ETC training courses in order to improve their skills and therefore their chances of securing employment. This endeavour was further complemented by the work of the Corporation's employment advisors who were involved in a number of recruitment exercises with employers with the ultimate aim of identifying the best suitable candidates for vacant posts irrespective of gender.

As from 2006, all registrants were furnished with their own CV based upon the European template on their first day of registration. This has provided all registrants with an equal opportunity to find employment through an official CV in the Europass format. In that same year, ETC also launched a job search DVD entitled "**Ghajnuna Sabiex Issib ix-Xoghol**" that has been given to all first time registrants and Job Club participants. The DVD provides assistance to all registrants on CV and application letter writing, and overall preparation for interviews. Additionally as from 1st January 2008, all new clients registering on Part 1 were introduced to the **Personal Action Plan** system within one month of registration whereby clients are called in on a monthly basis for a span of six months. As from 1st January 2009 all registered unemployed clients were also introduced to the PAP system. In its first year, 2, 793 Personal Action Plans for males have been developed and 1, 422 for females. The discrepancy in figures is reflective of a sustained male participation and a slow growth of female activity within the labour market.

Following the Prime Minister's budget speech for 2008; ETC also launched its **Part Time Register** in February 2008. This part-time register is comprised of two sections. Part 3C1 is for clients seeking a part-time employment as their primary job while Part 3C2 is for clients seeking a part-time employment as a secondary job. The idea of this register was put forward during an internal training sessions held by the Gender Unit to employment advisors, after a thorough evaluation of research conducted by ETC on women and their work aspirations had revealed a female preference for part-time employment as it provided a possibility for work-life reconciliation. This Register has

also enhanced ETC's part-time vacancies matching system and at the moment over 400 clients are registering on both Part 3C1 and Part 3C2 of which 332 are males and 84 are females.

ETC acknowledges the fact that many of its registrants, both male and female, may find it difficult to come to Hal-Far to register due to family and caring responsibilities. In light of this fact, ETC has now made it possible for its registrants to renew their registration at their regional Job Centre rather than travelling to and from Hal Far.

Both male and female registrants have benefited from a number of **Job Fairs and Open Days** that were organized over the years to increase the number of employers that make use of ETC services. During such seminars, the spectrum of ETC services is explained for the benefit of both registrants and employers. The job fairs have provided an opportunity for employers to disseminate information and promote their vacancies with both male and female attendees, thereby enhancing their possibilities of finding a suitable person for the job on the basis of qualifications, skills and experience; rather than on the basis of gender.

Employers are given the opportunity to make use of the Corporation's facilities including the possibility of having employment advisors present during interviews, which advisers are specifically trained on gender related issues, to ensure that discrimination on the basis of gender is eliminated during the recruitment process.

ETC has on several occasions intervened in situations of collective redundancies, liaising with the Department of Social Security in a bid to provide all redundant jobseekers with a **Fast Track Registration Service** and to offer all such persons a number of services that are aimed at improving their potential of regaining alternative employment elsewhere. Referrals to training programmes are intended to increase these persons' employability in line with labour market requirements. In addition, redundant employees are provided with a one-stop shop service that is: (1) Registering for work (2) Issued with the ETC registration card and (3) A Check of their entitlement for any unemployment benefits and Social Security contributions with officials from the Department of Social Security.

In order to make its job brokerage more effective and accessible by all, the Corporation has continued to send out daily automailers by email, free of charge to all those jobseekers who have shown interest in receiving information on ETC vacancies, on vacancies appearing on local newspapers, and on EURES vacancies. Employers are not permitted to make gender specifications in adverts placed with ETC. All available job opportunities are sent to male and female employees alike. For registrants who are not computer literate or who do not readily have access to a computer, ETC continued to offer the **Jobseeker Direct** free phone services (Tel: 800 765 00). This service gives job seekers the possibility of phoning-in and asking for vacancies related to their chosen occupational preference.

In 2005, the **EURES** service kicked off within the ETC providing information about living and working conditions in other European countries, assisting clients searching for vacancies in these countries and encouraging them to eventually take the leap. A touch screen **Job Bank** was donated to MCAST and to the University of Malta to be used by all their students, and a seminar to all guidance teachers on the subject was

also organized. EURES services have also been explained to registered jobseekers on several occasions since their inception in Malta. A pilot project was also launched targeting four and five male and female drop out students or those most frequently absent from school in two area secondary schools, in an effort to try and re-engage them in the learning process and give them a new perspective on Europe.

3.1. ii Outreach and Awareness Activities

The **Women @ Work** project was launched where twenty women from the Cottonera region participated in a “Coffee Morning B’Differenza” during which attendees were exposed to information about the labour market, employment opportunities, and tips for job searching techniques. The project was a joint initiative of the Employment Services Division and the Gender Equality Unit within ETC, as well as the Cottonera Community Team of Agenzija Appogg. It was intended to empower unemployed women residing in the Cottonera region to take up gainful employment by identifying hindrances and providing crucial support in this regard. Following the success of this project in its first year, the project was relaunched between 2006 and 2007 with entities providing their services at the Kumpless Access in Birgu. Between 2007 and 2008 this project was also extended to incorporate women from Valletta. Participants who attended the seminars were encouraged to enrol on work exposure schemes, attend training sessions on health and safety and gender issues at work, and avail themselves of various other ETC services. Following the completion of these sessions, a personal action plan was drawn up for each attendee. Focus groups were also held to discuss issues such as empowerment, social security and pension rights, cooperatives, ETC services and other work-related issues. A reasonable number of participants have found full or part-time employment, with most participants currently undertaking courses or participating in job experience schemes.

The ETC was also involved in several **media outreach** activities aimed at raising awareness on gender equality at the workplace amongst the general public. A number of ETC officials have been invited on several occasions to provide their input in television talk shows and radio programmes and this has consequently augmented the Corporation’s profile in its commitments towards gender equality in work related issues. A short **radio campaign** was also conducted by the Gender Equality Unit between 2005-2006 aimed at raising awareness on the changes to the Income Tax Act that effectively introduced a tax break for women returnees and more advantageous arrangements for the second earner in the household.

As a result of the growing influence of the media on cultural behaviour and attitudes, in 2006, a project entitled **Gender News Good News** was developed in collaboration with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) as well as with partners from Italy, Spain and France in an effort to instigate a cultural shift in gender stereotypes and gender roles in the local labour market with particular reference to parental leave. In view of this trend, mass media operators were targeted through two training seminars on gender stereotypes. Seminars transferred knowledge and information on legislation, identified positive and negative practices in the portrayal of gender stereotypes in the world of work on television, and focused on the reconciliation of work and family duties. Media outreach in 2008 continued through the airing of a number of success stories of both male and female individuals who directly benefited from ETC initiatives in a bid to encourage unemployed and/or

inactive men and women to resort to ETC services to assist with their integration or reintegration into the labour market.

Akin to preceding projects aimed at increasing the rate of female participation in the local labour market, the project ESF 24-**Increasing Female Participation through Childcare Services at the Workplace** was developed in an effort to boost the rate of female employment through providing quality, affordable and accessible childcare services at the place of work. The project had a twofold objective. Firstly, it sought to increase the pool of professional childcare workers through offering a number of tailor-made training programmes for mature individuals. Secondly, it provided an attractive package of incentives to small and medium sized enterprises that were aimed at instigating the introduction and efficient running of childcare services at the workplace. The incentives offered sought to enable mothers to remain in or return to the labour market knowing fully that their children were being adequately supervised by qualified child carers. The project was also of particular relevance to single parents who faced financial difficulties and a lack of child caring assistance; providing them with an opportunity to return and immerse themselves into the world of work and hence enabling them to improve their financial situation. Noteworthy is the fact that childcare centres at the work place can be equally frequented by children of both male and female employees thereby ensuring a gender neutral environment amongst the workforce. A total of eleven childcare courses were funded through the project which came to an end in September 2007 with a closing ceremony where both beneficiary trainees and employers shared their experiences and received certification of their participation.

This latter project was later consolidated through ESF 50-**National Campaign Promoting the Benefits of Quality Childcare**. This campaign centred on divulging information and raising awareness amongst the Maltese public about the benefits of quality childcare services for children, parents and employers alike. The campaign was initially kicked off by conducting a thorough research on the subject of childcare, which later acted as the groundwork for the subsequent advertising campaign. The campaign made use of a number of different media namely television, radio, billboards, leaflets and a national conference that all dealt with highlighting the benefits of quality childcare services. A website, together with a free phone service was also launched as a means of enhancing the delivery of information on the subject to the public. Over the course of 2006 and 2007 over six hundred telephone calls were made to ETC requesting further information and a post-campaign research revealed successful results. Public awareness on the various aspects of childcare had increased to the point that many had considered making use of these services as a means of assisting them in their work-life reconciliation efforts.

A **Campaign on Family-Friendly Measures** was also set into motion in an attempt to effectively highlight the benefits that family-friendly measures such as teleworking and job sharing can reap both employer and employee. The project provided an opportunity for collaboration with the Communications Course students at the University of Malta and successfully presented real life instances of local businesses that adopted work-life reconciliation measures at work. This collaboration was then enhanced by further cooperation with the University of Malta and the Foundation for Human Resources Development to organize a workshop on the subject in May 2006

that provided an opportunity for employers to discuss these measures with other employers who already implemented family friendly measures at their place of work.

Efforts have also been strengthened to reach out to young people. Although ETC's remit starts with jobseekers above school leaving age, ETC has sought to collaborate with the Education Division on gender equality. For instance, **training seminars for students** of Vincenzo Borg Brared Area Secondary Boys School and Maria Goretti Area Secondary Girls School were also organized over a two-day period in November 2007 and January 2008 respectively. The overall aim of these training sessions was to assert and empower students to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes specifically in the area of employment and non-remunerated work, and to provide students with a set of thinking tools that will help them make informed decisions as future workers and potential parents. Training placed particular importance on the interactive element of the activity; which meant that the session itself consisted of a number of discussions, workshops, games and the use of role models. This training was organised and delivered by experts in the field of gender and included a number of psychologists and youth workers.

3.1. iii ETC Schemes

The **Active Youth Scheme** was also established in order to target youths between the ages of 16 and 24 who have been registering for at least six months and were willing to provide services to the community. Participants were given work experience and learned new skills while engaging in projects with non-governmental organizations, religious and cultural organizations. Males were slightly underrepresented in this scheme between October 2005 and September 2006. In fact out of a total of 113 participants, 48 were male and 65 were female. However, this trend had changed by October 2006 to September 2007 to mark 61 male participants and 49 female participants; a trend which continued to persist even in 2008 to stand at 50 male attendees and 45 female attendees, denoting also a slight reduction in this gap.

Within the framework of the aforesaid scheme, the **Job Experience Scheme** was developed to provide job experience to school leavers who more often than not have very limited or no work experience in their preferred area of occupation. Of particular interest is the fact that over the period 2005-2006, 57 percent of all youths that participated in this scheme were actually women who were given the opportunity to gain work experience in a number of different employment sectors. Although figures denoting female participation have declined slightly over the years, while figures denoting male participation has been on a steady increase, figures are nevertheless relatively stable. As from 2008, both the Active Youth Scheme and the Job Experience Scheme received funding under ESF 72.

It is not only with young people that efforts have been made to integrate both male and female youth. In February 2008, the Communications and Marketing Unit within the ETC was also involved in an Older Workers campaign that made use of several media tools such as radio, press releases and adverts on local newspapers in order to encourage the concept of life long learning amongst older workers. All these efforts

are particularly relevant from a gendered perspective when viewed in light of the discrepancies in male and female employment at older ages.

Female jobseekers have benefited from a number of employment schemes designed and implemented in recent years. The ESF 17-**Training and Employment Exposure Scheme** was another programme designed specifically for registered unemployed persons over 40 years of age, most of whom were long-term unemployed. The vast majority of participants retained employment with the employer who provided them with on-the-job exposure or have alternatively been successful in finding employment by themselves. An aggregate total of 460 clients had actually started this scheme of which 350 were males and 110 were females.

The **Work Start Scheme** was initially launched with the aim of providing work experience and empowering women who have never worked or who alternatively have been absent from gainful employment for at least five years. The rates of female participation in the scheme's first years were particularly encouraging with 83.8 percent of all enrolled persons being women who were provided with work experience in various sectors. There was however a marked drop in the proportion of women using this scheme which dropped to 40.6 percent of the aggregate total which drop is currently being studied.

ESF 31-The Employment and Training Scheme was another scheme that was aimed at encouraging and assisting employers in providing fundamental training to newly employed persons at the outset of their probationary period, with a view to strengthening jobseekers' employability. This project sought, among other aims, to specifically strengthen the employment prospects of young single mothers as well as female returnees through the Lone Mothers Initiative and the Traineeship for Women Returners. Young single mothers in receipt of social benefits were encouraged to enrol on training courses and work exposure placements. Females seeking to return to the labour market following a period of absence were provided with training and employment in elderly care, retailing and pharmaceuticals. Although enrolment was low, completion rates were adequate, with 8 out of 10 participants successfully completing the lone parents' programme and 8 out of 12 participants completing the traineeship programme.

Also falling under the ESF 31 scheme, a programme for school leavers entitled 'basic employment training' offered these youth training in Maltese, English, Literacy, Numeracy, Technology Education, ICT and personal and social skills.

A major scheme in recent years was the project launched under the **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)** for workers made redundant by Bortex and VF. An aggregate total of 672 redundant males and females were provided with a profiling exercise by the Corporation's employment advisors. This was further supplemented by a number of occupational guidance services, training opportunities, entrepreneurial start-up grants up to a maximum of EUR 5,823, a redeployment scheme for employers who engaged former VF and Bortex employees, and a job search allowance of EUR 69.88 per week for employees who were registered unemployed. A total of 527 females and 145 males participated under this scheme as at September 2008.

3.1. iv Training Services

Between 2005 and 2006, 6,763 persons from both Malta and Gozo were enrolled onto ETC courses, 4,724 of which were males and 2,039 were females. As part of its efforts to reduce the gap in male and female attendance rates for ETC courses, the Corporation has introduced its Childcare Subsidy Scheme to reimburse trainees who utilise such services while undergoing training.

Women's participation in ETC training programmes remains low. Males outnumber females in almost all training courses offered by ETC, with the greatest discrepancies in trade courses such as Electricity-Basic, Gardening, General House Electrical Installation, Handling of Power Tools in Electrical and Plumbing Installations, Metal Machining, Plastering and Graffiato, Plumbing-Basic, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, Rubble Wall Building, Shutter Formwork, Steel Fixing, Welding, and Woodwork. Conversely, there were no male participants in training programmes such as Office Skills course, and in the Food Handling Category A course. Office related courses are also more likely to attract women than men, as do IT courses.

Between 2005 and 2006, the Training Services Division within ETC and in collaboration with Dar Guzeppa Debono in Gozo, developed and organized an **Empowerment Course** specifically targeting single mothers which was successfully attended by eleven females. A leaflet encouraging lone parents to explore further training and work options was developed and, in collaboration with the Department for Social Security, was mailed to all lone parents on social assistance. The Valletta Job Centre offered interested parties a more personalised guidance service and a number of single parents were directed to relevant courses and job oriented training services being offered by ETC.

Homeless women as well as female victims of domestic violence seeking refuge at Dar Merhba Bik and Dar Qalb ta' Gesu' were also targeted through an Empowerment Skills training programme that consisted of self empowerment and job-readiness skills. Illiterate women participating in the course were further encouraged to enrol themselves in a literacy course offered by ETC in an effort to enhance their employability prospects. Through this an EU funded project entitled ESF18-**Literacy Training for Those Seeking Employment**, ETC aimed at further improving the employability of both male and female registered unemployed persons. Female participation for this course stood at an unfathomed 90 women in comparison to the 430 males that participated in furthering their literacy skills under this project by the end of September 2006.

ETC continues to manage the Apprenticeship schemes, which have two streams: the **Extended Skill Training Scheme** and the **Technician Apprenticeship Scheme**. Possibly due to the trades and technical orientation of most apprenticeships, female enrolment in these schemes continues to be far lower than that of males. At the end of December 2008, a total of 728 persons were registered apprentices with ETC; 97% of these were young men, although a vigorous media outreach had been carried out.

The Training Services Division has also been implementing the **Training Subsidy Scheme**. This scheme has enabled self-employed individuals and all persons engaged

in SME's employing a maximum of twenty employees or less to apply for this Training Grant Scheme that provided 75 percent of all training costs. Eligible persons also included part-time workers as well as workers employed on a definite contract provided that certain criteria were met. This scheme has provided a large number of females with the opportunity to further their knowledge and experience within their particular area. Between 2006 and 2007, a total of 70 persons had applied for the training, 35 persons of which (15 women and 20 men) had successfully completed their respective training and were thus awarded the grant.

The **Entrepreneurship Scheme (INT-Ibda Negożju Tieghek)** was aimed at providing training and a support system for unemployed persons seeking to plunge into their own entrepreneurial ventures. The programme consisted of two primary components: the training and business planning phase, and a start up grant of EUR 2, 300. Some of the businesses set up through this scheme formed part of the beauty therapy, retailing, handyman services, frame and curtain making, travelling, ICT and metal finishing sectors. Towards the end of 2008, ETC also re-designed this scheme to enable a number of redundant persons to participate and a Business Planning Programme was also co-ordinated which provided training services and career guidance on establishing one's own venture. These efforts were further consolidated by providing a series of courses in business and management under the ETC Business and Management Development Programme. A number of business plans were examined by independent assessors before being able to qualify for start-up grants available through the European Globalization Fund. Figures acquired denoting participation over the period 2005 and 2008 have consistently shown that the entrepreneurial culture is generally more popular among unemployed men rather than women. However, there appears to be similar interest in ETC's small business management programmes which tend to be equally attended by both women and men.

Another European Social Fund project was implemented to promote entrepreneurship among women (ESF 47). Training was given in business and mentoring skills and a gender neutral training manual that included a DVD for new entrepreneurs was developed and accompanied by a TV campaign and reference library for trainees. An aggregate total of 20 inactive or unemployed women were enrolled at the beginning of this project, 15 of which successfully completed the full training programme.

ESF 52-Training programmes for Youths in Institutional Care was also organized, in recognition of the difficulties faced by these youth to establish themselves in the adult world. A vigorous outreach was carried out, and a group of 24 young people attended a number of courses including ICT, literacy in Maltese and English, numeric skills and life skills. 17 males and 7 females participated in 2007.

3.1. v Special Support

ETC's Supported Employment Division provides special support to certain disadvantaged groups including the very long-term unemployed, persons with a disability, ex-convicts, ex-substance abusers and social cases.

Disabled clients registering within this division were invited to participate in the ESF **19-Supported Employment Scheme** between 2005 and 2006 during which clients' abilities were assessed by an occupational therapist, a work placement was found and clients were assisted in their new job. 23 males and 11 females were placed on the scheme.

Between 2007 and 2008, 84 persons were placed in employment through the **Bridging the Gap Scheme** which involves an allowance of 80% of the minimum wage to persons participating in this work exposure scheme. In 2008 63 participants were male and 21 were female, although this gap has been steadily closing since 2005.

Following the successful initiation of a pilot project by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) to help selected clients by offering them a social mentor and a social worker, ETC collaborated with FSWS for the official launch of **ESF 20-Integration of Social Excluded Clients** project in May 2008. In all 256 clients participated in this project of which 161 persons were male and 95 persons were female.

3.1. vi Research and Development

ETC's Research and Development Unit has conducted vast amounts of research of paramount importance from a gender perspective since its inception. As part of the project **Modern Men in an Enlarged Europe: Developing Innovative Gender Equality Strategies**, that was aimed at challenging gender stereotypes in the take up of parental leave and the role of men in raising and caring for their children, the Unit was involved in the preparation of a national report and the compilation of a joint transnational report on perceptions and attitudes of both employers and employees on parental leave. Paternity leave was used in an effort to establish new and modern images of men as equal care-givers in the family. Indeed, the project encouraged the eradication of male aggression and violent imagery, and the adaptation of male and female roles in society. ETC also organised a seminar on Men and Parental Leave to mark the end of this project and to disperse findings emanating from the research conducted.

Between 2005 and 2006, the Gender Equality Unit together with the Research and Development Unit also coordinated a research study entitled **Lone Mothers on Benefits** in order to better understand the work aspirations of such women and to shed light on how this cohort of clients may be assisted more productively. At a research forum in 2007 the findings of the research were presented in a published report and a seminar organized for employment advisors in order to expose them to the findings and thus improve the quality of ETC services being offered to lone mothers seeking employment.

In November 2005 the Research and Development Division published its study on **Women and Men in the IT Labour Market** in line with ETC's efforts to enhance gender equality in formal employment. Statistics have persistently revealed that gender segregation in employment fields concerning science, engineering and

technology has remained a recurrent factor in the structure of the local labour market. The aim of the brochure was to disseminate good practices pertaining to gender equality in the field of IT and employment. Research results obtained from the various case studies in question have revealed that while it is possible to have an effective gender balance in IT occupations, nevertheless, males continue to outnumber females in IT managerial positions as well as in the number of staff employed within the IT division of the firms under examination. The report also highlights how IT can be used as a tool that may facilitate flexible working arrangements such as reduced hours, telework arrangements, career breaks, part-time work, childcare and special leave.

In line with the notion of flexibility, the Unit was also involved in a short **Telework Research** study on Malta. A leaflet was published identifying the benefits of telework from both an employer and employee perspective, particularly by highlighting its potential for improving an employee's work-life balance through performing a large percentage of the work load from home, and the cost effectiveness of this approach from an Employers point of view. The study also included a number of recommendations for both employers and employees and several international best practice examples. A Telework seminar was also organized in collaboration with the Ministry for Investment, Industry and IT during which ETC disseminated and discussed the findings emanating from its research on the subject. A manual entitled **How to Make Work Better for Employers and Employees** was also launched and circulated during a seminar held for HR managers which provided employers with a set of concrete measures which could potentially be adopted in order to avail themselves of full female potential at the workplace. Best Practice employers were also invited to share their experiences through presentations at the seminar.

3.2 PRESENT AND FORTHCOMING ETC INITIATIVES

ETC will continue over the months to come, to analyze the reasons for lower uptake of its services among female jobseekers and particularly the lower uptake of training programmes. Initiatives to address this imbalance will be the subject of detailed internal consultation and will result in appropriate remedies. In the meanwhile, ETC will be implementing the following measures in relation to outreach, employability and research objectives.

3.2. i Outreach and Awareness

Over the months to come, ETC will continue to endeavor to broaden the range of options open to both women and men. A major campaign will be the **ESF 59 “Nista’ - The Benefits of Sharing Life’s Responsibilities” Campaign**. This is a three year campaign that challenges cultural stereotypes pertaining to male and female roles within the family unit and at work through different media.

The target audience of the campaign will include women, men and employers. Specifically, inactive young women, inactive older women, single parents and women in the black economy will be targeted to highlight the difficulties that may arise from dependency on social security benefits, the dependency on one source of income, as well as to raise awareness about the increasing feminization of poverty and the difficulties related to reliance on one pension that may also lead to unsuspected poverty in retirement. The campaign will also highlight the benefits of life long learning, financial independence, improving the quality of life for the family and the social aspect of work. The measures recently introduced by government that are specifically aimed at instigating this shift from inactivity to activity of women in the labour market will also be promoted.

With regards to men, the campaign has sought to promote the increase in male participation in the family sphere and non-remunerated work as a means of freeing women from the full burden of family work and care responsibilities. The campaign will therefore highlight the benefits of reduced work for men, their increased interaction with children and other family members, the avoidance of overdependence on women for common household chores, the financial benefits accruing from a dual wage for the family and the improvement in its standard of living. This campaign will once again underscore the importance of introducing flexible working conditions that will facilitate and enable this new, modern, way of life; a life which has reconciled the work-life balance.

Finally, the campaign will also target employers by pointing out the importance of introducing flexible working conditions for their employees and the benefits that are bound to stem out from the introduction of such measures. Unfortunately, employers are still rather weary and apprehensive about introducing family friendly measures within their companies or organizations. As a result, it has become part of the duty of this campaign to slowly eradicate any negative perceptions that employers might have

about this modern approach to working and instead foster an inclusive work culture and mentality that caters to the different needs and demands of different women and men. Through introducing measures such as reduced hours, flexi time, childcare services and teleworking, employers are given the opportunity to retain trained and efficient staff, improve their morale and thereby also improve productivity rates.

In addition to the above, ETC will update the **Manual for employers** which it published in 2006, entitled 'Making work better for organisation and for employees'. The revised version will include a special focus on job sharing and teleworking. Family friendly measures will also be actively promoted among small and medium enterprises which are less likely to utilize them.

ETC will discuss, with employers' representatives and the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, the feasibility of launching the **'Family Friendly Company' Award** based on a number of established indicators, and having an annual ceremony in this respect. The possibility of facilitating a network of family-friendly employer-mentors will also be actively explored.

Outreach will also be carried out with women in challenging circumstances. Further guidance and empowerment training will be offered to women in shelters and young single parents in particular, in order to broaden their aspirations and prevent them from getting caught in a poverty trap.

ETC will be leading an initiative to promote the benefits of declared work. This campaign is intended, in part, to raise women's awareness of the implications of undeclared work and to assist them through information on means to regularize their position.

3.2. ii Employability and Employment Schemes

In respect of enhancing women's employability, ETC will be operating ESF 2.65-**Training Aid Framework**. This training grant scheme is intended to encourage and empower employers to train their workforce, thereby increasing competitiveness and innovation in the company itself. The programme offers a part-refund of training costs to undertakings; the amount of which depends on the size of the undertaking and the nature of the training provided. This programme is open to all entities within the private sector except for the agriculture and fisheries sector. As training grants are also available to part-time workers and those on definite contracts, this programme is clearly able to contribute significantly to raising the employability also of those women who may tend to be in more precarious labour market positions.

ETC will also be implementing its ESF 2.4 - **Employability Programme**. This consists of a wide and extended range of training programmes delivered by ETC to enhance the employability of jobseekers and the inactive. This programme could have a very significant impact upon the number of females in employment within the Maltese labour market as it provides the opportunity for women who have been absent

from the formal economy for a relatively long period of time to develop or strengthen their skills profile.

In addition to strengthening jobseekers' employability, ETC is also operating a major scheme that will support the reintegration into work of persons in various groups, among whom are woman returners. The ESF 3.64-**Employment Aid Programme** provides employers who recruit such persons with wage incentives for a number of weeks in a bid to ensure the integration and retention of certain groups in the labour market. These persons include but are not limited to women returners and lone parents.

The **Work Trial Scheme** will be introduced in 2009 and will consist of work exposure placements intended to enhance the employability of target groups through on-the-job training. This scheme will target in particular those inactive women who have been on an employment break of one year and over amongst others. ETC will work to improve participants' awareness of the competencies required on the workplace, provide participants with practical work experience that strengthens participants' CVs, helping to build confidence and improve self esteem and identify the areas in which participant will require further training.

3.2. iii Research

TAJJEB VP/ 2007/015- Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of PES for a Better Work-Life Reconciliation is a joint research effort between Public Employment Service organisations in Malta, Cyprus, Sweden, Slovenia, and Iceland. The countries have been specifically selected to reflect different geographical and social realities and situations across the EU. Sweden and Iceland have been chosen categorically as best practice countries in this regard.

The aim of the project is to discover through the drawing up of individual national reports, the principle concerns and needs of private sector employers and what practical measures will help them make the workplace better equipped to facilitate work-life reconciliation for both men and women. Part of this project consists of a national dissemination activity in each partner country shedding light on the national situation and the results achieved reflecting local socio-economic realities to employers, policy makers and other relevant authorities. This activity will help to disseminate results to a greater number of stakeholders in the partner countries.

The research aspect of this project is also perceived as a positive step towards highlighting practical ways in which Public Employment Service organisations can augment the quality of their services and identifies the key changes and practical recommendations necessary to increase the retention of women in the labour market. Simultaneously, the research also assists in developing the necessary tools for understanding the needs and concerns of employers.

The research will enable the Public Employment Service organisations, through the creation of a network of experts, to propose to the relevant authorities at both national and European level, necessary policy changes deemed indispensable for the effective

implementation of measures in favour of work-life reconciliation, particularly in the private sector.

A tender will be issued in late 2009 for a feasibility study on **Household Services scheme**, similar to those in operation in various EU Member States and which operate a type of voucher system for persons purchasing a range of household services with the double aim of promoting work-life balance among working parents as well as the opportunity of organized and formal employment for persons offering domestic labour.

A review of **best practices in other European Member States**, in respect of gender equality in the labour market, is underway and should result in the elaboration of further initiatives over the months to come.

3.2.iv Consultation and Proposed Actions

ETC has embarked on a comprehensive **internal consultation process** during which senior managers, managers and senior executives from the various constituent subdivisions of the Corporation including the Employment Services Division, the Training Services Division, the Supported Employment Unit, the IT Department, the Finance Department, the Marketing Department and the Labour Market Information Section have been invited to provide their commentary and remarks on how their respective divisions can assist in boosting the take-up of ETC services by women resulting in a higher female participation rate.

The Corporation has committed itself to significantly intensify its efforts to lure more women to avail themselves of its services and thereby inflate the rate of female employment in Malta. These sessions yielded positive outcomes not only because a number of potential initiatives and focus areas were established and analysed, but also because all the staff of the Corporation was made aware of the fact that gender equality was an individual responsibility that must be actively pursued if it is to yield constructive ramifications.

A draft format of the ETC Gender Equality Action Plan 2009-2010 was distributed to the Corporation's various stakeholders as well as to members of the general public in an **external consultation** exercise for their feedback and assessment in improving the quality of the ETC's proposed services, initiatives, and overall approach to the subject matter. Moreover, this exercise also consolidated the Corporation's vision in forging closer links with its stakeholders in a bid to provide an optimum service for its clients.

A number of beneficial projects and actions targeting the various sectors of the local population have emerged from the consultation process. Indeed, this was the overall scope behind opening up the action plan in draft format to the various key contributors as it was envisaged that several entities representing people from the various walks of life can be assisted through creating tailor-made services.

Results extracted from the consultation process have been duly recorded and suggestions for improvement discussed in terms of their viability and adoptability

with management personnel in the various components of the ETC set up. Accepted proposals have been incorporated into the proposed areas of activities and will be implemented across the allocated time lapse for the Gender Equality Plan. The Gender Unit would like to thank all individuals and organizations involved in the consultation process for their valuable contributions in shaping the outcome of this fourth Gender Equality Action Plan.

July 09 – September 09

Initiate implementation of ESF 59-Nista' The Benefits of Sharing Life's Responsibilities Campaign. Target audience includes women, men and employers with the aim of eradicating long established gender roles and encourage the establishment of supporting structures. It also aims to inform inactive women about the benefits of formal employment; particularly by highlighting the importance of paying NI contributions as a safety net against poverty at pensionable age.

Conclusion of **transnational research project Tajjeb VP/2007/015** that is aimed at identifying employers' concerns vis-à-vis family friendly measures and highlighting ways in which Public Employment Services can improve the quality of their services in this regard.

In order to understand and tackle the problem better, each Division within ETC has committed itself to **examine its gender segregated performance** statistics in order to identify the niche of clients which presents the greatest difficulty according to age group; qualifications etc and consequently make greater concentrated efforts towards this cohort of clients.

Additionally, ETC will be targeting; amongst others; inactive women who have been on an employment break of one year and over and will implement a system of job rotation that centres on temporary employment through its **Work Trial Scheme**. This scheme is being formulated after the needs of persons who are at a particular disadvantage in the labour market were identified. It aims to help these clients overcome barriers faced in their transition to employment by providing work experience and on-the-job training.

ETC is to make better use of its communication tools by using **chit messages to promote the take up of courses amongst registering job seekers** that traditionally may be more appealing to male clients but can be easily taken up by women.

Submission of **application for Progress funds** under the 'restructuring, well-being at work and financial participation'.

October 09 – December 09

Training and re-training of ETC staff members in gender mainstreaming to improve the quality of the services offered to clients.

Specialised labour market orientation and guidance programmes:

- for women who underwent domestic violence
- for single mothers

In collaboration with Dar Qalb ta' Gesu, Ghabex , Unit Ghozza, and Dar Merhba Bik.

ETC to forge closer **links with the heads of schools and college principles** of various colleges around Malta and Gozo and to increase collaboration with Employment Advisors and Guidance teachers. ETC plans to organise a number of activities for school children.

ETC to **support the student advisory services at the University of Malta** in respect of gender equality and female labour market integration. Staff will provide assistance to potential and current students with regards to the lifecycle approach to work in a bid to encourage more females to remain in the labour market even after marriage.

ETC to embark on greater efforts to communicate non-stereotypical **success stories** to its current and potential clients through its various reports and the media.

ETC to conduct a **feasibility study** to see whether it should increase the hourly rebate of EUR 1.30 currently given to trainees who send their children to a registered childcare centre for the duration of training provided by ETC.

January 10 – March 10

The inclusion of a section on gender equality at the workplace in the **PSD teacher's manual**. This will encourage teachers to raise awareness amongst their students in non-stereotypical gender occupations.

As ETC recognizes the importance of highlighting the significance of Family-Friendly measures, a **Campaign on Family Friendly Measures (FFM)** will be launched and will include the following activities:

- Updating of manual for employers
- Promotion of FFMs and their benefits in the form of:
 - an information campaign
 - training targeted at employers
 - dedicated website on FFMs
 - evaluation study on FFMs (The Impact of the Private Sector)
 - FFM Seminar and certification ceremony

Promoting and facilitating entrepreneurship amongst women through targeted training in entrepreneurial skills as a means of attracting more females into the labour market. Training in entrepreneurial skills will also be provided in order to ensure the viability of clients' potential ventures. The Malta Chamber of Commerce has also offered to provide assistance in the mentoring stage of the activity.

Develop and continue offering tailor made training courses including:

- The upgrading and continuation of the 'Empowerment for Women' course.
- Development of training programmes that appeal to inactive clients.
- Development of a 'Basic Skills' Course for women over 40 years of age and who are not in possession of a valid school leaving certificate.

Revision and lowering of requirements for enrolment onto specific courses to enable a greater number of women returnees to attend.

ETC to start **offering soft skill courses at Local Council level** under the 'Back to Work' programme. Information sessions on various aspects of the labour market will also be delivered.

ETC to develop a policy for Employment Advisors to help them to assess whether a client should be enrolled onto **training courses in the morning or in the evening**. This will provide greater flexibility for clients seeking to enhance their skills and knowledge seeing as some existing and potential clients are not able to attend training at fixed times.

Re-launching of the Women @ Work Project inviting women from the Isla, Birgu, Bormla and the Kalkara regions for a "Coffee Morning B'Differenza". Attendees are given the opportunity to discuss the problems that they find in securing employment and ETC; in collaboration with Appogg, assists these women through training and support.

April 10 – June 10

Feasibility study to assess the possibility of developing a **Home Help Service Scheme** which will help families in their reconciliation efforts and act as a driver for empowerment for those offering the services. ETC will offer specific training to jobseekers opting to give these community services.

ETC to **assist promoting and offering more guidance in the setting up of cooperatives** to assist more males and females in finding employment.

ANNEX 1: INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES IN GENDER EQUALITY

Family friendly measures have been classified as prerequisites for the effective reconciliation of work and family structures. A number of innovative measures exist in Europe, a few examples of which are outlined below.

Public Sector Initiatives

Ireland

The Irish Government has introduced the ‘Programme for Prosperity and Fairness’ that seeks to increase the number of childcare services in the public and the private sector, increase the number of out-of-school childcare services provided by community groups and school management, improve national fiscal and social policy measures to facilitate work-life reconciliation, and promote family friendly measures at enterprise level. In addition to these efforts a National Framework Committee for Family-Friendly Policies was also set up in Ireland under partnerships agreements with several other government departments and authorities, trade unions and confederations; with the aim of augmenting access to family friendly working arrangements as means of realizing the full benefits of equality and competitiveness at the workplace.

Austria

In 1998, the Austrian Ministry introduced a ‘Family and Work Audit’ initiative with the overall aim of raising awareness of family friendly policy initiatives and assisting companies in creating family friendly environments for their respective employees. The Audit provides a sound analysis of family friendly measures undertaken by the companies under assessment. Over the years, the audit has revealed a number of interesting findings including the fact that flexible measures were made possible for employees hailing from a wide range of employment sectors. Of specific relevance for Malta are the findings that the audit has revealed that smaller companies (that incidentally make up a large proportion of enterprises in Malta) provide flexible working arrangements according to the individual family needs of their employees. The audit has also identified an improvement in employee motivation, commitment, reduced stress levels and increased employee retention rates. Enterprises engaged in the initiative and employing a maximum of twenty employees are offered a 90 percent reimbursement of costs, while those employing over five hundred employees are offered a 25 percent reimbursement of costs.

Sweden

The Swedish government has made it a top priority to promote the ‘Quality at Work’ concept as a central objective for creating more and better job opportunities for its citizens. The concept centres on the idea of engaging oneself in sustainable employment that encourages and enables both sexes to enter, develop their skills, and

remain in the labour force and thus widening the access to the labour market. As part of its efforts towards strengthening social cohesion and inclusion, the Swedish government has also formulated a childcare system that is specifically aimed at meeting the needs of working mothers. The central government provides subsidies for the use of childcare programmes within municipalities that are supported by local taxation and parent fee contributions. These childcare centres are exclusively open for children of parents who both work and/or study for a minimum of twenty hours per week and for children of single parents. Payment for childcare services follows the 'maxtaxa' scheme which refers to a payment ceiling of up to EUR 210.00 for each family.

In addition to this Sweden also has a comprehensive Parental Leave Programme that is based upon the assumption that both parents have a shared responsibility in the upbringing of their children and hence both parents are entitled to an obligatory number of non-transferable parental leave. This parental leave may be availed of by parents who actively participate in the labour market as well as by parents who do not participate in the labour force. Parents, including also single parents; are entitled to a total of four hundred fifty days compensated leave per child which may be availed of in a flexible manner either on a full-time or part-time basis or alternatively saved and used at any time within the entitlement period. Parents are allowed to avail themselves of this leave from sixty days before the expected birth of a child up to the child reaches eight years of age. This leave may be shared by both parents but each parent is allocated thirty days of non-transferable leave which will be lost if left unused. Moreover each parent is entitled to a hundred eighty days with a compensation level that is relative to the income prior to the commencement of the leave period. Fathers are granted an additional ten days of leave on the birth of a child and parents are also allowed to take an extra period of ninety days with a guarantee level of compensation at a flat rate of EUR 6.70 per day.

Of additional interest is the "Speed-Premium" concept that the Swedish government has granted to mothers who have another child within a 30 month time span from the birth of a previous child. In this case, mothers are guaranteed the same level of compensation without returning to employment during this period.

This structure of parental leave has enabled either employed parents to remain home with their children until they reach the age of one. Employers are in turn obliged to allow employees who have children under the age of eight to work for six hours per day while simultaneously providing them with job security. The Swedish government is also providing career breaks for a maximum of one year on a trial basis and compensation is received on condition that the person employed to replace the employee on a sabbatical is a registered unemployed person.

France

In 2002, the French Government launched a national network entitled 'Combining Family and Work Life' as part of the French EQUAL programme. The projects were particularly focused on developing child caring models to conform to atypical hours or locations, monitoring the supply side and demand for child care in rural areas of the country, improving public transport services for atypical hours or locations, providing

training to company managers on time management issues, and expanding the number of indicators on work-life balance for establishing a social rank of companies.

The projects included a vast array of actors from both the public and the private sectors and simultaneously incorporated several fields of action. One of these government incited projects instigated a shift in company set up through the introduction of a 'Young Parents' Positions' initiative, by adapting working hours to the needs of young parents; especially single parents or parents facing problematic situations. A flexible multi-task team that work during normal working hours, was set up in order to be in a position to deal with last minute replacements and respond to unanticipated overloads. This set up has made it relatively easier for employees with caring responsibilities to address family commitments, while employers ensure that output is kept at a constant level.

Czech Republic

In 2004 the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade collaborated with the 'Gender Studies' non-profit organization to launch a competition to award the firm that best applied the principle of equal opportunities within a corporate context. Companies eligible for the award were segregated according to the size of the enterprise. Interestingly, the winner in the small and medium sized enterprises category was a publisher of a local weekly newspaper that granted active parents the facility not to work on weekends and the possibility to avail themselves of special leave over and above their statutory leave. Both male and female employees are granted the option to work flexible working hours, part-time basis, or to engage in telework.

Germany

As part of a governmental policy programme, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Young People gathers a number of family friendly best practices. The Ministry engages itself in a number of public outreach activities with the aim of promoting family-friendly workplace environments. Past initiatives have included a dedicated web page on the 'Success Factor Family' that provides information and patterns of best practices, a number of brochures that encourage family-friendly working cultures and provides a checklist of personnel management strategies for small and medium sized enterprises; all of which were prepared in collaboration with other relevant public and private structures. A study was also commissioned by the Ministry to identify the cost benefits of family friendly personnel management and measures that indicated a 25 percent return on investment for medium-sized undertakings.

Private Sector Initiatives

Italy

ZF Padova, an Italian managed industrial plant has given its employees greater charge of their working hours by introducing a new time planning scheme that enables employees to allocate their personal working hours according to a multi-week structure with a maximum of forty-five hours per week. Employees plan their working hours on a weekly basis and are given responsibility to determine when they require time off for parental leave, supplementary training, vacation leave etc. This structure is expected to facilitate the recruitment of skilled employees with family responsibilities and improve work organization and the availability of the services offered.

Germany

The German Printing Company, Druckwerkstatt Kollektiv GmbH, Darmsatdt, has opted to reduce the number of regular working hours for its employees in a bid to improve the balance between work and private life. Furthermore, parents with children in a crèche are offered six hours additional reduction from regular working hours. Parents of kindergarten children are granted four additional reduced hours, and two further hours are granted to parents of school children. These special reductions are offered with full pay, and working hours are made flexible to suit personal requirements.

Spain

Coface Ibérica, the Spanish division within a French insurance company received the national award for flexible work places by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Spanish High Council of Chambers of Commerce. Of interest is the fact that 70 percent of employees are female and the company has recently achieved annual sales growth rates of 40 percent.

The company provides its employees with a flexible time window for starting and finishing work provided that workers satisfy the target monthly working hours. Employees are allowed to avail themselves of a ten hour working deficit that may be written off in the following month. Alternatively excess working hours up to a maximum of ten hours may be exchanged for days off and no work is performed on Friday afternoons. Within this framework employees are given the opportunity to plan their work schedule around their family responsibilities and are also given the opportunity to take maternity and paternity leave beyond the legally established limit upon request. Annual vacation leave for company employees is set at 31 working days, with reduced working hours are offered in the summer months between 15 June and 15 September. The company also provides its employees with complete flexibility when family emergencies occur. Time taken off in this regard is not deducted from employee's vacation leave but compensated through the monthly target of working hours. Employees are further provided with time and stress management training.

Denmark

After identifying stress amongst employees as a major predicament, Novozymes; a biotech-based company, introduced a number of initiatives to facilitate the work-life balance. The company introduced new maternity leave regulations for its employees that are longer than those imposed by Danish law and also grants seniority to employees for the use of childhood services in the vicinity of the premises. Further to this, the company also offered a washing and grocery shopping scheme to employees, however this was recently aborted due to a lack of interest by employees. The company also provides flexible working arrangements to employees who in turn are able to plan their own working hours.

ANNEX 2: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This Annex provides an overview of legislative changes recently introduced.

Part-Time Regulations Amended 2007- As of 1st July 2007, local employment legislation pertaining to the conditions of employment for part-timers has been brought in line with EU Directives through L.N. 140 of 2007, L.N. 164 of 2007 and later through L.N. 240 of 2008.

In a nutshell, these regulations state that persons whose principle employment is their part-time work and pay social security contributions in relation to this work are entitled to pro rata benefits regardless of the number of hours worked.

Benefits include the minimum entitlement of all public holidays and annual vacation leave, sick leave, birth leave, bereavement leave, marriage leave, injury leave and any other leave as was established under the Act. Moreover, through these Regulations, part-timers are now also entitled to statutory bonuses and other income supplements as full-time employees employed with the same employer and carrying out similar duties as part-timers.

Protection of Maternity (Employment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007- L.N. 431 of 2007 has amended the Employment and Industrial Relations Act to enable all employees on maternity leave on or after 1st January 2008 to enjoy full wages during this period. This also applied to employees who commenced maternity leave prior to 1st January 2008.

Special Paid Leave Regulations 2007- As of 1st January 2008, where employees are not covered by a Wage Council Wage Regulation Order, L.N. 432 of 2007 has introduced the following minimum of entitlements for full-timers:

- Sick leave (the equivalent in hours of two working weeks sick leave per year, less any sickness benefits)
- Birth leave (one working day)
- Bereavement leave (one working day)
- Marriage leave (two working days)
- Injury leave (a maximum of one year)
- Leave for jury service (indefinite)

Bereavement leave, marriage leave and birth leave may be availed of on the next working day from the occurrence of the event unless otherwise requested by the employee. Employees may postpone their leave entitlements in connection with these occurrences for up to two weeks, in which case the employer will be compelled to grant its postponement.

European Union Act, Equal Treatment of Persons Order, 2007- The Order transposes Directive 2000/43/EC and establishes the illegality of discrimination against persons in relation to social protection; including social security and healthcare, social advantages, education, access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, as well as housing and access to any other service as may be designated by law. It also states that persons will be found guilty of

discrimination if it is proved that they neglected their obligation to suppress harassment.

Banks, financial institutions, and insurance companies are prohibited from discriminating against persons in the granting of facilities in respect of establishments, equipment or in the launching or extension of any business. This is also the case for self employment, the insurance of that business, and for the person in self employment except where there are justifiable financial risks. The order also has the effect of criminalizing and penalizing accordingly the subjection of persons to harassment and any discriminatory behavior emanating from the refusal of such persons to submit to harassment.

The Order also establishes the illegality of publishing or displaying discriminatory advertisements and also calls for penalties to be imposed in this regard. It also imposes an obligation on persons causing harassment to provide the complainant or the Equality Commission a report pertaining to the complaint and/or the steps taken to verify or investigate the complaint within ten working days of such request. The Commissioner is empowered through the Order to initiate investigations and assist complainants in formulating their complaint.

If a complaint is brought against a partnership, company, association or other body of person, all persons who at the time had reasonable power and responsibility to prevent such offences shall also be deemed to be guilty unless it can be proven that the offence was carried out without their knowledge and that due diligence was exercised to prevent such offences. Victims are granted right of action before a competent court in order to halt such unlawful acts and receive compensations for real damages incurred and any other compensation that may be awarded and considered reasonable by the court.

Equal Treatment in Employment (Amendment) Regulations, 2008- The amendments introduced state that the Regulations transpose Directives 76/207/EEC, 2000/78/EC, 2000/43/EC, 2002/73/EC and 2006/54/EC and include all persons working in both the public and private sectors. This also includes services with the Government in accordance to the 'Extension of Applicability to Service with Government (Equal Treatment in Employment Regulations, 2007)'.

Teleworking Regulations 2008- Teleworking has been regulated through L.N. 412 of 2008 with the aim of introducing more family friendly measures at the workplace, fulfilling the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda for more equality and employment, and increasing the use of ICT facilities across public and private sectors.

Teleworking contracts must be in line with the terms laid down in the Legal Notice. Hence such contracts must be in writing and contain information as required by the Information to Employees Regulations, 2002. Written information pertaining to the teleworking contract must include the location where teleworking has been proposed to occur, the provisions relating to the equipment used for telework, the number of hours to be spent at the place of telework and the workplace, the schedule which the employee must follow while performing telework, and a description of the work to be carried out. The contract must also list the department, superior or person to whom the teleworker is answerable to, the reporting arrangements, provisions akin to

monitoring, a notice of termination of the teleworking agreement, and finally; where no reference is made to teleworking in the employment contract, a reference to the right of reversibility of both parties.

Where teleworking is not referred to in the employment contract, employees are free to accept or refuse an offer by the employer for teleworking without any adverse effect on the former's employment security or conditions. The employer is in turn also given the opportunity to accept or refuse a request for telework made by an employee. Where an employee has embarked on a process of teleworking, this will not have any effect on the employee's employment status including rights laid down in the Act, Regulations, individual or collective agreements as comparable employees working at the employer's premises, the right of an employee to participate in training and career development programmes and to be subjected to appraisal policies, the right to participate in and contest elections to bodies representing employees, the right to revert to a previous position or to a similar post, and the right of both parties to terminate a telework agreement. Termination in the first two months must be given three days notice in writing, while termination following the aforementioned period must be given two weeks notice in writing unless otherwise stated in the agreement itself.

The right of the employee performing telework must be respected by the employer and monitoring systems put in place only if there is consent by both parties in the written agreement on telework. This monitoring must be proportionate to the objective and introduced in line with Council Directive 90/270.

The employer shall be deemed responsible for providing; installing and maintaining equipment and providing the teleworker with a suitable technical support facility unless otherwise stated in the written agreement. The Civil Code shall be invoked to deem whether costs for loss, damage, or misuse of equipment and data shall be borne by the teleworker or the employer. Employers must compensate or cover all costs incurred by telworkers in performing their duties while teleworkers shall be responsible for managing their working time and for taking good care of any equipment and data provided and are obliged not to gather or disseminate illegal content via the internet.

The workload and performance standards of teleworkers must correlate to those established for comparable employees working at the employer's premises. The employer must also do everything in his power to prevent the isolation of the teleworker from the rest of the workforce by giving the employee the opportunity to meet colleagues and granting access to work related information. The employer is also obliged to make clear to the employee the provisions of the Data Protection Act and shall take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of data used and processed by the teleworker while carrying out work related duties. The teleworker in turn is also obliged to abide by the provisions of the Data Protection Act and by the measures enlisted in the Legal Notice.

Gender Equality in the Supply of Goods and Services 2008- The equal access to and supply of goods and services has now been regulated by L.N. 181 of 2008 with effect from 1st August 2008. This has effectively transposed Directive 2004/113/EC into Maltese legislation and also widened the remit of NCPE functions to providing

assistance to victims of discrimination, conducting independent surveys on discrimination, publishing independent reports and providing recommendations incidental to discrimination.

The Regulations cover all public providers of goods and services irrespective of whether the person is providing such goods or services to the public or private sectors, including public bodies, outside private or family life, and will also cover all transactions carried out in relation to this context. The primary aim of these Regulations is to provide a framework for combating both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender, including discriminatory treatment related to pregnancy or maternity, and protecting the principle of equal treatment between men and women.

This Legal Notice has given a holistic protection to gender equality in employment. It has established sexual harassment as a criminal offence and holds liable any persons who neglect their obligation to prevent any form of harassment including sexual harassment within their organization or who issue instructions of direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex. Discrimination is also deemed to occur if a person is victimized following disclosure to authorities or a designated public regulating body including the Commissioner, or upon the initiation of legal redress procedures. Persons subjected to discriminatory treatment are entitled to compensation payments from the defendant for damage incurred.

The Regulations have also prohibited the use of sex as a precondition in the prognosis of premiums and benefits in relation to insurance and financial services except in specific circumstances outlined in the Regulations.

Tax Credit (Women Returning to Employment) (Amendment) Rules, 2009- Women who return to formal employment, including also those on a self-employed basis are entitled to one full year's tax exemption or a maximum of EUR 1,631 in tax credit.

Eligible women include women returning to work post January 2008 following a five years absence or more from the labour market. These women are exempt from paying tax on income for an entire year in respect of every child under the age of sixteen. It also includes women returning to work following an absence from the labour market of less than five years. These women are exempt from paying tax on income for an entire year in respect of every child born on or post 1st January 2007.

The tax credit that was launched in 2005 shall remain available to women who return to formal employment or self-employment following a five year or more absence and do not have any children under the age of sixteen.

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