

## **1. What measures have been taken to strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

First of all, the Dutch government has been committed to improve gender equality in employment and incomes, with a particular focus on the 1) financial independence for women, 2) the appointment of more women to senior positions and 3) female participation in the labour market and the gender pay gap.

### 1) Financial independence for women:

In addition to its existing commitment to economic independence for women, the government has extended this policy objective. At present, only 59.1 per cent of women meet the 70 per cent of the statutory full time minimum wage criterion, compared with 78.7 per cent of men. However, 70 per cent of the minimum wage is just enough to live on as a single person. But it leaves very little financial leverage. For this reason, the government's new supplementary objective is to increase the proportion of women earning at least 100 per cent of the full-time minimum wage; they can then be considered financially independent. To achieve this, the ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs and Employment have been working on a policy framework aimed at helping women reduce their distance to the labour market. Part of this approach resides in supporting local authorities with the implementation of gender-sensitive reintegration policies. Furthermore, a number of projects are being subsidized supporting women in vulnerable circumstances: the Integration and Society knowledge platform (KIS) has started a project which aims to improve the labor market position of women with a migration background and the 'Single Super Mom' project has been put in place with the objective to support financially dependent single mothers.

### 2) Appointment of more women to senior positions:

The number of women in senior positions is still too low, especially at the very top of organizations, and this situation is not changing fast enough. For this reason, the government has decided to take firmer measures to increase the appointment of women to senior positions as it is currently working on legislation that imposes a quota on supervisory boards of listed (direct) companies. As such, the measure obliges these companies to formulate ambitious targets for the appointment of more women in management and supervisory positions. This means that Dutch listed companies are obliged to achieve at least 30% of appointed women in their Supervisory Board. In addition, similar measures will be translated to the (semi-) public sector. Considering the diversity of the organizations belonging to the (semi-) public sector, a one-size-fits-all arrangement will not fit this purpose. As a result, a special advisory committee has been appointed to draft a proposal for measures that will apply in the public sector. As such, the government is committed to diversity and inclusivity in the broadest possible sense, and is promoting them actively within companies and organizations. Greater diversity in the upper echelons can also help create a more inclusive climate at every other level.

### 3) Female participation in the labour market and gender pay gap:

The government is taking the following policy measures to increase female participation in the labour market, both in absolute terms and in the number of hours worked, and to achieve greater gender equality in the division of work and care tasks:

With effect from 2019, partners will receive five days of paid parental leave. It is intended that from 1 July 2020, they will also be entitled to an additional five weeks on 70 per cent of their salary. When men spend more time looking after their new-born child, this tends to encourage a more equal distribution of care tasks between the parents in the long term. Moreover, a more generous overall leave entitlement should enhance female labour-market participation by reducing the discrepancies between men and women in this respect. In addition, the government has commissioned an Interdepartmental Policy Survey (IPS) to research Dutch part-time culture and draft appropriate policy responses. As part of the IPS, the government will develop different scenarios that look into the facilities needed to improve childcare, primary education and parental leave. Attention is also paid to pregnancy discrimination. As part of its Pregnancy Discrimination Action Plan, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has financed a project to encourage working women and female job seekers of childbearing age to stay in or find work during pregnancy and early motherhood.

With this, the government is endeavouring to achieve greater gender equality in the labour market by increasing female participation and improving opportunities to combine work with care. These policy measures should help narrow the pay gap. With regard to additional actions to narrow the gender pay gap, the ministry of Education, Culture and Science has subsidized a campaign aiming at raising womens' and employers' awareness of the gender pay gap. This also included the campaign "# 15 percent less" and the "Equal Wage Check". With the aforementioned, employers can easily check the existence of a pay gap within their organization. The "Action Plan for Labor Market Discrimination 2018-2021" also refers to the checklist for equal pay for men and women: "Your earned wages!"

## **2. What actions and investments have been made for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

The measures listed above highlight some of the main actions and investments that the government has made for financing gender equality with a tailored focus on the position of women in the labour market and greater equality in the division of work and care tasks. In addition, the government is investing €250 million in childcare allowance. This means that many families where both parents work can expect to receive a more generous allowance if their child goes to daycare. Furthermore, the tax burden on working people is to be eased by reducing income-tax rates and increasing employee tax credit. This will make it more financially attractive to enter the workforce, and for part-time workers more rewarding to extend the number of hours they work. This is particularly important for promoting female participation in the labour market considering that by 2018 almost three-quarters of all working women in the Netherlands were in a part-time job, compared to one-fifth of working men. Even at the beginning of their careers, before they have children, women are more likely than men to work part-time.

## **3. What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development?**

After introducing the compliance with the Corporate Governance and Supervision Act (Wet bestuur en toezicht), which set an advisory "comply or explain" target of women holding 30 per cent of positions on boards of directors and supervisory boards, results remained disappointing. The government has therefore reviewed the situation and has prepared firmer measures. As such

it is currently working on legislation that imposes a quota on supervisory boards of listed (direct) companies.

As of 2018, only 19 per cent of university professors are women. As a result, a wealth of academic talent remains unutilized. Fortunately, the Dutch universities attach great importance to gender balance and have compiled targets for the number of female professors in 2020. In recent years, all have made progress on this front. The Westerdijk Talent Impulse (Westerdijk Talentimpuls), which in 2017 provided them with support to appoint a hundred new female professors at a stroke and to up their previous targets, appears to have been a success: the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, NWO) has indeed been able to confirm 100 nominations. These so-called Westerdijk professors do not count towards the existing target figures; whether they have been achieved will become clear in 2021.

The national government itself is a major employer. In the field of gender equality, we score better than the private sector with a gender pay gap just half that of commercial businesses and 33 per cent of senior positions occupied by women. All the ministries have committed themselves to promoting diversity at the workplace by signing the Diversity Charter (Charter Diversiteit). In practice, this means working actively to prevent even subconscious prejudice, to create an open organizational culture and to encourage the recruitment, retention and promotion of employees, regardless of disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or cultural, ethnic or religious background. Rijk 2025, our current strategic review of government HR policy, is paying particular attention to diversity and inclusivity.

**4. What macroeconomic, labour and social policies have been put in place that promote full and productive employment and decent work for women, in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment and economic rights and independence?**

Increasing the participation of women in the labor market is crucial to achieve gender equality. The corona crisis has made this visible once again. There are still significant differences between men and women in the average number of hours they work, the jobs they end up in and the wages they receive. It is still unclear what the precise impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is on women's employment and economic rights and independence. However, the Dutch Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) estimates that in the initial stages of the lockdown (March and April) women worked 16% fewer hours, while the decrease was 11% for men. On the other hand, the Central Agency for Statistics (CBS) establishes that more men than women have become unemployed from March to April. The impact of COVID-19 on women's employment and participation in the labour market remains unclear so far. Both the ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs and Employment are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effects of the financial emergency aid packages that were put in place in the first months of the pandemic and pay specific attention to any differences between male and female participation in the labour market post-COVID-19.

**5. What response and recovery measures to the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken to improve and expand social protection for women (e.g., healthcare coverage, unemployment benefits, paid sick leave, paid parental leave, maternity benefits, pensions, income support such as cash transfers)?**

Initial measures taken to improve and expand the social protection for women during the first stage of the COVID-19, in particular in relation to the lockdown, have first and foremost resided

in protecting victims of gender-based domestic violence. Among other activities, victims of domestic violence were able, at any time, to contact a specialized domestic violence hotline ('Veilig Thuis') for professional and anonymous advice on domestic violence and any unsafe situations at home. In cases of emergency, they can call the emergency hotline ('112') for immediate assistance from the police. In addition, the Public Prosecution Service ('Openbaar Ministerie') prioritized cases involving (sexual) violence and vulnerable victims. The police has been closely monitoring cases involving domestic violence and has sufficient capacity for an effective response should the number of such cases increase. Furthermore, the government has been working on additional guidelines for more coherence between existing guidelines for all professionals that come in direct contact with vulnerable families, with the aim to increase their awareness of possible signs of domestic violence and how to report any signs or incidents. The government will publish these guidelines soon.

**6. What actions have been taken to expand the availability and affordability of care services to address the increase in unpaid care and domestic work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., care subsidies, paid leave)?**

See the above.

**7. What action has been taken to increase resources and support for women's and civil society organizations as they cope with the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Women's and civil society organizations have remained regularly consulted, if not more frequently, during this period to gauge their ability to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Further actions to increase resources and support for these organizations remain to be assessed in the near future.

**8. What steps have been taken to improve gender-responsive data collection in the context of follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to track and monitor the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

In these times of crisis where people are in isolation in their homes and experience psychological stress, it is of utmost importance that there is sufficient attention for the prevention of domestic violence.

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There have been no signals (yet) about a shortage of shelter for women (and their children) who need a safe haven. The government is closely monitoring the situation at national level, together with all organizations involved. Municipalities monitor the situation at local level and are ready to expand the capacity if needed.

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The government published an advise to municipalities to follow the guidelines for people who need shelter less strictly under the current circumstances.

The government is launching a campaign aimed at increasing public awareness of domestic violence during the corona crisis, particularly for victims and bystanders, which will be publicized on tv, radio, social media and through other relevant campaign materials.

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