

# **Gender Equality Action Plan 2012 - 2014**

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## **List of used abbreviations**

UN	United Nations
CSB	Central Statistical Bureau
RTSD	Road Traffic Safety Directorate
EEA	European Economic Area
ME	the Ministry of Economics
EC	European Council
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
FTUCL	Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia
ECL	Employers' Confederation of Latvia
MW	Ministry of Welfare
CM	Cabinet of Ministers
SEA	State Employment Agency
PEE	Pre-school education establishment
PLYL	Potentially lost years of life
MJ	Ministry of Justice
Ombudsman	Ombudsman
MEPRD	Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development
NHS	National Health Service
SLI	State Labour Inspection
NCE	National Centre for Education
MH	Ministry of Health
NCM	Nordic Council of Ministers

## **Introduction**

Gender Equality Action Plan 2012 - 2014 (hereinafter referred to as Plan) is elaborated in compliance with the Concept on the Implementation of Gender Equality (confirmed by the Cabinet of Ministers on October 16, 2001; protocol No. 50, 21§) which aims at efficient, integrated and coordinated approach to the issue of gender equality.

Plan is a continuation of previous development planning document - gender equality policy launched by the Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2007 - 2010 and the Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2007 - 2010.

Plan is a short-term policy planning document elaborated for three-year period and it contains both vertical and horizontal dimensions of gender equality implementation measures that require additional funds or they are intended to be funded from various foreign financial instruments.

Gender mainstreaming is an approach used in Latvia and EU gender equality policy which means that across all fields of activity and levels the impact of laws, policies and measures on situation of both genders are being examined and involved authorities from all industries must get involved in its implementation.

Ministry of Welfare called ministries, social partners, ombudsman and non-governmental organizations to put forward suggestions for learning about the situation of men and women and improvement of this situation. Suggestions were received from two ministries - MEPRD, Ministry of Welfare as well as from Ombudsman office and non-governmental organizations - NCM Riga office, Employers' Confederation of Latvia and Women Resource Centre "Marta". After learning about the situation and finding out data the Ministry of Welfare included in the Plan the most important measures promoting the improvement of men's and women's situation in the fields directly related to MJ, MES, ME. A new topic that so far has not been researched and activated is included in the Plan, namely - impact of women and men on the environment and climate change.

Plan was discussed in two Gender Equality Committee sittings - March 2011 and June 2011 as well as within the framework of individual meetings of representatives from the industry ministries, social partners, NCE and non-governmental organizations.

Four directions of activities requiring certain activities for their implementation which will promote the improvement in situation of men and women are included in the Plan.

Ministry of Welfare is going to submit to the Cabinet of Ministers informative report about the implementation of Plan until July 1, 2015.

## 1. Linking the Plan with the national development planning documents, political guidelines documents and legal acts

Plan complies with the following documents:

1. Concept on the Implementation of Gender Equality passed by Cabinet of Ministers in 2001 (protocol No. 50, 21§) which includes the main directions of gender equality policy development for the unspecified period of time.
2. Since the government of Indulis Emsis in 2004 the issues of gender equality are included in declarations about the planned activities of the Cabinet of Ministers. **Declaration about the planned activities of the Cabinet of Ministers** headed by Valdis Dombrovskis, measure 9.7 "We will promote the development of socially inclusive society, providing equal opportunities to all social groups in order to reduce the inequality of income and thus reduce the poverty and social exclusion risks, averting discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices."
3. Article 218 of the National Reference Document 2007 - 2013 reads that one of the horizontal priorities is "Equal opportunities" and one aspect of it is gender equality which must be observed in all fields of European Union structure funds' and Cohesion fund's intervention.
4. **Priority of Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030** - "Long-term contribution to human capital", direction of activity "Availability of labour market and reduction of discrimination."
5. Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, chapter VIII "Fundamental Human Rights" include two articles related to supporting of gender equality: reference to international documents (Article 89) and principle of equality (Article 91) "All persons within the Latvia are equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be implemented without any discrimination."

## 2. Linking the Plan with European Union and international documents

Not only Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other normative acts but also EU treaties and international human rights instruments are regulating the principles of gender equality. Due to the inclusion of gender equality principles in EU activities' value scale and consequently also in normative acts EU and elaborators of national policies must take into consideration the dimension of gender equality and necessity to integrate this aspect in all fields of activities instead of merely those regulated by the EU directives.

Plan complies with the following EU documents:

1. Consolidated version of the **Treaty on European Union** determines that in compliance with EU core values the women and men are equal (Article 2) as well as EU combats discrimination and promotes the equality of women and men (Article 3).
2. Consolidated version of the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** determines that by performing its functions the Union aims at preventing inequality between women and men and facilitating the equality

(Article 8) as well by establishing and implementing its policy EU aims at combating discrimination based on gender (Article 10).

3. **Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union** determines the prohibition of discrimination, int. al. on the basis of gender (Article 21), in the member states, obliging equality of men and women in all fields and maintains that the principle of equality does not prohibit keeping or determining measures providing special advantages to insufficiently represented gender in a certain field, (Article 23)
4. "**Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015**" which is the next political document of EU level in the field of gender equality after "Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)" with the six priority fields to implement unified gender equality policy in all EU countries:
  - *equal economic independence of women and men,*
  - *equal wage for equal work and work of equal value,*
  - *equal decision-making opportunities for women and men,*
  - *elimination of gender-based violence,*

Promotion of gender equality in foreign policy and horizontal direction containing the following topics:

- *gender roles (stereotypes), implementation of equal attitude regarding legal acts, administration,*
- *gender equality promotion instruments.*

Plan complies with the following UN documents:

1. **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** adopted on December 18, 1979. Latvia accepted Convention on May 14, 1992, thus undertaking the responsibility to promote the equality of women and men in all fields of life by changing the social and cultural models of behaviour for men and women in order to eliminate prejudice, customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of inferiority or superiority of one gender or stereotype roles of men and women.
2. Beijing Platform for Action which was signed by Latvia together with other countries in Global Women's Forum in Beijing on September 15, 1995 thus undertaking the responsibility to promote equal opportunities to women and men in the following fields: poverty, education, health, preventing violation against women, armed conflicts, economics, participation in decision making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, mass media, environment, equal opportunities for girls.
3. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on December 10, 1948, is legally binding for Latvia since May 4, 1990. In compliance with declaration all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, gender.

4. **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (ICCPR)** determines that UN member states are obliged to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to implement all economic, social, culture and civil rights set forth in these pacts and covenants.

Plan complies with the following EP documents:

1. **Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms** that sets forth recommendable standards for member states regarding the achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* quality as well as implementation of gender mainstreaming in education, science, culture, financial, political, economic, social protection, media, violence prevention, work-life balance etc. fields of activity.
2. **Recommendation Rec(2002) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence** and prevention of domestic violence adopted on April 30, 2002, sets forth recommendable standards to member states for prevention of violence against women and in the family.
3. **The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms** adopted on November 4, 1950 is effective in Latvia since June 27, 1997. According to this convention implementation of any rights set forth in any of laws are to be ensured without any discrimination regardless of sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.
4. **European Social Charter** came into force on February 26, 1965, but in Latvia it came into force on March 2, 2002. Charter guarantees the enjoyment, without discrimination, of fundamental social and economic rights regardless of race, colour, sex, religious belief, political opinion, national affiliation or social origin. The aim of this charter is to increase the living standard and promote the social welfare of both urban and rural residents by means of respective authorities and activities.
5. **Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** was open for signature on May 22, 2011; one of its aims is to eliminate every kind of discrimination based on sex and promote the equality of women and men. If Latvia accedes this convention the requirements set forth in this convention becomes topical. Article 14 and 15 of the convention emphasizes the importance of value-based education as well as education of specialists including those working in the field of education about the gender equality and unprejudiced gender roles.

### 3. Description of the current situation

Despite the fact that the principles of gender equality are incorporated in several legal acts and policy documents, gender equality *de facto* has not been achieved yet neither in Latvia, nor in other EU Members States, which can be seen from different statistics data and the different situations of men and women, as well as the gender disproportion in most areas of life, etc.

Gender equality means elimination of discrimination and restrictions of individuals' rights and possibilities not only in legal acts, but also compliance with these principles in all the areas of life.

Within the framework of the plan it is envisaged to comprise the most essential areas where gender inequality or sharp differences between the position of men and women *de facto* can be seen or where there is a lack of balance among the genders – like education, employment, health, entrepreneurship.

In the description of the current situation the most topical problems in four Directions of Action of the Plan are identified. Solution of the identified problems is included in the table of Measures of the Plan.

#### Direction of action I *Minimisation of the gender specific roles and stereotypes*

Views and conviction of persons serve as an essential precondition for their action. Surveys and studies confirm that gender stereotypes or the public opinion on the roles of men and women do exist in the society<sup>1</sup>, and they restrict an individual's ability to make his/ her free and flexible choice to a certain extent. Within the context of minimisation of stereotypes the gender equality can be deemed achieved if in any situation, area and at any age the society treats a person like an individual and not a representative of one or the other gender. It should be emphasised that it does not mean denial of physiological differences between men and women, but refers to the social roles of genders instead.

The most frequent consequence caused by stereotypes concerning roles of one or the other gender is the lack of balanced proportion of genders in different areas. In almost any area where there is a different situation of men and women it is caused by the public opinion or stereotypes concerning the role of one or the other gender, their behaviour, appearance, mental abilities, etc. Often these opinions are obsolete and do not comply to the actual situation. One of the areas where a clear impact of stereotypes can be seen is selection of education based upon the gender, as well as the disproportion among the teaching staff or between female and male teachers on all levels of education and, in particular, among preschool teachers.

One of the ways for minimising stereotypes concerning roles of men and women is to begin to do it at as early age as possible by promoting equal possibilities for boys and girls irrespective of their gender, as well as to encourage increase of the number of male teachers, so that more male teachers start to work at schools and nursery schools

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Awareness and attitude of people concerning issues of gender equality, Survey of people of Latvia. SKDS, 2001, Gender equality in Latvia. Analysis of the survey results. *Latvijas fakti*, 2004, BSZI, Factum or the aspects of gender equality in the labour market. Riga: Ministry of Welfare, 2006.

and, thus, also the role model of a man as an educator of children. A child needs to see role models of both men and women and it is important to see that both men and women take care of children and are equally responsible in care and play with children.

Teachers' attitude towards both boys and girls, as well as the issues of gender equality in general play an important role in minimising gender stereotypes. Therefore a lot of attention has to be focused on teachers' training because, as it can be seen from studies, quite often teachers demonstrate different attitudes towards boys and girls without being aware of it<sup>2</sup>. In training preschool teachers on equal possibilities for boys and girls the goal is to achieve the situation when during their daily work with children teachers would reflect their attitude, in particular, whether it is not different towards boys and girls, whether girls are not unknowingly directed towards games of "care" and "housekeeping" or towards the dolls' section, and boys are not directed towards the area of construction games and cars, whether affiliation to the particular gender is not emphasised in any situations, what kind of children's books are selected for reading, etc.

Until now in Latvia, within various projects, teachers of the general education level have been trained, also guidelines have been developed for evaluating textbooks from the point of view of gender equality, teachers have been trained, however, training of preschool teachers and development of methodological materials concerning ensuring equal possibilities for boys and girls in daily activities of nursery schools, in games, in attitude and in selection of literature was missing.

According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science as of the beginning of the study year 2010/2011 in preschools there were 6985 female and 8 male (1.2%) teachers, there were 568 female masters of preschools compared to 8 male masters (1.4%), which is huge dominance by one gender, in this case women. For instance, in Norway and Denmark the goal set at the national level provides for employment of 20% of male teachers in preschools.

The EC in its Report of 2010 „*More women in senior positions. Key to economic stability and growth*” concludes that the gender balance in a field, team or office is an essential precondition for economic growth and business, creates high added value along with growing productivity of a company, as well as has positive impact upon the working environment within a team in comparison to teams consisting of representatives of one gender.

The traditional education and career choices based upon belonging to one or the other gender present a major factor for segregation of the labour market based upon gender and therefore differences between wages of men and women, lack of labour flexibility, etc. It should be emphasised that it is not the goal of the policy of gender equality to achieve equal number of men and women in all professions or fields, rather it is to minimise both visible and invisible obstacles preventing women and men to select education and profession which is not traditional for their respective gender.

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<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the situation in the education system regarding the issues of gender equality. Report. Ministry of Welfare. 2005.

Until now, within separate projects judges have been indirectly trained on the issues of gender equality, mainly in relation to gender-based violence and human trafficking<sup>3</sup>, however, it is essential to train judges on the principles of gender equality, in particular in cases of civil legal disputes concerning determination of a child's place of residence with the father or mother or on issues of care. No data on such cases have been collected from the gender point of view until now, however, the trends indicate that in most cases of divorce the court determines the child's place of residence with the mother. One of the causes for taking such decisions could be the generally obsolete views of the court and the society in general concerning the man's role in the family and his ability to take care of a child. According to the principles of gender equality, in reviewing such cases care of a child should be given to one of the parents without taking into account the parent's gender, but considering other factors instead, like, the parent's interest in bringing up the child, attitude towards the child, as well as possibilities to provide food, clothing, shelter and health care, care of the child and his/ her education.

Direction of action II *Promotion of healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle of women and men*

Integration of the gender aspect within the climate change policy has been a very topical issue lately both globally and in the EU, in particular, in the Northern countries. It means the way how women and men impact the environment. No research or surveys of the national level have been carried out in Latvia until now on issues like what means of transportation are used (cars, public transportation, airplane, ships, etc.), what food is selected, whether waste is sorted, what kinds of goods or services are selected, how and whether electricity is saved, what types of fuel are selected by each gender, and who – a man or a woman – is the decision maker on the above issues, etc. Based upon results of such studies it is possible to identify how and in what way one or the other gender impacts which areas, and who is responsible for taking decisions. This allows to define the target groups of the society more accurately from both gender and other perspectives to be able to target educating information campaigns for promoting the environmentally friendly lifestyle and adaptation to the climate change consequences later.

According to the studies performed by the Northern countries<sup>4</sup> and non-governmental organisations<sup>5</sup> differences are quite big. For example, the study of 2011 concerning the impact caused upon the environment by the lifestyle and consumption models of residents of Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki applying the calculator of the Ecological Footprint in four areas: household, transportation, food, goods and services, reveals trends, that, for example, women who live in Riga use a private care twice less than men, however, in comparison to Helsinki and Tallinn both women and men in Riga use private cars more (in Riga – women 74 km, men 149 km per week, in Helsinki – on average only 54.4 km both genders).

There are differences also in choice of food. For example, in all the countries covered in the study men eat more meat (18% of all the global gas emissions originate from

<sup>3</sup> Project implemented by the Ministry of Welfare „Strengthening of intersectoral cooperation for prevention of violence” (2005 - 2006), Information campaign against trafficking of women by the Northern and Baltic countries (2002 - 2003)

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Studies by the Northern Countries Gender Institute, magazine NIKK (Issue No. 2, 2009) [www.nikk.no](http://www.nikk.no)

<sup>5</sup> See the study “Measurements of the footprint in three countries. Findings of the study” carried out by the Resource Centre for Women „Marta” in cooperation with Finnish, Estonian partners in 2011, [www.marta.lv](http://www.marta.lv).

meat production facilities exceeding the amount generated by all types of transportation jointly<sup>6</sup>), use strong spirits, women, in their turn, choose more fish, light alcohol, coffee, sweets<sup>7</sup>.

There are also differences in water consumption – men save more water (in particular, men living in Riga) and are more willing to sort waste than women, however, men spend double amount of money for various services compared to that spent by women (650 EUR and 250 EUR per month respectively).<sup>8</sup>

In the area of health the most striking differences can be seen in the data on women and men concerning the average expected lifespan which is impacted by unhealthy habits (excessive consumption of alcohol, smoking, insufficient physical activity, etc.), as well as postponing visits to a doctor for establishing the diagnosis and appropriate treatment. During the preceding periods for implementation of the program Gender Equality (years 2004 – 2006 and 2007 – 2010) in the area of health specific measures targeted at women and men were carried out, however, to achieve considerable change in improving the health of women and men it is necessary to implement regular and targeted measures.

Potentially lost years of life is an index describing causes of early death or years which a person would have lived until a certain age if he/ she had not died in an accident, due to an illness or any other cause. In Latvia people at age capable of work, in particular, men lose most potential years of life due to external causes of death which are considered causes of death possible to prevent. Circulatory system diseases present the second cause of losing potential years of life and malignant tumours account for the third cause<sup>9</sup>.

Within the groups of external causes of death among men suicides and traffic accidents account for the highest proportion.<sup>10</sup> The analysis of the situation per gender for several years indicate that in case of men the number of potentially lost years of life is more than double compared to that of women. In 2009 the potentially lost years of life in case of men amounted to 85338 years or 70% of the total number of potentially lost years of life, however, in case of women this number was 35 793 years or 30% of the total number of potentially lost years of life<sup>11</sup>.

Although the number of traffic accidents has a downward trend, until 2007 this category took the first place within the external causes of death, in particular regarding young men aged 20 to 29 years. Along with onset of the economic crisis, in 2008 the rapid increase of the number of suicides among men exceeded the number of deaths in traffic accidents and took the leading position (until 2007 suicides had ranked second within the category of external causes of death). During last years, as well as in the beginning of the 90-ies the rapid increase of the number of suicides among Latvian men at age capable of work (in particular, within the age groups from 25 to 29 years and from 30 to 34 years) should be related to economic and financial

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<sup>6</sup> Studies by the Northern Countries Gender Institute, magazine NIKK, Issue No. 2, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> The study "Measurements of the footprint in three countries" carried out by the Resource Centre for Women „Marta” in cooperation with Finnish, Estonian partners in 2011

<sup>8</sup> The study "Measurements of the footprint in three countries" carried out by the Resource Centre for Women „Marta” in cooperation with Finnish, Estonian partners in 2011

<sup>9</sup> Potentially lost years of life in Latvia in 2009. Health Economy Centre. 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Potentially lost years of life in Latvia in 2009. Health Economy Centre. 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Potentially lost years of life in Latvia in 2009. Health Economy Centre. 2010.

hardships and different behaviour by men in crisis situations. This trend cannot be seen among women and the number of suicides is comparatively even.

*Direction of action III Promotion of economic independence and equal opportunities of men and women at the labour market*

In Latvia the level of employment of women is comparatively high – in 2008 (prior to the unemployment wave caused by the economic crisis) it amounted to 65.4%, thus, exceeding the EU average of 59.1 %, however, the level of employment of men in Latvia (72.1%) was close to the EU average (72.8%). Due to the impact caused by the economic crisis and unemployment in 2009 the level of employment of women and men at age capable of work (15-64) decreased and got balanced between both genders, i.e. in 2009 it amounted to 60.9% for women and 61.0% for men, and in 2010 it was 59.4% for women and 59.2% for men.<sup>12</sup>

The economic independence is determined also by the size of wage. In Latvia in 2010 the average wage of women amounted to 81.7% of the average wage of men or by 18.3% lower than that of men, which factor certainly impacts welfare of women as well as the amount of their pensions in future.<sup>13</sup> Since the mid 1990-ies there was a trend of decrease of this difference (in 1997 the average gross wage of women amounted to 80% of that of men), the difference was fluctuating on the level of 15-20% and the best situation was achieved in 2008 when the difference was 14.5%. However, during last two years this difference has increased again, the average wage of women in 2009 was 15.9% below that of men and in 2010 this difference amounted to 18.3%<sup>14</sup>.

It is not always the case that a different average wage of men and women means differences in wage for jobs of equal value. This can also be explained by segregation of the labour market based on the gender – there are more men in better paid sectors of the labour market and more women in lower paid sectors (horizontal segregation), as well as segregation based upon positions – women do not take top-level positions in companies or institutions so often (vertical segregation). Different wages are caused also by other factors, for example, women in general work less hours and more often have part-time employment, they also suspend their professional life because of family duties more often than men.

For example, as regards women compared to men with children aged up to 12 years, the level of employment differs considerably both from the gender perspective as well as compared to women who have no children. The level of employment of this group of women decreases by 12.4 points, however, the level of employment of men with children increases by 7.3 points<sup>15</sup>, which indicates that the split of care duties between men and women is not equal and the availability of care services is insufficient, there is no policy for balancing work and family life.

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<sup>12</sup> Data of the Central Statistics Bureau.

<sup>13</sup> Data of the Central Statistics Bureau, including the issues “Women and men in Latvia 2008” and “Women and men in Latvia 2010”.

<sup>14</sup> „Women and men in Latvia 2008” and “Women and men in Latvia 2010”. Central Statistics Bureau.

<sup>15</sup> Report developed by the Swedish presidency to the Council on Beijing +15 and the situation in the Member States (the indicators developed in the EU for evaluation of the situation regarding the Beijing Platform for Action are used in measurements). 2009.

The highest difference of wages between women and men in Latvia can be seen in the finance brokerage (the sector of banks) where women receive just 61.1% of the wage of men. There are also high wage differences in wholesale and retail, in information and communications services. There are just a couple of fields where the difference of the average wages of men and women is comparatively small, namely in the state administration and defence (97.5%), operation of administrative and utilities services (94.4%), education (93.2%) and construction (95,9%)<sup>16</sup>.

Data on representation in business and in the top-level decision making positions indicate lower participation by women. For example, in 2010 women account for just 36% of the total number of top-level decision making positions (directors, executive directors, managers of small companies) in small companies<sup>17</sup>. In comparison to men the proportion of newly established companies by women is considerably lower. The situation is similar regarding the number of women on company boards where Latvia has a very good situation against the background of other EU countries, i.e. 23%, however, this cannot be deemed to be the gender balance (the data are collected on listed companies, these are 33 companies in Latvia). The number of male employers in Latvia is almost double compared to that of women, i.e. in 2010 there were 23.9 thousand male employers (out of 454.9 thousand permanently employed men) and 13 thousand female employers (out of 486.1 thousand permanently employed women).<sup>18</sup>

There are several reasons behind the comparatively disproportional number of women and men in entrepreneurship, in particular regarding starting entrepreneurial activity, i.e. women choose to take less risk because more often than men they have to take care of children and other family members, women on average earn less than men making them more subject to the risk of poverty than men and preventing them from making savings for starting up entrepreneurship; women, in particular the ones who are poorer, have worse access to transportation making them less mobile; they also have less free time because of child-care and home duties; they have less self-confidence. The global practice shows that the programs of micro loans targeted in particular to poor women have very good results, especially regarding repayment and sustainability of companies. Also the national welfare indices improve because welfare of other family members is more dependent upon women than men.<sup>19</sup>

On the EU level positive discrimination of one or the other gender is permitted and even recommended until the balance of both genders is achieved in a particular field (for instance, quotas, etc.). The EC allows Member States to create special support for starting up entrepreneurship by women and for newly established small companies founded by female entrepreneurs<sup>20</sup> and admits that Member States can create systems of support motivating women to establish companies, and recognises that women encounter particular hardships also in relation to costs of care for family members. Such activities are not considered discriminatory in relation to men and they have to be terminated as soon as the balance between genders in entrepreneurship is achieved.

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<sup>16</sup> Women and men in Latvia.2010. Central Statistics Bureau.

<sup>17</sup> The European Commission “ *Database: women & men in decision making* “  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=764&langId=en>

<sup>18</sup> Data base of the Central Statistics Bureau NB09.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) analysis „Enterprise development. Micro-Credit and Equality between Women and Men” <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/41/1896456.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> The Commission Regulation (EC) No. 800/2008 of August 6, 2008 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the common market in application of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty (General block exemption Regulation), Section 3, Aid for female entrepreneurship <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:214:0003:01:LV:HTML>

Until now in Latvia individual episodic support measures have been performed for starting up entrepreneurship or supporting newly established companies on the national level defining women as a target group, for example, there was the micro lending facility by the Mortgage Bank for rural female entrepreneurs. There have also been some activities related to business mentoring programs. The Association “Leader” has implemented 2 mentoring programs, one competence workshop and one creative workshop for entrepreneurs in 2007 and in 2010 in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy (funding was granted). Both men and women participated in these activities and women were not singled out as a target group.

Lithuania can be mentioned as a positive example; in June of 2011 an agreement was signed between the European Investment Fund and Siaulus Bank<sup>21</sup> on encouraging entrepreneurship by women. Within the framework of funding of five million Euros self-employed women, beneficiaries of micro loans, companies managed by women, etc. will be supported. Lithuania has justified this initiative by unequal access to resources by women and men and lower representation of women in entrepreneurship.

According to research the global financial crisis have the worst impact upon poorer people<sup>22</sup>. Women in Latvia are facing a higher risk of poverty than men, in particular this refers to women with children. Also this factor is essential for considering special, targeted post-crisis support measures.

Also experience gained from preceding global economic crisis shows that the employment of men improves much faster than employment of women<sup>23</sup>. From among the persons who become unemployed women are facing a higher risk that they will not be able to find a new job of equal value. This is related to the fact that majority of women are employed in state funded authorities (state administration, education, medicine, etc.) where reforms are implemented during crisis and personnel is usually not restored up to the previous level, like it is, for example, in fields where men are employed – construction, engineering communications, transportation, etc., which are branches experiencing fast recovery following crisis.

Creation and provision of possibilities to balance the work and family life, so that parents and especially women could join the labour market and be economically independent, is an essential precondition for economic independence of men and women. Attention was focused on this issue and measures were implemented for creating such opportunities both in the Program for Implementation of the Gender Equality for 2004-2006 and in the Program for Implementation of the Gender Equality for 2007-2010 (by establishing short-term child-care centres, au-pair service, constructing pre-schools).

Fathers’ involvement in bringing up children from the very moment of birth, use of the paternity and child care leave, which also should be encouraged and promoted in the society, etc. have a huge role in balancing the work and family life and

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<sup>21</sup> This initiative was implemented in the European Micro Financing Progress Program, EU Micro Financing Initiative, funded by the European Commission (200 million EUR) and the European Investment Bank within the cooperation. One of the social goals of the initiative is promotion of equal opportunities of women and men in business.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the article by the economy researcher Benja Stig Fagerland based upon a number of studies „Shall women save the world economy? .., 2010.Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies

<sup>23</sup> Smith, M. (2009). Analysis Note: Gender equality and recession, EGGE.

strengthening the family. Although the number of fathers receiving paternity benefits increases, which permits to conclude that men are more involved in the family life (in 2006 the paternity leave was used by 29.7% of socially insured fathers, in 2008 – 40.9%, in 2009 – 39.8%, in 2010 – 37.2% of socially insured fathers), still more than 50% of socially insured fathers have not used this opportunity.

Also collective agreements concluded between the employer and representatives of employees (trade unions) and providing for special conditions, like, flexible working time, suitable working conditions, additional leaves for fathers and mothers, etc. play an important role for encouraging reaching balance between the work and family life.

Taking into account that there is direct link between availability of child care and the parents' employment indices, it is necessary to improve availability of child care, especially for persons who have lost their jobs and who are participating in support measures for unemployed persons. According to the data of the Employment State Agency on year 2010 there are problems in setting up groups of unemployed persons because they refuse to participate referring to child care as one of the reasons.

#### *Direction of action IV Monitoring and evaluation of the gender equality policy*

Regular monitoring and evaluation of an implemented policy is among the preconditions for implementation of a targeted policy. By carrying out regular monitoring of the implemented policy it is possible to identify the tasks to be performed in future and required modifications and improvements in both regulatory acts and various policy areas in an efficient manner. One of the approaches for performing this monitoring is integrated approach to gender equality according to which impact upon the situation upon women and men is evaluated in all stages of the action policy, i.e. development, implementation, evaluation, and the situation, interests and needs of both genders are taken into account. Cooperation not only at the level of state administration, but also involving social partners and non-governmental organisations is an especially important precondition for implementing efficient monitoring.

One of the ways for performing monitoring of an implemented policy and concluding whether the implemented policy and measures have yielded positive results, as well as for identifying changes and development trends in various fields is carrying out studies and developing regular analytic overviews. Until now a study on the impact of the gender equality policy upon the situation of men and women has not been carried out.

Within framework of this direction of action the information on the fields of Beijing Platform for Action and situation in Latvia will be updated. Beijing Platform for Action reflects the viewpoint of the UN Member States upon the changes of the position of a women and improvement of the situation in 12 most important areas of life: poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, armed conflicts, economy, participation in decision making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, mass media, environment, girls. The Platform for Action describes problems in each of the areas and proposes directions of action and recommendations for governments of the states concerning specific measures for achieving improvement.

Taking into account that the position of women in EU Member States regarding problems focused upon in Beijing Platform for Action is not equally topical in different global regions and the fact that the policy of gender equality is being implemented in the EU and it is aimed at ensuring rights and possibilities to both women and men, in December of 1998 the EU Council agreed that for the purpose of evaluating implementation of Beijing Platform for Action it was necessary to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators on areas identified in Beijing Platform for Action which would permit to compare the situation of both women and men across various EU Member States.

As from 1999 the Council has agreed on indicators in ten areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. Also Latvia participates in development of these indicators and regularly (every 3 years) summarises data on the situation in Latvia based upon the developed indicators in 12 areas of the Platform.

Taking into account that the directions of the gender equality policy are set by the Concept for implementation of the gender equality adopted in 2001 and the fact that the issues and ways of encouraging gender equality have changed over twelve years, a new development planning document will be developed within the framework of the Plan – Guidelines of Gender Equality Policy for 2015-2022, setting the strategic directions for further development of the gender equality policy in Latvia.

#### **4. Expected policy results**

If the indices which are usually used to describe the situation in the area of gender equality (for example, the employment of women and men, use of time by men and women, proportion of women in decision making positions, segregation of the labour market based upon gender, balance of women and men in entrepreneurship, etc.) improve it cannot be clearly concluded that this is the achievement due to the measures implemented within the framework of the Plan.

Positive changes, like improvement of understanding and change of attitude of the society, employers and experts, changes in the social economic and demographic situation and other changes take place due to the impact by implementation of several action policies, besides, as it can be seen from experience of other countries, improvement of the situation is encouraged by regular investment of financial resources for solving identified problems. It is also true that sometimes changes can be identified only when comprehensive studies are carried out.

Similarly to the preceding period (2007-2010) no broad measures directed towards encouraging gender equality will be carried out within implementation of the gender equality policy within the framework of the Plan, and this is related to unavailability of funding and (restricted) human resources available for this policy area.

The following changes are expected thanks to implementation of measures planned within the four directions of action:

Direction of action I Minimisation of the gender specific roles and stereotypes

Better understanding and more support by experts to integration of the gender equality principles in the area of education should be expected, including change in the attitude by teachers and more equal opportunities for boys and girls in the process of education. Children of preschool age will have possibilities for more diverse development, non-traditional behaviour free of stereotypes on the roles of one or the other gender without receiving negative attitude in feedback; in future this could encourage children to choose professions which are not traditional for the respective gender and to make free choices without basing them on affiliation to one or the other gender.

Several positive features, like decrease of the difference of wages of women and men, improvement of the working environment along with male teachers coming to nursery schools and schools, improvement of the boys' achievements at schools, etc. can be expected in the result of implementation of measures following from the developed long-term recommendations on minimising the gender segregation in professions where it is most pronounced.

Direction of action II Promotion of healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle of women and men

Habits of lifestyle especially characteristic for women and men and impact upon the environment will be identified, the people's understanding of their impact upon the health and environment will improve. In the result positive changes in trends of habits of the lifestyle of women and men, attitude towards the health, environmentally friendly model of life can be expected. Knowledge of environment experts concerning integration of gender aspects in promoting environmentally friendly lifestyle will improve and in the result more purposeful public education campaigns on impact upon the environment will be created and the gender aspect will be integrated in the environment protection and climate change policy.

Direction of action III Promotion of economic independence and equal opportunities of men and women at the labour market

Along with improvement of the possibilities of balancing the work and family life changes are expected in the division of responsibility between women and men concerning duties related to child care and upbringing and housekeeping. If more convenient possibilities are offered for balancing professional activities with the family duties, most probably, women will get involved in the labour market more actively and men will have more possibilities to participate and assume duties related to bringing up children.

If involvement of women in entrepreneurship is encouraged faster recovery of people facing the risk of poverty (for example, children, young people, women) can be expected after last social economic crisis of Latvia, thus encouraging the economic growth and welfare in the country in general.

Direction of action IV Monitoring and evaluation of the gender equality policy.

The system of monitoring and evaluation of the gender equality policy system will be improved and will permit to analyse efficiency of the policy, to identify tasks to be carried out in future for implementation of the gender equality, thus encouraging purposeful utilisation of resources (time, money, information, human). Also understanding of experts of the essence of the gender equality and possibilities and importance of application of the integrated approach in branch policies will improve. By application of the integrated approach of the gender equality in branch policies

analysis of a higher quality will be available concerning the situation in the particular branch from the gender perspective.