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Social dialogue, renewable energy, female employment

edited by Giulia Rossi and Selma Terzimehic

On the 13th of May 2010, Adapt and UPEE, in cooperation with the University of Szeged, Faculty of Law, have organized the first of three thematic workshops within the *WiRES* project. The event was held in the city of Sofia (Bulgaria) and was dedicated to the theme of social dialogue, renewable energies and female employment. The aim of the workshop was firstly to discuss the results of the first stage of the project, focusing on challenges and opportunities women workers may face in the renewable energy sector. Participants had the pleasure to hear more about the project, its objectives and planned activities. Mr. Teodor Dechev and Mrs. Radosveta Gospodnova from UPEE presented a detailed research study on female employment in renewable energy sector in Bulgaria. The data, which have been collected with the support of the Bulgarian National Institute on Social Security, al-

lowed to highlight concerns of the socio-economic context, industrial relations and social dialogue perspectives in the power engineering sector and renewable energy subsector, with a gender mainstreaming approach. Ms. Giulia Rossi, a representative of Adapt, presented the results of a research on female employment in renewable energy sector, focusing on some methodological issues and available data. Finally, Mr. Balazs Rossu from the Faculty of Law of the University of Szeged discussed supranational legal issues in green economy and its impact on female employment.

The event has also been the occasion to share ideas and experiences with representatives of Bulgarian social partners and other relevant stakeholders. In fact, representatives of some of the most important Bulgarian trade unions, associations and companies took part to the event, attesting a growing interest in

To know more

If you want to know more visit the website of Adapt www.adapt.it. All related information are available to: Progetti, *WiRES*, and Archivio storico, *Green jobs*.

WiRES



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improving female occupation in the sector. Participants had the pleasure to listen and compare experiences with the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria, the National Federation of Energy Workers (NFE), the Bulgarian Branch Chamber of Power Engineers, the Bulgarian Photovoltaic Association, the Employment Agency, the Confederation of Labour Podkrepa, the Lumy-Comp Design Ltd., the Association of Bulgarian Energy Agencies (ABEA), Sofia Energy Agency (SOFENA) and Demetra Vraca Ltd.

The relevance of gender issues in employment policies has been strongly emphasized by Mrs. Zhivka Mincheva, a representative of the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which highlighted the main challenges women are facing in the Bulgarian labour market and policy developments. Gender pay gap and discriminatory behaviours, especially related to maternity, are still registered in the main European countries. Later on in the debate Professor Katia Vladimirova, from University of National and World Economics has also been dealing with gender segregation and work-life policies, in a perspective of changing

labour relations.

The partners were extremely satisfied with the outcomes of the workshop, as it seems to have achieved its planned objectives: promotion of the social dialogue and collection of useful data, providing also for establishing contacts and creating a basis for the numerous further collaborations. The aim of this *Dossier* is to collect and present some of the interventions presented during the workshop. In a first moment article, Giulia Rossi summarizes the main results of the first stage of the WiRES research, *The state of art in the European labour markets*. In the second article instead, the juridical perspective is offered by Mr. Rossu, *Green economy and impact on female employment: supranational legal issues*. The second WiRES' workshop, *Women in green economy*, was held on the 27th and 28th of May 2010 in Karlsruhe, Germany, as a part of an international conference on *Human capital for sustainable economies*, organized by Etech Germany. The results of the workshop will be presented in the next thematic *Dossier*.

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Bollettino Adapt

Produced in collaboration with the Marco Biagi Centre for International and Comparative Studies, consists of a series of electronic newsletters providing updated information on labour and industrial relations issues. There are two types of Adapt newsletter.

Bollettino ordinario

It's a weekly newsletter providing updated information on labour law and industrial relations. It includes extensive documentation from international, EU, national, regional and local sources, divided by section. Particular attention is paid to: certification, Italian case law, employment agencies, employment services, staff leasing, education, training, apprenticeships, research, higher education, mobility of labour, immigration, collective bargaining, health and safety, working hours, and undeclared labour. In addition it includes statistical surveys, economic notes and institutional reports, news about calls for tenders, competitions and awards, and the activities of Adapt/Marco Biagi Centre for International and Comparative Studies.

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The state of art in the European labour markets

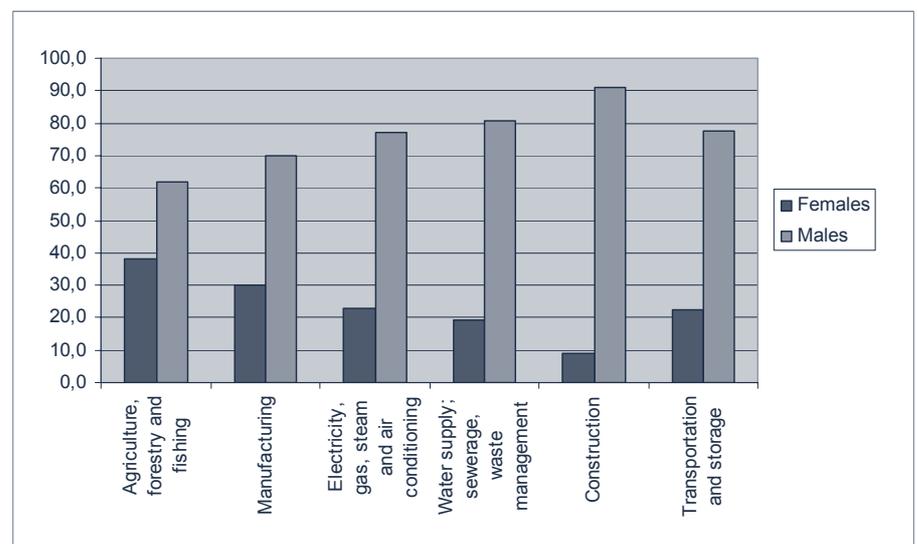
by Giulia Rossi

Over the last decade European labour markets have seen an increasing participation of women. Evidence can be found in the female employment rate which has increased by 5.2 percentage points in the period 2000-2008, reaching 59.1% for the EU-27 in 2008. However, as reported by the last *Report on equality between women and men*, women are still more likely to have a disadvantaged position, mainly because of the higher incidence of precarious contracts, involuntary part-time and a persistent negative pay gap (European Commission, *Report on equality between women and men 2010*, December 2009). Moreover women workers are still not equally distributed among occupations and economic activities and there has not been much positive evolution in aggregate levels of segregation in sectors and occupations since 2003. Segregation – which is commonly measured by the Karmel and MacLachlan Index, which can be interpreted as the share of the employed population that would need to change occupation (sector) in order to bring about an even distribution of men and women among occupations (sectors) – is relatively high in Europe, reaching 25.3% for occupational segregation and 18.3% for sectoral segregation. The issue of gender segregation in labour markets is particularly relevant during economic downturns. Experience from past crisis suggests that a great attention should be put on vulnerable groups, also after the economy

has begun to recover. This is particularly true for young (both women and men) and female labour force in a whole. For persons who become unemployed, the risk of not being re-employed is higher for women, while men's employment generally recovers more quickly than women's (M. Smith, *Analysis Note: Gender equality and the recession*, EGGE, 2009). The risk of falling among part-time unemployed (part-timers who would like to work more) or in the so-called inactivity trap is in fact higher for women, which represent more than two thirds of the 63 million persons between 25-64 who are inactive in Europe. In this context it is strongly recommended to ensure female participation also in those “non-traditional jobs”, defined as those where women represent less than 25% of the total workforce.

Green jobs are certainly an example of ‘non-traditional jobs’ if we think that the majority of them is expected to be created in the secondary sector (construction, transportation and energy production and distribution) where women are traditionally under-represented in almost all European countries. In 2009 the share of women workers in these sectors was below 25%, reaching just 38% in agriculture and 30% in manufacturing (see the figure). The renewable energy industry is one of those sectors where a relevant creation of new jobs is expected. Generally, the first obstacle found by a researcher trying to quantify employment levels in renewable energy sector is the delimitation of the companies that are part of it, given the non-existence of an official classification. If we think about the wind energy industry, for example, we

Employment composition by gender in those activity sectors mostly related with green investments in the EU-27 in 2009



Source: Eurostat

see that wind turbine manufacturers are part of the sector and normally belong to the category of manufacturing. But in this sector we should also include companies that generate and distribute electricity from wind energy, as well as those companies that manage all the processes of wind measurement and siting, the environmental impact assessment, installation and construction of wind farms and negotiation of renting and permits. Finally one could incorporate the centres specialised in activities that are specific of wind energy, like wind energy measurement and forecasting, wind related research and development, operation and maintenance of wind turbines, specific training modules and so on (for a more detailed description see M.I. Blanco, G. Rodrigues, *Direct employment in the wind energy sector: An EU study*, in *Energy Policy*, 2009, vol. 37, n. 8, 2847-2857). We should keep in mind that the diversity, the dimensions and the local natures vary and this make it difficult to identify and to target them. One of the consequences of this complex framework, as reported by many studies, is a lack of knowledge of the employment types that are required in the sector and a shortage of skilled workers.

Although there are no gender-disaggregated data on employment in renewable energy sector as a whole, it is generally considered a male-dominated sector. When considering energy and electricity industry, most managers and employees are male. Ac-

In the energy sector the share of female technical staff is at most 6%

According to a recent work of Sustainlabour, the share of female employees in the energy industries is estimated at 20%, most working in non-technical fields such as administration and public relations. Some researchers have suggested that the energy sector has a highly masculine image which deters women. It is also true that there is a stereotype that women are not technologists and that they are not capable of building, operating and maintaining sophisticated technologies. This idea seems to be confirmed by the occupational composition by gender in the energy sector. The share of female technical staff is at most 6% at global level, in decision making positions it is about 4% and in the top-management is less than 1% (Sustainlabour, *Green Jobs and Women Workers. Employment, Equity, Equality*, Draft Report, 2009, in www.sustainlabour.org).

Increasing the share of women workers in this sector will certainly require a combination of innovative and traditional strategies, overcoming discriminatory and organizational barriers women might face. According to the European Mine Chemicals and Energy Workers' Federation among the existing barriers for female participation a relevant role is played by flexible working hours, childcare needs and the culture of organization. In Europe electricity sector in particular has been through rapid changes and restructuring and this has brought with it new challenges and new possibilities for

promoting equality into the strategic development of companies and into an effective human resource planning. In such dynamic industry, as renewable energy, company work-life policies should be developed and should be targeted both to women and men. In particular, if long working hours or shift turns are requested (e.g. for PV cells manufacturing) some measures and innovative working arrangements are needed in order to do not disadvantage working parents.

In general many sector studies point towards the importance of improving the ability to recruit more women in order to meet future skills and recruitment challenges. According to Cedefop, on average women are expected to be better qualified than men in the future, although at the medium qualification level the rates of increase are higher for men than for women. At the same time, the fall in the number of people with low-level qualifications is expected to be sharper among women than men. The better qualifications of women reinforce the need of measures to better use their potential and provide concrete opportunities to reconcile work and family.

In general new jobs in the renewable energy sector will require skills in fields like engineering, chemistry and physics where women are traditionally under-represented. Taking the wind energy sector as example, the previously quoted study of Blanco and Rodrigues argues that the shortage is more acute for positions that require a high degree of experience and responsibility. In particular, manufacturers report a shortage in engineers and in O&M and site management

activities. As an example, an engineering degree is in fact requested for wind farms' designers or for wind turbines' electrical engineers. In addition to the educational requirements some profiles might also demand for some previous experience in the energy field. This is the case of managerial positions related to the management of the wind industry's commercial applications where in addition to a management previous experience, a technical experience in the field of energy is generally required. Technical requirements also

characterize those profiles requiring secondary level education, i.e. technical staff for O&M and repairing wind turbines. All these examples show how the low participation in technical educational fields might be an obstacle for women to be recruited in the sector. Labour market policies which address gender discrimination and increase female employment in renewable energy industry must take into account that part of the problem is the fields women typically choose to enter. Rectifying this gender gap depends also on

school systems to give information, counselling and financial incentives to female students to enter more technical fields of study.

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* The first stage of the WiRES research has been conducted by Giulia Rossi jointly with Danilo Bianchini.

Green economy and impact on female employment: supranational legal issues

by *Balazs Rossu*

Basic question(s)

There is one fundamental question regarding the aforementioned topic and that is: How can one define *green jobs* (or green economy) as a term? Although what really raises more and more questions about this term, intriguingly, is not that it is not yet defined. On the contrary, the problem is that we have too many of possible definitions for the same term, and most of these are used in actual practice. Almost each and every institution, legislative body, country or even expert has their own 'version' of the definition for *green jobs* and most of these terms are based on different methodologies and follow different aspects regarding the case. I am not hinting that any of these definitions would be

wrong, but to be able to work effectively in the future, we would most importantly need to lay down the basic terms for everyone working on the topic to use, as some could be quite misleading when observed from an alternate perspective. The possible examples are countless, but some of them are worth mentioning. For example a group of experts, trying to simplify the term, defined *green jobs* as "any kind of work that does not damage the environment any further"; it truly sounds simple and also has some good ideas, but it holds just as many possible flaws. According to this definition, someone working in his own garden, or assembling his or her bicycle manually would mean that they are doing *green jobs*. Is that the case? Possibly, but unfortunately that is far

from the truth. It is simple to overlook some details, especially when dealing with an entirely new field of science. But not all mistakes are the same level. Let us see a different, more scientific approach of the definition. A group of experts examined the different kinds of jobs and stated that "one should only be considered to be actually doing a green job if the level of carbon dioxide

Bollettino speciale Adapt

To know more:

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Green Economy and Female Employment. More and Better Jobs?

edited by Francesca Mattioli

emitted to the atmosphere during the work process is relatively low". This explanation is more sophisticated but also has its own flaws, as for example nuclear energy would be the last to be considered *green* by most people (if not by everyone), but according to the definition mentioned last, operating a nuclear power plant should be considered a green job, as the process of producing atomic energy does not release a vast amount of carbon dioxide in to the air, but severely damages the environment in other ways.

Another group of questions is raised by the topic of *green jobs* and that is regarding the current economic crisis. The opinions differ here just as well, as some economic experts say that the green economy is the long-sought answer for the labour market issues that play a tremendous role in the current economic situation. According to them, the

How can one define green jobs (or green economy) as a term?

new jobs (work places) created by the technological and scientific advance brought along by the renewable energy sector (and the green economy as a whole) are going to be so grand in numbers that the EU's aim of full employment will become possible in just a few decades.

Others do not see things so bright and say that even though some new occupations will be created, old ('non-green') ones will be no more and so some people might be able to be employed by the new renewable sector, but the ones left without a job to do will be overwhelming in numbers.

A third group of experts is positive that the loss of jobs and the new ones created will indeed bring a balance, meaning they will balance each other out.

Currently there is no agreement among the experts regarding the issues and questions mentioned above. There is something that

they do agree on though, and that is that we must take and follow this path that leads to the use of renewable energies and green jobs, as we are running low on our natural resources and have done some serious damage to our environment that we have to stop and fix in the long run if we are planning to live on this planet in the future.

Legal background

It is important to know what legal means are there to support us regarding the different grounds of work. As it has been mentioned already, the importance of these issues are non-disputed, but we still need to have a designated path, along which we can get ahead, otherwise we will only raise more and more unsolved issues, especially on such an innovative area of research and work, particularly in the present economic situation. We should be well aware of the legal background we can rely on and we

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should put special emphasis on the employment of women as they are only a mere 10 to 15% of these sectors' workforce, which has to be changed. Mainly I will aim to highlight the different articles regarding the legislation about gender equality as the aim is not to create yet another field to support gender discrimination (of course the other end is not the appropriate solution either, but according to the present state we are far from excluding men from the renewable energy sector). Among the numerous supranational legislation the one that should be mentioned first is the Treaty of Lisbon. According to Article 1a, "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and *respect for human rights*, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, *non-discrimination*, tolerance, justice, *solidarity and equality between women and men prevail*" (Author's italics, editor's note). In Article 2 it discusses an aim mentioned already: "The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, *aiming at full employment* and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance. It shall combat social ex-

There are other means to support our case: the most important is social dialogue

clusion and *discrimination*, and shall promote social justice and protection, *equality between women and men*, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child" (Author's italics, editor's note).

The Treaty also lists the principal areas where shared competence between the Union and the Member States apply:

- a) *internal market*;
 - b) *social policy, for the aspects defined in this Treaty*;
 - c) *economic, social and territorial cohesion*;
 - d) agriculture and fisheries, excluding the conservation of marine biological resources;
 - e) environment;
 - f) consumer protection;
 - g) *transport*;
 - h) trans-European networks;
 - i) *energy*;
 - j) area of freedom, security and justice;
 - k) common safety concerns in public health matters, for the aspects defined in this Treaty.
- The ones highlighted in bold are especially important in our case, with special regard to energy which is listed as a separate category for the first time in this document.

Social dialogue

Apart from actual, so called 'hard law', there are other means to support our case on this field, and the most important is social dialogue without doubt. Its importance is mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty in Article 136a as follows: "The Union *recognises and*

promotes the role of the social partners at its level, taking into account the diversity of national systems. It shall facilitate dialogue between the social partners, respecting their autonomy. The Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment shall contribute to social dialogue" (Author's italics, editor's note).

The concept of 'social dialogue' pervades discussions of labour relations in Europe. Its value in the estimation of many scholars and policymakers is that the concept opens the way to an entirely new and potentially transformative paradigm in deliberative democracy.

European social dialogue is enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht (Articles 138 and 139; ex 118a and 118b) and it is pro-

Dossier Adapt

To know more:

n. 4/2010

Green jobs: nuove opportunità o nuovi rischi?

a cura di Radosveta Gospodinova, József Hajdú e Lisa Rustico

n. 2/2010

The economic and occupational impact of green economy

edited by Giulia Rossi

n. 9/2009

The impact of green investments on labour market

edited by Carlo Stagnaro

moted by the European Commission as an instrument for a better governance and promotion of social and economic reforms.

The aforementioned articles of the Treaty of Maastricht that contain discussion about the social dialogue are as follows (Articles 138 and 139 respectively): “The Commission shall have the task of promoting the consultation of management and labour at Community level and shall take any relevant measure to facilitate their *dialogue* by ensuring balanced support for the parties.

To this end, before submitting proposals in the *social policy* field, the Commission shall consult management and labour on the possible direction of Community action.

If, after such consultation, the Commission considers Community action advisable, it shall

consult management and labour on the content of the envisaged proposal. Management and labour shall forward to the commission an opinion or, where appropriate, a recommendation.

On the occasion of such consultation, management and labour may inform the Commission of their wish to initiate the process. The duration of the procedure shall not exceed nine months, unless the management and labour concerned and the Commission decide jointly to extend it” (Author’s italics, *editor’s note*).

“Should management and labour so desire, the *dialogue* between them at Community level may lead to contractual relations, *including agreements*.

Agreements concluded at Community level shall be implemented either in accordance with the procedures and practices spe-

cific to management and labour and the Member States or, joint request of the signatory parties, by a Council decision on a proposal from the Commission” (Author’s italics, *editor’s note*).

There is a long way ahead of us until we reach even some of our ‘check-points’ but we should work together both on regional and community level. Law will as always have a strong influence on paving our way, but we should keep in mind that social dialogue is also a possibility at our disposal and regarding such complicated issues it will play a decisive role in our final success in changing our world *green*.

Balazs Rossu

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Events



Health and Safety and Vulnerable Workers in a Changing World of Work

Conference

8th June 2010 – London

Publications



Il commentario analizza in modo **organico** e **completo** la nuova normativa in materia di salute e sicurezza sui luoghi di lavoro, aggiornata al decreto legislativo n. 106 del 2009. L'opera offre, in un'**ottica interdisciplinare** e **altamente specialistica**, una **prima interpretazione** del nuovo testo normativo e, grazie agli **schemi riepilogativi** e di **sintesi**, fornisce le **linee guida** indispensabili per la risoluzione dei nodi problematici e delle principali questioni emergenti.

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