

A Pact for Gender Equality

20 Measures for the Promotion of Gender Equality

Gender equality has yet to be achieved, a reality only heightened by a global financial crisis making it increasingly difficult for men and women today to realize their full personal and professional potential.

Despite the progress made towards equality in recent years, critical steps remain to be taken with regards, in particular, to closing the pay gap, opening up decision-making positions to women, improving overall working conditions, guaranteeing duty/responsibility equity and dismantling inflexible gender stereotypes...

The *Laboratoire de l'égalité* was created by men and women from all professional walks of life. Its goal is to raise awareness regarding issues of gender equality, particularly in the upper echelons of both the private and public sectors, and to put forward targeted initiatives for advancing gender equality.

Working in close collaboration with the 600 members of our network, the *Laboratoire de l'égalité* devised a **Pact for Gender Equality specifically intended for the candidates of the 2012 French presidential elections.**

Our major commitments are presented in 4 key areas:

1. Gender equality and furthering greater professional responsibility for women
2. Equal wages and promoting job security
3. Reconciling work and family life and encouraging greater male involvement
4. Working together towards a culture of equality

1

Gender Equality

Greater Professional Responsibility for Women

Whether in politics, business, associations, labor unions or the public sector, only a fraction of women hold high-level positions and decision-making roles. The advancement of gender equality is fundamental to the establishment of a just democracy.

1. Reinforcing equal gender representation in politics

- a) **Restrict the public financing of political parties to parties respecting a 50% quota of women candidates.** Abolish the practice of dual mandates.
- b) **Promote fairness in the distribution of male and female candidatures,** basing choices on objective criteria and probable election outcomes.
- c) **Put into place a proportional list system for regional elections,** alternating candidates of both sexes until reaching a quota of 50% women.
- d) **Appoint women to offices vacated during a mandate** until gender parity is reached.

2. “Breaking through the glass ceiling” in both the corporate and public sectors

- a) **Evaluate and enforce the quota requiring 40%** of all company board members to be women. Companies governed by other decision-making bodies (directorates, executive committees, steering committees) must implement **a plan to promote gender equality** and to respect a quota of 40% women board members.
- b) **Ensure the equal representation of women (50%) in leadership roles** in the public sector (national administration, local administration and public health services), in higher education and in the arts.
- c) **Make gender equality mandatory** in the recruitment of top civil servants. Require equal representation of women and men on school selection boards and in the promotion of students.
- d) **Publish reports** on the representation of women in the public and private sector and on the various means used for promoting gender equality. Set up monitoring structures, and require that annual social responsibility reports include information on the attribution of jobs to men and women in both the public and the private sector.

3. Facilitate women's access to positions of power and responsibility **within trade unions and other non-profit organizations,** until gender equality is reached.

4. Set up support networks in all fields for women candidates running for elected offices and executive positions (mentoring and networking). Mobilize government officials, locally and nationally, in the fight against stereotypes in order to do away with barriers preventing the equal sharing of power and responsibilities between women and men.

2

Equal Wages Promoting Job Security

*Women continue to earn on average 27% less than men.
We can reduce the gap by 10% in the next 10 years if we give ourselves the means.*

5. Putting an end to involuntary part-time work

- a) **Prohibit “mini-jobs”** of less than 16 hours a week (when unrelated to occupational particularities).
- b) **Increase by 25%** the wage of hours worked beyond the number stated in an employment contract (so called “complementary” hours).
- c) **Make it mandatory for companies to offer full-time permanent positions** to part-time workers after six months of employment (except in specific cases).

6. Adhering to the “same job means same pay and same career opportunities” principle.

- a) **Implement a 5-year plan to close the gender pay gap**, by comparing job positions (within the sector or the company), education levels, position responsibilities and the physical and mental demands of the work.
- b) **Eliminate the negative effects of family-related leaves of absence**, which impact not only pay raises but other career advancement factors as well, such as training courses, promotions and performance appraisals. Sanction companies that discriminate against women on the basis of such leaves.
- c) **Adjust employee and department targets as well as performance appraisals to the specifics of part-time work**, in decisions pertaining to salary, training and professional growth.
- d) **Monitor employee careers in an annual male-female status report**, and require companies to develop strategies to close the wage gap and to eradicate direct and indirect discrimination.

7. Reforming the income tax system

Put an end to household taxation and **implement individual taxation** while taking into account dependents, so that taxes paid by everyone, regardless of marital status, are fair and proportionate to individual income.

8. Improving retirement income for women

Increase the retirement revenue of women, often much lower than that of their male counterparts due to social and professional prejudices met with over the course of their careers.

- a) Reinstated the right to full retirement benefits at the age of 65.
- b) Extend the benefits of survivor’s pensions to partners who have entered into a civil union.
- c) Improve overall family rights that alleviate without eradicating gender inequalities, such as increasing insurance coverage terms.
- d) Put into place commissions such as France's *Conseil d’orientation des retraites* (Retirement Guidance Council) to evaluate the effect of pension reform on both sexes.

3

RECONCILING WORK AND FAMILY LIFE GREATER MALE INVOLVEMENT

Women today still take on two thirds of all household tasks, devoting, what is more, three times more time than men to childrearing. Let us create a partnership between men and women that entails a more egalitarian division of household tasks and child rearing responsibilities.

9. Providing all women with the opportunity to work after childbirth

Create 500,000 new childcare spaces for young children. Guarantee school meals and quality afterschool programs for children until 6.30pm, both during the school week (including Wednesdays) and during school holidays, focusing in particular on the training and professional qualifications of child care personnel within schools.

10. Helping fathers become more involved in family life

- a) **Extend paternity leaves** from two weeks to four weeks at 100% pay.
- b) Implement a shorter **parental leave** of 12 months, divided between the two parents, at 80% pay up to 1,800 euro a month.
- c) Launch a **campaign promoting a more equal sharing of household and family responsibilities** between men and women.
- d) Grant fathers the right to take time off for child care and implement **more flexible working arrangements**.
- e) Put an end to excessive workloads and **the promotion of presenteeism**. Put limitations on non-standard schedules.

11. Facilitating work-life balance in case of caring for a dependent parent

Help working men and women who care for a **dependent parent**.

- a) Expand the public system allowing professional caregivers to help seniors in their homes.
- b) Instate the right to working time flexibility in order to provide necessary additional care to a senior without jeopardizing one's job.

4

Towards a Culture of Equality

Combating gender stereotypes that negatively affect self-image and the future choices of girls and boys. Acting to promote equality between men and women.

12. Implementing a Pact for Gender Equality in education at all levels, from early childcare facilities, primary, middle and high schools through institutes of higher education.

- a) Develop specific training programs for teachers and education staff** on stereotypes related to beliefs about acceptable roles for men and women. Develop and put into place teaching methods and tools for teaching gender equality to children of all ages.
- b) Modify contents and school materials** that convey stereotypical representations, namely in children's literature and textbooks. Ensure sex education programs respectful of self and of others. Create watchdog groups in schools to monitor inappropriate gender-based behavior.
- c) Create gender studies programs and departments** in universities and higher education institutions. Promote increased gender equity research through student fellowships and financial aid.

13. Challenging gender stereotypes in career choice and family roles.

- a) Expand the range of choices available to all students, regardless of sex, in their academic and vocational orientation.** Challenge our gender-based preconceptions of jobs typically held by either men or women.
- b) Promote a diversity of career paths for both men and women** to meet workforce demands across the board and, in particular, in employment-intensive sectors.

14. Raising public awareness of gender-based stereotypes and denouncing sexism

- a) Launch a public awareness campaign** combating sexist media messages and the representation of men and women in contexts symbolizing or denoting man's domination of woman (in association with the French *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel*, the French council governing the content of radio and TV).
- b) Launch communication campaigns** combating sexist remarks and practices as well as sexual harassment at the workplace, in both the public and private sectors and within the political sphere.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY

Pivotal issues

Implementing a national policy and building a framework to meet the challenges!

15. Create a Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality and launch a national gender watchdog organization. Set up an **interministerial gender awareness program**, with a specifically trained "gender equality correspondent" appointed to each ministry. **Create a national resource center**, in charge of statistics, analysis and the compiling and exchange of best practices. Make adequate financing available.

16. Promote an Equality Label for corporations, governments and local administrations.

Developing our pact on the European and international level

17. Make gender equality a priority in foreign policy, and mainstream our priorities at all levels through bilateral and multilateral relationships.

18. Promote international and European networking and exchanges with regards to all of our major commitments, in accordance with the European Strategy to Promote Gender Equality (2010-2015) and the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020).

19. Ensure that all European financing programs contributing to gender equality at the workplace, and in particular the European Social Fund, are widely available and distributed throughout France.

20. Promote the Gender Equality Charter at the local administration level, with the support of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions. Promote the Equality Label and bring support to the cities, departments and regions that choose to implement it.

About the *Laboratoire de l'égalité*

A group of men and women from all political and professional horizons created the *Laboratoire de l'égalité*, an association committed to achieving, without further delay, gender equality in all sectors of economic life and at all levels of decision making.

The experience and influence of both its founding members and its steering committee, as well as their involvement in various private and public networks, are a major contribution to the association.

In a few short months, the *Laboratoire de l'égalité* has proven to be a rallying force, able to both engage key decision-makers and to raise public awareness. The association has put forward objective proposals for dealing with issues essential to building real gender equality in the workplace and to promoting a more egalitarian work-life balance, focusing on issues such as women's retirement income, school hours, parental leave, and so forth.

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