
GENDER AS A EUROPEAN PARADIGM OF MINORISATION ON THE JOB MARKET:

SOME LESSONS FOR PORTUGAL

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In the 90s female low wages and atypical forms of work are still high in most Member states. Attempts to deal with the job market crisis through an increase in the flexibility of work practices have resulted in the creation of discriminatory shares of working activities between male and female workers. European Community rules and policies have not generated much change in the persisting gender minorisation in the job market. Indeed, female unemployment and poverty are growing, especially in Portugal. The prospects of new European Union social regulations depend on the resolution of the equality gap through collective labour law. However, the implementation of collective agreements on equal opportunities is unlikely to be satisfactory without the support of trade union organisations, which are at the moment giving insufficient attention to gender questions.

In Europe, fundamental rights are fashion. One of these rights is certainly more fashionable than any other: the right of equal opportunities between men and women. The Treaty of Amsterdam adds only one item to the "tasks" of the European Community: the promotion of equality between men and women (by a modification of Article 2 of the EC Treaty). In Portugal, article 9 § h) of The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, as amended by Constitutional Law of September 1997, makes it a fundamental task for the State to "promote equality between men and women".

This paper will not examine whether this fundamental right has been implemented correctly in the member states of the European Union. By giving an account of the actual situation of gender on the job market, the purpose of the present paper is to suggest some possible clues to the problem. The problem is simple: In the member states of the European Union, a huge gender gap persists, despite principles, rights and policies on equal opportunities (Martínez-Calcerrada 1996).

The first part of the paper deals with the place of women in the job market of each member state. It is an attempt to underline the common features. The second part identifies possible trends by locating them within the equal opportunities approach. It is a attempt to suggest some lessons for Portugal.

UNRECOGNISED PROTAGONISTS OF CHANGE:

WOMEN IN THE EUROPEAN JOB MARKET

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Past, present and future trends in the female employment clearly show an increase in the female share of economic activities. The increase is the most obvious in industrialised market economies. In OECD countries, the female overall employment has increase more than 2% a year over the past decade (OECD 1994). This increase can be explained by three factors: (i) A demographic factor: the number of women is growing faster than the number of men in these countries. (ii) A family factor: the burden of family activities weights is less heavily on women today as family rates are falling. (iii) An education factor: the level of education of women, which has been below that of men for a long time, is now reaching the same point.

In all the member states the number of female workers in the job market is not only becoming increasingly important: Women appear everywhere as the most dynamic sex in the developments inscribed in the data concerning employment, although their isolation is far from being overcome. Statistical data available on the female workforce in these countries point out at the fact that women workers are concentrated in industries and services, both in the private and public sectors, with the exception of Greece where the majority of women are employed in the agricultural sector. The low value of wages indicates this, as does the groundswell of women who work in new forms of employment which are beyond the regulations established under collective agreements, or are not covered by them. Despite this, one can detect the following trend: European women regard themselves, and behave, more and more like workers. At the same time, childcare is one of the major obstacles to equal access to opportunities for women - due to the lack of adequate infrastructure in all the member countries. This is the main reason for the apparent gender paradox of the job market.

THE APPARENT GENDER PARADOX OF THE JOB MARKET

There is a continuing growth of the participation of women in the job market, despite the differences between member states and despite the intensity of the employment crisis - especially for women.

The presence of women in the job market is important in all the member states, but their participation is greater in northern Europe, particularly in the Scandinavian countries, but also in Belgium, the United Kingdom and Portugal. Sweden has a figure of 80% (Dalhberg 1996: 5), the highest level of all, while in Denmark the figure is 76% (Valbjørn 1996: 3) and in Finland it is 73% (Köykkä 1996: 2).

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Portugal, although belonging to the group of southern European countries, and occupying a peripheral position, shows a high level of female activity: 42% (and 81% of these follow an uninterrupted career, the highest such figure in Europe) (Nunes 1996: 3). The Portuguese figure is getting close to that of Luxemburg and the Netherlands, which stands at 53% (Laroche-Reeff 1996: 1; de Bruijn 1996: 3). In the other southern European countries such as Spain, the level of female participation in the job market is 35.8% (Alemany 1996: 3). In Ireland, it is 32% (Browne 1996: 6). Italy demonstrates the lowest level, at 28.8% (Bergamaschi 1996: 1).

It should be pointed out that in that part of Germany which was formerly the German Democratic Republic, the presence of women in the job market is still very high compared with other member states. The level is currently 73.3%, but prior to German reunification it was verging on 80%; at the same time in West Germany one notes a slight increase in the level, which was 41% in 1992 (Stolz-Willig 1996: 1-3). What is important in all cases is the continuing increase in the level of female participation in the course of the last decades, and in some countries this trend has been most striking. Such is the case, for example, in Luxemburg (increase from 29.5 % in 1970 to 47 % in 1994) (Laroche-Reeff 1996: 2-3), in Spain (increase from 28.3% in 1984 to 37.4% in 1994) (Alemany 1996: 3 and in Greece (increase from 41% in 1981 to 60% in 1993) (Kravaritou 1996: 4).

The characteristics of the job market have been significantly altered, as too have been the conditions for women. The general trend is that they no longer abandon their work when they get married, they return to work after having children, and they continue to work right up until retirement - if this is possible. A certain attitude or mentality which, for historical reasons, saw work as temporary, is losing its grip on European women and is being consigned to the past. This is the case even if the work itself is becoming more temporary, a phenomenon which is largely a recent development in Europe. Women enter the job market and remain there, facing up to the implications of their traditional roles of reproduction and participation in the private sphere. They are disadvantaged with respect to professional training even if they have spent many years in education. Despite the fact that they are now better qualified than ever, they still have family responsibilities, and they are inhibited by their position as newcomers in the working world so long dominated by men and their way of thinking. The organisation of the market and collective agreements fail to take into account all of these factors which go hand in hand with female employment. It is as if women were slotting into the pre-existing structures: but in fact this is not the case. New structures are emerging, and new forms of segmentation too.

BASIC GENDER SEGMENTATION OF THE JOB MARKET

The job market is, in most member states, heavily segmented with regard to gender. Women are employed in the service sector and are engaged in a limited number of activities.

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If women are still in some way the invisible protagonists in the job market of the member states, they do not gain access to the most sought-after jobs and positions. In every member state there exists, without exception, a vertical segregation as much as a horizontal one, although the extent of this varies from country to country. It is as if there exists two job markets, with the inferior one being that of female employment. Above all, women are the obliging darlings of the service sector; and even in this sector, the most important posts are occupied by men.

In every country there exists an uneven distribution between male and female employment by activity sector. Moreover, the number of female activities is limited and stereotyped. In the industrial sector, female participation is minimal, even in industrialised countries like Belgium (Wuïame 1996: 21, 26). It is even more limited in countries where the primary sector employs a large number of workers, despite the dramatic contraction of this sector, as in Greece for example (Kravaritou 1996: 6).

One finds the highest level of female service sector employment in the United Kingdom (83%) (Bercusson 1996: 4). Similarly, Ireland demonstrates a high level (77% in 1987) (Browne 1996: 6-7). In all countries women are most strongly represented in the public services, with the Scandinavian countries being by no means an exception. In Sweden, the public sector employs 56% of the female labour force (Dalhberg 1996: 7), and the situation in both Denmark and Finland is very similar (Valbjørn 1996: 7; Köykkä 1996: 3-4). This pattern is even found in Italy, where public administration employs half of the female labour force (Bergamaschi 1996: 4). In addition to public administration, healthcare, teaching and social services in every country are characterised by female employment, and all these areas contain undervalued jobs. It is now known that certain female "qualities" such as manual dexterity, concentration and capacity for repetitive work are not properly recognised as professional qualifications because they are considered to be innately female. It is also generally acknowledged that the simple fact of a profession acquiring a female employment profile is sufficient to provoke its devalorisation.

One should, however, make clear certain small differences concerning the vertical segregation of employment: the phenomenon seems to be more

acute in the countries of southern Europe, in the Netherlands and in Luxembourg, than in the Scandinavian region or in France, although even here sometimes the most senior posts in the hierarchy are occupied by men, whether in universities, in teaching in general, in public administration, in firms and industry, or elsewhere. In all cases, women are clearly a "minorised" group, sharing similar problems than minority group - although women are not a quantitative minority.

WOMEN AS A MINORISED GROUP ON THE JOB MARKET

Women are more likely than men to find themselves in inferior positions on the labour market. As such, it seems reasonable to talk about women as minorised as a gender. In particular, this is the case as inferior part-time positions and new employment structures disguise the predicament of women.

Everywhere one finds a correlation between female employment and jobs which are flexible, lack security, and have fewer legal rights associated with them. Part-time work is an example of this form of employment and illustrates for certain countries the specific nature of female employment. However, in the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Germany (in descending order of importance) part-time work assumes a different role. In these states it enables a rise in the level of living conditions and a better distribution of professional and non-professional tasks between the sexes. In Sweden, for example, part-time work assumes the characteristic of a choice, because it is not only temporary, but it is also, and above all, simply one of three options enabling the combination of parenthood and work (the two others being maternity/paternity leave, and temporary replacement) (Dalhberg 1996: 10). Also in the Netherlands, part-time work, although making up for the absence of childcare infrastructure and of arrangements which would permit a better distribution of extra-professional (domestic) tasks between the sexes is valorised in the 1993 legislation - since it is paid at the same hourly rate as full-time work (de Bruijn 1996: 7-8).

In certain countries, such as Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, part-time work is very limited. This indicates quite simply that these countries are characterised by new forms of employment and/or by work in the informal sector, which often tends to make female employment invisible. Still worse, these categories of workers are usually not protected, because they fall outside the application of collective agreements. The outcome is as if the structure of the job market "genetically" positions these categories of worker (which is, moreover, growing in number) in a marginal position with respect

to equal opportunities/collective negotiations. This is particularly the case in the countries of southern Europe. The situation of these workers provokes many questions, including the issue of their representativeness and their "legitimacy", especially since their importance could hardly be described as marginal. They represent a challenge for equal opportunities, and to the classic structures of collective labour regulation. They also are linked to the emergence of new gender structures on the job market.

294 GENDERED STRUCTURES OF THE JOB MARKET

The gendered structure of the job market is patent in the wage gap between men and women. Actually, the so-called the female wage gap persists and negotiations have an important role to play here.

The gap between female and male wage levels remains significant, even if in certain countries, particularly the Benelux group, there have been indications of an improvement. This statement is particularly true for the Netherlands, where the system of minimum-wage and of "integrated" wages reduces the earnings gap between male and female workers to 23% on average (de Bruijn 1996: 9-10), and also of Luxemburg, where the earnings gap has closed from 30% in 1984 to 20.6% on average in 1994 (Laroche-Reeff 1996: 8-9). But one can observe an opposite trend to that in the Benelux countries, in Denmark for example, as a result of the economic crisis. This is patent in the introduction in the public sector, by collective agreement, of "wage pools", that is, of funds of redistributed communal wages, which widens the earnings gap (Valbjørn 1996: 19).

As a general rule, the gap is less wide in countries where the system of collective negotiation is centralised, which is the case in Italy, Germany and Greece. In Italy, for example, the earnings gap between men and women was estimated in 1992 to be an average of 27.9%. In addition to centralised wage negotiation, this rule was completed by the introduction of mechanisms of sliding-scales. The neutrality of this mechanism benefited female workers (Bergamaschi 1996: 12-15). In countries where collective negotiation is decentralised, specifically the United Kingdom and Ireland, there is no narrowing of the gap; the situation has tended to remain static, and has even deteriorated for certain categories of female workers (Bercusson 1996: 5-6). Ireland registered earnings gap of 32% on average in 1995 (Browne 1996: 25-28). Amended version of the Employment Equality Bill published in December 1997 is unlikely to be able to tackle this structural framework.

In every country a significantly greater number of women than men are on the minimum wage level. In the Netherlands for example, in 1990, 4.5% of

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the active female population received the minimum wage, as opposed to 1.1% of the active male population (de Bruijn 1996: 9). In Luxemburg too, one third of the active female population is on the minimum wage, against one tenth of the male population (Laroche-Reeff 1996: 8). It should be pointed out that in the United Kingdom, in Ireland and in Luxemburg, the least well-paid women are approaching the poverty level. Nor are these exceptions, because poverty is more closely associated with women in all the member countries, even if it manifests itself differently in the most industrialised countries compared to the southern European countries, where the family role of "welfare state" is more important. The pay differential between male and female wage earners increases as a function of age, as demonstrated by the United Kingdom, where the earning gap between the sexes was 28% on average in 1995, rising with age to reach 33% on average for the 40 to 49 year old age group (Bercusson 1996: 5) and Finland (Köykkä 1996: 7-8). One of the reasons for this, equally applicable to the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Austria, is the interruption of women's career paths for family reasons (Bercusson 1996: 3; de Bruijn 1996: 6-7; Buchinger, Gschwzandtner and Pircher 1996: 1). More precisely, it is a question of the presence of women in the employment market and the presence of dependent children in the family. A question of family structure than also depends on the family origins of women, as already observed French sociologist Georges Menahem in the 80s (1984: 62). It should be pointed out however that there are not significant earning gaps between state employees in the member states, most demonstrably in Luxemburg and Greece. Admittedly, it is not only the lack of professional training (although this is certainly a factor) which is the cause of the gap: even with the same training, the same higher education and the same cultural assets, the prospect of employment is not the same for men and women. The explanations for these gaps are more complicated than education levels or even the interruption of the career path, for example, there are certain categories of wage earners in France for which this problem does not arise, even though they too have children (Junter-Loiseau 1996: 2).

It is apparent that the inequality of earnings - even when the equality of earnings has been guaranteed by community law for some time now - is due to factors which are as much structural as they are cultural. Negotiation itself, deprived of the perspective of equal opportunities, institutionalises discriminatory wage practices. Collective agreements, by their clauses, not only codify the earnings gaps and other forms of discrepancies between different categories of workers, according to sector or profession, but also between men and women, who do not enjoy the same degree of influence in negotiations.

Although they too are fashionable, autonomous and dispersed decentralised negotiations may not work to promote equal opportunities. Instead, taking account of the concept of equal opportunities at the highest negotiation level proves indispensable for the reduction of earnings gaps, introducing the possibility to change the discriminatory structure of collective negotiation. One could even say that this approach has inspired the Swedish collective negotiations of 1995, which granted to the sectors with a majority of female workers the highest wage rises (ETUI 1996: 29).

Portugal is one of the member states where the labour market is experiencing a radical restructuring as regards the workforce. As such, it cannot minimise the risk of gender segregation, in particular given the importance of rising unemployment and of the increased precariousness of female employment.

FUTURE TRENDS: AN EQUALITY GAP NOT EQUAL FOR ALL DEALING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT AND PRECARIETY

In all the member countries, the level of female unemployment is higher than male unemployment, with the exception of the United Kingdom and Germany (Bercusson 1996: 2; Stolz-Willig 1996: 2). In Greece, unemployment three times higher for women than men in 1993 (Kravaritou 1996: 6); in Spain, 31.7% of the active female population is unemployed against 19.2% of the active male population (Alemany 1996: 6); in Austria, 6.9% of the active female population is unemployed against 6.7% of the active male population in 1993 (Buchinger, Gschwandtner and Pircher 1996: 7); in Portugal 8.2% of the active female population is unemployed against 6.3% of the active male population in 1994 (Nunes 1996: 5); in Finland, 16.4% of the active female population is unemployed against 19.6% of the active male population in 1995 (Köykkä 1996: 5).

Everywhere, women are in the majority in precarious and atypical forms of work. Part-time work in certain countries - though not in all (it is not the case in Germany, Scandinavia and generally in the most formalised work markets) is characterised by a lack of security. It resembles the new forms of work which deny the female wage-earner the rights and guarantees which are traditionally assigned to them. Part-time employment with very restricted hours in the United Kingdom (Bercusson 1996: 4), part-time work without security in Austria and the Netherlands (Buchinger, Gschwandtner and Pircher 1996: 6; de Bruijn 1996: 8), atypical and irregular work, work in the informal sector in the countries of southern Europe, Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as in France and Belgium, is carried out by women. This is particularly because it allows them to look after their children and take care

of other family responsibilities. One can observe, in every country, the link between part-time and atypical work on the one hand, and family responsibilities on the other. This is particularly true of countries where the lack of childcare structures is most acute, especially when one takes into consideration the large extent of female activity, as for example in the United Kingdom (Bercusson 1996: 3). In the case of this particular state there is a direct relation between the lowest level of childcare facilities and the level of female part-time work.

Today, and even more in the future, work from home, "piecework", by women, raises the question of children and other familial responsibilities. It may take several forms. Women may operate as independent agents, they may call themselves such when in reality this is not the case, or they may be sub-contracted to work at home. This is often the case in southern European countries such as Greece. It is of such importance and extent that one might suggest that the profile of the industrial worker in Greece is that of a woman who works at home. The concern is that the majority of women working without security are not included in collective negotiation, and are not incorporated in collective agreements. But, as their number grows they become more significant to collective negotiations and to equal opportunities. In this way, one has the impression that an important aspect of modern industrial conflict in Europe is given expression by women in their contemporary position. They operate as autonomous agents and seek employment in the job market, but on entering this market they are confronted with problems which are specific to their position as women. Female migrants in Europe represent an element of the female workforce, which, due to their numerical importance in the job market, and to their general dynamic which suggests that they will occupy a still greater place, cannot go unrecognised in the collective negotiations for equality. In reality, they constitute the still largely invisible part of the female work structure in the job market. They represent a fertile ground for a reflection on how to integrate gender into collective bargaining structures through new legal regulations.

FUTURE LEGAL AVENUES : A CHALLENGE

Equality has been described as a 'global labour standard' (Hepple 1994: 123). Without any doubt, the principle of equal opportunities between men and women is also a fundamental right of the community legal order (Rideau 1995: 13). Future legal avenues might not put into question this fundamental nature but may challenge the effectiveness of such a right.

The well-known rise of so-called 'soft law' is linked, together with the taste for 'proceduralisation' to the development of social dialogue as a consensual

source of international regulation. The European Union is no exception to this new trend. In fact, this trend is not entirely new. The Social Dialogue at Community level was initiated in 1985 by President Jacques Delors. However, "it was given renewed momentum in the context of the Maastricht [the European Union] agreements in a Joint Declaration of the Social Partners of July 3 1992" (Cockburn 1994: 3).

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According to articles 4.1., 4.2. and 2 of the Agreement annexed to Protocol on Social Policy annexed to the Treaty on the European Union, in the field of "equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work", social partner might negotiate enter into contractual relations. Such contractual relations - including agreements - "shall be implemented either in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to [the social partners]" or, "at the joint request of the signatory parties, by a Council decision on a proposal from the Commission". These articles, annexed to the Treaty on the European Union, as well as the whole Protocol on Social Policy, has been integrated in the Treaty of Amsterdam. Moreover, social partners have not waited for the Treaty of Amsterdam to negotiate agreements of some relevance in the field of gender equal opportunities. On its side, the Commission has been prompt to encouraged such initiatives, which have resulted in two new Directives on parental leave and part time. The former Directive, Directive 96/34/CE, was designed as a flexible tool with economic rather than social objectives by the Commission (COM (96) 26 final).

So the question remains whether the *promotion* - in particular the promotion of the *value* - of such a fundamental right shall be as unquestionable as it seems. Revealing is, in this respect, the emotion generated among the academic community by the two recent cases of the European Court of Justice *Eckhard Kalanke v. Freie Hanselstadt Bremen* (Case C 450/93) and *Hellmut Marschall v. Land Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Case C 409/95) - both on gender preferential treatment in employment. Are social partners, and especially trade unions, ready to give their support this fundamental right? Are they *willing* to do so? Do they feel *responsible* for implementing this principle? Are the claims of the recently recognised collective subject 'women at work' taken into consideration such that traditional behaviours has been adapted to it? How are the experience and interests of women taken into account by structures and agents and in the content of collective agreements? Answers to these questions are complex. So is the relation between trade unions and gender issues.

TRADE UNIONS AND GENDER: A COMPLEX MARRIAGE

In the XIXth Century, trade unions used to see women as unfair competitors on the job market, as women worked harder and earned less. Have things

really changed? Observers note that, today, the achievement of equal opportunities through collective bargaining is a complex goal, not only in practice but also in theory (Bercusson and Dickens 1996). In several members states, the combined effect of female participation in the labour market, women's demands and the growth of the feminist movement, and social actors growing awareness of new needs has led to a number of advances of collective labour regulations. In fact, these initial steps have been rather awkward. Moreover, diversity might turn progresses even slower than they already seem: In several Member states, equal opportunities is not integrated with collective bargaining. Instead, it is dealt with by legislation. This is the case, for example, for Portugal but also for Spain, France and Greece, where legislation as a regulatory tool has much more weight than collective bargaining. The situation is different in the Nordic and Scandinavian countries where, generally speaking, collective bargaining has always prevailed as a means of regulating labour conditions. In Belgium the social dialogue has been institutionalised by the creation of "commissions paritaires" and has acquired an important role. Italy is a rather exceptional case; collective bargaining at the upper level has had a very important role there since the 60s. The same cannot be said for Greece, where collective bargaining is assigned little importance. Put simply, in Europe, there is no such thing as a cohesive entity which brings together collective bargaining and equality. There is no unique concept which corresponds to collective bargaining as linked to equal opportunities for men and women.

Does this situation entail specific consequences for the situation of women in trade unions and, in turn, for their power to negotiate gender-sensitive collective agreements for women? The first of the expected consequences would be the level of representation of women in trade unions. Evaluating women's participation in trade unions is made a difficult task by the absence of public available and up to date list of union members in most countries. It appears to be, at the decision and/or negotiation levels, structurally weak. Portugal is a good example of traditionally weak representation of women on the executive boards of the two main trade union confederations, with less than 20 % of women on the executive boards (CEWR 1994: 126). Paradoxically, most European trade unions have proposed measures in favour of women in their organisations, partly because of the recruitment crisis they are facing. The creation of women's committees is one those propositions. In fact, the creation of women's committee within the union seems unable to tackle the lack of involvement of women in trade unions; two barriers: - the time constraint on women and the pressure of domestic commitments. As we know; in some European countries, such as the UK, there are very limited child care infrastructures. - women's lack of

confidence, generated by the low status and job segregation. The mere creation of women's committees is meaningless if there is not a strong involvement of trade union policies in favour of women's issues. Nowadays, the female representation in Trade Union is globally equal to their share in the workforce. The problem is not quantity but quality. In other words, a question related to the internal structures, processes, times, habits within the trade unions. Times might well be the decisive factor. As Jonathan Gershuny well underlined, time allocation is strongly linked to class and gender convergence - and conflict (Gershuny 1993: 583). This is certainly the clue to answer the question: why gender's interests actually do not reach the bargaining table.

CONCLUSION

Equal opportunities is a policy of the European Union and is part of the history of the European Union. One can also identify in it the influence of the feminist movement of the 60s, a movement which has had a strong influence on the labour legislation of the member states. Collective bargaining is traditionally one of the most democratic regulatory instruments for workers' conditions, both men and women. Indeed, men and women, are becoming more and more visible as a 'collective subject' of law, and more and more present in the labour market. However, trade unions seem reluctant to deal with gender issues. Not only trade unions are reluctant to deal with gender issues, but governments also seem reluctant to encourage, supervise, lead collective contractual processes on gender issues. For example, the Global Plan for Equal Opportunities approved by the Portuguese Government in March 1997 refers little to a cooperation with social partners. It only refers to the introduction of 'specific measures' regarding the promotion of equal opportunities in agreements negotiated with social partners (Objective 1, point 7) but does not explicit these specific measures in the specific objectives of the Plan (!). This is not only revealing of the Portuguese opinion but also, to a certain extent, of the "opinion of the Union".

This collective deficit should not be under-estimated. It entails important social consequences. First, in terms of the self-fulfilment of women at work as autonomous beings in the same terms and under the same conditions as their male colleagues, without any sex discrimination. Secondly, with respect to the satisfaction of human beings requirements of 'care' within the family. How can collective bargaining incorporate these those two claims without prejudicing the principle of equality and the needs of children, for example? These two issues are closely linked, because until now women have traditionally borne the burden of housework and 'caring'. This

circumstance makes this question into a societal one, a question for European society, a question that social partners can no longer ignore.

Collective agreements still reflect a patriarchal logic, albeit a modernised one, according to which even working women have to combine work and family responsibilities. A shift in the male paradigm of collective bargaining and within the structure of labour law as a whole cannot be detected in the various member states. On the opposite, we can observe a growing interest for "individual labour relations" and a so-called "(individual) flexibilisation", whereas "collective labour relations" are viewed as secondary. A mistake that, in a country like Portugal - as well as in Spain - , is likely to cost a high price.

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