



For further information visit the project website  
<http://www.flexicurity-gender.eu/>



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# Flexicurity under a gender perspective

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### Project partners



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## What's flexicurity? How to see it under a gender perspective?

The term flexicurity stands for a series of labour policies aimed to increase at the same time labour market's flexibility and job stability (*employment security* and *job security*). The income protection in the event of losing paid work (*income security*) and the ability to combine paid work with other private or social activities (*combination security*) also relate to this strategy. Even if flexicurity may provide the means to reduce segmentation and limit some of the risks associated with mobility and transitions, and enhance inclusion in the labour market, some of its elements can both ameliorate and exacerbate gender inequalities. As an example, flexible contracts, often addressed to women, may provide a "precariousness trap" rather than a "stepping stone" towards permanent employment, generating labour market segmentation. According to Robery and others, a gender mainstreamed approach to policies in this area would «recognise the role of gender in reinforcing inequalities associated with flexible working and shapes of flexible working; address the reconciliation needs of employees with care commitments while recognising risks of extending working hours or unsocial hours scheduling; support pathways out of non-standard work and working times to avoid the risks of long-term traps and segmentation of women into disadvantaged employment forms».

## Context

In spring 2006, the European Union Council embraced flexicurity as one of the key points of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment and, consequently, of the European Employment Strategy. The guideline 21b of this Strategy underlines the need to promote flexibility in combination with the necessary security, and to reduce the degree of segmentation in the labour market. The increasing attention to policies aiming at providing a high degree of labour market flexibility to employers while ensuring at the same time a satisfactory level of security has roots in the huge debate recently occurred at both academic and policy levels. However, in spite of the rising number of publications and documents on flexicurity, much of the discussion generally lacks a thorough and coherent gender perspective.

Gender equality is included as one of the points (Principle no. 6) in the recently agreed Common Principles of Flexicurity (EC 2007), saying that «flexicurity should support gender equality, by promoting equal access to quality employment for women and men and offering measures to reconcile work, family and private life». But it is often absent or not included systematically elsewhere when policy pathways or initiatives are discussed. Instead, gender needs to be maintained throughout, in order for the flexicurity approach to be consistent with gender mainstreaming and to avoid possible risks to gender equality coming from the implementation of flexicurity strategies in Member States.



## Project's objectives

The overall objective of the project is to increase partners' knowledge and awareness on the implementation of flexicurity policies in a gender perspective. The achievement of this objective is intended at the diffusion of a gender mainstreamed approach to flexicurity. In detail, specific objectives of the project are:

- Providing capacity building to key actors;
- Improving prominence of the flexicurity debate (in a gender perspective);
- Providing policy suggestions;
- To enhance the collaboration and the exchange of experience among partners, in a true trans-national dimension.

## Activities

**Production of national reports:** partners will be required to produce a national report, where implemented flexicurity policies will be analysed taking into account explicitly their impact on gender equality. Partners will be also required to identify case studies and, possibly, good practices in the field of gender and flexicurity.

**Peer Reviews activities:** peer reviews among partner institutions will be organised, aiming at fostering mutual learning and exchange of experiences. Three thematic meetings (corresponding to the following flexicurity dimensions: labour market flexibility; social security systems and unemployment benefits; Active Labour Market Policies, ALMPs, and lifelong learning activities, LLL) will be organised, with the aim to present, in a gender perspective, policies implemented by partner countries as well as case studies and good practices. The experience of other EU countries on these issues will be also shared by inviting four external experts to the thematic meetings (who will participate as well to the final conference).

**Identification of possible policies and suggestions:** country-specific guidelines for the implementation of gender mainstreamed flexicurity policies will be developed. These guidelines will summarize the main outcomes of peer review activities, with the aim to provide suggestions to policy-makers in the drafting of upcoming NRPs (National Reform Programmes).

**Final phase, follow-up activities:** the project will include specific follow-up activities aiming at involving a large audience of stakeholders (policy-makers, social partners, scholars and relevant institutions). Namely, beside the three thematic meetings, a final international conference will be organized and a final report will be published, collecting the main project outcomes as well as the policy guidelines.

