

Women in low-skill work

Presentation of the study

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Dr. Claudia Weinkopf

Institute for Work, Skills and Training

The team

- **Institute for Work, Skills and Training (IAQ Gelsenkirchen), Germany**
 - *Claudia Weinkopf, Bettina Hieming, Karen Jaehrling, Thorsten Kalina*
- In collaboration with
 - **European Work and Employment Research Centre (EWERC Manchester), United Kingdom**
 - *Damian Grimshaw, Jill Rubery, Nirit Shimron*
 - **Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA Prague), Czech Republic**
 - *Oleksandr Stupnytsky*

Objectives of the study

- **Description + quantified analysis** of low-skill work from a gender perspective
- Identification of **best practices** in the various national contexts and sectors
- **Guidelines and recommendations** for improving the social recognition and professional status of low-skill work and low-skilled workers

Selection of countries: CZ, DE, UK

- **Limited selection**
- But representing a **broad range** of diverging institutional settings and patterns of female employment – e.g. in
 - the level and structure of welfare state services and benefits
 - wage distribution and levels
 - the volume and share of service employment
 - female employment rates (+ part-time share)

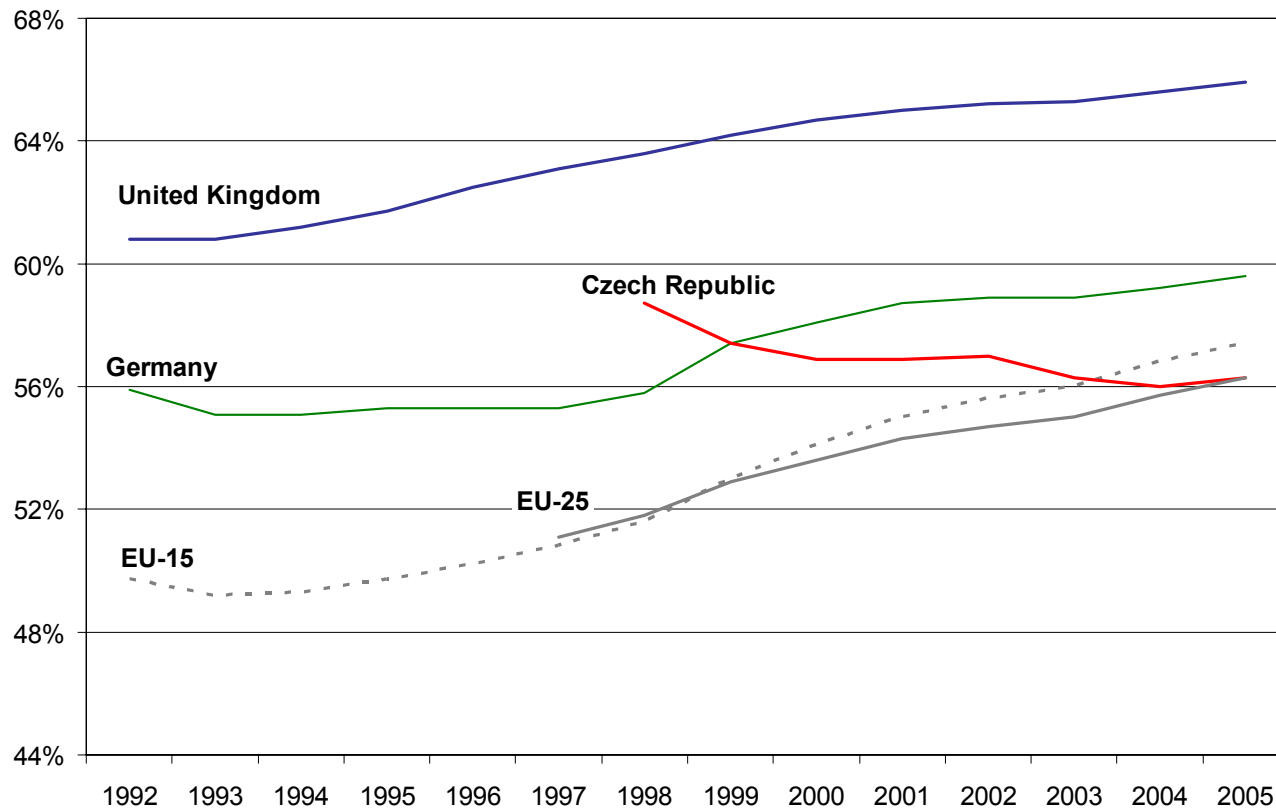
Methodology

- Review of **previous studies and literature** on relevant issues
- Preparation of **country reviews** including pay data
- Comparative **data analysis** with the Labour Force Survey
 - Employment trends 1995-2005
 - Job quality in selected low-skill occupations
- **Interviews** with stake holders

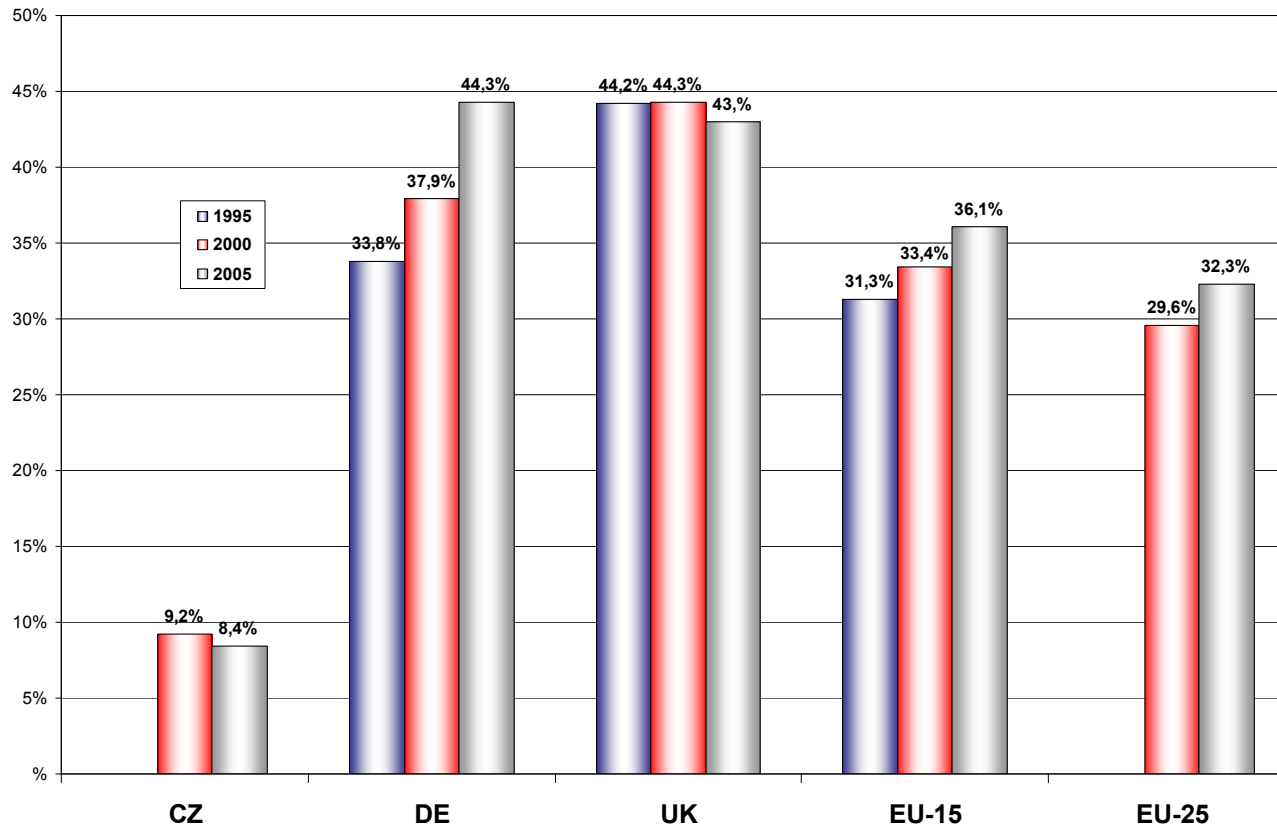
Structure of the final report

1. Trends in female labour market participation
2. Low-skill service sector – job prospects for (low-skilled) women?
3. Job quality in female dominated ,low-skill‘ service occupations
4. Trends and best practices
5. Recommendations

1. Female labour market participation (a)



1. Female labour market participation (b) – female part-time rates



1. Female labour market participation (c)

- **Lower participation rates** for low-skilled women, particularly those with children
- Considerable **differences in part-time rates**
- **institutional environment** in each country frames the extent and structure of women's economic activity
 - i.e. the tax system, regulation of part-time work, the childcare facilities and the patterns of parental leave

2. Low-skill work – job prospects for women? (a)

- **Employment in low-skill occupations has been increasing less** (or decreasing more strongly) than employment in the other skill segments
- **Exception: UK** – relatively strong growth of low-skill segment between 2000 and 2005
 - But not accompanied by increasing job opportunities for low-skilled employees

2. Low-skill work – job prospects for women? (b)

- **Women have increased their employment in low-skill occupations** but
 - these gains are frequently largely attributable to the growth in part-time work
 - and have benefited women with low levels of formal qualifications to only a limited extent
- It is too simple to equate **low-skill work** with employment opportunities for **low-skilled** (women)

3. Job quality in low-skill occupations (a)

- The three national reviews draw on **key dimensions of job quality** – namely
 - remuneration
 - workers' voice
 - vocational training and skill development
 - working time flexibility and work-life balance

3. Job quality in low-skill occupations (b)

- **Female-dominated low-skill jobs frequently go hand in hand with**
 - low pay
 - unfavourable working and employment conditions
 - limited prospects for career development
- Reinforced by the predominant responsibility of women for the **reconciliation of paid work and family life**

4. Trends and best practices (a)

- **Remuneration**

- national minimum wages (or other standards)
- higher valuation of typical female occupations
- Elimination of discrimination against part-timers

- **Industrial relations / workers' voice**

- Improving pay and working conditions on industry or establishment level
- Agreements on training, working time and work-life balance for both men and women

4. Trends and best practices (b)

- **Vocational training and skill development**
 - Low skill level = high risk of low pay and poor working conditions
 - Training schemes + minimum standards for skill composition
- **Working-time flexibility + work-life balance**
 - according to the employees' needs
 - Increasing availability (+ quality) of childcare facilities
 - Part-time strategies ambivalent from a gender-perspective

4. Trends and best practices (c)

- **Social recognition**

- Closely related to pay and job quality
- Term „low-skill work“ implies a devaluation of female-dominated occupations

- **Labour market policies**

- Focus not only on the unemployed but also (or even more) on inactive people + returners
- Training schemes for the low-skilled
- Subsidies for low paid jobs may have negative impacts from a gender-perspective

5. Recommendations (a)

- Due to **several ambivalences** of encouraging “women in low-skill work“ it is recommended
 - to focus not solely on the low-skill segment
 - to pay more attention on job quality + the general conditions framing female employment
- **Best practices** are inspiring but also limited
 - As most of them intend solely to facilitate but not to challenge women’s dual role
 - frequently not easily transferable to other countries

5. Recommendations (b)

- **Promotion of low paid work** in order to increase employment **tends to disregard gender-specific impacts** of such strategies
- **Increased awareness of low job-quality as a problem** or crucial issue among stakeholders is essential for more effective measures to improve women's labour market position

5. Recommendations (c)

- There is a **need for both**
 - an increasing number of **good practice examples** and
 - considerable **changes in the national frameworks** shaping the patterns and conditions of female employment
 - in the political sphere
and
 - among stakeholders on the industry and establishment level

Contact details

Dr. Claudia Weinkopf

Deputy Manager and

Head of Research Department “Flexibility and Security”

Institute for Work, Skills and Training (IAQ)

University Duisburg-Essen

45117 Essen

Germany

Tel. +49 209 1707-142

Fax +49 209 1707-124

E-Mail: claudia.weinkopf@uni-due.de

www.iaq.uni-due.de