

Abstract:

Around 1990, there were significant differences between countries with regard to women's participation in market work specifically as to the *quality* of participation, both in terms of degree of participation and of employment status. In several countries many women undertook paid work which neither lead to work-related social citizenship rights nor anywhere near to economic autonomy.

All over Europe female labour force participation is increasing along the expansion of the service sector, a sector which is the main employment site of women in modern advanced democracies. The European Union promotes the market production of all kinds of goods and services, in order to achieve the political economy goals of the Lisbon Agenda. Both men and women are needed to achieve these goals. The European Union is heralding the "adult worker" model for its citizens of both sexes.

At the same time there are mounting pressures from employers to increase flexibility in working time in order to achieve cost efficiency and enhance competitiveness, especially within the service sector. The just-in-time approach is now challenging the traditional labour contract. Flexibility in time may be either positive or negative for women, depending on how this kind of market work is possible to reconcile with family responsibilities.

Against the background of these two dominant labour market trends the present paper is focussed on changes in the extent and composition of women's market work during the last fifteen years, with respect to the identified differences in quality of participation, and given the overall increase in female labour force participation. We will also look at separate parts of the service sectors where European women work. Countries examined are the old EU member states, in various constellations. Data from OECD, European Social Survey, and Luxembourg Income Study are used.