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24 February 1984

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

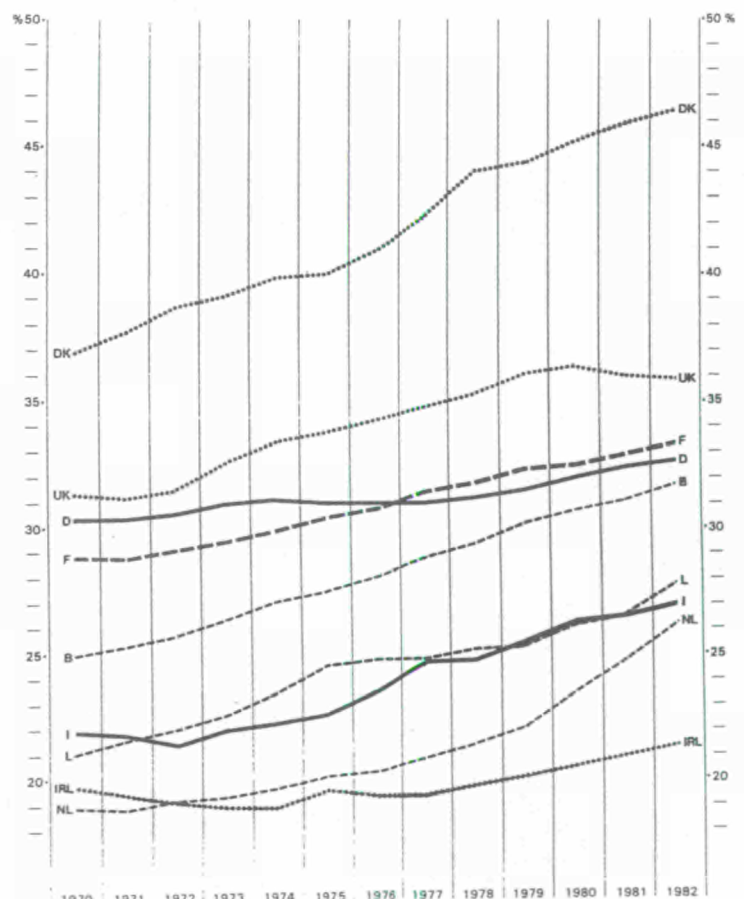
The progress of women on the labour market is one of the most striking developments in social statistics: The proportion of economically active women in the female population of 15 to 64 years in the European Community rose from 44% in 1970 to 50% in 1982, whereas over the same period the activity rate of men on this basis fell from 90% to 84%.

Graph 1 shows that the overall activity rate for women (alle ages included) rose, without exception, in all community countries between 1970 and 1982. This rise was particularly marked in the Netherlands (+39%), in Luxembourg (+33%), Belgium (+27%), Denmark (+26%) and Italy (+23%) whereas it was fairly limited in the F.R. of Germany (+8%) and in Ireland (+8%). It should be noted that since 1980 in the United Kingdom, in conjunction with a very marked rise in unemployment, the activity rate of women has gone into decline.

In 1982, the level of activity rates of women remained notably different amongst the member states: as against an average rate for the Community of 32%, in Denmark it was greater than 46% whilst the rate was only 21% in Ireland and 26% in the Netherlands.

ACTIVITY RATES OF WOMEN *
by country

1



* Economically active women (employed or unemployed) as a percentage of the total female population.

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NOTE: More detailed information is contained in the yearly publication 'Employment and unemployment'.

This bulletin was prepared by the division 'Employment and labour force sample survey'.

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Symbols and abbreviations

| | | | | | |
|---|---------|---|-----------------------|---|-------------|
| T | Total | ∅ | Average | p | Preliminary |
| M | Males | : | Not available | r | Revised |
| F | Females | * | Estimated by Eurostat | | |

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Apart from the fact that women, like men, are also retiring at an earlier age, it is notable that **the rise in the activity rates of women applies to all ages** (Graph 2).

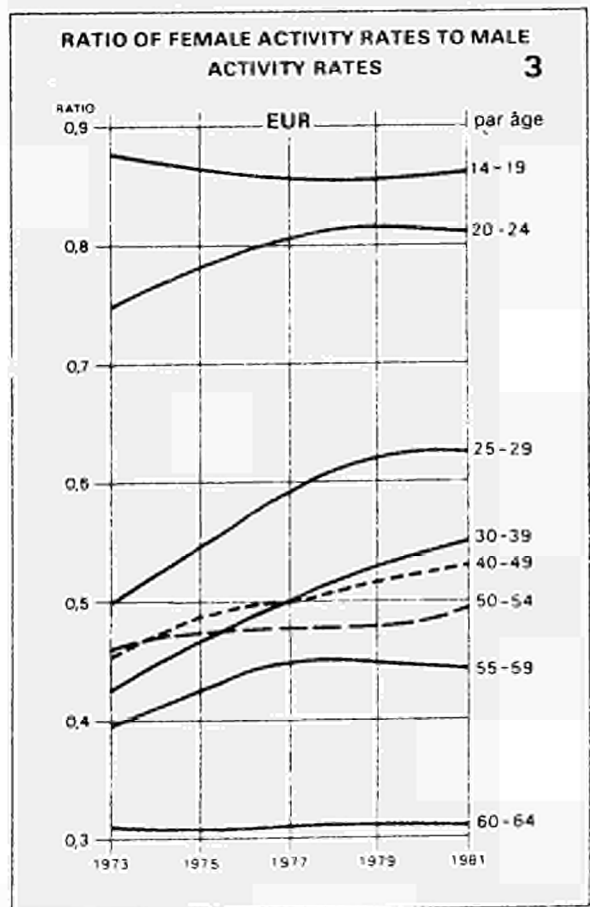
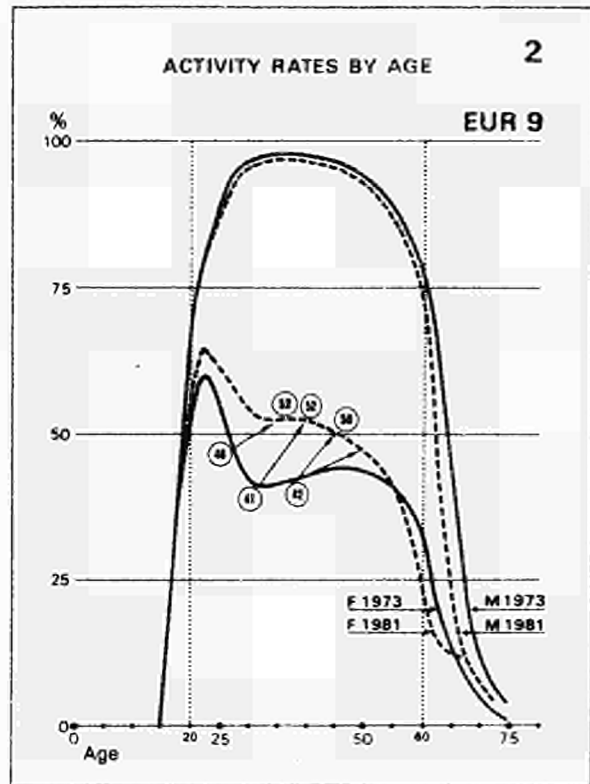
At the beginning of the 1970s the curve showing activity rates by age sagged in the middle, reflecting the fact that women tended to withdraw from the jobs market when they had young children and started seeking work again from the age of 35 onwards. By 1981 this trend had disappeared, while the activity rate of women aged between 30 and 50 increased from just over 40% in 1973 to more than 50% in 1981.

This change in the behaviour of women in relation to the labour market becomes even more impressive if the results are analysed on a cohort basis: if women who were aged between 25 and 29 in 1973 had maintained the same pattern of behaviour towards work between 1973 and 1981 their activity rate in 1981 (at which time they would have been aged between 33 and 37) would have remained as in 1973 at 46%. If they had had the same pattern of behaviour as existed in 1973 their activity rate would have gone down to 41% in 1981. Yet not only has their activity rate not decreased, it has actually increased from 46% to 52%. And this phenomenon applies to every age group without exception.

In less than a decade the narrowing of **the gap between the activity rates of men and women has been spectacular** (see Graph 3):

The ratio between the activity rates of women and men has increased for all age groups, and in particular for persons aged between 25 and 44, where the increases vary between 20 and 27%. The changes in the behaviour patterns of older persons have been slightly less marked. The ratio varies less for the youngest age groups, simply because nowadays the behaviour of young women is practically comparable with that of young men.

These observations on the activity rate of women point to a simple but far-reaching conclusion: barring a reversal of this sociological trend the behaviour of women on the labour market will be comparable to that of men by the start of the 21st century. It therefore seems likely that 30 years from now there will be an additional 20 million women on the labour market.



* A ratio of 1 means that the activity rate of women is equal to that for men.

On examining the different sectors of economic activity, it is apparent that a very large proportion of women are employed in the service sector: 71% on average in the Community, rising to as high as 85% in the Netherlands. On the other hand the proportion of women working in industry is only 23% on average in the Community, whereas 43% of men work in industry.

This tendency of women to work in the service sector is somewhat fortunate from their point of view since this is the only expanding sector, the others being in decline. Table 2 below shows that these falls in employment in agriculture and industry between 1970 and 1982 affected men as well as women. It also reveals that even though the expansion in the service sector has been a general one, the increase in female employment has been much more marked than that for males.

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: WOMEN - 1982 (%)

TAB. 1

| | D | F | I | NL | B | L | UK | IRL | DK | EUR9 | GR | EUR10 |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Agr. | 7,0 | 6,0* | 13,3 | 2,5 | 1,7 | 5,2* | 1,2 | 5,6 | 5,5 | 6,0* | 41,6 | 7,0* |
| Indus. | 25,5 | 21,1* | 26,9 | 12,1 | 16,0 | 12,6* | 19,7 | 20,1 | 13,5 | 22,6* | 18,2 | 22,5* |
| Serv. | 65,5 | 78,8* | 59,8 | 85,4 | 82,3 | 82,2* | 79,1 | 74,3 | 81,0 | 71,4* | 40,2 | 70,5* |
| Total | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 |

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: MEN - 1982 (%)

| | D | F | I | NL | B | L | UK | IRL | DK | EUR9 | GR | EUR10 |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Agr. | 4,4 | 10,0* | 11,4 | 6,0 | 3,6 | 4,5* | 3,7 | 21,9 | 10,8 | 7,3* | 23,9 | 8,0* |
| Indus. | 50,5 | 41,6* | 40,2 | 35,7 | 40,3 | 48,1* | 44,1 | 35,2 | 36,2 | 43,4* | 31,5 | 43,0* |
| Serv. | 45,1 | 48,4* | 48,4 | 58,3 | 56,1 | 47,4* | 52,2 | 42,9 | 53,0 | 49,3* | 44,6 | 49,0* |
| Total | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 |

EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY 1982 (1970=100) TAB. 2

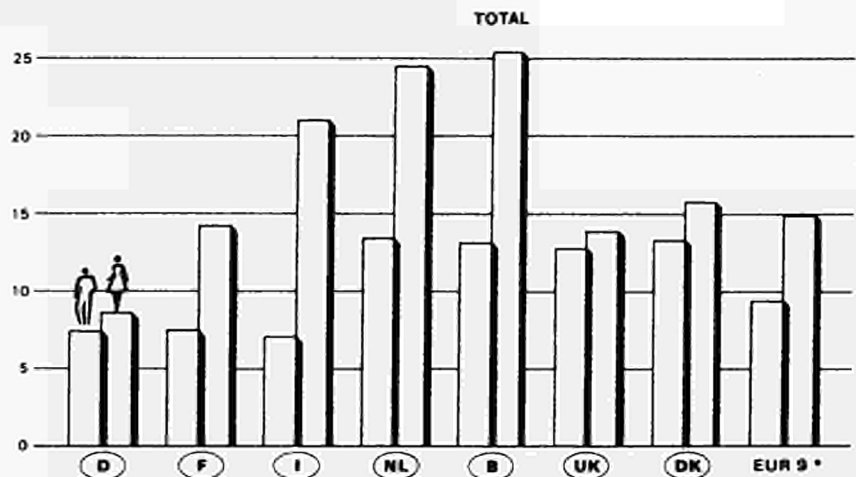
| | D | F | I | NL | B | L | UK | IRL | DK | EUR9 | GR | EUR10 |
|----------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|------|------|-------|
| <u>Agric.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Males | 66 | 67* | 63 | 83* | 63 | 47* | 80 | 69* | 73* | 67* | 74* | 68* |
| Females | 57 | 51* | 72 | 105* | 58 | 100* | 82 | 70* | 95* | 63* | 105* | 67* |
| <u>Indus.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Males | 84 | 88* | 99 | 79* | 76 | 92* | 75 | 116* | 74* | 85* | 128* | 86* |
| Females | 80 | 93* | 105 | 88* | 67 | 138* | 69 | 102* | 70* | 83* | 142* | 84* |
| <u>Servic.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Males | 112 | 118* | 117 | 121* | 114 | 137* | 104 | 128* | 122* | 113* | 129* | 114* |
| Females | 125 | 134* | 160 | 147* | 132 | 147* | 126 | 135* | 141* | 133* | 135* | 133* |
| <u>Total</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Males | 93 | 98 | 99 | 99* | 93 | 103* | 88 | 105 | 93 | 95* | 109* | 95* |
| Females | 101 | 113 | 123 | 135* | 112 | 142* | 108 | 121 | 121 | 111* | 121* | 111* |

In terms of unemployment women are clearly in an unfavourable situation. Unemployment rate estimates* made by EUROSTAT show that in the Community at the end of 1983, the rate was approaching 15% for women whereas it was slightly less than 10% for men.

The female unemployment rate compared to that for men is three times higher in Italy and double in France, the Netherlands and Belgium. About 1 economically active woman in 4 is unemployed in the Netherlands and Belgium and 1 in 5 in Italy.

ESTIMATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX *
End of December 1983

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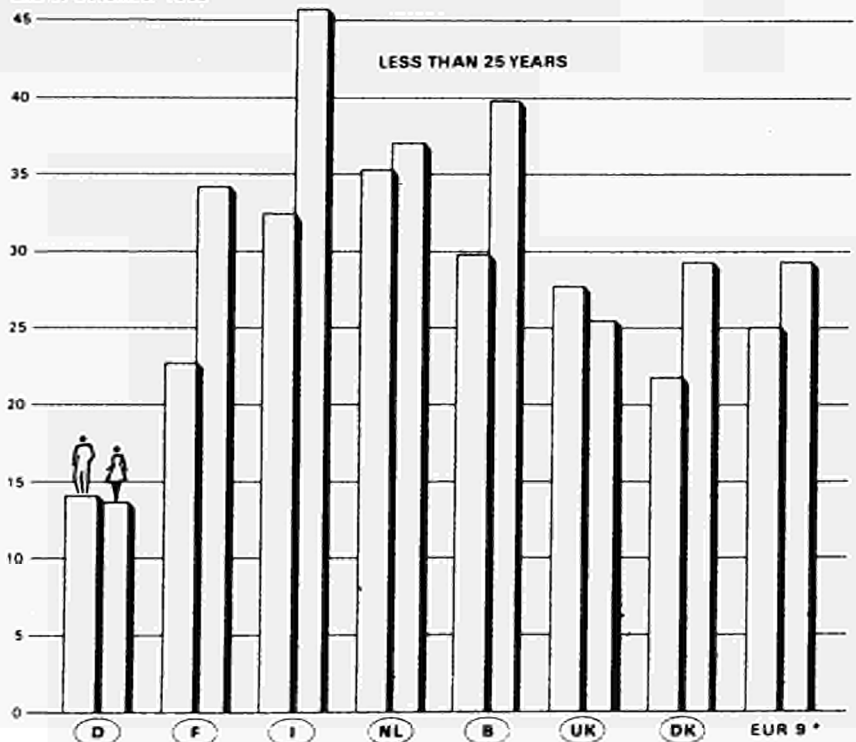


The disadvantage of women compared to men on the labour market is slightly more important for women aged over 25 than for the younger age groups. However the young have their own particular disadvantage in that the unemployment rate for young people is double that for those over 25 leading to a very dismal situation in respect of young women in certain countries.

Thus in Italy around 1 young woman (under 25 years) in 2 is unemployed. This rate is approaching 40% in Belgium and 35% in France and in the Netherlands. On the other hand it should be noted that in the F.R. of Germany, in comparison with the other countries, the rate of unemployment of young people has remained relatively low and that the unemployment rate of young women is comparable to that of young men.

ESTIMATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX *
End of December 1983

5



(*) Number of unemployed as a percentage of the working population of the same sex. Comparable estimates by country produced by EUROSTAT by updating the results of the 1981 Community labour force survey; this updating has been achieved by use of the trends in registered unemployment; (provisional data).

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