

Public sector adjustment and the threat to gender equality

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From He-cession to She-(au)sterity

- Initial recession hit male employment- concentrated in manufacturing and construction
- Reduction in gender gaps through levelling down
- Women account for a much higher share of the public sector than the private sector (68-76% compared to 40-50%)
- Next phase of austerity measures can be expected to widen gender gaps again and damage progress towards gender equality

He-cession closes gender gap by levelling down

Employment rate E27	2008	2011
Men	72.7	70.1
Women	58.9	58.5
Gender gap	13.6	11.6
Unemployment rate E27		
Men	6.7	9.6
Women	7.6	9.8
Gender gap	-0.9	-0.2

Importance of public sector for gender equality

	Employment in public sector	Working conditions in public sector	Impact of public sector on overall labour market
Women's employment: quantity	High concentration of women's employment	Work life balance options (regular or flexible with employee needs) facilitate continuity	Public services facilitate women's employment integration in public and private services
Women's employment: quality	High quality jobs- high concentration of higher educated women	Pay and pension premia especially for lower skilled (offsets discrimination in private sector)	Provides a good practice example for gender equality policies for labour market as a whole

Employment opportunities

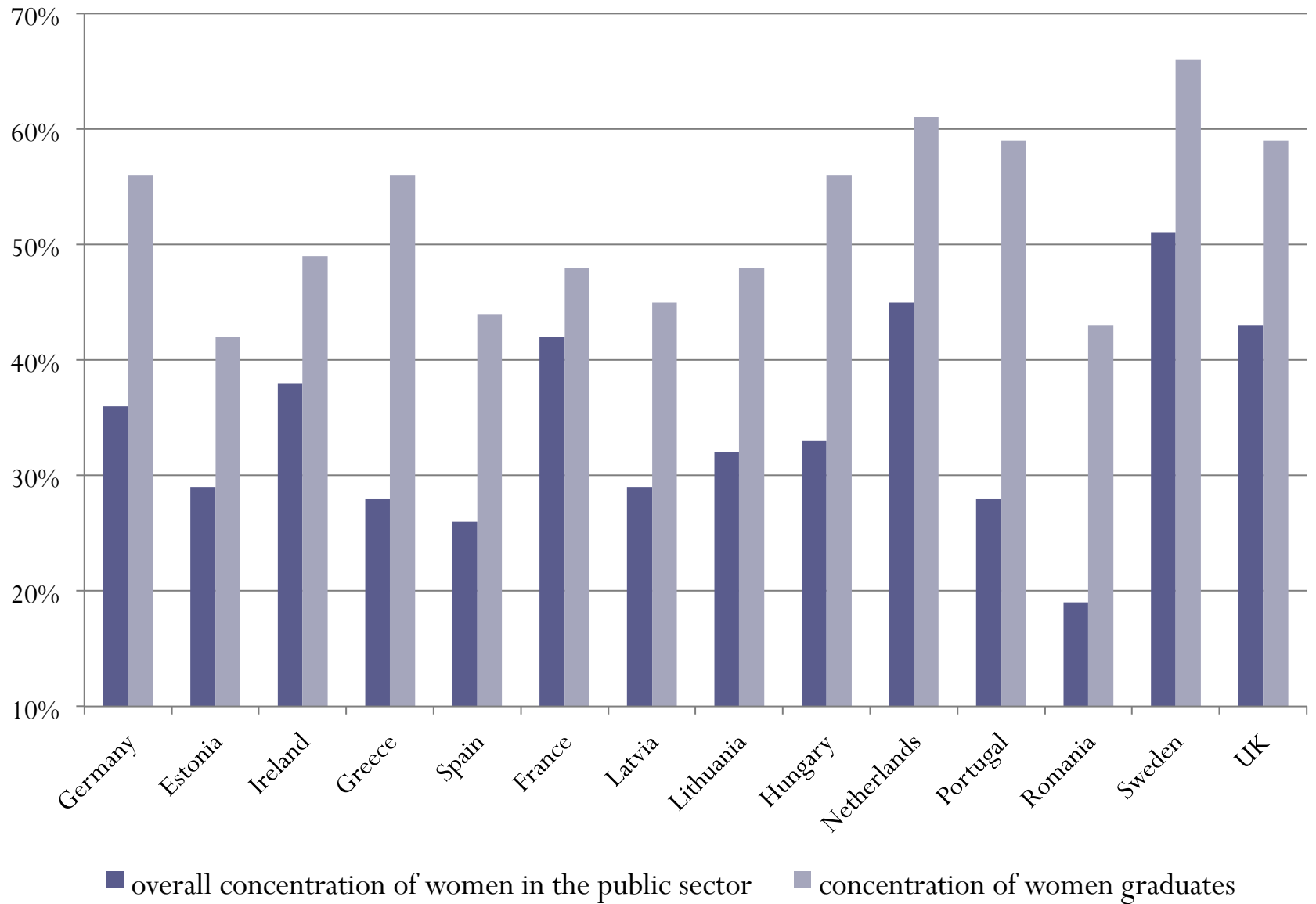
Employment quantity

- Concentration in public sector varies from 19% of all female employed (Romania) to 51% (Sweden)

Employment quality

- Concentration of higher educated female employment much higher- from 42% (Estonia) to 66% (Sweden).
- Representation of female higher educated in public sector more than double that for all women in 3 cases- over 40% higher in a further 6.
- Specificity of investments as nurse/teachers reduce alternative opportunities- dependent on the policies of the state

Women's concentration in the public sector 2010 NACE OPQ



Working conditions

Employment quantity

- Opportunities for work life balance policies greater in public versus private sector facilitating integration
- Type of work-life balance varies by employment and social regime- flexible or guaranteed regular?
- For example: rate of part-time work in public sector largely follows national norms- variable across countries- but full-time public sector employment may offer more regular and shorter full-time hours

Work life balance policy	Public sector advantage Type 1	Public sector advantage Type 2
Working time	Regular compared to longer hours in private sector <i>Example: Portugal, Croatia, Romania</i>	Flexible (employee preference) compared to either regular/standard hours or flexible (employer preference) in private sector <i>Example: The Netherlands, the UK, France, Germany</i>
Maternity and parental leave	Shorter length of leave taken due to return to work more feasible (very long paid leave in private sector) <i>Example Croatia</i>	Longer paid leave (short paid leave in private sector) <i>Example UK, Greece, Ireland</i>

Working conditions

Employment quality

Pay

EU15

- Pay premium in public sector- but size varies and often larger for women (and may be close to zero/ negative for higher educated)
- Interpretation under austerity is of pay privilege- but from a gender perspective it may be compensating for discrimination in private sector among low paid women

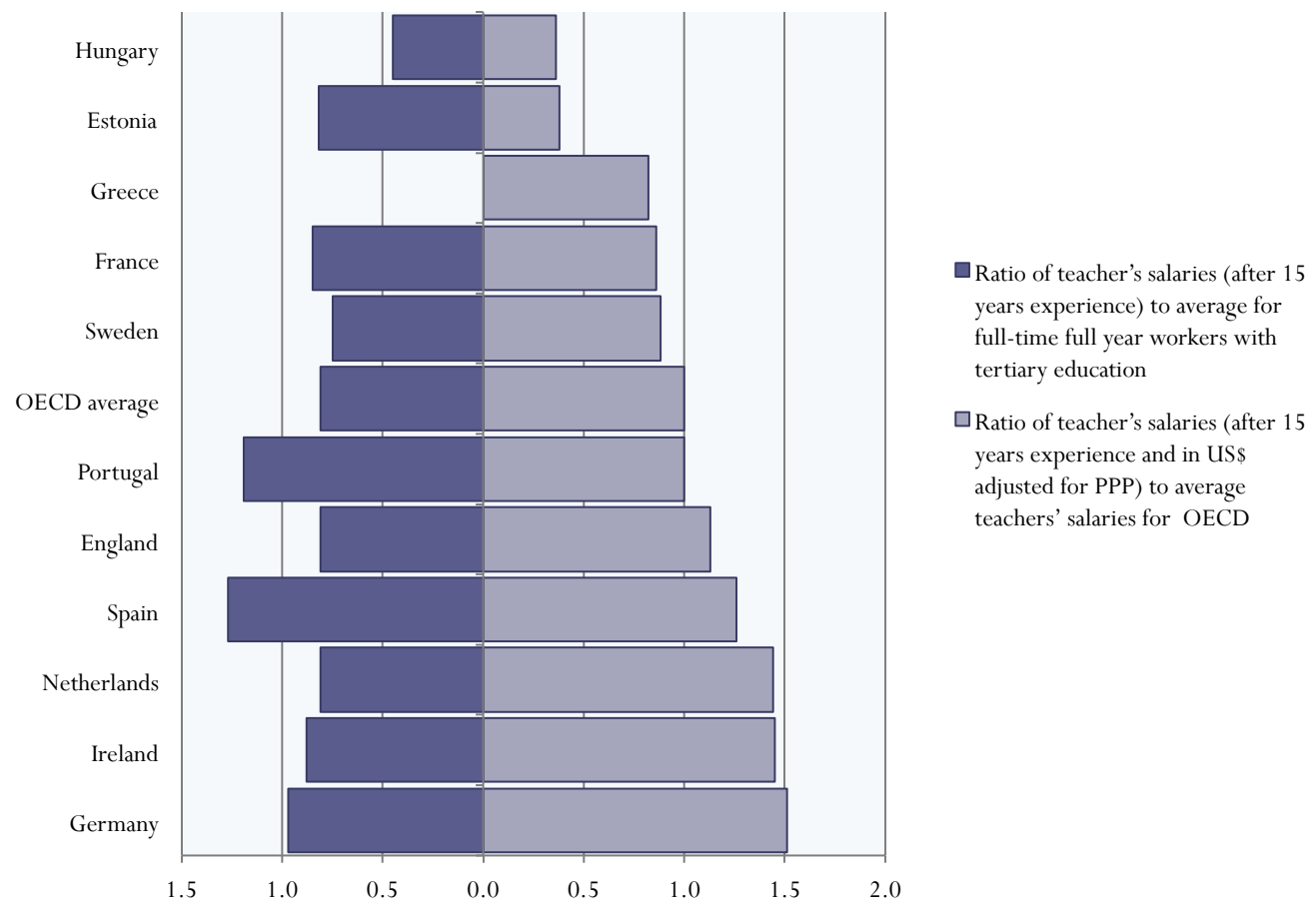
New member states

- Public sector may attract a pay penalty in some cases - this may be in part a legacy issue where public services for a long time have not been highly valued and have been done primarily by women.
- Austerity measures are leading to even lower pay and problems of retention.

Pensions

- In member states where occupational pensions important public sector may provide relatively good pensions and also in some cases more compensation for women's interrupted careers.

**Figure 3. Comparisons of teachers' salaries i) in US dollars adjusted for purchasing power parity
ii) relative to full-time full year employees with a tertiary education.**



Impact of public sector on overall labour market

Employment quantity

- Public services for child and elder care facilitate integration-
cutbacks would reverse this

Employment quality

- Public sector may have specific policy of promoting gender equality (e.g. Germany, France, Spain, UK) or may implement general policy more thoroughly (e.g. Sweden, Netherlands)
- Public sector provides in some countries a benchmark for better equality policies but not an issue in some member states.
Subcontractors may (Sweden) or may not (UK) follow public sector equality policies.

Advantage in public sector working conditions relative to private sector.	Importance of employment in public sector (quantity and vertical segregation)		
	High	Medium	Low
High	UK	Spain	Germany
Medium	France Sweden	Ireland Greece Netherlands Portugal	
Low		Estonia Lithuania Hungary Croatia	Latvia Romania

Impact of austerity

- **Employment cuts**- redundancies/limits on rehires/- increased work intensity for those remaining (mainly women)
- **Contract change** -longer term but accelerated trend towards less protected contracts (e..g France, Portugal, Estonia) associated with feminisation
- **Outsourcing of female dominated jobs**- may lead to lower pay (UK) or little change (Sweden)
- **Pay cuts** (Greece)/ pay freezes (UK)/ cancelling of overtime pay (Romania), cuts to performance pay (Estonia)- mainly female workers and large rise in low paid (e.g. Hungary)
- **Working time changes**- imposed longer hours (teaching in Spain, Romania, Portugal, Ireland) and/or cuts to hours and pay- more employer imposed working time flexibility
- **Equality policies**- some examples already of retreat- Equality Ministry in Spain abolished, UK cuts to budget of equality body plus non full implementation of Equality Bill, review of equality duty brought forward

Conclusions: the importance of preserving the public space for gender equality

Importance of public space for gender equality

- Space for alternative society values- (human and social investment)
- Alternative to female unpaid domestic labour (limited evidence of male unpaid domestic labour as substitute)
- Source of support for women in comparison to private sector (more discriminatory wages, male patterns of working time etc in private sector)

Threat to gender equality from policies to

- shrink the size of public sector employment
- erode the quality of public sector employment (implicitly endorse continuing of pay disadvantage for women)
- and blur boundaries of public/private space.

In short the state cannot be trusted under austerity to promote progress towards gender equality- may be a major actor in any reversal of gender equality.