

Policies and Practices to Promote Women in Leadership Roles in the Private Sector

Report prepared by the OECD for the
G20 EMPOWER Alliance



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Executive summary

This stock-taking report has been prepared by the OECD in collaboration with the Private Sector Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation (EMPOWER)¹ under the 2020 Saudi Arabian Presidency of the G20. It draws upon existing evidence on the implementation of OECD standards to promote women's participation in private sector leadership, including the *2013 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship*, the *G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance* and the *2019 OECD Corporate Governance Factbook*.

The **introductory section** provides a brief overview of the remaining gender imbalances at the senior management levels, identifies the challenges hindering progress, and makes the case for undertaking action to address them. The **second section** outlines the range of policy instruments and recommendations the OECD has developed to address these challenges, and presents key observations on the state of their implementation across OECD and G20 countries, while highlighting the impacts of quotas, numerical targets and disclosure requirements as among the most predominant policy initiatives undertaken. Drawing mainly upon the results of a survey of EMPOWER members undertaken specifically for this stock-taking review, the **third section** provides an overview of practices for the advancement of women in leadership positions, laying out more concrete measures taken by individual countries via government-led, private sector-led and public-private initiatives.

The report **concludes** by recognising the EMPOWER Alliance's important efforts to encourage concrete and practical actions to advance the global effort to strengthen the role of women in private sector leadership, and provides follow-up steps for consideration to support further progress towards this goal. In particular, evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the policies and practices included in this report could be beneficial. This could be done through background research, including a literature review of the publicly available evidence that has sought to assess the impact of the policies in place to promote women in leadership positions at national levels. It is also worth noting that the OECD and the ILO are already committed to monitoring progress through existing tools: while the annual OECD/ILO report tracks the implementation of the G20 25x25 Brisbane goal on the gender gap in labour force participation, the biennial *OECD Corporate Governance Factbook* monitors the progress made by OECD, G20 and FSB countries in promoting gender balance in management and leadership.

¹ The EMPOWER alliance was launched at the 2019 G20 Summit in Osaka, and convened for the first time under the Saudi Arabian Presidency of the G20 in 2020. It includes private and public sector representatives from 26 countries, including: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Rwanda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, as well as from the European Union.

1. The case for action

Promoting women's participation and gender equality in leadership roles in the private sector is a pressing policy challenge for all countries. Even with strong actions in some countries, the private sector is lagging behind the public sector. Across G20 and OECD countries, women make up only about one-third of managers. They are also far less likely than men to become chief executive officers (CEOs) or to sit on boards of private companies. Gender balance at the top of listed companies is still a distant goal in G20 and OECD countries. The average percentage in OECD countries of women on company boards reached 25% in 2019 (18% in G20 countries), up from 20% in 2016 (15% in G20 countries), which in turn rose from 16.4% in OECD countries in 2013² (MSCI, 2019^[1]). This is progress, but even the best performing countries still fall short of equality. While the share of women sitting on publicly listed company boards of directors rose between 2013 and 2016 in 80% of OECD countries only three countries recorded increases greater than or equal to 10 percentage points. (OECD, 2017^[2]). At the level of CEOs, the gender gaps are more pronounced. Just 6.5% of Fortune 500 companies are led by women. On average, 4.8% of CEOs in OECD countries were women in 2016. Although double the level attained in 2013, women CEOs remain a small minority (OECD, 2020^[3]).

Metaphors such as “glass-ceiling”, “sticky floor” and “labyrinth of leadership” have been used to describe barriers to women's upward mobility in the workplace. The concept of “broken rungs” has also recently been suggested to describe barriers hindering women from reaching the first level of managerial positions, hence resulting in women remaining at entry level positions far longer than men (McKinsey, 2019^[4]). Even women who make it to top-tier positions face continuous hurdles. Depending on national contexts, women are constrained by a variety of social, legal and institutional barriers: the double burden of work and domestic responsibilities; gender stereotypes around women in the workplace and which sectors they choose; lack of female role models; and lack of opportunities to network. Moreover, recruiting and promotion systems can be based on lateral career paths that do not consider potential career breaks, notably for women who take maternity leave. In board selection in particular, women may face barriers due to the slow turnover of board seats, non-transparent board selection criteria, lack of female role models, and informal board appointments based on male-dominated networks.

Addressing these gaps and challenges at all levels of the private sector, not least leadership and management, is not just a moral imperative. Women's underrepresentation in leadership limits the presence of female voices in important decisions, and deprives girls and young women of strong role models. While far from the only cause, women's underrepresentation in leadership also contributes to related inequalities, such as the gender pay gap and gender differences in wealth and economic security. Tackling gender inequalities in leadership can help tackle gender inequalities elsewhere.

There is also a business case for improving diversity in management and helping women access leadership positions. A substantial body of research has found that more gender-diverse boards have the potential to contribute to better corporate governance for many reasons. Since women are generally under-represented in “old boys' networks”, more female directors might bring more independent views into the boardroom and strengthen its monitoring function. Gender-diverse boards tend to have a wider range of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and problem-solving skills, which may contribute to better monitoring of executive behaviour, including by fostering closer scrutiny of the handling

² MSCI data is used for all countries (MSCI, 2019^[34]). For 2016, data are unavailable for Argentina and Saudi Arabia. For 2013, insufficient data are available to provide a comparative figure for G20 countries.

of conflicts of interest (OECD, 2012^[5]; Thwing-Eastman, Rallis and Mazzucchelli, 2016^[6]; Lee, L et al., 2015^[7]).

In terms of the impact of gender-diverse boards on firm performance, several studies have concluded that there is a positive relationship between a firm's financial performance and women's presence on boards or at senior management levels. Some other empirical analyses provide more mixed results and point to a lack of clear causality, i.e. It may well be that correlations between the presence of women in leadership positions and firm performance may be attributed to better performing firms being more likely to seek or attract women. Variability of results might also partly be explained by differences in study design and the type of data used – including different country and institutional settings; samples; definitions of gender diversity; accounting or market measures of performance; and methodologies (OECD, 2012^[5]). Nevertheless, a number of more recent studies point to positive results.

For example, according to Credit Suisse Gender 3000 (CSG3000) data covering 3000 global companies in OECD countries from 2014-2017, more diverse boards can translate into long-term value creation. Companies with at least one female director generated on average 3.5% higher returns on equity than those with no female directors, and companies with more than 15% female senior managers had 50% higher profitability compared to those with less than 10% female managers. Indeed, in their updated analysis released in 2019, Credit Suisse found that differentiating companies by their management rather than board diversity, if anything, yields stronger results. Companies with more diverse management teams have generated sector-adjusted outperformance approaching 4% a year compared to those displaying below the average (Credit Suisse, 2019^[8]).

These findings are mirrored by a study which analysed data of United States listed companies within the Russell 3000 Index over a 17-year period (2002-2019), including 5,825 new executive appointments, of which 578 were female. The study finds that firms with female CFOs are more profitable and generated excess profits of \$1.8T over 2002-2019, and that firms with female CEOs and CFOs have produced superior stock price performance compared to the market average. Indeed, in the 24 months post-appointment, female CEOs saw a 20% increase in stock price momentum and female CFOs saw a 6% increase in profitability and 8% larger stock returns (Sandberg, 2019^[9]). However, several more recent studies have also pointed to mixed and inconclusive evidence regarding the effects of gender-diverse boards on company performance.³

While causation is not clearly established, a growing body of research suggests that having more women in leadership positions has the potential to contribute to better corporate governance and firm performance, which in turn can yield important economic benefits. Firms' legal, regulatory and socio-economic contexts are also important parameters to consider when assessing the relationship between women in leadership positions and firm performance.

2. The state of play

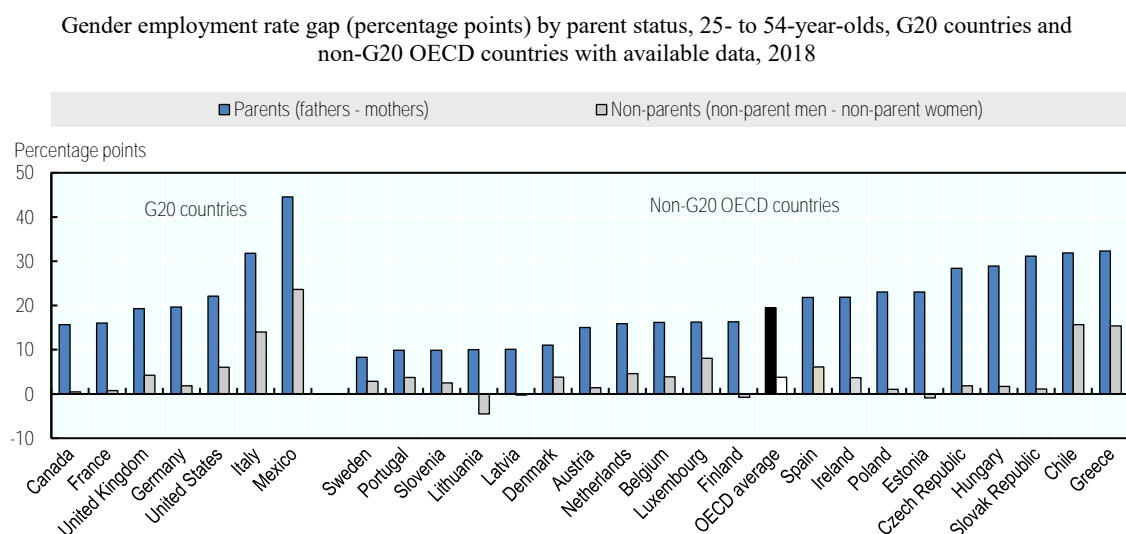
Leadership is far from the only area of the labour market where gender gaps persist. Despite the remarkable progress made by women in paid work and in education and skills attainment over the past half-century or so, women's position in the labour market remains

³ Studies finding mixed and inconclusive evidence include: (Solal and Snellman, 2019^[43]), (Post and Byron, 2014^[45]), (Marinova, Plantenga and Remery, 2016^[48]), (Ahern and Dittmar, 2012^[49]), and (Gregory-Smith, Main and O'Reilly III, 2013^[50]).

very different from men's. Across OECD and G20 countries, women are still less likely than men to be in paid employment – in 2019, the OECD average gender employment gap (15- to 64-year-olds) still stood at 11 percentage points (26 percentage points on average across G20 countries, for 15+ year-olds) (OECD, 2020^[3]; ILO, 2020^[10]). Once in work, employed women often work shorter hours than employed men, enjoy shorter job tenure than employed men, and earn less than employed men (OECD, 2020^[3]; ILO, 2020^[10]). Men and women continue to work in different sectors of the economy, with women's employment often concentrated in the public sector, in the care and education sectors, and in the service sector more generally (OECD, 2020^[3]; OECD, 2020^[11]; ILO, 2020^[10]). In many such “feminised” industries, pay rates are lower than in industries dominated by men (ILO, 2018^[12]). In some OECD and G20 countries, women are also more likely than men to be informally employed in vulnerable, low-paid jobs (OECD/ILO, 2019^[13]; ILO, 2020^[10]). Indeed, while globally, men make up the majority of the world's 2 billion workers in informal employment, in several regions (including sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, south Asia) informal employment is more common among women than men (OECD/ILO, 2019^[13]). Childbirth and parenthood have a particularly dramatic effect on women's employment. In many countries, gender employment gaps among childless men and women are nominal or only small (Figure 2.1). Gender employment gaps are far wider among parents than those without children. In some countries, childless women now earn more, on average, than childless men (OECD, 2017^[2]). But this changes sharply once children arrive. Practically all employed mothers take a break from work shortly before and during the first few weeks or months after childbirth. In several OECD and G20 countries, many employed women still exit the labour market entirely following childbirth, whether by choice or not. When (or if) they return, women are far more likely than men to reduce their hours or adjust patterns of paid work to fit their family and care commitments.

The breaks, interruptions and concessions that women make for family reasons all add up over the course of their careers. On average, women's careers are one third shorter than men's, and are much more likely to involve one or more periods of part-time work (OECD, 2017^[2]). This has an impact on women's ability to build their careers: other things being equal, less time spent at work means less time to progress. Family responsibilities also mean that employed women tend to be less mobile than employed men. Women (especially mothers) make fewer in-work transitions (e.g. change of employer, job, or contract type) than men – transitions that are crucial for job and career progression (OECD, 2017^[2]). In fact, much of the gender gap in earnings progression is generated before age 40, as women miss many labour market opportunities during the early stages of their careers (OECD, 2017^[2]). Together with other, less tangible factors, including discrimination, these breaks and concessions contribute to attrition in the number of women who advance on the career ladder and into leadership positions. This has further knock-on effects, such as for women's ability to build wealth and economic power over the lifespan of their careers.

Figure 2.1. Gender employment gaps are far wider among parents than those without children



Notes: Data for Mexico refer to 2014, and for Chile to 2017. Data for Mexico refer to 15- to 64-year-olds. Parents are defined as those that live in the same household as a child (age 0-14) for who they are reported as either the mother or the father. Non-parents are defined as those who live in a household without any children (age 0-14) for who they are reported as either the mother or the father. For Canada and the United States, children aged 0-17. The OECD average excludes Mexico. The gender employment rate gap is the percentage point gap in employment rates between men and women, among men and women in each group (parents, and non-parents).

Source: OECD estimates based on the European Union Labour Force Survey, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>, the Canadian Labour Force Survey, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/household/3701>, the Chilean Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN), <http://observatorio.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/index.php>, the Mexican Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares (ENIGH), <https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/enigh/nc/2018/>, and the U.S. Current Population Survey, <https://www.census.gov/programmes-surveys/cps.html>.

2.1. Policy support to promote women's engagement in paid work

Governments can play an important role in helping women maintain paid work and stay in full-time employment following parenthood. The *2013 OECD Gender Recommendation* (OECD, 2013^[14]) sets out a number of policy measures that adherent countries should consider in order to address gender inequalities in education, employment and entrepreneurship. Among these are a range of policies aimed at promoting women's paid work and employment continuity.

Mandating (and enforcing) access to paid parental leave is an important first step. Providing mothers with guaranteed access to paid maternity and parental leave can promote job continuity and help maintain female labour force attachment. These leaves should be at least employment-protected, and ideally job-protected, providing mothers with the right to return to the same position (or an equivalent position, where necessary for business reasons) following leave. Leave entitlements need to be designed with care, however, as lengthy leaves can harm women's long-term earnings and career prospects (Thévenon and Solaz, 2013^[15]; OECD, 2017^[2]). One reason is that a prolonged period out of work can lead to a loss of skills and experience; another is that it can encourage employer discrimination against women in the hiring and promotion process.

Providing fathers with access to paid parental leave is important too. Parenthood often represents an important breakpoint in the formation of "traditional" gender roles, and

encouraging men to take an active role in childcare from birth may have lasting downstream effects on the distribution of unpaid work (OECD, 2019^[16]). In many instances, it is not enough to provide fathers with just the *option* of taking shareable leave: differences in earnings between partners, combined with societal attitudes towards the roles of mothers and fathers, mean that use of shareable leave is almost always dominated by mothers (OECD, 2017^[2]). Paid leave rights that are reserved just for fathers – such as paid paternity leave and paid fathers-only parental leave – are one way of encouraging fathers to take leave on parenthood.

Following leave, access to affordable, flexible, good-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is crucial. The affordability of good-quality care services is decisive in parental employment choices, especially for single parents and second earners, many of whom are women. Even relatively high-earning parents can see their (effective) take-home pay eroded substantially by high ECEC costs (OECD, 2020^[17]). Governments can promote access to affordable ECEC through a number of different mechanisms (OECD, 2020^[18]). While several of the most successful countries in this area (e.g. the Nordic countries) run large-scale publicly operated ECEC systems, Korea, for instance, has recently constructed an extensive system of affordable ECEC through a mix of public and private services. Policies implemented by Korea include direct subsidies to many providers and generous child care benefits for parents. Largely as a result, the share of children under age three enrolled in ECEC increased from 3% in 2001 to 41% in 2018 (OECD, 2019^[19]).

And family-friendly workplace practices can also help parents combine work and care commitments more effectively (OECD, 2016^[20]). Flexibility with regard to starting and finishing times and access to home working (teleworking) can both be valuable, as can working part-time, although prolonged periods of part-time work can hamper career progression (OECD, 2019^[16]). While flexible working practices are often set at the firm level, governments can facilitate access by providing workers with the right to (or right to request) certain arrangements (OECD, 2016^[20]; OECD, 2017^[2]). The Netherlands and the United Kingdom provide two good practice examples: in both, all employees meeting certain tenure criteria have the right to request flexible working, including the scheduling of hours and the place of work, which employers can refuse only on serious business grounds.⁴ Widening the “right to request” to all employees is important, as it confers bargaining power and lessens the risk of discrimination against target groups of workers (e.g. parents).

To be most effective, family-friendly policy should target all workers – both men and women – and encourage men to take on an equal share of family care and unpaid work (OECD, 2017^[2]). Across OECD and G20 countries, women continue to spend far more time on unpaid work than men (OECD, 2020^[11]). As well as putting limits on the time they can spend on paid work, this also helps drive employer discrimination: as long as women take more leave, more often reduce their hours, and/or make more use of flexible working, some employers will continue to perceive women as less committed to their careers than men. As mentioned above, paid paternity leave and fathers only paid parental leave are two tools that governments can use to promote men’s engagement in unpaid work (OECD, 2017^[2]). But governments should also explore ways of encouraging men to make greater use of flexible working or to reduce their working hours, especially while children are young. Germany, for example, provides families with bonus weeks of paid parental leave if *both* parents take part-time leave and reduce their working hours to 25 to 30 hours per week for at least four months.

⁴ In the Netherlands, the right to request flexible working also does not apply to employers with fewer than ten employees.

Box 2.1. COVID-19, women, and leadership

The COVID 19 pandemic is harming health, social and economic well-being worldwide, with women at the centre (OECD, 2020^[21]). While the crisis has had a heavy impact on many different groups, including the elderly, and while men appear at more risk of death than women once they contract the virus, the effect on women has been substantial. Leading much of the wider social and health response, women have been facing compounding risks, burdens and responsibilities (OECD, 2020^[21]). Examples include:

- Most immediately, *women are playing a key role in the health care response to the pandemic*. Women make up two-thirds of the health workforce worldwide, including 85% of nurses and midwives (Boniol et al., 2019^[22]), and account for 90% of long-term care workers across OECD countries (OECD, 2020^[23]). Health and social care workers have been facing exceptional demands, and considerable risks, through the crisis. The strain has often been particularly acute for mothers, who have also had to cope with school and childcare facility closures during confinement.
- At work, *women may be facing higher risks of job loss and economic insecurity*. Historically, economic crises have often done more damage to men's jobs than to women's. This was the case with the 2008 financial crisis, for example, and in many previous crises. This time, however, women are at least as exposed to job loss as men (OECD, 2020^[21]). Data from Canada, for example, show that women have lost more jobs than men since February, in both relative terms (as a share of the employed) and absolute terms. In the United States, unemployment rates increased more sharply for women than men (OECD, 2020^[24]). Part of the reason is that the short-term economic fallout from COVID-19 has particularly affected sectors that rely on physical customer interaction, many of which are major employers of women. According to the ILO, globally, at the beginning of 2020, 41 percent of all women workers were employed in the industries most at risk from the crisis – accommodation and food services; real estate, business and administrative activities; manufacturing; and the wholesale/retail trade – compared to 35 percent of men workers (ILO, 2020^[25]).
- In the home, *the crisis has likely amplified women's unpaid work burden*. In G20 countries, as in all countries around the world, women already provided most unpaid work before the crisis, ranging from around 60 per cent in Canada to 90 per cent in India (OECD/ILO, 2019^[26]). Widespread school and childcare facility closures increased the amount of time that parents spent on care and child supervision and home schooling, with much of this additional burden likely having fallen on women. One early study in Germany suggests that, in about half of all households with children, the female partner alone cared for the children (Möhring et al., 2020^[27]), although another found that fathers were at least doing more during lockdown than before (Zinn, Kreyenfeld and Bayer, 2020^[28]). Another study, from Switzerland, found that women shouldered much more of the additional burden of home schooling and childcare than men, with knock-on effects for their paid work (Bütikofer et al., 2020^[29]).

The potential impact that COVID-19 may have had on women's access to leadership is not yet clear. However, what the crisis has made very clear, is that workplace policies and practices must be responsive to, and able to account for, the roles and

responsibilities that workers also have outside of work. The crisis has helped highlight the importance of constructing flexible, family-friendly workplace practices that can accommodate the needs of mothers, parents, and other workers with caring responsibilities at home. To the extent that women's representation in leadership can help promote these kinds of practices, it has also underlined the importance of helping women to access top management positions and ensuring that women's voices and perspectives are fully heard.

Source: OECD (2020^[21]), "Women at the core of the fight against the COVID-19 crisis", <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>; OECD (2020^[24]), OECD Employment Outlook 2020: Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1686c758-en>.

2.2. Policies to support women in leadership positions

However, policies such as paid leave, affordable childcare, and access to flexible working can only go so far in promoting women's access to leadership. Helping women access paid work is not the same as ensuring they have access to good jobs and good careers, and while supports that help keep women in the labour market are important, they are not in themselves sufficient for women's access to management and leadership positions.

On that front, the OECD has developed a range of policy instruments and recommendations that can support progress in empowering women in leadership and management roles in the private sector. In particular, the *G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance* (OECD, 2015^[30]) underline the importance of ensuring the right mix of backgrounds and competencies within the board of directors to ensure a diversity of thought in boardroom discussions. In this regard, the Principles highlight that "countries may wish to consider measures such as voluntary targets, disclosure requirements, boardroom quotas, and private initiatives that enhance gender diversity on boards and in senior management."

In supporting governments, businesses and all relevant stakeholders to make progress in implementing such instruments to promote women in leadership roles, the OECD has identified four main policy approaches:

- Laws that set a minimum quota for women on boards
- Rules on disclosure of the gender make-up of company boards and/or diversity policies
- Comply-or-explain provisions on gender in corporate governance codes
- Voluntary targets for gender diversity on boards and/or in senior management

To help make sense of where countries stand in their implementation of these and other tools and good practices, the *OECD 2019 Corporate Governance Factbook* (OECD, 2019^[31]) provides comparative information across 49 jurisdictions including all OECD, G20 and Financial Stability Board members. The data gathered in the Factbook shows that countries inside and outside the G20 have implemented a range of policy options along these lines to empower women in leadership roles in the private sector.

Evidence shows that quotas can encourage an increase in the number of women on boards in the short term. While recognising variations in the percentage, scope, timeline for implementation and penalties for non-compliance across countries, listed companies domiciled in jurisdictions that have established mandatory quotas have attained greater overall gender diversity at the board level (MSCI, 2019^[1]). For instance, in Germany where a 2015 law introduced a quota of 30% with a deadline of 2016, women's representation on

boards increased from 16% in 2011 to 35% in 2018 (FidAR e.V., 2020^[32]). In France, the 2011 Copé-Zimmermann introduced a 40% quota with a deadline of 2017 and a mid-term target of 20% by 2014, thus increasing women's representation on boards from 13% in 2011 to 44% in 2020 (Governance Metrics International, 2011^[33]; MSCI, 2019^[34]). In Italy, following the introduction of the 2011 Golfo-Mosca Law, women's representation on boards jumped from 3% in 2009 to more than 35% in 2018⁵ (OECD, 2019^[35]). However, in companies not subject to the Golfo-Mosca Law, the share of women on boards in Italy was below 18%, suggesting that women's participation remained well below the quota levels where they did not apply (Cerved-Fondazione Marisa Bellisario, 2020^[36]).

The mere expectation that mandatory measures will be implemented can also spur companies into action. In both Italy and France, anticipation of a quota incited companies to take measures to increase the proportion of women on boards through hiring practices, numerical targets and/or recommendations on board composition in their corporate governance codes (Deloitte, 2016^[37]). However, quotas have also faced some opposition, with critics citing possible negative side effects, such as the potential for companies to consider not listing or de-listing to avoid such requirements, or contributing to perceptions of women selected on the basis of quotas as “tokens” and evaluated less favourably by others (Leibbrandt, Wang and Foo, 2018^[38]). In addition, quotas might lead businesses to view them as a ceiling rather than a floor on the number of women, stalling progress on equality in the long run.

Out of the 49 jurisdictions covered by the *OECD 2019 Corporate Governance Factbook*, 12 jurisdictions⁶ reported establishing mandatory quotas, including five (Denmark, France, Iceland, Norway and Spain) requiring at least 40% female participation of women or of the least represented sex on boards, and four (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal) setting the bar between 20% and 35%. In total 10 countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Israel, Norway, Portugal and Spain) have introduced compulsory gender quotas for PLCs, while 12 countries (Austria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Slovenia, South Africa and Switzerland) have established mandatory quotas for state-owned enterprise (SOE) board membership (OECD, 2019^[31]).

Voluntary targets have also been adopted in 14 countries either for listed companies or (SOEs) or both. Policies that combine targets with strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms have led to good results. European countries lead the charge in terms of the overall participation of women on boards. The five top performers globally are also OECD members: Norway, France, Sweden, Italy and Finland, all of which have implemented mandatory quotas. Overall, while countries that have adopted a quota have seen a more immediate increase in the number of women on boards, those that have taken a “softer” approach, using disclosure rules or targets, have seen a more gradual increase over time.

Disclosure requirements related to board composition and senior management are an important additional component of many countries' frameworks to support an increase in women's participation in leadership positions. In 2019, 49% of the 49 surveyed jurisdictions reported having established requirements to disclose gender composition of boards, compared to 22% with regards to senior management. An additional three

⁵ Although mandated gender quotas in Italy have been successful at increasing the number of women on boards, a recent study finds that the law affects only a small number of firms. It also finds no increase in female representation at the top executive level or among top earners. This may be because norms and perceptions take time to change, or because newly appointed women in senior roles wield limited power (Maida and Weber, 2019^[51]).

⁶ Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain.

jurisdictions recommend such disclosure for both boards and senior management (OECD, 2019^[31]).

Shareholder activism for diversity can also help galvanise change. In the United States, despite the absence of country-level quotas, only 1% of companies covered by the 2019 MSCI ACWI Index had all-male boards as of 2019, down from 1.9% in 2018 and 2.6% in 2017 (MSCI, 2019^[1]). Indeed, while companies such as State Street and Blackrock have taken steps to promote greater board diversity, in 2017, State Street notably voted against the re-election of directors at more than 400 companies that failed to encourage diversity (Wall Street Journal, 2017^[39]). Similarly, in Canada, only one of the 92 companies covered by the 2019 MSCI ACWI Index had no female directors (1%) in 2019 (MSCI, 2019^[1]).

Corporate governance codes have also become a popular method of improving corporate governance in OECD countries, including around gender equality. Australia and the UK use comply-or-explain mechanisms in their codes to encourage greater gender balance on boards. In Australia, the presence of women on corporate boards has increased from 8% on the ASX 200 index in 2010, when code recommendations were introduced, to 23% in February 2016 (Clarke et al, 2016^[40]). In the UK, the corporate governance code was updated in 2018; it now requires companies to report on the gender balance of senior management in their annual reports and to provide details of company practices to encourage greater gender diversity on boards (OECD, 2019^[35]).

Overall, however, there has been unequal progress in closing the gender gap in senior management positions and on boards. The *Factbook* highlights that women comprise at least one-third of management positions in 39% of jurisdictions, whereas just 10% of jurisdictions have women comprising at least one-third of listed company boards. Only two jurisdictions have fewer than 15% of women in senior management positions, whereas 43% of jurisdictions have fewer than 15% of board positions occupied by women (OECD, 2019^[31]).

An important caveat is that data on percentages of female participation on the boards of listed companies as of end 2017 show that actual levels in some cases lag behind prescribed quotas and targets. This suggests that a number of jurisdictions are still transitioning towards the higher quotas and targets that, in many cases, have been only been established in the last few years. This underlines the important role that robust implementation strategies can play, from awareness-raising and capacity training to effective incentives and, as appropriate, sanctions to promote timely compliance (OECD, 2019^[31]).

While quotas, targets and disclosure requirements are the most commonly used tools to drive progress among listed companies, they are by no means the only options available. In addition, as the next section on good practices, initiatives and programmes shows, such policies can be further re-enforced by a range of complementary measures aimed at promoting a more conducive environment for the advancement of women in leadership positions.

3. Practices for the advancement of women in leadership roles: Findings from the EMPOWER members' survey

As part of its effort to promote good practices for the advancement of women in leadership positions in the private sector, EMPOWER submitted a survey to its members to collect data on good practices, initiatives or programmes which have contributed to an increase in the share of women in leadership positions on three fronts: i) at company level, ii) in the private sector, and iii) at the national level. While the survey design distinguished these three levels for ease of input of initiatives by respondents, it is important to recognise that

these levels do not function in silos and are deeply intertwined: national strategies and regulatory policies impact companies' behaviours; likewise, practices from the private sector inform the need for and extent of government intervention.

The resulting responses provided by private sector and government points of contact from 20 countries⁷ have served as a basis for the analysis and synthesis of the survey results that follows in this report. In addition, EMPOWER has consolidated the more detailed descriptions of individual practices provided in their survey responses into a single document.⁸

The remainder of this section aims to provide a useful overview of selected initiatives in place across these 20 countries that encompass both government-led and private sector-led programmes and initiatives. An important caveat is that the analysis of the survey results is not intended to provide a fully representative or comprehensive comparison or assessment of initiatives across countries. While some respondents covered company level initiatives in greater detail, others focused more on public sector-led initiatives or attempted to be more comprehensive. Nevertheless, the responses do provide valuable insights into various practices and initiatives used at the national, regional and firm levels. Overall, the responses provide information on over 100 policies, programmes and initiatives, which were analysed and classified into distinct – yet inter-related – categories. While more data would be needed to assess the impact of these initiatives – i.e. analyse the relationships between the actions companies are taking and the outcomes they achieve – survey respondents have already identified practices they have found to be effective at increasing women's representation in leadership positions.

While these initiatives span the entire employee journey – from recruitment, to promotion, to retention – and are applicable across industries at company level, it is crucial to recognise the importance of the social, economic and institutional environment in which they are embedded. Promoting women in leadership positions in the private sector does not happen in a vacuum and needs to be seen as occurring within a wider policy framework and socioeconomic and cultural context. In the same vein, government-led and private sector-led initiatives do not work in isolation, and greater impact is secured when both parties are involved and aligned. Government-led initiatives mainly take the form of nudges, regulation or funding. Private sector-led initiatives mainly relate to instruments used to achieve gender diversity targets and foster a change in company culture.

These initiatives are detailed below, as comprised within three overarching sections. The **first section** includes initiatives related to creating buy-in from companies to achieve gender equality and accelerate progress. The **second section** covers initiatives mainly implemented at company level that signal a commitment by company leadership to accelerate progress. These initiatives mainly include the adoption of targets and metrics, diversity and inclusion policies, and the revision of recruitment and promotion policies and processes. The **third section** relates to training, mentorship and networking programmes

⁷ Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, UAE, United Kingdom, United States. See also acknowledgements at the end of this report.

⁸ The 2020 EMPOWER Chair (Saudi Arabia) and Co-Chairs (Japan, Italy and Canada) introduce the document, entitled “2020 Playbook of EMPOWER Good Practices,” by noting that the practices described have been voluntarily submitted by G20 members and invited countries, and that: “To be open and inclusive, we did not edit or change any descriptions from each country.” They suggest that the Playbook can be used as a means to facilitate exchange of information and learning regarding good practices and policies adopted in different countries.

as private sector-led, government-led or public-private instruments to support women's advancement to leadership positions.

Of note, in the interest of concision, not all initiatives included in the survey responses are covered in the text below. Variability in the level of detail provided did not allow for an assessment of effectiveness and “best practice” on a comparative basis. Nevertheless, sufficient information was provided to allow for a selection of initiatives seen as innovative or as good examples of wider trends, which could serve as useful and informative examples for EMPOWER and the wider community.⁹

3.1. Regulating, supporting and incentivising companies to accelerate progress

Creating buy-in from companies' leadership for the promotion of women in senior roles may involve regulations, support and incentives. The initiatives identified below encompass both government-led and private sector-led initiatives to incentivise companies to accelerate progress.

3.1.1. *Reforming legal and policy frameworks*

As previously mentioned, promoting women in leadership positions in the private sector does not happen in a vacuum. Wider policy perspectives need to be accounted for to achieve this goal. As governments have established several important legal, structural and budgetary reforms to promote gender equality in the labour market, several new laws, policies and programmes in all fields have incorporated a cross-cutting gender perspective. For example, in **Canada**, the Gender Results Framework (GRF) introduced in the 2018 federal budget identifies six key areas where change is required to advance gender equality, and includes indicators under each pillar to track success or failure. In addition, the Canadian government has been using Gender-Based Analysis plus (GBA+) since 1995 as an analytical process to assess the impact of policies, programmes and initiatives on diverse groups of women and men.

And in **Japan**, to facilitate women's participation and advancement in the workplace, the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement¹⁰ was enacted in 2015 and enforced from 2016. Under the Act, employers with over 300 regularly employed workers are required to establish action plans, based on an analysis of the situation concerning the status of their female employees, and make them public. They are also required to disclose information regarding female participation and career advancement in the workplace. The Act was revised in 2019 to further accelerate the efforts to facilitate the promotion of women in the workplace¹¹. The revised Act has (i) expanded the scope of employers required to establish action plans and make them public (from employers with over 300 regularly employed workers to over 100); (ii) strengthened employers' information disclosure regarding female participation and career advancement in the

⁹ It is also worth noting that the selected initiatives summarised below focus on groups of initiatives considered most directly relevant to supporting women's access to leadership positions, and thus does not cover some examples provided by jurisdictions that fall outside of the scope of this report's focus. For example, this report does not address in detail initiatives related to family-friendly policies, to women in entrepreneurship, and to the promotion of women and girls studying or working in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Although such initiatives are important in and of themselves, and certainly relevant to supporting a stronger role for women in the work force more generally, they may have less direct relevance for their promotion to leadership roles.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=3188&vm=04&re=01>

¹¹ See: <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/policy/children/work-family/dl/20191122e.pdf>

workplace, and expanded the scope of employers required to disclose this information (from employers with over 300 regularly employed workers to over 100). The revised Act took effect in June 2020, and the expansion of scope of obliged employers will take effect in April 2022.

Oversight and advisory bodies have also been set up in parliament and in government to help improve policy design and better support women's advancement in the private sector. For instance, in 2015, the **United Kingdom** established the Women and Equalities Parliamentary Select Committee to scrutinise the work done by the executive to empower women and support their advancement in the workplace. This Committee¹² also scrutinises companies and the progress of women in business, as it calls in business leaders as witnesses to various reports and inquiries they hold. A Women's Business Council¹³ was also established in 2012 as a business-led and government-backed initiative to support women's economic empowerment. Its members are senior business leaders from different sectors who advise the government on policies to advance women in the private sector and champion good practice in their sectors. The Council has influenced policy on shared parental leave, flexible working and childcare; organised several events with business leaders; and developed specific programmes and toolkits for businesses. Likewise, in **Jordan**, the inter-ministerial committee for empowering women was established in 2015 to ensure cross-cutting gender mainstreaming within executive plan. In the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, the Gender Balance Council was also established in 2015 as a federal entity responsible for developing and implementing the national gender balance agenda. Its objectives are to reduce the gender gap across all sectors, enhance the UAE's ranking in global competitiveness reports on gender equality and achieve gender balance in decision-making positions.

Measuring and researching the place of women in leadership helps governments understand where barriers lie for women, which in turn allows for better design and implementation of strategic policies to advance women in leadership roles. As such, research initiatives have been launched to assess evidence-based approaches to advancing workplace gender equity in many countries (including **Canada**, **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Kingdom**). In particular, legislative measures have been introduced in the aim of reporting on and eliminating gender pay gaps in the private sector. The examples of **France's** gender equality index and **Switzerland's** mandatory wage equality audits are detailed in Box 3.1 below.

Box 3.1. Eliminating the gender pay gap: France's gender equality index and Switzerland's mandatory wage equality audits

France – Gender Equality Index

The 2018 French law for the freedom to choose one's professional future introduces a new chapter in the French Labour Code relating to measures aimed at eliminating the gender pay gap. This new chapter establishes the obligation to publish a certain number of indicators relating to pay and promotion differentials and actions taken to eliminate them. The new index particularly targets wage differentials and introduces levers to eliminate them, including in SMEs as long as they have 50 or more employees.

¹² See: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/328/women-and-equalities-committee/>

¹³ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/womens-business-council> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/womens-business-council-wbc-five-years-on-report>

In the form of a score out of 100, the index of gender equality consists of five main criteria which assess the inequalities between women and men in companies:

- **Salary (40 points).** The indicator identifies the average earnings of women and men in a company. Performance bonuses and benefits in kind are taken into account, but bonuses related to working conditions, departure and precariousness are excluded. To get the full 40 points, a company will need to narrow the gap between women's and men's earnings to zero.
- **Percentage of men and women who have benefitted from a pay increase over the year (20 points).** To get full points, a company will have to pay the same salary increases to women as men, to the nearest 2% or two people.
- **Evaluation of promotions in companies (15 points).** These points are awarded to companies which, during the year, promote as many women as men to 2% or with a maximum gap of two people. For companies with 50 to 249 employees, this criterion is merged with the previous one on pay increase.
- **Maternity leave (15 points).** The full score will go to a company that pays women returning from maternity leave. Please note that if an employee in this situation does not receive a salary increase, no point will be awarded to the company for this criterion.
- **Have at least four women among its top ten salaries (10 points).**

According to the law, each year French companies with more than 50 employees have to publish the score obtained on the gender equality index on a yearly basis on their website. If it is less than 75 out of 100, they have three years to comply. Otherwise, they are financially sanctioned up to 1% of their payroll.

The obligation first applied to companies with more than 1,000 employees, starting from March 1st, 2019. It was later extended to companies with between 250 and 1,000 employees (starting from September 1st, 2019) and to companies with 50 to 249 employees (from March 1st, 2020). A first assessment dated September 13th, 2019 revealed that all companies had efforts to make. 17% were on red alert. The 1,240 companies with more than 1,000 employees obtained on average a score of 83 out of 100.

Switzerland – Mandatory Wage Equality Audits

In the aim of reducing the unexplained difference in pay between women and men and improve the enforcement of equal pay, the Equal Opportunities Act was amended on 14 December 2018 and came into force on 1 July 2020.

Under the new provisions, companies with at least 100 employees are obliged to carry out an internal wage equality analysis. The first internal wage equality analysis must be conducted by the end of June 2021 at the latest, and is to be repeated every four years. The wage equality analysis has to take into consideration all contributions for work performed by employees, thus including both the actual basic wage and all social wage components (such as family, local and child allowances, gratuities and benefits in kind, including employee stock units, options or other equity). The Federal Government provides a free of charge instrument (Logib) to companies, which calculates the level of wage equality in the company by regression analysis. However, employers are free to use any other method to conduct their equal pay analysis as long as such chosen method is scientifically sound and legally compliant.

The analysis must be reviewed by an independent body, including either (i) an auditing company, (ii) an organisation that promotes gender equality or safeguards the interests of employees, or (iii) an employee representation. The Federal Council has laid down specific training criteria, which auditors who review equal pay analyses on behalf of employers will have to comply with.

The Act mandates public companies to publish the result of the equal pay analysis in the annex to their annual accounts, and employers to inform the employees in writing of the result of the equal pay analysis within one year of the conclusion of the audit.

Source: <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/indexegalitefemmeshommes-ve-03-pageapage.pdf> and <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19950082/index.html>

3.1.2. Peer-to-peer networks and advocacy initiatives to foster mutual commitments and push for accountability

International organisations have been created in **France**¹⁴ and **Russia**¹⁵ as platforms to strengthen the case for gender equality in the economy and society, including in the private sector. By fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues at an international level, these platforms enable the collaboration of decision-makers from the public and private sectors in the development of concrete instruments, charters, and policy proposals to accelerate women's leadership advancement and reduce inequalities through the empowerment of women across society. Over the years, both platforms have launched various initiatives fostering women's advancement at all levels in the private and public sectors, aiming to help them reach leadership positions. For instance, in **France**, the *CEO Champions Initiative* gathers CEOs who have publicly committed to drive women's advancement in their organisation, and enables them to share concrete measures adopted to achieve and to track progress against this goal.

Likewise, several peer-to-peer networks and advocacy initiatives have been established at the national, regional and international levels as a pledge by companies to commit to achieving gender equality, and to share best practices and tools to accelerate women's leadership advancement. These initiatives are characterised by their multi-stakeholder approach, and as such foster mutual commitments by adhering companies, and push for accountability in achieving gender equality. Selected examples are provided in Box 3.2 below.

Box 3.2. Selected peer-to-peer networks and advocacy initiatives

The **30% Club** is a global campaign led by Chairs and CEOs taking action to increase gender diversity at board and senior management levels. Under the leadership of the global chair, the campaign has an international footprint with presence in fourteen countries and regions around the world (including **Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, East Africa, MENA, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States**). In particular, the 30% Club campaign is working to bring about change by encouraging and supporting Chairs and CEOs to appoint more women to their boards and senior management teams, and by providing information and support for businesses trying to improve their diversity at all levels,

¹⁴ Women's Forum for the Economy and Society.

¹⁵ Eurasian Women's Forum.

especially by sharing innovative practices that have proven effective and by devising new collaborative actions.

In **Australia**, the private sector has demonstrated support for women through the creation of an institute¹⁶, which gathers 230 Australian male leaders who use their individual and collective leadership to elevate gender equality as an issue of national and international, as well as social and economic importance. The institute works to substantially improve women's representation in public and professional fora. This example was replicated in **Japan** in June 2014 when nine male leaders announced the "Declaration on Action by A Group of Male Leaders Who Will Create a Society in which Women Shine", comprising three pillars, including: i) taking actions and sending messages ourselves, ii) disrupting the status quo, and iii) developing networking. Since its launch, male leaders have regularly published reports compiling best practices, and holding meetings to exchange information and expand the network. Likewise, in the **United States**, a company-led initiative aims to inspire men to leverage their unique opportunity and responsibility to be advocates for gender equity. This contributes to enhancing gender partnership and accelerates the creation of inclusive workplaces. This initiative has recently received the support of two corporations through a \$5 million grant and a \$2 million grant.

In **Italy**, an association¹⁷ was created in 2009 by twelve managers in the aim of promoting gender balance and an inclusive culture in organisations and across the country. In 2020, the association comprises around 200 member companies in Italy, representing more than 2 million employees. It operates by providing companies with effective tools to achieve greater gender equality (such as inclusion plans and mentorships programmes), and by fostering a dialogue between companies and with institutions – which in turn encourages mutual growth and optimises employee potential. In particular, in 2017, the association launched a “Manifesto for Female Employment” outlining a nine-point agenda identifying the ways in which companies can increase the presence of women on their teams. To date, the document has been signed by over 130 company chairs and managing directors.

In **Jordan**, a non-profit association¹⁸ was established in May 2018 in the aim of promoting women's access to leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. The association operates as an open network fostering dialogue and collaboration amongst its stakeholders in order to bolster the strategic positioning of Jordanian women on boards of directors. In particular, it serves as a hub to: i) support board diversity, ii) raise the visibility of women eligible for non-executive directorship positions, iii) raise awareness on the importance of gender diversity in leadership positions, iv) provide a database of qualified women board candidates to companies.

In **Switzerland**, a business association for gender equality¹⁹ was created as a network of over 100 Swiss-based companies committed to increasing the share of women in management. Its aim is to advance female talents in its member companies and to help them thrive; sensitise men and management about the topic as key change agents;

¹⁶ www.malechampionsofchange.com

¹⁷ <https://valored.it/en/>

¹⁸ <https://www.wobsjo.com/>

¹⁹ <https://weadvance.ch/>

connect its member companies, and offer them platforms for cross-company exchange; and allow best practices to be adopted faster by others.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

3.1.3. Government-led initiatives to raise awareness of board diversity in listed companies

Governments have sought to galvanise listed companies' efforts to spur change by raising their awareness around the need for gender diversity on boards, as well as by providing them with support such as guidelines, as evidenced in **Japan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore** and the **United Kingdom** and detailed in Box 3.3 below.

Box 3.3. Selected government-led initiatives to accelerate progress in listed companies

In **Japan**, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the Tokyo Stock Exchange jointly launched “Nadeshiko Brands” to highlight listed companies that actively promote the participation of women on boards and in senior managerial positions. Companies are evaluated based on their diversity management and disclosure efforts. “Nadeshiko Brands” labels provide positive recommendations for investors as attractive investment targets with potential for long-term growth.

In **Saudi Arabia**, an agreement between the Capital Market Authority and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Women Empowerment Agency) was signed to support the promotion of women on boards in the market by developing guidelines for companies informing them of the nomination mechanisms for women, and by raising awareness on the importance of diversity on boards.

In **Singapore**, the Council for Board Diversity (CBD) was established by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to promote women's representation on the boards of companies listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX). One of the initiatives under CBD was to engage key board decision makers, including those in the Top 100 Listed Companies, to raise awareness of board diversity. This initiative contributed to raise women's participation on the boards of the top 100 primary-listed companies from 7.5% in 2013 to 16.2% at the end of 2019.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Hampton-Alexander Review is an independent, voluntary and business led initiative supported by the government. Over the years, the Hampton-Alexander Review has engaged with FTSE Board members to gather their perspective on the need for gender diversity at the top of British business. Their stories highlight the benefits and advantages of gender a balanced Board and the example it sets for the rest of the organisation. The Review has a target of 33% representation of women on FTSE 350 boards and in senior leadership by the end of 2020. This captures over 23,000 leadership roles at board level and the two leadership layers below for the UK's largest companies by capitalisation. It builds on the success of its predecessor, the Davies Review, which exceeded its target of 25% women on FTSE 100 boards by the end of 2015. Data is collected and reported on annually and the report is launched at an event with both Ministers of Business and Ministers of Equalities in attendance.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

3.1.4. Tools to incentivise companies to take action and accelerate progress

Through tools at their disposal, governments can also incentivise companies to accelerate progress by highlighting excellence in gender equality practices in the private sector – including by raising the profile of companies doing great work in this area. Overall, these efforts seek to publicise, and celebrate or reward diversity in firms. Such tools include certificates (**Argentina** and **Japan**), MOUs (**Korea**), awards (**Australia** and the **United States**), norms (**Mexico**), and contest for employers (**Russia**). Concrete illustrations of their implementation are provided below.

In **Argentina**, as part of the Gender Parity Initiative (IPG), the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security created a certificate of gender equality for companies, in partnership with the Argentinian Institute of Normalisation and Certification and with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Economic Forum and participation of the private sector. The certificate is granted to companies which have undergone a diagnosis and planning process with support from the Ministry, and as a result have implemented an action plan to incorporate practices to improve women's working conditions and access to opportunities. Likewise, in **Japan**, as part of the Government's efforts to incentivise companies to promote the participation and advancement of women in the workplace, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare started issuing the 'Eruboshi' certificate to companies that satisfy certain standards and that are recognised for their excellence in this area. Eruboshi-certified companies can use this certification mark for their promotion. They are also granted points in public procurement. In 2019, a new special certification system – 'Platinum Eruboshi' – was introduced, granting companies more points in public procurement.

In **Korea**, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has started signing MOUs with private companies to increase the number of women in executive positions. Private companies that provide plans for promoting female employees are able to sign an MOU with the Ministry and receive support (such as consulting services) to help them improve their gender diversity. In addition, Korea is operating a family-friendly certification system, whereby certificates are granted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to private enterprises and public institutions that implement a set of family-friendly policies (such as maternity leave and child care support, flexible work hours, etc.).

In **Australia**, the WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality²⁰ citation was introduced by the government in 2014 as a recognition programme that aims to encourage, recognise and promote active commitment to achieving gender equality in Australian workplaces. The citation is strategically aligned with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* and recognises that gender equality is increasingly critical to an organisation's success and is viewed as a baseline feature of well-managed and leading organisations. The citation's seven focus areas cover leadership, strategy and accountability; developing a gender balanced workforce; gender pay equity; support for caring; mainstreaming flexible work; preventing gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying; and driving change beyond the workplace. In 2019-2010 alone, nearly 120 organisation received the citation, which reflects the Australian private sector's increasing effort to support gender equality in the workplace. Likewise, in the **United States**, the Secretary of State's Award for Corporate Excellence for Women's Economic Empowerment honors companies that have committed to support women's economic empowerment through their values, strategies, policies, programs, procedures, and/or operational practices. Similar awards have been implemented in **Argentina** and **Canada** –

²⁰ For more information, see: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/leading-practice/employer-of-choice-for-gender-equality#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20employer%20of,gender%20equality%20in%20Australian%20workplaces>.

albeit as private sector-led initiatives – seeking to recognise both exceptional women in leadership positions as well as enterprises advocating for gender diversity in business.

In **Mexico**, the Norm for Labour Equality and Non-Discrimination (NMX-R-025-SCFI-2015) was established in 2015 as a means to foster change in the workplace culture, by publicly recognising and certifying those workplaces that incorporate a gender perspective into their recruitment, pay, promotion and training processes, and that create a safe environment for women. As of May 2020, 411 organisations have been certified under Norm NMX-R-025-SCFI-2015, including 67% public sector organisations and 33% private sector organisations. Overall, it is estimated that over 810,040 people (46% of which are women) work at – and benefit from – workplaces that implement gender equality and non-discrimination policies in Mexico.

In **Russia**, at the end of 2019, the Council of the Eurasian Women's Forum attached to the Federation Council announced the launch of the contest for employers entitled “Development of Women's Leadership”. The main goals of this initiative are to encourage employers to devise policies to overcome barriers hindering women’s access to leadership positions, as well as to encourage companies to better support working parents.

3.2. Commitment by company leadership

Setting clear diversity aspirations (targets) backed by accountability (metrics) at company level stands as a best practice for more diverse representation in leadership roles. A large majority of surveyed respondents report at least one instance of gender diversity targets being set up by companies in their respective countries, alongside the adoption of ad-hoc performance measurement tools to monitor companies’ progress against these goals. Such measures may be seen as complementary to national quotas or targets for listed companies that have been established in many of the surveyed jurisdictions. These company-specific targets are often comprised within an all-encompassing gender equality strategy, including companies’ commitments to equal pay. Implementation of these strategies includes concrete measures, such as establishing diversity and inclusion committees, reducing biased language and eliminating associations with gender stereotypes in job descriptions for leadership roles, and revising recruitment and promotion policies and processes. These levers are described below. Tools developed by the private sector to help companies achieve their gender diversity objectives are also identified.

3.2.1. Targets and metrics

A large majority of surveyed respondents from the private sector report the establishment of gender diversity targets, along with associated KPIs and metrics to monitor their performance against these goals. These instruments are often comprised within an all-encompassing gender equality strategy, including public commitments, targets, metrics, equal pay programmes and budgetary measures to correct unjustified pay gaps, as evidenced in Box 3.4 below. Overall, evidence shows that instituting a culture of measurement is paramount to promote women’s advancement to leadership positions.

Box 3.4. Selected gender equality strategies at company level (Canada, France, and Saudi Arabia)

In **Canada**, one media and technology company has set up gender diversity targets and has adopted ongoing tracking and measurement of its performance against these goals. The company operates as a Quadruple Bottom Line business, which means that it measures success across People, Environmental, Social, and Financial pillars. Each of these pillars have individual goals and KPIs that the company tracks to on a monthly, quarterly and yearly basis. Goals for gender equality include gender pay gap, gender balance at all levels, gender balance at management levels, and execution of gender equity interviewing. This has proven to be a strong methodology in keeping the business accountable to its KPIs in each of the pillars.

In **France**, several major companies from the finance, insurance, construction, telecommunications and cosmetics sectors have set up gender diversity targets along with gender diversity indicators for key populations, thus enabling them to measure the impact of their actions and to adjust policies accordingly. In recent years, some of these companies have also started monitoring the allocation of remuneration between women and men with an indicator integrated into the annual remuneration review process for all functions. This has been accompanied by measures taken to anticipate possible gender pay gaps, as well as to correct existing unjustified pay gaps. In one major company from the insurance sector, where unjustified gender pay gaps were found, 2,422 corrective budgetary measures impacting 1,300 women were implemented, entailing an average salary increase of 4.77%.

In **Saudi Arabia**, one major company from the transportation sector reports having incorporated key performance indicators (KPIs) around women's recruitment, development, and promotions for each of its operating companies. This allows assessing each company's performance and progress in this area, which is factored into an algorithm that determines annual bonuses. Of note, a key KPI was introduced to track the share of women in managerial positions. As a result, the promotion of women has increased by 30% since 2013, and the number of women in managerial positions has increased threefold over the same period.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

In order to help companies achieve their gender diversity objectives, tools have been developed by both the public and private sectors, as well as academia. In **Switzerland**, the federal office for gender equality developed the Logib²¹ tool as a “self-assessment pay calculator”, which is a statistical tool aiming to check whether or not a company is implementing equal pay for equal work between women and men. The tool is an easy-to-use software package that is suitable for companies with 50 or more employees. In addition, in **Switzerland**, a benchmark of key performance indicators was developed by academia for integration within human resources processes, which compares companies and gives them recommendations on how to build up the pipeline for women in leadership positions²². In **Australia**, companies have collaborated to develop the Leadership Shadow

²¹ See: <https://www.ebg.admin.ch/ebg/en/home/services/logib.html>

²² See: https://www.diversitybenchmarking.ch/en/?noredirect=en_US

tool²³, which is a toolkit designed to help leaders drive efforts to achieve better gender balance in their organisations, in particular by encouraging leaders to think about what they say, what they prioritise, what they measure and how they act.

3.2.2. Adopting diversity and inclusion policies to promote a change in business culture

Companies which are committed to promote a change in business culture and remove systemic barriers take a systematic approach to identify practices and policies – including the use of language in internal and external communications – which might impede inclusivity or discourage the development of diverse leadership candidates. Survey respondents report that these initiatives yield positive outcomes, as women become more openly embraced as leaders in leadership positions. These efforts are often comprised within wider diversity and inclusion policies, and overseen by diversity and inclusion committees when they exist. Insights from companies in **Canada, India, Saudi Arabia** and the **United Kingdom** are provided below.

Box 3.5. Employment equity and diversity policies and practices

In **Canada**, several large companies from the media, financial, real estate and food industries have devised diversity plans which include such items as reviewing the companies' policies, processes and programmes to ensure that no unintended biases exist, that they proactively take diversity into consideration and that they engage in external activities that demonstrate their commitment. Several companies have also implemented an annual diversity and inclusion survey to monitor their diversity breakdown and inform their efforts on enhancing diversity and representation across the organisation. In these companies, the inclusion committee or council is chaired by the company's CEO and comprised of senior managers across all areas of the organisation. The committee's primary objectives are to monitor, promote and role model a culture of inclusion, embed diversity and inclusion in strategic business initiatives, and enhance leadership development specific to open-mindedness and cross-cultural awareness. The committee can also play a role in identifying board candidates, and in providing mentorship to new board members.

In **India**, one major industrial group introduced a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) programme and simultaneously launched a diversity group in June 2015. The group seeks to facilitate the recruitment and inclusion of minorities, including women, persons with disabilities, and LGBT+ persons. The company announced that it was working on a roadmap to ensure 25% representation from diverse groups by 2020. To achieve this target, the company has adopted a five-pillar approach to diversity and inclusion, including: commitment, sensitisation, development, infrastructure, and celebration.

In **Saudi Arabia**, one large company from the transportation sector has established a Women Network Steering Committee (WNSC) comprised of both male and female executives who play an important role in guiding and driving the company's diversity strategy, and support initiatives to enrich the career exposure of female employees. Guided by WNSC, the company's diversity division supports operating companies in their efforts to achieve gender equality and promotes women's empowerment through different measures. These include – but are not limited to – conducting annual visits to all operating companies to discuss diversity KPIs and explore areas of support. The

²³ See: <https://malechampionsofchange.com/the-leadership-shadow>

company's overall progress is then monitored using an automated online diversity dashboard. An annual Work Culture Survey is also shared with all female employees to measure their satisfaction rate and identify opportunities for improvement within their companies.

In the **United Kingdom**, the use of nudges have proven effective in boosting job application rates from female applicants. In particular, an insurance company was able to increase the share of female applicants to senior management roles by 45% in only three months by advertising every job vacancy as being potentially a 'part time, job share or full time working opportunity'¹.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

Note: ¹ See: <https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/uk/news/breaking-news/how-did-zurich-increase-female-applicants-by-45-173009.aspx> and <https://equalities.blog.gov.uk/2020/05/29/double-nudge-encourages-employers-to-offer-flexibility-in-turn-boosting-job-application-rates/>

The survey response from **Japan** also reported that companies are making collective efforts to eliminate gender gaps by changing social norms to address and break down stereotypes in the Japanese culture. In particular, 12 major companies partake in the Unstereotype Alliance led by UN Women, which seeks to use the advertising industry to eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes in all media and advertising content. Companies and organisations can join the Alliance at a global level or through regional National Chapters, which are currently operating in Brazil, Japan, South Africa and Turkey. Overall, the Alliance comprises 100 members, including 41 from global memberships and 60 at a national level.

3.2.3. *Revising recruitment and promotion policies and processes*

In order to increase the pool of female candidates and recruits, companies are revising their recruitment policies and processes. This includes setting specific targets for female recruits, and implementing specific recruiting events and workshops for female talents. Concrete instruments to achieve these targets include de-biased recruiting practices such as anonymised CVs, shortlist targets for women, and structured interview methods, as evidenced by companies in **Canada, France, Saudi Arabia, Singapore**, and the **United Kingdom**.

Box 3.6. Recruitment and promotion policies and processes

In **Canada**, one leading media and technology company interviews at least two qualified women for every open role for candidates of all seniorities, to the extent possible. Equal opportunity promotions are also in place, whereby the most qualified candidate is selected for an open role or promotion regardless of background. The company also encourages to propose a qualified women for a promotion at the same time a man would be proposed.

In **France**, one major company from the financial sector has adopted the structured interview method, which seeks to homogeneously assess candidates on objective criteria related to the position. For each position, five behavioural skills (among 34 skills defined by the group) are retained, including necessarily the ability to adapt. For the given position, the questions asked are the same for all candidates and relate to their past experiences. The response rating scale is pre-established and shared by all recruiters. This allows decreasing the part of interpretation of the candidate's performance in

interview. The interview is subject to detailed formalisation using a shared frame of reference. The objectives of the structured interview method are four-fold: (i) recruit the best profiles by assessing their future adaptation, (ii) neutralise and limit the influence of bias and stereotypes by guaranteeing equal treatment of candidates, (iii) strengthen non-discriminatory practices, and (iv) ensure the diversity of candidates and recruitments.

In **Saudi Arabia**, one large company from the transportation sector conducts detailed psychometric assessments through a third party when selecting talent, which help them identify capability and potentiality, eliminate gender bias and increase women's enrolment in existing development programmes. The company also reports actively identifying functions that have low female representation and encouraging the company to correct that. This has helped lead to an increase in the number of positions held by women at different career stages between 2013 and 2020.

In **Singapore**, one company from the financial sector has been recruiting more female talent in technology – an area that is conventionally male-dominated – through targeted hackathons.

In the **United Kingdom**, one major food company has enhanced its internal and external recruiting processes to make sure that those who are assessing the talent for hire or promotion are also a diverse group of leaders, presenting men and women, who will look at the candidates' strengths and potential through a varied set of perspectives. As such, interview panels must include women.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

3.3. Investing in training, mentorship and networking programmes

Trainings, mentorship and networking programmes have gotten significant traction from companies, as these account for the most widely reported category of initiatives by respondents. These instruments serve several objectives. **Trainings** are implemented either as government-led, private sector-led, or public-private initiatives to respectively either promote gender balance in the private sector, actively sponsor rising women or address unconscious biases in organisations. **Networks** are either set up to accelerate women's careers advancement, or as a means to foster change in business culture at the grassroots level. **Mentorship and sponsorship programmes** are usually set up by companies to strengthen their female talent pipeline.

3.3.1. Training programmes

Training programmes are either implemented as government-led initiatives to promote equal opportunities in the private sector and accelerate women's careers advancement, as company-led initiatives to sponsor rising women, or as public and private sectors-led initiatives to address unconscious biases in organisations.

Training programmes as government-led initiatives

Evidence gathered from the survey responses shows that training programmes delivered as government-led initiatives can take various forms. Innovative examples are detailed below, as comprised within two categories: (i) government subsidies to incentivise companies to deliver trainings targeting female employees, as well as trainings incorporating a gender perspective (**Argentina**), and (ii) government-led and government-supported training programmes designed in collaboration with academia (**Japan, Saudi Arabia, Spain**).

In **Argentina**, the Secretary of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises of the Ministry of Productive Development has a Programme of Fiscal Credit for Training in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, which contemplates a reimbursement of costs associated with training for the companies' personnel, president, vice-president, partners and/or managers through an electronic bond applicable for national taxes payment. This programme offers an additional percentage of reimbursement if the companies train women, and another additional percentage if the training incorporates a gender perspective and focuses on themes related to gender equality.

In **Japan**, the Government has developed a programme in 2016 to conduct trainings in multiple regions across the country for female candidates eligible for board positions. Moreover, since 2017, the Government has also supported the cross-company training camp targeting female senior management candidates. The programme is run by instructors from Harvard Business School and is organised in a case-study format. Participants examine real-world cases from an executive's point of view, and engage in active discussions with each other to develop leadership qualities such as perceptiveness, strategic thinking, and a comprehensive capacity for judgement. Likewise, in **Saudi Arabia**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development's leadership and guidance initiative was launched in collaboration with INSEAD Business School in the aim of training up to 1,700 women to help them advance to leadership positions. To date, 120 have already graduated from the programme.

In **Spain**, the Women's Institute, carries out *Talentia 360. Women Managers* in collaboration with the School of Industrial Organization (EOI), which stands as a professional development and leadership programme for managers. Since 2010, more than 250 managers have participated in it. The Programme consists of structured and comprehensive trainings – including coaching and networking – with a gender and multidisciplinary perspective, to enhance the managerial capacities of the participants as a decisive factor for their professional projection.

Training programmes as company-led initiatives

Other instances relate to training programmes implemented at company level to sponsor rising talents. Evidence shows that these are often established by companies as part of their strategic plan to reach their targets and strengthen their leadership pipeline. As such, they can target different categories of employees (such as 'emerging talents', 'advanced talents' and women at middle management levels, or 'top talents'), as well as specific categories of managers (including male managers, to provide them with managerial tips to create more inclusive professional environments). Overall, these trainings programmes can be delivered both online and offline.

Box 3.7. Training programmes as company-led initiatives

In **Australia**, one large company from the financial sector has launched women in leadership programmes to provide learning and coaching for women to develop and strengthen their career resilience skills, which in turn strengthens these companies' leadership pipeline.

In **France**, leading companies from the financial, insurance and telecommunication sectors have set up education, training and professional development for women in order to help them reach leadership positions. This includes the creation of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as well as targets for women's participation in talent programmes. Further, talent programmes can be comprised of several sub-categories

each targeting specific employee categories, such as “emerging”, “advanced” and “top” talents.

In **Germany**, one major logistics and transportation company has launched an MBA course in cooperation with academia to strengthen the leadership skills and creative power of talent in the company. The proportion of women participating in the master's programme is 50%.

In **Indonesia**, one large telecommunication company launched a programme – through the Sisternet application, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection – delivering both online and offline classes seeking to promote women’s advancement in the digital economy. The company also provides comprehensive Individual Development Plans to its employees, in the aim of enhancing female employees’ leadership skills.

In **Japan**, training programs targeting male managers are widely provided in male-dominated industries (including in finance, construction, consumer products and technology industries) to provide male managers with knowledge and managerial tips to better manage their female employees, including for instance on how to communicate their expectations, how to motivate them, and how to encourage them to seek career advancements with the appropriate support. This type of training helps foster change at both the individual and collective levels – as male managers adopt new attitudes and mindsets, they can contribute to creating more inclusive workplaces where women are more likely to thrive.

In **Spain**, the Confederation of Employers' Organizations (CEOE) launched the *Promociona* project in 2013 – in collaboration with the Women’s Institute – in the aim of increasing the presence of women in leadership positions by identifying and promoting female talents. It consists of a comprehensive programme to strengthen the professional and leadership skills of women. To date, 834 managers from more than 600 companies have participated. As a result of its success, the *Progresia initiative* was launched in 2019 to provide high-potential women with the tools and skills necessary to advance their professional careers and assume high-responsibility positions in organizations in the future. The project is aimed for companies committed to equality and the professional promotion of women.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

Unconscious bias trainings

Unconscious bias trainings have been established by the private and public sectors. These programmes can be delivered to the entire organisation to build awareness and ownership of diversity and inclusion strategies and principles, or can specifically target members involved in recruitment processes, promotions, or performance evaluations. Examples from **Australia, Mexico, Spain** and the **United States** are provided below.

Box 3.8. Selected unconscious bias training programmes implemented at company level (Australia and Mexico), and at the national level (Spain)

In **Australia**, one major company from the financial sector has launched an online ‘Learning Inclusively’ training programme to help understand the benefits of inclusion and diversity and the value of different backgrounds and perspectives. Leaders are provided with practical frameworks and tips to create an inclusive team environment through actions and language. The uptake of the training continues to grow with 241 leaders completing the programme since its release.

In **Mexico**, several companies have used diversity and inclusion 360 programmes for their executive teams regarding inclusive leadership, inclusive mentorship, and unconscious biases. Companies report that these programmes have had tremendous impact given that they address cultural biases from a top-down approach, and result in supervisors placing more women in line for occupying a manager position or getting a promotion. One company from the construction industry also reports having used diversity and inclusion diagnostics to design customised solutions to achieve gender equality. The diagnostic is two-fold: it is first comprised of an internal diagnostic where HR makes an assessment of their current practices (including gender gap, income gaps, among others). The second step includes an evaluation by employees, whereby the differences in perception between men, women, and any other diversity group can be compared. This information is critical to understand the starting point of an organisation, and the key priorities for the company and its employees.

In **Spain**, the *More Women Better Enterprises* initiative seeks to promote balanced participation of women and men in high-level positions and decision-making. It includes over 140 adhering companies and organisations, which commit to increasing women participation within a period of four years. These companies benefit from the assistance of the Secretary of State for Equality and the Institute for Women, which provide them with professional development and female leadership projects and workshops to help them eliminate unconscious gender biases and promote good practices that facilitate identification, management and retention of female talents.

In the **United States**, many companies from multiple sectors have implemented unconscious bias trainings for all management employees. Such trainings have included in-person, workshops as well as online classes for all management employees, and are repeated. These complement other initiatives implemented in the aim of promoting inclusion and a change in business culture. For instance, many companies also monitor the composition of each management team, and provide statistics to each manager as a means of measuring progress.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

These practices stand in line with those identified by the ILO (2017^[41]) to mitigate unconscious gender bias in the workplace.

3.3.2. *Women's networks*

Female networks are either set up to accelerate women's careers advancement, or as a means to foster change in business culture at the grassroots level.

Networks to support the advancement of women's careers

Boards are historically populated by individuals in existing board members' networks. As such, increasing the exposure of high-potential women to such networks is a step toward creating change in board composition. Female network initiatives aimed at supporting women's career advancement and access to leadership positions are heterogeneous and take various forms. They can either be implemented at company level as private sector-led initiatives (**Canada, Germany, Saudi Arabia**), or at the national and international levels as public sector-led initiatives (**Japan, Spain, Saudi Arabia**) or private sector-led initiatives (**United States**).

In **Canada**, many of the companies that are most successful in retaining female leaders and promoting them to boards and executive positions have instituted formal networking. In particular, major companies from the construction and insurance sectors have established women's inclusion networks aiming to help women reach their full career potential through regular networking and mentoring sessions featuring internal and external speakers and a structured professional development curriculum. Likewise, in **Germany**, companies from the energy and company software sectors have established women's global networks for their employees, which offer mentoring programmes and trainings and contribute to increasing the visibility of the female workforce and its issues within companies.

In **Japan**, the 'Human Resource Bank of Female Leaders' was founded in 2015, providing information on women who have served as a member of a government council or have completed a government-led training course for executive candidates, and who are willing to be appointed as company executives. In **Spain**, a digital network has been established by the Women's Institute as a public-sector led initiative to give visibility to high-potential female managers, as well as to promote and strengthen support networks. As such, a LinkedIn page and twitter account have been created to give visibility to women in senior positions and to their contributions to companies and to society as a whole, as well as to projects and initiatives related to the promotion of women in leadership positions and to the necessary participation and balanced representation of women and men in decision making. Likewise, in **Saudi Arabia**, the government has established an online platform gathering women leaders with a minimum of eight years of experience encourages networking between leaders, and provides for a space for companies to post vacant leadership roles and share good practices.

In **Saudi Arabia**, one company has set up local women's leadership communities operating at city or country level. For the year 2019 alone, these communities ran over 424 events around the world. 81% of participants believe that these have helped expand their professional networks. These communities are run by over 200 community leaders around the world, which are employee volunteers dedicated to enabling the advancement and development of their local female leaders. Community leaders host activities in their local offices, which provide professional development and networking opportunities for their communities at large. These sessions take various forms: bringing in expert speakers, running panel sessions, and mentoring and networking opportunities. In addition to these events, leadership communities discuss and collaborate in dedicated virtual community channels.

In the **United States** and spreading globally, the Lean In Foundation (LeanIn.org) founded in 2013 has partnered with over 1400 organisations and provides the tools for companies

to build their own Lean In Circles which create mentorship platforms at scale. In particular, Lean In Circles gather communities of peers who meet regularly to share experiences, and facilitate discussions on gender issues between women and men. A year after its launch, 14,000 Lean In Circles had been created around the world. To date, over 34,000 Lean In Circles have been created in over 157 countries.

Networks to foster an inclusive business culture

Grassroots network initiatives such as employee resources groups (ERGs) have been implemented by many companies to foster diversity and inclusion in the workplace by mobilising employees around common purposes – including gender equality and female leadership. These groups are often sponsored by senior managers who help raise awareness on these issues and coach contributing members.

Companies can also establish internal social networks to promote the professional development of women. For instance, in **France**, one major insurance company has established an internal network for women and men as a platform to enable the discussion of gender balance issues and the exchange of ideas to help women's career advancements. This company has established another network based on volunteering which gathers almost 1,400 employees (25% of whom are men) to mobilise employees in favour of greater diversity in the company and in particular ensuring better access for women to management and executive positions. It involves sharing experiences and highlighting inspiring models (internal and external, women and men). A dozen meetings, conferences and roundtables have taken place since the creation of the network.

3.3.3. Mentorship and sponsorship programmes

Companies set up mentorship and sponsorship programmes to strengthen their female talent pipeline. While these programmes most commonly entail matching mentees with mentors/sponsors within companies in order to help increase mentees' exposure in executive decision-making circles, they differ in several respects. Mentors take on an advisory role towards their mentees, helping them build a career vision and suggesting ways to expand the mentee's network. Sponsors act as advocates for their mentees, driving their career vision and providing them with active network connections. While a mentor can be anyone in a position of experience, a sponsor is a senior-level executive. Overall, these programmes allow companies to develop a pipeline of talented women who are able to fill vacancies in director and executive officer positions, and retain gender balance.

Box 3.9. Mentorship and sponsorship programmes

Company-led sponsorship programmes (Canada and France)

In **Canada**, one major media company has established a Women's Advisory Task Force chaired by the CEO, which is focused on increasing the number of women in leadership development programmes and providing women with career sponsorship opportunities. In **France**, one major insurance company has implemented a "tandem sponsorship programme" whereby senior managers use their influence and knowledge of the organisation to strengthen the pool of female talents and accelerate career developments for women participating in the programme. The company reports that in 2018 alone, sixteen new sponsorships in tandem were launched involving board members and senior managers, and that sixteen of its subsidiary companies had initiated local deployments of the programme.

Company-led mentorship programme (Korea)

In **Korea**, one major insurance company has set up a mentorship programme running on an annual basis, whereby all mentors are trained based on the five-step coaching process of the International Coach Federation. At the year-end wrap-up session, mentees are required to present their learnings and career development plans. The programme has had tangible results, as it has helped lead to an increase in the number of female managers by five times in the company.

Cross-company mentorship programmes (Germany and Italy)

Cross-company mentoring programmes are also reported in **Germany** and **Italy**, which are established as platforms for female talents to discuss their experience with mentors from different companies and branches. These programmes usually span over nine months and include monthly meetings arranged independently by the mentor and mentee, and with the constant support of a dedicated coach providing methodological insights on any critical issues for each pair. In addition, group coaching sessions are also offered for the mentees, as well as networking meetings between all mentors and mentees participating in the programme.

Country-wide mentorship programmes (Saudi Arabia)

Country-wide mentorship programmes targeting women in specific sectors also exist. In the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, a non-profit organisation registered at the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) aims to support and develop the skills of female professionals in the area of financial services and its related sectors. Mentors are experienced men and women willing to share their knowledge and expertise with their mentees, within strict rules of confidentiality, which seek to build trust and encourage mutual respect. The organisation works by encouraging the planning of professional/personal objectives for the full year programme and documenting these ideas on an online platform.

Source: Responses to the EMPOWER Survey.

Conclusions

This report outlines the range of policy instruments and recommendations that have been developed to address gender imbalances in the private sector – including policies to promote women’s engagement in paid work and to support women in leadership positions – and presents key observations on the state of their implementation across OECD and G20 countries. It recognises that governments can play an important role in helping women to maintain paid work and stay in full-time employment following parenthood. It further highlights the impacts of quotas, numerical targets and disclosure requirements as among the most predominant policy initiatives undertaken to promote women to senior roles in the private sector, which may be complemented by private sector initiatives.

Drawing mainly upon the results of a survey undertaken by the Empower Alliance specifically for this stock-taking review, this report also provides an overview of practices for the advancement of women in leadership positions. It lays out concrete measures taken by individual countries via government-led and private sector-led initiatives within a threefold typology, including: (i) initiatives related to creating buy-in from companies to achieve gender equality and accelerate progress, (ii) initiatives mainly implemented at company level that signal a commitment by company leadership to accelerate progress, and (iii) initiatives related to training, mentorship and networking programmes to support women’s advancement to leadership positions. While these initiatives span the entire employee journey and are applicable across industries at company level, it is important to recognise the importance of the social, economic and institutional environment in which they are embedded. Likewise, government-led and private sector-led initiatives do not work in isolation, and greater impact is secured when both parties are involved and aligned. Government-led initiatives mainly take the form of nudges, regulation or funding. Private sector-led initiatives mainly relate to instruments used to achieve gender diversity targets and foster a change in company culture.

The EMPOWER Alliance’s important efforts to encourage concrete and practical actions to advance the global effort to drive progress to strengthen the role of women in private sector leadership could be further supported through follow-up efforts to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the policies and practices included in this report. The OECD and the ILO are already committed to monitoring progress on the implementation of the G20 25x25 Brisbane goal on the gender gap in labour force participation and progress on gender equality in the labour market more generally through the existing annual OECD/ILO report. The *OECD Corporate Governance Factbook*, published every two years, also stands as a tool to monitor the progress made by countries in promoting gender balance in management and leadership. Conducting additional research to further evaluate the impact of these different tools could include a literature review of the publicly available evidence that has sought to assess the impact of the policies in place to promote women in leadership positions at national levels.

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