

## COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING



## COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

---

With the drafting of this document, and as previously occurred with the approval of the “Common basic principles for improving youth employment and training”, the members of the **Ibero-American Network of Public Employment Services (RISPE)** propose the **adoption** of a series of **common basic principles for employment and training, this time focusing on women**, with a view to their approval at the meeting of the **VI Assembly of the Ibero-American Network of Public Employment Services (RISPE)**. Thus, the Network aims to continue focusing on the most relevant challenges facing the Public Employment Services and Ministries of Labour of the member countries.

As in the case of youth employment, the RISPE member countries (in order of accession: Spain, Costa Rica, Chile, Cuba, Portugal, Colombia, Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Peru, Honduras, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Guatemala) have drawn up a document for each country on “THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN: BASIC DATA AND INITIATIVES”, which served as the basis for the proposal for the principles agreed upon here.

Women's employment and training face **similar challenges in different countries**, such as those related to inequality, digitalisation (technological changes), transformation of the labour market, environmental and demographic changes, informality, and migration, among others. These challenges are shared by the population as a whole but **affect women unequally and manifest themselves with varying intensity in the different countries** of the RISPE.

The main **factors hindering women's employability** worldwide include:

1. **Participation gaps and unemployment**, with unequal access to employment and higher long-term unemployment rates among women.
2. **Structural barriers and social norms**, since, on the one hand, there is an unequal distribution of domestic and care work and, on the other, prejudices persist that limit women's advancement to management positions and their presence in high-demand, high-paying sectors, such as in STEM careers.
3. **Job quality and wage inequality**, given that a large number of women are concentrated in the informal sector, while the wage gap between men and women persists.
4. **Legal and safety obstacles**, on the one hand, due to the existence of legal barriers that prevent their full economic participation and, on the other hand, due to the lack of robust legal frameworks against sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace, which reduces opportunities for retention and professional growth.

Furthermore, in the case of women, there are also added **cumulative inequality factors** (racial, ethnic, socio-economic), making the implementation of positive action measures necessary for groups of women who face multiple discrimination factors.

Promoting employability, full participation and integration of women in the labour market, and equal labour rights for men and women is therefore a priority for our countries and requires **coordination and articulation among all actors** involved in the labour market, promoting holistic public policies and specific measures adapted to social, cultural, local, and regional variables.

In this context, it is considered important to **continue promoting international cooperation and the exchange of good practices** for the integration of women into the labour market, encouraging the strengthening of transnational cooperation networks.

The basic principles proposed for **adoption must be adapted to the different needs and interests of women**, taking into account their personal starting point with regard to employment, limited or non-existent experience in the field of employment, and their level of education, in relation to the needs of the sectors with the most job opportunities, **as well as the situation in each country**.

In summary, these include promoting equal opportunities, implementing fair wage policies, offering professional development and work-life balance programmes, eliminating gender discrimination in hiring, and ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of female workers. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight the role of women in male-dominated sectors and direct investment towards gender equality.

On the other hand, in some cases, they may exceed the powers of the Public Employment Services themselves and even of the relevant Ministries of Labour, as there are, as we have seen, many structural factors that affect women's employment which must be addressed in a holistic manner, taking into account all approaches (educational, legal, socio-economic, cultural, etc.). In these cases, the respective areas of competence of each Institution involved will be respected.

Considering the above, the countries that comprise the RISPE made their proposals **on the common basic principles for improving women's employment and training**, considering the **core responsibilities of Public Employment Services and Ministries of Labour**.

Based on all this, the **VI RISPE Assembly**, at its meeting on 23 **February 2026**, approved the following **COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES**:

### **COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING:**

Taking into account the above, the Ibero-American Network of Public Employment Services (RISPE) agrees on the following **basic principles for improving women's employment and training**

### ***1.- The importance of working towards equal opportunities, rights, and non-discrimination in employment: inter-institutional coordination***

- **Treat men and women equally** in terms of access to education and technical training, professional development programmes, support for accessing employment, quality employment, working conditions, professional advancement, fair wages and social protection, and reducing gender gaps without direct or indirect discrimination.
- To this end, all forms of discrimination in access to training, job placement, recruitment, working conditions, and career progression **must be prevented** and eliminated. Therefore, among other issues:
  - selection, intermediation, recruitment, and professional development processes must be **impartial and objective** and free from gender bias.
  - access to and retention in employment under **conditions of equality** must be ensured, eliminating practices that limit women on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, or social status.
  - **equitable recruitment** must be promoted in all sectors, especially those where women are underrepresented, as well as when under certain circumstances, such as pregnancy and breastfeeding.
  - special attention should be paid to moving towards **formal employment**. In this sense, special attention must be paid to jobs and sectors largely dominated by the presence of women such as that of **women domestic workers**, increasing information on their labour and social protection rights, training, improvement of employability, and occupational safety and health conditions.
  - precariousness and discrimination in labour relations must be combatted through increased monitoring of contractual practices and the implementation of measures to promote the regularisation of work.
  - **reducing the income gap** between women and men, must be achieved through various measures such as awareness campaigns on the right to equal pay, incentives to promote feminised sectors with a special focus on salary reviews, the introduction of action plans with targets and deadlines to reduce disparities, and recognition of companies with good practices in this area.
- **Same job same conditions:**
  - The principle of **equal pay** is essential to correct historical economic disparities and close the gender pay gap, ensuring that the work done by women is valued equally to that of men.
  - Implementation of **diversity and inclusion policies** that promote work environments free from discrimination and that value differences is essential.

- The Public Employment Services will promote **public policies and specific measures**, when necessary, to promote the **employability** and professional **integration** of women and equality in the labour market adapted to social, cultural, local, and regional variables.
- **Inter-institutional coordination** between the Ministries responsible for Equality, Social Services, Education, and the Interior and the various regional administrations (regions and municipalities), respecting the respective areas of competence of each one, with the aim of establishing collaboration between different institutions to improve women's integration into the labour market and the quality of services.

## **2.- Guidance and information as pillars of action**

- It is important that, from the time of school through into work, Public Employment Services and Education Ministries, as well as other possible actors, collaborate on providing guidance and information.
- Public Employment Services, through their specialised staff (employment counsellors and guidance counsellors), play an essential role in:
  - guiding, informing, and supporting women, identifying their job profiles, interests, and expectations, and exploring their employment options, encouraging free and informed choices without gender stereotypes.
  - helping to define professional objectives and job search itineraries adjusted to the labour market supply, with the aim of achieving better training, greater employability, and integration into the labour market.
  - proposing training activities that enable them to return to work, update their knowledge, and maintain and improve their employment, allowing them to acquire the technical knowledge and skills necessary to perform a job.
  - facilitating access to mentoring, professional networks, and exchange spaces that enhance employment opportunities.
  - providing support and follow-up during the development of the personalised plan to improve employability, as well as support at the start of employment.
  - using inclusive and non-sexist language and images in media, advertising, and communication.
  - Providing initial and ongoing training for guidance staff on equal opportunities between women and men and on incorporating a gender perspective into guidance and support services and processes for labour market integration.
- Guidance counsellors, teaching staff, and processes for recognising the work skills acquired by women play an essential role by achieving these objectives and will also contribute to women's empowerment.

### ***3.- Access to education, training, and skills development tailored to the needs of the labour market and continuing throughout life.***

- Improvements in education and training are essential tools for the development of individuals, particularly women, enabling them to enter the workforce, remain employed, and advance professionally in their careers.
- Public Employment Services must contribute to models of continuous learning for women seeking employment through quality training that responds to the needs of the labour market and improves their employability, enabling:
  - Guaranteed equitable access to education and training, providing women with the skills necessary to make informed decisions and actively participate in society and the labour market.
  - Promotion of continuous improvement, lifelong learning, empowerment, and training for women, ensuring adaptation to the changing labour market and improving employability skills that enable their integration into the labour market, retention in employment, and professional development.
  - Facilitate equal opportunities in access to training with practices that promote work-life balance.
  - Where necessary, offer training programmes tailored to women's circumstances and accessibility:
    - including and encouraging female participation in digital and technical training, in cross-cutting or soft skills, and in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) or the green economy;
    - promoting female participation in internship and scholarship programmes in the aforementioned sectors;
    - enabling them to better cope with the new technical requirements of the labour market resulting from demographic, digital, and ecological transitions;
    - creating opportunities that enable them to re-enter the labour market after career breaks, often because of family care responsibilities.
- Equal opportunities in access to training are also guaranteed by **practices that promote a good professional, personal, and family-life balance**. These practices include the use of **flexible working hours** tailored to the needs of training groups, as well as the **provision of social support** in the area of childcare and care for dependent persons. This support, like the care allowance for dependent persons, aims to strengthen parental protection and facilitate the balanced participation of women and men in training programmes.

#### ***4.- Facilitate joint responsibility for balancing work, personal, and family life***

- Promote work-life balance policies accessible to all genders, encouraging shared social and family responsibility in caregiving and flexible working hours that do not penalise women professionally.
- Improve career stability and progression among women, which is hampered by greater job insecurity and discrimination in labour relations, with a higher incidence of precarious, temporary, and part-time contracts among women.
- Within the scope of their powers, Public Employment Services shall contribute to promoting measures that enable paid work and care responsibilities to be balanced, including:
  - non-transferable paternity leave and parental leave;
  - flexible training and working hours and flexible working arrangements, enabling the incorporation of working and training arrangements that allow family and professional responsibilities to be balanced, allowing women to participate in the labour market without sacrificing their well-being or that of their families;
  - other measures to support parenting such as providing breastfeeding rooms or childcare services (expanding public services), to facilitate the reconciliation of personal commitments with work, and;
  - supporting companies in creating work-life balance solutions.

#### ***5.- Promote the inclusion of women in situations of increased vulnerability***

- Public Employment Services must respond to labour market dynamics and prioritise people in vulnerable situations by:
  - Making increased investments to prioritise care, support, education, training, and empowerment, with personalised and sustainable pathways to labour market integration for women belonging to the most vulnerable groups. These include women with low levels of education and training, victims of gender-based violence, single mothers, immigrants, refugees, women with disabilities, women belonging to ethnic minorities or who are long-term unemployed, as well as women who have been released from prison.
  - Paying attention to diversity, considering historical disadvantages, and promoting affirmative action to address gender inequality and other factors affecting access to employment.
  - Promoting the participation of women who are victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence in Job Placement and Entrepreneurship services.

- Implementation of strategies with a cross-cutting gender approach that promote the inclusion of women in the workplace, when deemed necessary. In this regard, it is considered important to develop the principle of intersectionality, implementing positive action measures for women who face multiple discrimination factors, with differentiated barriers based on their age, ethnicity, territory, immigration status, disability, or other conditions of vulnerability. This principle requires the design of differentiated and relevant interventions that respond to the wide range of women's realities. The aim would be to guarantee the exercise of their rights and promote their participation in work and society, as well as their access, with equal opportunities, to resources and services.

### ***6.- Contribute to women's economic independence and empowerment***

- The Public Employment Services, within the framework of their competences, will contribute to:
  - labour market integration and access to formal and sustainable employment for women, ensuring decent working conditions, access to social security, and protection mechanisms against job precariousness and informality, with special attention to women living in poverty, rural women, young women, and women with disabilities, which will contribute to their economic autonomy.
  - ensure that women can access decent, quality jobs, accumulate assets, and have greater control over economic resources such as land and loans to reduce inequality.
  - promote the empowerment of women by facilitating improvement of their training in strategic areas such as digitalisation, green transition, and non-traditional sectors, which will facilitate women's participation in personal, family, and work spheres and contribute to increasing their employability.
  - promote advisory programmes, technical and financial training, financing, and support for women entrepreneurs so that they can set up their own businesses, especially in rural areas, among migrants, or those at risk of social exclusion.

### ***7.- The importance of recognising unpaid care work***

- It is necessary to:
  - Recognise the economic and social value of unpaid care work, incorporating public policies that require inter-institutional coordination and contribute to promoting shared responsibility and its redistribution between the state, market, community, and households, reducing gender roles and stereotypes that assign care responsibilities to women.
  - Raise awareness of and the social value of care work, promoting:

- institutional support such as public care services and compensation for work interruptions arising from these responsibilities;
- flexible training and employment systems that facilitate participation in the labour market by women who bear a significant burden of unpaid care work.

### ***8.- Promotion of participation, leadership, and access to decision-making positions***

- It is important to highlight and encourage women's participation in all sectors, including those traditionally dominated by men.
- Promote the presence and active participation of women in decision-making and leadership positions in both the public and private sectors to ensure gender mainstreaming in decision-making.
- Invest in policies for education, training, and empowerment for women's participation and leadership, accelerating their progression to senior positions.
- Establish mechanisms that facilitate the promotion of women to positions of responsibility, increasing their representation in decision-making spaces, eliminating structural barriers, and promoting female leadership at all levels.

### ***9.- Awareness-raising and training for the business community and trade unions***

- Raise awareness and promote cultural change, as well as an inclusive corporate culture, from senior management:
  - This could be achieved by implementing information campaigns and programmes aimed at raising awareness among employers and society about the importance of gender equality, combating gender stereotypes, and promoting inclusive and discrimination-free work environments.
- Highlight the importance of flexibility at work, allowing for flexible working arrangements, care leave, and support networks that help balance family responsibilities with personal and professional life.
- Ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of all workers, especially women, is key to building safe and healthy workplaces where women can develop to their full potential.
- Prevent and eradicate violence and harassment at work by consolidating protection protocols and effective reporting and sanctioning mechanisms.

- Coordinate between the various entities working in this field, with the aim of providing technical support in the development of equality policies and the integration of the gender perspective into organisational strategy.
- Recognise the role of social dialogue in reaching agreements on these issues.

#### ***10.- Territorial approach adapted to specific contexts***

- Public Employment Services will contribute to:
  - improve the tools for analysing and forecasting the labour market and territory, enabling:
    - up-to-date information on the economic and employment situation of the environment to be obtained;
    - the identification of staffing needs, the business fabric, required job profiles, and attraction of job offers;
    - training needs and future employment options to be identified with the aim of helping to reduce the gap between the demand and supply of skills that employers need.
  - the development of high-quality training relevant to the needs of the labour market and linked to real employment opportunities, helping to close gaps in education and employability.
  - the design of policies that respond to the specific characteristics of each territory, especially in rural or sparsely populated areas, ensuring sufficient resources and inter-institutional coordination to help bridge territorial gaps.
  - multiculturalism, interculturalism, and inclusion to be taken into account when designing policies that consider cultural, ethnic, and territorial diversity, with a special emphasis on women of rural, indigenous, and African descendant.

#### ***11.- Importance of social dialogue for the development and implementation of policies to promote women's employment***

- As key stakeholders in the effectiveness of employment policies, the social partners can, from their different and complementary perspectives, pool and agree upon the skills needs of employers and develop appropriate education and training programmes to meet those needs. Thus, the interests and concerns related specifically to the needs of women can be incorporated into the formulation of policies and programmes.
- Tripartite social dialogue and action by social partners can facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy, alleviating one of the main employment problems in some of the countries in the Network, namely informal employment, which strongly affects women.

- Collective bargaining can contribute to improving the quality of employment and building comprehensive and sustainable responses to reduce gender gaps.

### ***12.- Transparency, information, monitoring, and the impact assessment of measures***

- Public Employment Services must establish outcome measurement and evaluation systems to assess the real impact of specific public policies and measures aimed at improving women's employment and, where appropriate, to address potential inequalities in implementation, while promoting the exchange and dissemination of good practices.
- In this regard, they should strengthen the production, systematisation, and use of information disaggregated by sex and other variables in statistics, surveys, public records, and data collection carried out in order to identify gaps, guide decision-making, and evaluate the impact of employment and training policies and programmes targeting women.

Madrid, 23 February 2026

