



# Towards gender equality in the labour markets of Canada, USA and Russia: an overview of progress in achievement of international commitments

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## Abstract

In 2019, the International Labour Organization (ILO), together with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), prepared and presented to the G20 leaders a report entitled “Women at work in G20 countries: Progress and policy action”. According to the report, Canada, the United States and Russia show the lowest results among the G20 countries in reaching the goal of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 percent by 2025. This is largely due to the relatively high levels of gender equality that have already been achieved in these countries. The article analyzes the policy of Canada, the USA and Russia towards women at work in four directions: 1) measures taken by national Governments, in cooperation with social partners, to increase women’s participation in the labour force and to overcome cultural and behavioural barriers to the employment of women; 2) measures to increase women’s ability to earn decent wages, including through lifelong learning, upgrading qualifications and skills development; 3) measures to reduce the proportion of women employed in the informal sector and in low-paid jobs; 4) measures to protect women in labour market in order to encourage men and women to combine work and family and share family responsibilities equitably.

## Keywords

women’s rights, gender equality, gender equality in the labour market, gender gap in labour force participation

**JEL codes:** J08, J16, J71, J78, F55

## Introduction

The international community has prioritized women's rights, including gender equality in the labour market for decades.

This is evidenced, in particular, by the The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted on December 18, 1979 by the UN General Assembly (Canada and Russia ratified, USA signed it). (CEDAW 1979). The Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3: promote gender equality and empower women) (United Nations 2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5: gender equality) (United Nations 2015) have consistently reaffirmed the need to achieve gender equality.

The G20 countries, an international platform where representatives of the world's leading economies discuss ways and means of ensuring economic growth, during the Russia's G20 Presidency of 2013 drew attention to the fact that in modern conditions, the involvement of women in the labour market is an important source of higher opportunities for economic growth (G20 Information Centre 2013).

In 2014, as part of the Australia's Presidency, the G20 countries adopted the first collective commitment, often referred to as the «Brisbane target», to reduce the gap in labour market participation between men and women by 25 percent by 2025 (G20 Information Centre 2018).

ILO estimates that if this goal is achieved globally, it will be able to add \$5.8 trillion (over 7% of the global GDP) to the world economy, as well as increase potential tax revenues (ILO 2017).

From the 2015 Turkey's G20 Presidency onwards, the G20 countries annually report on the measures they have taken to achieve the "Brisbane target". The formulation of the collective obligation itself is not changing, however its interpretation is gradually expanding. Thus, in 2017, within the framework of the Germany's G20 Presidency, the countries identified the following areas in achieving gender equality in the labour market: reducing the wage gap between men and women, improving women's working conditions and increasing the proportion of women getting education in science and engineering. In 2019, during the Japan's G20 Presidency, the countries emphasized the need to reduce the proportion of women's unpaid domestic work.

The annual reports of the G20 countries are periodically analyzed and summarized by international organizations, which publish relevant reports. In 2019 the International Labour Organization (ILO), together with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), prepared and presented to the G20 leaders a report entitled "Women at Work in G20 countries: Progress and policy action" (ILO 2019).

According to the report, Canada, the United States and Russia show the lowest results among the G20 countries in terms of the pace of achieving the "Brisbane target". Although the initial position of women in the labour market in Canada, the United States and Russia was considered to be more prosperous compared to other G20 countries, in the past five years since making a collective commitment, the other countries have achieved significant improvements in gender equality in the labour market.

It can't be stated that Canada, the USA and Russia are not developing in this direction. The low rate of reduction in labour market inequality is a result of the minimal existing gender gap in labour force participation, as well as a number of other exogenous factors.

The article presents the experience of these countries in four areas: 1) measures taken by national Governments, in cooperation with social partners, to increase women's participation in the labour force and to overcome cultural and behavioural barriers to the em-

ployment of women; 2) measures aimed at increasing women's ability to earn decent wages, including through lifelong learning, upgrading qualifications and skills development; 3) measures to reduce the proportion of women employed in the informal sector and in low-paid jobs; 4) measures to improve working conditions that encourage men and women to combine work and family and share family responsibilities equitably.

The range of measures taken by the countries in focus confirms their commitment to gender equality and the fact that the slow pace of narrowing the gender gap in the participation in the labour force does not mean the absence of gender-sensitive labour market policies in these countries.

## Canada

### Increasing women's participation in the labour market

Canada has a fairly high level of participation of women in the labour market. This is facilitated by the social changes taking place in Canadian society, including:

- changing norms on gender roles;
- raising the level of education;
- decrease in fertility;
- family policy.

In 2018, according to the World Bank, the participation rate of women aged 15 and above in the labour force was 61% and that of men was 70%. At the same time, 59% of women were part-time workers. The unemployment rate for women aged 15 and above was 6% (World Bank Group 2019).

In order to increase women's participation in the labourforce, various projects and programs are being implemented by the Government of Canada with social partners. These include educational credit programs, a strategy for women's entrepreneurship development, and programs for early education for children, child care services and child benefits.

Recently adopted programs (2018-2019) are aimed at increasing the representation of women in "men's" occupations: the apprenticeship grant programs for women, the apprenticeship encouraging programs, the trade union program for training and innovation. Creation of the Women in Construction Fund is also aimed at achieving this goal. Funding for these programs is provided by the Government of Canada with the participation of unions.

The Canada Student Loans Program, with 60% of the participants being women, facilitates their access to education and, as a result, enhances women's decent employment opportunities (Government of Canada 2018). It provides loans and grants to low-income students to continue their studies in high school and beyond. In 2016, the Government of Canada increased the grant by 50% for low- and middle-income students. In addition, a unified family income threshold has been introduced. If the family income increases and surpasses this threshold, the grant will gradually be reduced, thus increasing opportunities for new students in need of financial support. In addition, under the Canadian Student Loans Program, there are special loans for students with dependents to help with the cost of caring when they continue their studies after graduating from secondary school. Remarkably, 79% of the recipients of this grant are women, and over half of the recipients are single mothers. In total, in 2016–2017, 35,300 persons received a student grant to support dependents.

Female entrepreneurs play an important role in promoting economic growth and job creation in Canada. Although only 16% of Canadian businesses today are owned or run by

women, studies show that by increasing women's participation in the economy, Canada can increase its GDP by \$150 billion (Government of Canada 2019c).

Recognizing the important contribution of women's entrepreneurship to both women's economic empowerment and to the entire Canadian economy, Canada offers a set of programs to assist entrepreneurs in setting up and developing their businesses, such as improving access to finance, promoting women's participation in international trade, and utilizing state procurement to support women-led enterprises. Support is provided at the state and regional level. In order to improve gender equality in the Canadian corporate sector, starting from 2018, the Government of Canada has proposed to publicly distinguish corporations that are committed to advancing women, including women belonging to national minorities, to senior management positions and to boards of directors.

Early childhood education and care programs, as well as child welfare programs, are also aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour market. The Federal Government is collaborating with each province and territory to sign three-year agreements on early childhood education and care. Investments in early education and child care are expected to provide these services to a large number of low- and middle-income families, thus facilitating women's entry into the labour market. Child benefits help families with children. Based on the number and age of children living with their parents and family income, each eligible child receives 6,400 dollars a year until they reach the age of 6 and 5,400 dollars a year when aged 6 to 17 years (Government of Canada 2019b).

### **Increasing women's earnings through lifelong learning**

Women have advanced significantly in well-paid professions such as medicine, law and public services. The proportion of women in high-skilled jobs in healthcare increased from 43% in 1987 to 61% in 2017. The representation of women in legal, social, community and public services has increased from 37% to 63%. The proportion of women in senior management rose from 21% in 1987 to 29% in 2017 (Statistics Canada 2019). Women have also made progress in ensuring their representation at the highest levels of economic and political life.

However, despite this progress, the gender gap in wages and incomes remains rather significant. In the Canadian labour market, many industries and occupations are segregated by gender, and women are still underrepresented in executive positions. Differences begin to be more pronounced from the age of 25. A gap emerges between paid work and unpaid domestic work, in career paths within or between occupations, and in relation to motherhood. There is a predominance of women in low-paid jobs, underrepresentation in some high-paid jobs such as engineering or science or executive positions, differential treatment on the basis of sex (e.g. gender bias, discrimination). There are different combinations of negative aspects based on preferences, economic constraints, and/or social expectations.

In order to eliminate these negative factors and reduce the wage gap, Canada is implementing a proactive system of pay equity, transparency and flexible mechanisms of work in the federally regulated private sector. Measures were being taken to increase women's access to education and lifelong learning, which provides opportunities for higher wages.

Programs were being implemented to encourage apprenticeship, including in occupations non-traditional for women. A fund had been set up to support women in construction and a strategy for apprenticeship has been developed.

Various initiatives are being taken to employ students and women in science and engineering fields. In 2017, the share of women among graduates in science and engineering specialties was

31%. The employment of graduates is based on the promotion of partnerships between employers and post-secondary institutions. Special attention is paid to professions that require a high degree of technical skills, for which there is a lack of skilled workers. Employers are granted a subsidy of up to 50% of the salary (up to a maximum of 5,000 dollars per person) and up to 70% (up to a maximum of up to 7,000 dollars per employee) for first-year students, women specializing in science and engineering, indigenous students, persons with disabilities and migrants. The initiative is expected to provide annually 10,000 jobs in the sphere of integrated education for Canadian students and graduates. In addition, in March 2018, the government announced an investment of 3 million dollars over 3 years for student workplaces in artificial intelligence, with enhanced support for young women. In this direction it is planned to create up to 500 jobs for students.

The Government of Canada has taken steps to facilitate women's search for jobs and employment at decent wage positions. For this purpose, information about job opportunities and skills requirements is provided. The Canadian Employment Fund is realizing the labour force development program which supports employment of population with special emphasis on persons with disabilities and older workers.

In 2018, the Government of Canada announced a new Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program (Government of Canada 2019a), which will be the successor to the Indigenous Skills Teaching and Employment Strategy. The program, developed in collaboration with indigenous peoples, will include ongoing funding to assist over 15,000 people. It will also ensure that indigenous women have equal access to skills development and training and are able to participate more actively in the economic life of their communities. The program encourages educational institutions, community organizations, local business and industry to partner with indigenous peoples' organizations to support their skills development. The program is designed to train personnel for better-quality and better-paid jobs rather than to quickly employ those unemployed or having lost their jobs. The new program is expected to allocate annually over 400 million dollars.

## **Protecting women in the labour market**

Women's security in the labour market and their social protection have been reflected, inter alia, in the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and in the Unpaid Interns Protection Program.

The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking includes measures aimed at prevention, protection, prosecution and is based on the development of partnerships between stakeholders with the goal of effectively detecting cases of trafficking. The National Plan envisages training of law enforcement officials, general and targeted public awareness campaigns, research and victim support through funding for non-profit and local organizations. A national human trafficking hotline, including an online portal and referral mechanism to social services and law enforcement agencies, had been established to help protect those who are vulnerable to human trafficking, especially women, and to provide victims with access to the necessary social and law enforcement services they need.

The Government of Canada has amended the Labour Code to protect from exploitation of unpaid interns working in the federally regulated private sector, to ensure that more interns receive wages and protection in accordance with labour standards. The federally regulated private sector has approximately 904,000 employees (6% of the total employed) working for 18,310 employers in transport, banking, telecommunications, radio, etc. In addition, the Government has committed itself to ensuring that Canadians have a reliable and up-to-date set of federal employment standards.

## Improving working conditions and social protection

Among measures to improve the working conditions of women in Canada, improvements in worker welfare and flexibility in working conditions, as well as protection against sexual harassment and violence in the workplace are of importance.

Canada's labour law protects the rights of parents in caring for a newborn child. At the federal level, the Labour Code of Canada provides for maternity and parental leave for employees who, at the time of the commencement of the leave, have worked for six consecutive months on a permanent basis with their employer. In 2017 in Canada, the duration of parental leave was 105 days (World Bank Group 2019).

The Government of Canada provides financial support to parents during their maternity or parental leave. Benefits are provided as part of the social insurance of employees. The allowance for caring for sick family members is also financed by this type of insurance for employees. The nursing allowance currently provides up to twenty-six weeks during which a family member leaves work to provide care. As a rule, the basis for this benefit is a serious medical condition of a family member in need of care with a significant risk of death. This allowance compensates unpaid domestic work, which is mainly performed by women.

The Labour Code of Canada grants workers in the federally regulated private sector the right to require from their employer flexible working conditions such as flexible workday start and end times and the possibility to work from home. Workers are also granted unpaid leave to meet family responsibilities, participate in traditional indigenous practices, seek medical assistance if they become victims of domestic violence, and also in order to make child care more flexible. Since women continue to perform most unpaid household work, these standards, inter alia, promote women's participation in the labour market and promote greater gender equality in Canada's labour force.

Victims of domestic violence may be granted leave of up to five days. It is anticipated that the legislation will be revised to make this leave paid. In addition, Canada introduced a rule, according to which federally regulated jobs should be free from harassment and sexual violence.

## United States

### Increasing women's participation in the labour force

In the United States, the labour force participation rate of women aged 15 and above in 2018 was 56%, and men's participation rate was 68%. 59% of women aged 15 and above worked part-time (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019).

Unemployment in the U.S. has been declining for more than 100 months in a row. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, the unemployment rate among adult women has reached its lowest level since 1953, 3.3% in 2018 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019).

The U.S. Department of Labor is working to encourage more women to enter the labour market, develop their career, and engage in entrepreneurship.

Women's businesses account for half of all U.S. businesses, but their income is lower than average for all businesses. Women's entrepreneurship development programs are implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Finance.

They have created a digital platform specifically designed for female business owners who want to develop it. It is filled with the resources that women need to define and achieve their business goals. The program, known as Ascent (SBA News 2019), uses digital technologies

for short expert advice and information combined with the tools needed to help businesses owners take immediate action and connect with other people looking for similar answers. The platform includes: over 100 videos, success stories, worksheets, icons and podcasts with content. This program is developed taking into account the busy schedules of the entrepreneur. Each resource on it can be used anytime, anywhere, alone or in a group. The program is created by teachers who specialize in women's entrepreneurship. It uses real examples of successful business owners to strengthen learning goals. The content is selected on the basis of scientific research on behavioural differences between female and male business owners.

## **Increasing the wages for women**

The United States of America, like other countries, linked opportunities for raising women's wages with increased opportunities for their education and skills development.

The U.S. Department of Labor seeks to expand apprenticeship because it enables learning and earning at the same time.

Technology changes the way people learn, communicate and work. It will continue to develop, creating more opportunities for women. The Federal Government of the United States is interested in training women in science and engineering specialties. The Women in Aerospace Education Act has been adopted. In 2017, President Trump assigned the Ministry of Education to allocate at least \$200 million of grant funds per year to promote high-quality science and engineering education. The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor has already supported a number of steps to engage women in technical and non-traditional occupations, including through the Women in Apprenticeship and Non-traditional Occupations Act. Since 2017, almost \$2.9 million have been allocated by the Women's Bureau into the grant program. There are special funds designated to promote the employment of women in underrepresented occupations, including in high-tech production.

The Science and Engineering Study Act has been adopted and the National Science Foundation is responsible for submitting a report on the effectiveness of all scientific, research and education programs aimed at increasing the participation of women and other underrepresented persons in a career in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

## **Protecting women in the labour market**

To help eliminate occupational segregation, the U.S. Department of Labor created a job website «Women Protect, Build, and Move America» (United States Department of Labor 2020), which focuses on best practices of women in police, construction and transport. The website is a source of information for female job seekers and employers. It contains statistics, a list of organizations that protect the interests of women working in these areas, as well as best practices and success stories.

The U.S. Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) aims to ensure a safe position in the labour market; it provides female veterans with the same access to employment services as male veterans. The program is supported by veteran organizations and enables female veterans to fully integrate into all areas of economic and political activity. The program was developed in 2013. As a result of its implementation, the number of unemployed female veterans in 2018 decreased to 34,000 from 97,000 in 2013. In 2018, the average annual unemployment rate of female veterans was 3%, which is lower than the unemployment rate of non-veteran women (3.7%), male veterans (3.5%) and non-veteran males (3.8%). Women make up 10% of all veterans in the United States.

In 2015, amendments to the definition of homelessness were introduced to the legislation, which increased the opportunities for veterans to participate in the reintegration program for the homeless. As a result of the amendments the homeless persons included those who were forced to leave their homes as a result of domestic violence or other life-threatening situations.

## **Improving working conditions and social protection**

Flexibility in working conditions, including the possibility of family leave and increased access to childcare services, do increase opportunities for women to participate in the labour market.

By reducing taxes, the government encourages companies to grant paid leave to employees for family or medical reasons. For this purpose, the business are offered a tax credit.

The legislation allows employers to obtain a tax credit in the amount of 12.5% of the salary paid to an employee entitled to a of family leave or sick leave if the employee earns less than \$72,000 a year and receives at least 50% of his regular salary while on leave. The maximum level of such a credit is 25%.

In order to qualify for this credit, the employer must provide full-time employees who are entitled to leave, at least 2 weeks of annual paid leave for family or medical reasons. For part-time workers, the length of leave is proportionally reduced.

The Government provides subsidies to improve access of low-income families, in which family members work or study, to childcare services, as well as funds for the improvement of the quality of care provided. Subsidies are granted for a period of up to 12 months and can be extended. On average, more than a million children benefit from this subsidy per month.

Parents from low-income families receiving a childcare subsidy are more likely to continue their work. The family's income must not exceed 85% of the median income of the state in order to receive the subsidy.

Under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, the child tax credit doubled from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per child under the age of 17. Families will also receive a tax credit of \$500 for children aged 17. This increase makes childcare more accessible to families.

The Women's Bureau collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Services and the White House to innovate in the provision of childcare services. They are working on the development of a public database on childcare costs based on local data, which will provide a better understanding of the impact of childcare costs on women's participation in the labour force. This is the first detailed database of such kind.

The U.S. are implementing an international initiative that is a priority for the Trump administration and helps to increase women's participation in the workforce around the world. The goal of the initiative is to reach 50 million women in all developing countries by 2025. The three main components of the initiative are: improving women's access to quality education and training; efforts to finance and support women's entrepreneurship; and eliminating political, legal and regulatory barriers and the promotion of the advancement of women.

## **Russia**

Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized the need to address the problem of gender inequality and eliminate existing stereotypes and career constraints for women at the Eurasian Women's Forum on 20 September 2019: "It is very important to open the way for the

necessary education for girls, to create comfortable conditions for working and doing private business, so that the woman feels independent” (Website of the President of Russia 2018).

### **Increasing women’s participation in the labour market**

In Russia, the level of participation of the population in the labour market (for the age groups 15–72 years) is increasing: in 2018 the participation rate was 68.9% compared to 68.4% in 2013. It increases both for women (from 63.0% in 2013 to 63.1% in 2018) and men (from 74.7% in 2013 to 75.4% in 2018) (Federal State Statistics Service 2019). The dynamics of gender gap in labour force participation vary along with age. The gap narrows for age cohorts from 15 to 30 years, when men and women actively enter the labour market. It increases for the age cohorts between 30 and 49 years, because of childbirth and childcare. The gap again reduces for the 50–54 age group when children have grown up, and increases for the 55–60 age cohorts due to different retirement ages for men and women. Finally, gap reduces again for age cohorts of 60–72 years.

The policy of the Russian Federation towards women is regulated by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and international obligations in this area. The National Strategy of Actions in the Interests of Women for 2017–2022 (approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation dated March 8, 2017 № 410-r) (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation 2017), was developed by the government with the participation of social partners (business and trade unions).

The strategy includes measures in the following areas:

- creating conditions for the preservation of the health of women of all ages;
- improving the economic status of women and ensuring the growth of their welfare;
- preventing and averting social disadvantage of women and violence against women;
- increasing the participation of women in public life;
- improvement of State statistics on the status of women in society.

In order to ensure cooperation between federal, regional, municipal public authorities, social partners and civil society in the consideration of issues related to the implementation of the The National Strategy of Actions in the Interests of Women for 2017–2022, the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 28, 2016 No. 1520 established the Coordinating Council for the Implementation of the Strategy under the Government of the Russian Federation.

The Coordinating Council consists of members of the Federation Council, deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, senior officials of the regions of the Russian Federation (heads of the highest executive bodies), representatives of federal executive bodies and public organizations.

Particular attention is paid to the creation of conditions for attracting women to the labour market. The number of jobs with flexible working hours and the possibility of remote employment is increasing. The All-Russian Bank of Vacancies of the information portal “Jobs in Russia” contains information on over 1.5 million jobs in various professions, including 73,300 jobs with a flexible schedule of work.

In order to attract women to the labour market, in the first half of 2019 various public services were provided to women through the employment service, including:

- professional orientation – 830,900 services or 51.5% of the total number of vocational guidance services (in the first half of 2018 – 795,100 services or 51.2%), of which 333,700 services or 40.2% were provided to unemployed women (311,600 services or 39.2% in the first half of 2018);

- social adaptation – 80,500 services or 55.0% of the total number of social adaptation services (in the first half of 2018 – 79,700 services or 55.6%);
- psychological support – 73,200 services or 54.1% of the total number of psychological support services (in the first half of 2018 – 74,400 services or 55.2%);
- to promote self-employment – 36,000 services or 56.5% of the total number of services to promote self-employment (in the first half of 2018 – 29,300 services or 55.8%).

During the first half of 2019, 53,000 women started vocational training and additional vocational education; 35,200 women passed vocational training and received additional vocational training, including 27,100 women who received vocational training and retraining, and 8,100 women received advanced training.

This set of measures helps to ensure a positive trend in the growth of women's participation in the labour market.

Particular attention is paid to the development of women's entrepreneurship. Its success is evidenced by the proportion of women in leadership positions in business. In Russia it is 47%, which is significantly higher than the global average of 25% (Grant Thornton International 2017).

### **Increasing women's wages**

The employer is obliged to provide employees with equal pay for work of equal value (article 22 of the Labour Code). Discrimination in conditions of remuneration is prohibited. The salary of each employee depends on his qualifications, the complexity of the work performed, the quantity and quality of the work fulfilled (article 132 of the Labour Code). However, the wage gap between men and women still exists throughout the country. According to Rosstat estimates for 2017 it was 25.3% (Rosstat 2019). Increase in salary for teachers, doctors and workers in culture, where mostly women are employed, is aimed at reduction of the gap.

Measures to improve women's earnings also include raising the minimum wage, which, since January 2019, is set equal to the subsistence minimum of the able-bodied population as of the second quarter of the previous year.

In order to effectively combine measures to integrate women into the labour market with measures of demographic policy and to prevent income loss at birth, a number of benefits are provided.

Maternity benefits, child benefits and first child benefits are being increased, making childbirth less disruptive to family income and preventing rising inequality.

The Address of the President of Russia to the Federal Assembly in January 2020 (Website of the President of Russia 2020) envisages a number of additional measures to support young families with children, which is to increase opportunities for women to participate in the labour market.

In the first half of 2019, 12,200 women who are on leave to care for a child before reaching the age of three, started vocational training and additional vocational education (in the first half of 2018 there were 12,000 women) (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation 2018b). 9,000 women passed vocational training and received additional vocational education, including 5,900 women underwent vocational training and retraining and 3,100 women underwent advanced training (in the first half of 2018 - 8,600 women, 5,400 women and 3,200 women respectively).

### **Protecting women in the labour market**

Women's security in the labour market is guaranteed by their employment in the formal sector. Unlike world trends, the share of women in informal employment in Russia is less than

that of men. However, the formalization of women's employment remains one of the Government's priorities. Appropriate measures are taken to avoid risks of informal employment, violation of workers' labour rights and lack of social protection and labour safety.

As a result of these measures, over 2,048 thousand people of working age were legalized in 2017. The additional contribution to the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation from insurance fee for legalized persons amounted to over 35 billion rubles.

In addition, since 2019, a new professional tax regime was introduced, which allows those employed through digital platforms or performing one-time work remotely to do it legally, independently paying tax. This tax regime enables women engaged in careers such as babysitting, nannies, childminders, etc., to participate in the State pension and social insurance system.

### **Improving working conditions and social protection**

Currently, about 12 million women in the Russian Federation are raising children of pre-school age (0-6 years). In order to facilitate re-entry of women into the labour market after childbirth, the availability of pre-school education for children under three years of age (and between 3 and 6 years of age) is being expanded. In the regions of the Russian Federation it is planned to create 255,000 new places in kindergartens and at least 16,000 additional places in the private sector of pre-school education for children under 3 years of age by 2024 (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation 2018a). These measures not only make it easier for women to return to the labour market, but also reduce women's unpaid domestic burden. Besides, parental and childcare leave for men in Russia is available for over thirty years and is widely used.

### **Conclusion**

The review of Canada's, the United States' and Russia's efforts to promote gender equality in the labour market demonstrates that all three countries are actively promoting gender equality and women's rights policies.

There are special bodies in Canada and the United States (Department for Women and Gender Equality in Canada and Women's Bureau in the U.S.). In the Russian Federation the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, a body with broader responsibilities works on these matters.

Unlike Canada and the United States, the Russian Federation's policy on women in the labour market is based on tripartism, i.e. active participation of government, trade unions and employers in its development and implementation.

The integration of women into the labour market is seen by the three countries as a complex task based on the integration of labour market policies, education, health and social protection.

The experience of these countries proves that only the integration of these efforts leads to positive dynamics of women's employment.

Obviously, due to national circumstances, countries focus on different aspects of gender equality. Thus, Canada pays special attention to indigenous women, the United States places emphasis on the development of apprenticeship systems, and Russia aims at ensuring a balance between demographic and labour market policies.

As a result, women's labour force participation is high in all the countries reviewed, with Canada ranked first among the G20 countries, the Russian Federation ranked seventh, and the United States ranked eleventh (ILO 2019).

The lowest positions taken by these countries in dynamics of narrowing of the gender gap in labour market participation are largely due to the high level of women's participation in the base period, whereas the progress of other countries in bridging the gap is more related not only to successful implementation of a gender-oriented policy package, but, above all, to the very low initial participation of women.

Of course, this does not obliterate the need to accelerate the narrowing of the gender gap in labour market participation in Canada, USA and Russia. This should be facilitated by further efforts to implement policies within the framework of the four areas identified by the international community.

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