

Council Directive of 19 December 1978 on the progressive  
implementation of the principle of equal treatment for  
men and women in matters of social security (79/7/EEC)

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

of 19 December 1978

on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal  
treatment for men and women in matters of social security

(79/7/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular  
Article 235 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission<sup>(1)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament<sup>(2)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee<sup>(3)</sup>,

Whereas Article 1 (2) of Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the  
implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to  
employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions<sup>(4)</sup> provides that, with a  
view to ensuring the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment in matters  
of social security, the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, will adopt provisions  
defining its substance, its scope and the arrangements for its application; whereas the Treaty  
does not confer the specific powers required for this purpose;

Whereas the principle of equal treatment in matters of social security should be implemented in  
the first place in the statutory schemes which provide protection against the risks of sickness,  
invalidity, old age, accidents at work, occupational diseases and unemployment, and in social  
assistance in so far as it is intended to supplement or replace the abovementioned schemes;

Whereas the implementation of the principle of equal treatment in matters of social security does  
not prejudice the provisions relating to the protection of women on the ground of maternity;  
whereas, in this respect, Member States may adopt specific provisions for women to remove  
existing instances of unequal treatment,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

*Article 1*

The purpose of this Directive is the progressive implementation, in the field of social  
security and other elements of social protection provided for in Article 3, of the principle  
of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security, hereinafter referred  
to as 'the principle of equal treatment'.

### *Article 2*

This Directive shall apply to the working population — including self-employed persons, workers and self-employed persons whose activity is interrupted by illness, accident or involuntary unemployment and persons seeking employment — and to retired or invalided workers and self-employed persons.

### *Article 3*

- 1 This Directive shall apply to:
  - a statutory schemes which provide protection against the following risks:
    - sickness,
    - invalidity,
    - old age,
    - accidents at work and occupational diseases,
    - unemployment;
  - b social assistance, in so far as it is intended to supplement or replace the schemes referred to in (a).
- 2 This Directive shall not apply to the provisions concerning survivors' benefits nor to those concerning family benefits, except in the case of family benefits granted by way of increases of benefits due in respect of the risks referred to in paragraph 1 (a).
- 3 With a view to ensuring implementation of the principle of equal treatment in occupational schemes, the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, will adopt provisions defining its substance, its scope and the arrangements for its application.

### *Article 4*

- 1 The principle of equal treatment means that there shall be no discrimination whatsoever on ground of sex either directly, or indirectly by reference in particular to marital or family status, in particular as concerns:
  - the scope of the schemes and the conditions of access thereto,
  - the obligation to contribute and the calculation of contributions,
  - the calculation of benefits including increases due in respect of a spouse and for dependants and the conditions governing the duration and retention of entitlement to benefits.
- 2 The principle of equal treatment shall be without prejudice to the provisions relating to the protection of women on the grounds of maternity.

### *Article 5*

Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that any laws, regulations and administrative provisions contrary to the principle of equal treatment are abolished.

### *Article 6*

Member States shall introduce into their national legal systems such measures as are necessary to enable all persons who consider themselves wronged by failure to apply the principle of equal treatment to pursue their claims by judicial process, possibly after recourse to other competent authorities.

#### *Article 7*

- 1 This Directive shall be without prejudice to the right of Member States to exclude from its scope:
- a the determination of pensionable age for the purposes of granting old-age and retirement pensions and the possible consequences thereof for other benefits;
  - b advantages in respect of old-age pension schemes granted to persons who have brought up children; the acquisition of benefit entitlements following periods of interruption of employment due to the bringing up of children;
  - c the granting of old-age or invalidity benefit entitlements by virtue of the derived entitlements of a wife;
  - d the granting of increases of long-term invalidity, old-age, accidents at work and occupational disease benefits for a dependent wife;
  - e the consequences of the exercise, before the adoption of this Directive, of a right of option not to acquire rights or incur obligations under a statutory scheme.
- 2 Member States shall periodically examine matters excluded under paragraph 1 in order to ascertain, in the light of social developments in the matter concerned, whether there is justification for maintaining the exclusions concerned.

#### *Article 8*

- 1 Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive within six years of its notification. They shall immediately inform the Commission thereof.
- 2 Member States shall communicate to the Commission the text of laws, regulations and administrative provisions which they adopt in the field covered by this Directive, including measures adopted pursuant to Article 7 (2).
- They shall inform the Commission of their reasons for maintaining any existing provisions on the matters referred to in Article 7 (1) and of the possibilities for reviewing them at a later date.

#### *Article 9*

Within seven years of notification of this Directive, Member States shall forward all information necessary to the Commission to enable it to draw up a report on the application of this Directive for submission to the Council and to propose such further measures as may be required for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment.

#### *Article 10*

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 19 December 1978.

*For the Council*

*The President*

H.-D. GENSCHER

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**Status:** *This is the original version (as it was originally adopted).*

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- (1) OJ No C 34, 11. 2. 1977, p. 3.
- (2) OJ No C 299, 12. 12. 1977, p. 13.
- (3) OJ No C 180, 28. 7. 1977, p. 36.
- (4) OJ No L 39, 14. 2. 1976, p. 40.