

## **Equality for Women in Israel – Equalizing Wages in Israel's Workforce**

This 2013-15 project was a focused continuation of the EU supported Equality for Women in Israel project from 2009-2011. The overarching aim of this project was to reduce gender-based inequality in the Israeli workforce with a specific focus on gender-based salary discrimination. The relevant activities of this project were as follows.

- Research and development of a comprehensive database on Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) website.
- Creation and dissemination of an index that assesses wage gaps in institutions; followed by outreach to institutions and facilitation of comprehensive and proactive monitoring process to equalize wages.
- Facilitation of meetings and exchanges between NGOs, municipalities, businesses and the EEOC.
- Design and propagation of tool-kit consisting of modular publications, online portal and trainings guides.
- Outreach and facilitation of trainings in selected institutions.
- Advocacy, legal action, media and online campaign aimed targeting major employers and selected policymakers.

This three-year project was nearing conclusion when they held a conference in late 2015 featuring NYU Prof. Paula England, a leading international expert on women, gender and work and past president of the American Sociological Association. This conference, planned for some 80 participants, drew over 200 people from every sector and area of the country, and focused on a project-proposed reform to Israel's Equal Pay law. The conference presented research on gender wage gaps, information on hidden discrimination and wage secrecy and on the proposed legislative reform as well as practical tools for equalizing wages. Co-sponsors of the conference were the Israel Women's Network, Adva Center, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission at the Ministry of Economics and Tel Aviv University's Department of Labor Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences. This event also attracted an impressive number of MK's from both the coalition and the opposition, which followed on the heels of the Knesset conference on "Divide and Conquer: Why is it Forbidden to Discuss Wages in the Workplace?" sponsored by MK Michal Biran (Zionist Camp) and the Equal Wages Project.

One of the greatest achievements of this multi-level project and its wide range of strategies came in 2014 when the Knesset passed two amendments to the Equal Pay Law. The first enables women to receive compensation not only for financial damages incurred by their lower pay, but also for the very existence of gender-based wage discrimination. The amendment also provides a host of protective measures for female employees who bring charges of wage discrimination against their employers. The second amendment expanded the requirement for publication of existing wage information, to which most Israeli governmental offices are now complying. This type of transparency is essential for monitoring proper compliance with the Equal Pay Law, which will eventually lead to an end to gender parity in wages.