

# Government and Pay and Employment Equity

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## Abstract

Historically, governments in the UK and elsewhere have used their contracting power to impose employment-related obligations upon private sector contractors. This practice has become much less common in Europe over recent decades, in part because of concerns about the implications of EC rules on free movement of labour. But the position differs elsewhere - in Ontario, Canada, for example, pay equity was in part funded by payments made directly by the provincial government to private bodies operating in the broader public sector in which many underpaid women are employed. In the UK, government has been reluctant to impose positive obligations in relation to pay and employment equity on private sector employers. But it has made steps towards mandatory pay auditing and the imposition of race targets in the public sector, while stressing voluntarism in the private sector. Many equality activists are calling upon the government to adopt contract compliance mechanisms for extending these obligations into the private sector. I will consider the perils and possibilities of these types of government involvement in pay and employment equity.