



**Understanding
gender inequalities
in EFFAT sectors:
Food, Agriculture,
Tourism and
Domestic Work**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

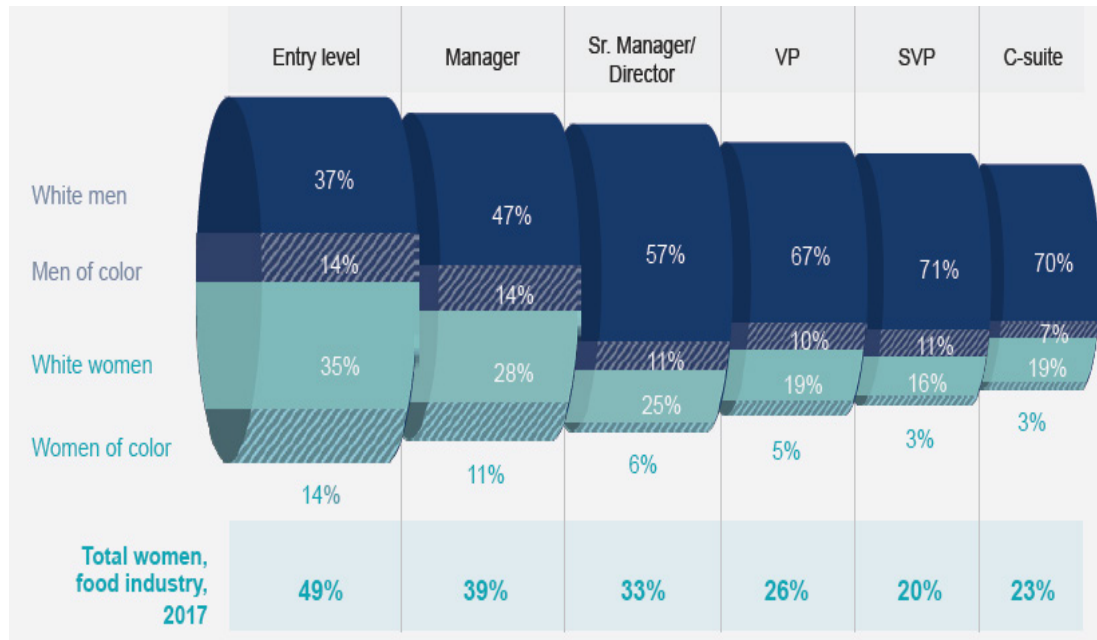
This report outlines the pervasive gender discrimination in the labour market, particularly affecting women in EFFAT sectors. EFFAT sectors are dominated by low-paid workers, many of whom face limited opportunities for skills development, with migrant women especially vulnerable to exploitation and harassment. The study focuses on the gender pay gap, work-life balance, and gender based violence and harassment to inform trade union recommendations aimed at tackling these persistent symptoms of gender based discrimination in EFFAT sectors.

Gender inequalities develop at varying dynamics across EFFAT sectors, depending on the economic and employment structure of the industry. European **agriculture** is primarily made up of family farms, which represent 93% of all holdings across EU Member States. These farms typically rely on the labour provided by the farm owner, manager, and family members, who benefit directly from the economic activity.

The sector also heavily depends on seasonal and migrant labour, especially in fruit and vegetable harvesting, with countries like Spain and Italy particularly reliant on this workforce, which often faces precarious working conditions with limited labour rights.

Women make up approximately 30% of the workforce in European agriculture, although their participation is likely underreported since many women work as unpaid family labourers. European statistics do not provide data on the gender pay gap in farming, however, it is estimated that it is high, in some countries, such as Spain reaching over 30%. Women tend to perform lower-paid, lower-skilled jobs such as planting and harvesting, while men dominate roles like machinery operation. Women are also underrepresented in farm management positions, and inheritance practices often favour male relatives,

Figure 1 Gender inequalities in the career progression of women and men in the food production industry



Source: FoodNavigator Europe, 2019

limiting women's access to farm ownership and government subsidies, such as those provided through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

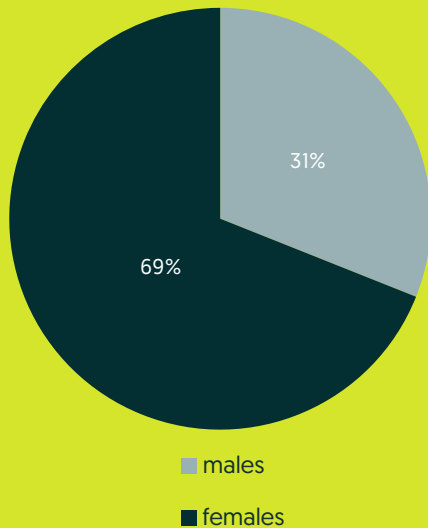
Migrant women, particularly undocumented workers, face the most vulnerable conditions in European agriculture. It is estimated that in some EU Member States, up to 40% of agricultural workers are undocumented. These workers, especially seasonal migrant women, are exposed to the harshest conditions, influenced by factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and migrant status. The isolation of farm work makes union organising difficult, further exacerbating gender inequalities in the sector. The seasonal and precarious nature of their work makes it difficult to address these inequalities through traditional union efforts.

The **food and drink** industry is predominantly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which make up 99% of the sector. However, the remaining 1% of large companies employ 42% of the sector's workforce. Trade union in the food and drink sector are generally more organised compared to other industries,

such as agriculture for several reasons. The food and drink industry is characterised by a relatively higher concentration of workers in specific locations, such as factories and processing plants which facilitates collective action. The sector has also a long history of union organisation, with several well-established trade unions advocating for workers' rights. Women are well-represented in the sector's workforce, accounting for nearly 50% of food production workers and over 70% in drink production as of 2022. Despite this, women in European manufacturing earn 18% less than men on average, and there are no detailed statistics on the gender pay gap specifically for the food and drink sector. The "glass ceiling" is evident, with fewer women in senior positions despite equal representation at entry-level roles [Figure 1].

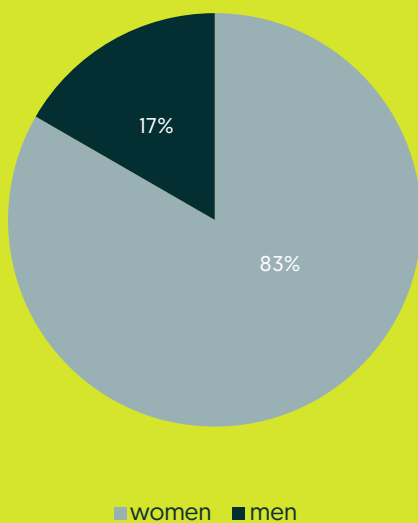
Part-time work is widespread among women in manufacturing, contributing to the gender pay gap, with women making up two-thirds of part-time employees [Figure 2]. The sector also relies heavily on subcontracted labour, which drives precarious employment conditions.

Figure 2 Part-time employment in EU-27 manufacturing by gender, Q4 2023



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat (2023), Labour Force Survey [lfsq_epgan2]

Figure 3 Employment in core domestic work activities in EU27 by gender



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, 2024, Labour Force Survey

*core domestic work activities account for social work activities without accommodation and activities of households as employers of domestic personnel

Domestic work is characterised by high levels of precariousness, with many workers engaged in informal roles, leaving many workers without official contracts and, consequently, without legal protections. Their precarious status heightens their vulnerability to exploitation, and in numerous countries, domestic workers lack essential labour protections, such as collective bargaining rights and social security. There are currently about 10 million domestic workers in the EU, with a significant majority being female (Figure 3) and many identified as migrant workers, particularly in Western Member States (Figure 4). These workers often endure poorer working conditions and lower wages compared to national workers.

There are no European statistics on the gender pay gap in the sector available. Interviews conducted with trade union representatives indicate that while men and women in the domestic work sector are often paid similarly, underlying gender based discrimination in pay remains evident. The assessment of the gender pay gap in domestic work should also include comparisons with equivalent jobs performed by men in other sectors. Some trade union representatives pointed out that industrial cleaners, who are typically male, often receive higher wages than female domestic workers, highlighting ongoing gender based pay discrimination within the sector.

This fragmentation of the sector's workforce complicates union efforts to organise and support domestic workers, as they are often employed individually by households rather than through larger companies. The isolation of domestic work limits opportunities for collective action and communication among workers. Moreover, many migrant domestic workers are undocumented, creating a fear of deportation that discourages union engagement.

The **tourist sector** is primarily composed of SMEs, with 1% of larger companies employing over 250 people accounting for 18% of the workforce. This sector includes a mix of seasonal and

permanent workers, allowing unions to mobilise both groups effectively. Seasonal workers often return to the same employers, enabling unions to establish ongoing relationships and negotiate collective bargaining agreements to ensure adequate benefits and protections.

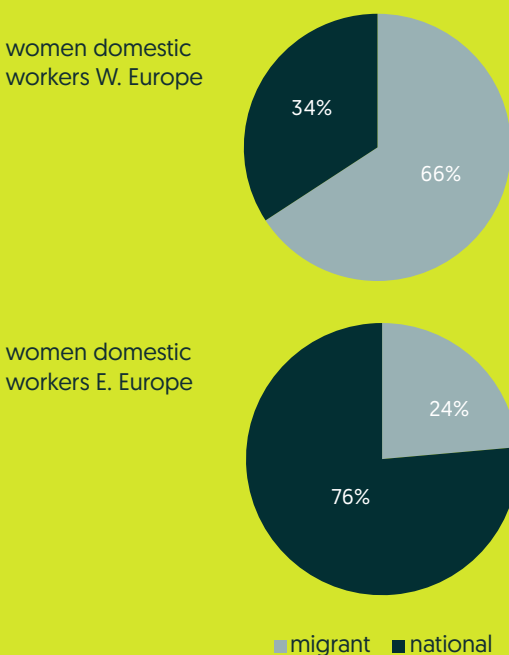
Women represent just over 50% of the workforce in tourism, but their employment tends to be concentrated at lower professional levels. There can be observed a correlation between, on the one hand, the high share of tourism in the national GDP and, on the other hand, the gender pay gap exceeding the current EU-27 average of 12,7%. For instance, Cyprus has a gender pay gap of 16,6% in tourism, followed by Croatia (14,6%) and Portugal (14%).

The reliance on feminised labour reflects unequal gender power dynamics, where women often undertake undesirable and undervalued work involved in cleaning, dealing with bodily fluids, waste and other unpleasant tasks.

Also, precarious work contracts are prevalent in the tourism industry, affecting women disproportionately. In the last quarter of 2023, nearly 70% of part-time workers in tourism were women (Figure 5), highlighting the connection between part-time employment and caregiving responsibilities. Indeed, over a quarter of women in the sector declare a poor and very poor work-life balance (Figure 6).

These patterns underscore the challenges faced by women in the tourism sector, particularly regarding job security, pay equity and the nature of their roles.

Figure 4 Women domestic workers in Europe by national/migrant status



Source: Progressive Policies based on ILO, 2015

Figure 5 Part-time work by gender in Accommodation and food service activities, Eu-27, Q4 2023

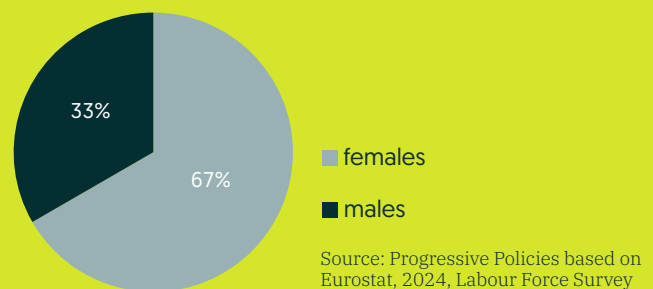
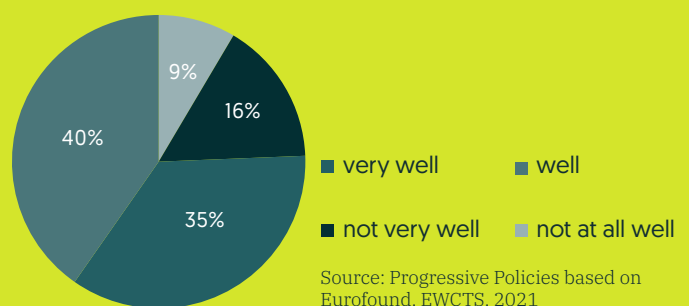


Figure 6 WLB of women in Tourism in EU-27



Overall, the frequent lack of adequate sector-disaggregated statistical data e.g. on the gender pay gap, the share of female and (undocumented) migrant workforce, or exposure to gender based violence and harassment at work, has often hindered the assessment of the real scale of the issues in the EFFAT sectors.

Global, European and national legal frameworks addressing gender based discrimination at work are improving, however, they are not sufficient or adequately implemented to prevent gender inequalities in EFFAT sectors. The recently adopted Pay Transparency Directive is an attempt to better address the gender pay gap and can be used by trade unions to build momentum in tackling the issue, particularly through workplace collective bargaining where possible. Nevertheless, tackling all forms of gender based discrimination still requires effective legal and policy solutions.

Trade union efforts to combat gender inequalities in EFFAT sectors must focus on specific challenges while prioritising gender equality. Key actions include enhancing trade union organisation and democracy, integrating gender issues into collective efforts, and implementing collective bargaining to close the gender pay gap through pay audits and targets. Negotiating equality plans can improve working conditions and career progression for women.

A supportive legal framework is essential for effective union actions, necessitating advocacy for laws that bolster social dialogue on gender issues. Attention should also be given to vulnerable workers, such as undocumented migrants, and the need for accessible care services. Enforcement of legal rights is critical, especially in light of rising far-right movements that exacerbate gender inequalities, which unions must actively address.

A comprehensive approach that combines these strategies is vital for overcoming structural barriers and promoting gender equality in EFFAT sectors, though priorities may vary based on sector dynamics, including social dialogue and gender stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

EFFAT has entrusted Progressive Policies with the task of carrying out a study exploring the evolution of gender inequality in the Agriculture, Food and Drink, Tourism and Domestic Work sectors.

Discrimination of women in the labour market is a pervasive issue that manifests in various forms and affects women's economic opportunities, earnings, and career advancement. Women in the EU earn on average nearly 13% less than men for the same work or work of equal value¹ and face multiple barriers to high-quality and well-renumerated jobs across industries. Discrimination affects women in various ways, depending on the sector and socio-demographic characteristics. The gender based discrimination increases at the intersection of gender and ethnicity, working class, migrant status, age or disability.

Women in the EFFAT sectors are particularly exposed to gender based discrimination and violence at work. The industries are characterised by a high share of feminised labour, often made up of precarious, migrant workers. Women are overrepresented in the low-skilled and low-paid jobs in all four EFFAT sectors. Domestic workers face particularly abusive and exploitative working conditions while the industry is almost entirely made up of a female workforce. Also women in tourism experience precarious work and are exposed to increased risk of third party violence. Gendered occupational segregation is also widespread in agriculture and food & drink, contributing to lower earnings and poor job quality for women.

Accordingly, it is important to investigate the different sectoral dynamics of gender inequalities in the EFFAT sectors to tackle the continued experience of discrimination amongst women at work. The study aims to produce trade union recommendations on sector-specific strategies addressing the gender pay gap and poor wor-

king conditions of women, as well as exposure to gender based violence and harassment in each of the EFFAT sectors.

The research has been focused on studying the sector-specific dynamic of gender inequalities – how they are manifested in each sector and their social as well as policy drivers, along with the identification of successful trade union practices in tackling the issues so far.

The study will particularly explore gender inequalities manifested in the gender pay gap, work-life balance and gender based violence & harassment amongst female workers in each of the four study sectors. These three dimensions have been selected in agreement with EFFAT because they are considered to be major symptoms of gender based discrimination. Women are predominantly affected by the precarious working conditions present in the EFFAT sectors, exacerbating these gender inequalities.

The overall study methodology has been based on qualitative interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of workplace challenges and union strategies, completed with desk research on recent trends and data, as well as a review of relevant legal instruments addressing gender inequalities. Based on the findings of this study report, a separate trade union guide has also been produced, formulating practical recommendations to empower women workers in the food, agriculture, tourism and domestic work sectors. We have also elaborated model clauses for a transnational collective agreement promoting gender equality in larger company groups.

¹ Eurostat EU-27 average gender pay gap of 12,7% recorded for 2022. Gender pay gap in unadjusted form by NACE Rev. 2 activity - structure of earnings survey methodology [earn_gr_gpgr2]

Methodology

Qualitative interviews were conducted from November 2023 to January 2024.

The countries identified for the study of gender inequalities in **all four EFFAT sectors** covered a wide geographical scope and represented Northern, Central and Southern Europe (summaries in Tables below)

The interview guide explored three main thematic areas:

1. The incidence and conducive factors of the gender pay gap, poor work-life balance of women and gender based violence (hereafter 'GBVH') in the two sectors.
2. Relevant legal provisions addressing the gender pay gap, poor work-life balance of women and GBVH.
3. Trade union practices and needs in tackling the gender pay gap, poor work-life balance of women, and implementing the EFFAT Zero Tolerance recommendations on GBVH in the two sectors.

The **response rate in agriculture and domestic work was 66% and 40%**, respectively. In comparison, the response rate in food & drink and tourism was at 80% in both sectors. The comparatively lower response rate in agriculture and domestic work **may have produced biased results** presented in the report. The lower response rate seems to result from the **low trade union density and poorer capacity** in these two sectors. In agriculture, this may be due to the nature of the sector in the EU dominated by small, family farms, as well as a large share of seasonal, migrant workforce. Similarly, trade union organising in domestic work is challenging amongst migrant, often undocumented workers. Nevertheless, it is an important finding in light of trade union strategies in addressing gender inequalities in agriculture and domestic work.

Table 1 Trade unions from the **agricultural sector** participating in the qualitative study, November 2023–January 2024

Country	Trade Union
<u>Northern Area</u>	
Finland	Teollisuusliitto
Sweden	KOMMUNAL
<u>Central Area</u>	
Austria	PRO GE
Bulgaria	FNSZ
<u>Southern Area</u>	
Italy	UILA UIL
Spain	UGT FICA

Table 2 Trade unions from the food & drink sector
participating in the qualitative study, November 2023–
January 2024

Country	Trade Union
<u>Northern Area</u>	
Finland	SEL
Lithuania	The Lithuanian Federation of Regional Trade Unions
<u>Central Area</u>	
Austria	PRO GE
Belgium	ACV-CSC
	SETCa-FGTB
Germany	NGG
Poland	NSZZ Solidarność
<u>Southern Area</u>	
France	FO
Spain	UGT FICA
	CCOO Industria

Table 3 Trade unions from the domestic work
participating in the qualitative study, November 2023–
January 2024

Country	Trade Union
<u>Central Area</u>	
Belgium	ACV-CSC
Germany	NGG
The Netherlands	FNV
<u>Southern Area</u>	
Cyprus	SEK
Spain	SOS Racismo

Table 4 Trade unions from the tourist sector
participating in the qualitative study, November 2023–
January 2024

Country	Trade Union
<u>Central Area</u>	
Austria	VIDA
Belgium	ACV-CSC
Germany	NGG
<u>Southern Area</u>	
France	FO, CFDT
Spain	FeSMC-UGT
	CCOO Industria
Cyprus	SEK
Italy	FIST CISL

Structure of the report

The first section analyses the incidence and conducive factors of gender inequalities in the four EFFAT sectors to account for the sector-specific nature of the studied gender inequalities. The second section provides a general overview of relevant legal provisions at global, EU and national levels intending to assess gaps and incoherences. Section three reviews existing trade union practices in tackling gender inequalities in the EFFAT sectors, along with an assessment of the implementation of the EFFAT Zero Tolerance to GBVH recommendations. The final section summarises challenges and puts forward recommendations for trade union strategies to address gender inequalities, accounting for the sector-specific nature.

SECTION

SETTING THE PROBLEM – UNBALANCED WORKFORCE AND INTERSECTIONALITIES

Gender inequalities in the labour market stem from unequal gender power relations embedded in patriarchal gender norms and expectations.

Men maintain their male superior identity and dominance over women at home and work through a gendered division of labour which is of an exploitative nature (Cockburn, 1985; Rees, 2022). Therefore, structural inequalities develop at the axis of gender and power which is also reflected in the labour market. People are gendered by the jobs they do and in turn jobs are actively gendered by who does them (Cockburn, 1985, 2009; Rees, 2022). Indeed, under the capitalist male breadwinner model, the male identity is tied to higher-valued work than female labour, which is diminished (ibid.).

The EFFAT sectors are industries where structural, patriarchal gender inequalities are particularly manifested as they develop at the intersection of gender and race, ethnicity, migrant status, class, and age. Far from being independent of each other, various forms of discrimination interact and exacerbate the risk of exploitative working conditions, work-related violence and harassment, as well as domestic violence (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Acker, 2006; Acker, 2012; Gothoskar, 2013; Rosette et al., 2018). Accordingly, migrant women workers in EFFAT sectors, especially in the **heavily feminised domestic work and tourist sectors**, are particularly exposed to discrimination and poor working conditions.

Enterprise size structure in the studied EFFAT sectors may be an important factor in trade union density and action, addressing gender inequalities. The food and drink industry is dominated by SMEs which make up 99% of enterprises in the sector. However, the remaining 1% of large companies account for 42% of the sector's workforce (Eurostat, SBS, 2020). A similar enterprise structure is observed in tourism. However, the 1% of companies employing over 250 persons account for 18% of the workforce in the sector (Eurostat, SBS, 2022).

Organising workers to tackle gender inequalities in agriculture and domestic work may pose a greater challenge for trade unions. European agriculture is dominated by family farms that rely on the labour provided by the farm owner/manager and their family, who also benefit directly from the economic activity. Family farms account for 93% of holdings and are predominant in all Member States. (Eurostat, 2020).

Employment in domestic work is also more difficult to capture as the sector hires large numbers of precarious, migrant and undocumented workers (ELA, 2021). They often include individual domestic workers performing informal work as direct employment by families is typical for the sector (ibid.). Large cleaning companies or agencies are rare, yet they may account for a significant number of workers as such companies may conduct activities across the EU. For example, they account for 43% of social workers employed in social work activities without accommodation (Eurostat, SBS, 2021). Also, in countries such as Belgium, a large number of domestic workers (170,000) are formally employed through service voucher agencies (Lens et al., 2021).

1.1

Agriculture: a patriarchal sector, including in the data collection

GENDER PAY GAP

There is a general paucity of disaggregated data on employment in farming, including the earnings and gender pay gap. Authors investigating gender inequalities in agriculture argue that farming is viewed as a sector rather than as an occupation. This perspective frames agriculture primarily as land that yields crops, raises animals, meets environmental goals, and produces public goods, with less focus on the individuals who make these outcomes possible (Shortall & Marangudakis, 2022). This has consequences for the collection of data on workers in the sectors, most importantly, the **exclusion of agriculture from the Eurostat Structure of Earnings Survey and calculations of the gender pay gap, which remains unknown in the sector.**

The interviews conducted with agriculture trade union representatives from Finland, Sweden, Austria, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain seem to confirm this phenomenon. During the interviews, several trade unionists reported a **lack of national statistics** on the gender pay gap in agriculture, which is **consistent with Eurostat**. Nevertheless, several interviewees informed of

the national gender pay gap in agriculture, which ranged from 13% in Bulgaria to 19% in Austria and **34% in Spain, which is much higher** than the current EU average gender pay gap estimated at 12,7%.

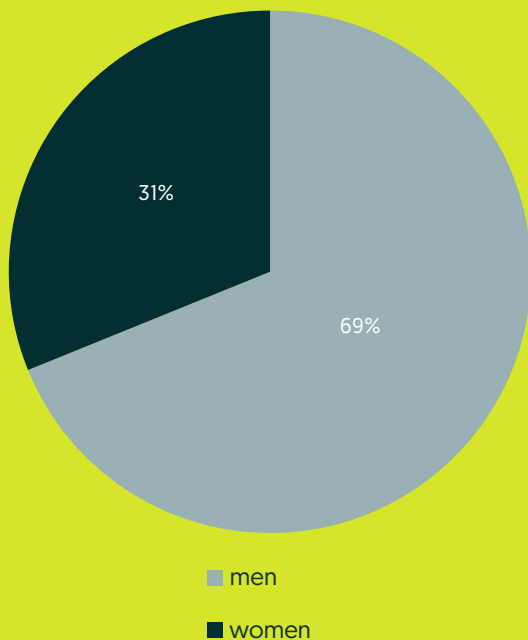
“Sticky floor” and occupational segregation

The latest Eurostat figures inform on 30% of women in European farming in 2022, yet, these numbers may be much higher [Figure 7]. The exact employment levels of women in agriculture are unknown, as official statistics only account for persons formally employed at farms, and do not

“It is more common to find women in harvesting and handling, while men occupy positions such as foreman, machine operator, and maintenance engineers”

UGT FICA

Figure 7 Employment in agriculture
in EU-27 2022 by sex



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat (2023), Labour Force Survey [lfsa_egan2]

capture unpaid family workers, providing an underestimated number of women working in agriculture (Shortall et al., 2017; 2022).

Studies suggest that women in agriculture tend to perform low-skilled and low-paid jobs such as planting and harvesting, while tasks such as ploughing and heavy machinery operations are mainly performed by men. (Shortall, McKee & Sutherland, 2020). It is observed that low-skilled jobs in farming are stereotypically performed by women, who are viewed as more suited to meticulous tasks due to the mere virtue of being a woman (ibid.). The phenomena may have a significant impact on wage disparities between women and men in the sector.

The difficult progression of women from low-skilled and low-paid to higher-skilled, better-paid jobs has been mentioned by trade union interviewees representing **Central and Sou-**

thern Europe. It has been observed that women employed in the lowest level jobs tend to never progress to higher quality jobs in agriculture. One reason is the seasonal nature of such work, where both women and men are temporary workers to perform casual work. However, several trade unionists have observed a gendered pattern in the limited career progression of women employed in low-skilled jobs. For example, an Austrian trade unionist reported that “women have more difficulties being placed in higher wage groups (skilled workers) than men” (PRO-GE).

Moreover, women are found in such low-skilled jobs despite having higher competencies as confirmed by a Slovenian interviewee: “Women’s education does not match their jobs, which means they are better educated” (ZSSS). The interviewed trade unionists have attributed the phenomenon to the motherhood penalty. The pregnancy of women in agriculture is viewed as an obstacle to holding technical or more responsible positions, whereby future maternity leave and family care duties would disrupt the sustainability of the farm.

Indeed, research indicates that women in agriculture are **underrepresented as farm managers**, although there are differences between Member States (Eurostat, 2018). **Men tend to inherit the land**, which is most often the case if a woman farmer has a brother (Shortall & Marangudakis, 2022). To receive the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidies, **only a single farm manager (usually a man) can be identified** as the recipient of the support. If **women** own farms, these tend

“Discrimination of women in agriculture starts from access to training courses, which consequently limits opportunities for job growth.”

UILA UIL

to be **smaller units that do not yield sufficient profits to qualify for CAP subsidies** (Shortall & Marangudakis, 2022).

Moreover, studies inform on the **low access of women in farming to professional training**, which may further exacerbate the gender pay gap (Balezentis et al., 2021). Women fail to participate in agricultural **life-long training**, as it is most often **addressed to men and responds to their needs**. This is because **women in agriculture are not seen as farmers** and are **not invited to training** (Barbercheck et al., 2009; Shortall et al., 2017). The issue has also been confirmed in our interviews.

Precarious work

Frequent **temporary and part-time contracts** for women workers have been reported by all interviewed trade unionists. The precarity has been strictly associated with women's roles as mothers and primary caregivers. A Finnish interviewee reported that "women are given temporary contracts when expected to become or are mothers" (Teollisuusliitto).

In Italy the use of labour subcontracting chains and temporary agency work has been commonly observed as a frequent phenomenon, affecting

"Women work shorter hours, or part-time, and do not increase their salaries with shifts or overtime, as they are more engaged than men in unpaid work of caring for the home and family."

UILA UIL

adversely women and men alike in the sector. This seems to be confirmed by the research findings suggesting that the gender pay gap closes faster in low-pay, precarious jobs, whereby women and men tend to receive similarly poor wages (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Fritsch, Verwiebe & Liedl, 2019).

Migrant women

Although there are no official statistics on the participation of migrant female labour or undocumented workers in European farming², it is observed that the use of such a workforce is common in the sector. It has been reported that in some Member States, the share of undocumented migrant workers in agriculture may be as high as 40% (Augère-Granier, 2021). Yet, **seasonal, undocumented migrant female workers** in European farming may be exposed to the **most precarious working conditions** exacerbated by the **intersection** of gender and race, ethnicity, migrant status, class and age (Palumbo & Scieurba, 2018).

Exposure to particularly adverse working conditions and pay in migrant, seasonal women workers has been confirmed by trade unionists from Italy and Spain. "If we analyse the wage gap by nationality, we observe that migrant women experience particularly low wages and precarious working conditions, especially those originating from third countries" (UILA UIL).

² Eurostat only provides data on the share of migrant workers by occupation, but none corresponding to farming activity.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

Overall, the work-life balance of women in agriculture has been **assessed as improving** by nearly all interviewed trade unionists. These observations seem to converge with EU data which informs that 80% of women in agriculture declare a good or very good work-life balance

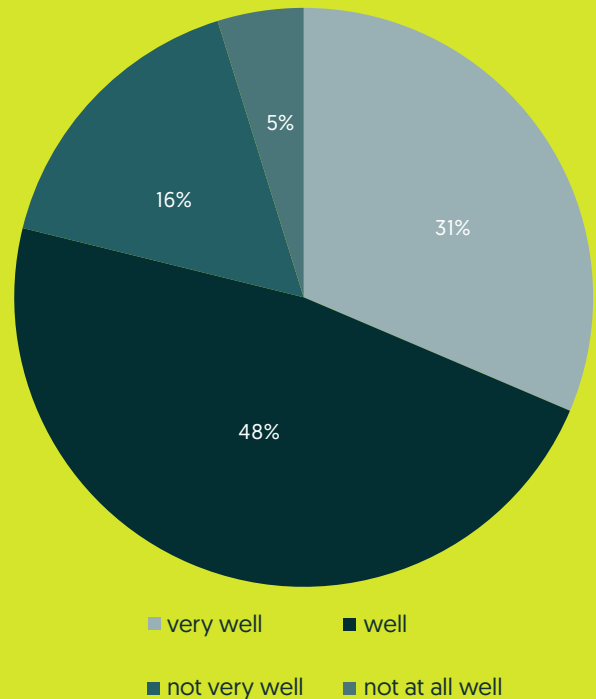
[Figure 8].

Nevertheless, interviewees representing Central and Southern areas observed that shift and weekend work in the sector has a significant negative impact on work-life balance, particularly on women, who are still viewed as primary caregivers and responsible for household duties. Gender stereotypes viewing women as “default” carers for children, the elderly and the disabled are commonly observed in agriculture. Only Northern Europe trade union interviewees have declared progress on gender equality in the sharing of domestic labour.

“While women’s participation in the labour market has been growing, the necessary structural social changes to promote an equal sharing of responsibilities in the home or in the care of children or dependent family members have not occurred at the same time.”

UGT FICA

Figure 8 WLB in women in Agriculture in Eu-27

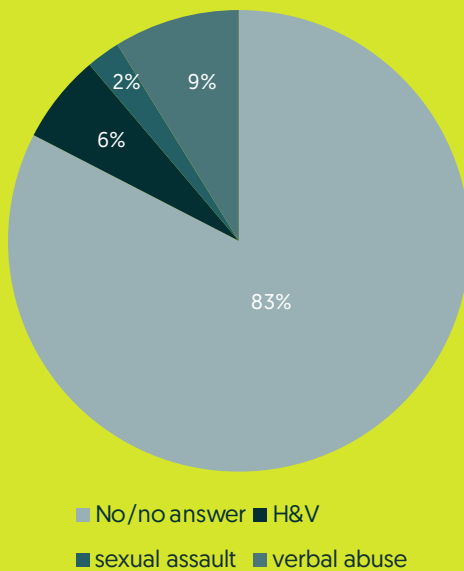


Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurofound, EWCTS 2021

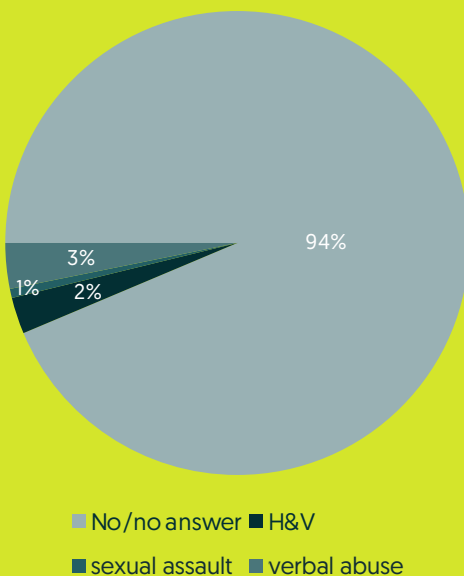
BVH

Recent EU data on exposure to GBVH in agriculture informs on 6% of women experiencing such misconduct (Eurofound, 2021), which is considerably lower than the EU average of 17% [Figure 9]. However, again, this share may be significantly underestimated as accounting for official farm workers only.

Figure 9 GBVH in women in Agriculture in EU-27



GBVH in women workers in EU-27 average



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurofound, EWCTS 2021

Accordingly, the interviewed trade unionists had **difficulty assessing the incidence of GBVH in the sector due to a lack of national data** on the issue. The lack of sector-disaggregated national statistics on the exposure of women to GBVH at work makes it difficult to estimate the size and trends in the issue. Additionally, sexual harassment and abuse tend to be underreported in migrant and undocumented migrants and thus not captured in official statistics. However, an important study has revealed a high exposure of female migrant workers to sexual violence and harassment in Italian and Spanish farms (Palumbo & Scieurba). The researchers observed a high number of abortions in Romanian women working on farms in the Italian Ragusa region. The abortion rate was considerably higher than in Italian women and the cases of sexual abuse remained unreported. In the present study interviews with trade unionists, only Finland reported a 'rather low' incidence of the issue in women in the farming sector.

1.2

A Glass Ceiling

in Food and Drink

GENDER PAY GAP

Women make up a large share of workers in **the food & drink** sector. Eurostat figures for 2022 show that women accounted for nearly 50% of workers in food and over **70% of workers in drink production** (LFS, 2023). Despite the substantial representation of women in the industry, **women in European manufacturing earn on average 18% less than men**, however, there are no available disaggregate figures on the gender pay gap in the food and beverage drink sectors³. Consequently, the trade union interviewees representing food & drink have reported difficulties in assessing the gender pay gap in the industry due to the lack of sector-disaggregated national data on the gender wage gap.

“Sticky floor” and occupational segregation

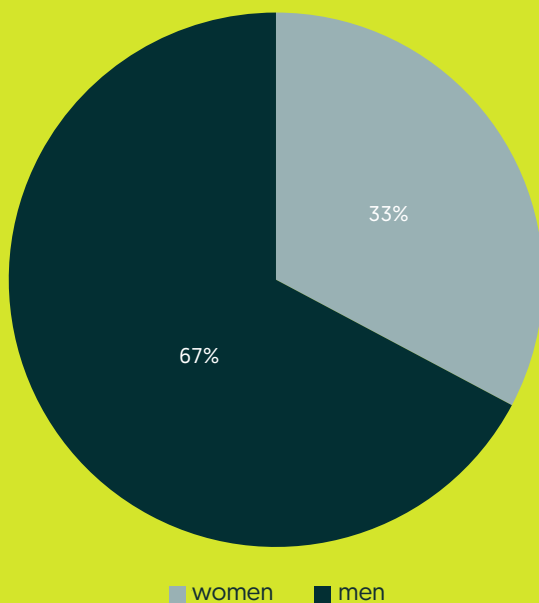
The food & drink sector seems to be primarily affected by **gendered occupational segregation** contributing to lower earnings and career opportunities for women. Studies suggest that this may be due to the lower participation of women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) studies leading to technical and engineering jobs in manufacturing (Strachan et al., 2018). This is consistent with the most recent Eurostat data on women’s employment in high-technology jobs in European manufacturing. **Only 1 in 3 engineering positions is held by women in the industry** [Figure 10].

Our interviewees represented trade unions covering a wide geographical scope, including Finland, Lithuania, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, France and Spain. Almost all the inter-

³ Calculated Eurostat EU-27 average gender pay gap in Manufacturing 2022 [EARN_GR_GPGR2]. There are no disaggregated figures for NACE codes representing manufacturing of food and manufacturing of beverages.

viewed trade unionists but France confirmed that there is usually a clear distinction between male and female jobs in the industry. Men tend to work as blue-collar workers in production and maintenance, with heavy machinery, whereas women are predominant in administration, human resources, and quality assurance laboratories. Although some of these jobs performed by women offer better pay than blue-collar work, women are underrepresented in technical and engineering jobs offering higher earnings and job quality.

Figure 10 Employment in technology intensive manufacturing jobs by gender in EU-27 (2022)



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat (2023) [htec_emp_nat2]

Parallel to occupational segregation, there has been reported during the interviews the phenomenon of **feminised labour** in the sector. Where low-skilled, low-paid work is involved, it tends to be performed predominantly by women. The types of jobs that are usually performed by women are manual tasks. “In the meat industry, packing jobs are traditionally dominated by women, while,

for example, meat cutters and butchers have traditionally been men” (SEL). This has also been associated with the **“sticky floor”** observed in the industry, as women in such low-skilled jobs have been reported to not progress to higher-skilled and better-paid jobs.

“In the canned fish sector, manual workers are usually women. The positions of responsibility are still held by men.”

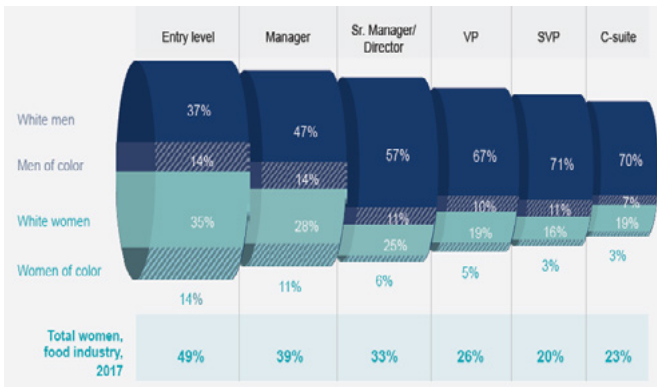
CCOO

“Glass ceiling”

Moreover, the phenomenon of ‘**glass ceiling**’ is particularly present in the manufacturing industry. While women and men tend to make up nearly an equal share of workers in the food sector at the entry level, the **share of women drastically drops up the career ladder** (Figure 11).

This has also been confirmed in the interviews. A Polish trade unionist affirmed that “there is a glass ceiling in white-collar work, except for the supply chain, and not in blue-collar work” (NSZZ Solidarność). Or as reported by a Spanish interviewee: “If we go up to the categories of management, it is more difficult to find women. In general, women are promoted less than men, even with the same or higher level of qualification” (UGT FICA).

Figure 11 Gender inequalities in the career progression of women and men in the food production industry



Source: FoodNavigator Europe, 2019

Unequal pay for work of equal value

The interviewed trade unionists have also commonly observed the problem of unequal pay for work of equal value between women and men in the sector. It is possible to identify this problem through the use of negotiated company pay audits which are described in more detail in Section IV on trade union practices of the report.

As reported by a German trade unionist: “When we do the salary check with an NGG paycheck tool (“EG Check”) which estimates the value of different jobs, it shows that women are paid less for the same value work” (NGG). Similarly, a Spanish interviewee declared: “In the salary audits, it appears that men are paid more for the work of the same value” (CCOO).

Precarious work

Furthermore, part-time employment is widespread amongst women in manufacturing. According to the latest Eurostat data, they make up **two-thirds of part-time workers** in the sector (LFS, 2023). **Part-time employment of women is**

a well-known factor contributing to the gender pay gap (Leuze & Strauß, 2016; Weeden, Cha & Bucca, 2016).

A high share of part-time contracts of women in the sector has been reported by representatives of **Central and Southern Europe** during the interviews. In Spain, the interviewed trade unionists reported that 62% of workers in food & drink with part-time contracts are women, which is at the level of the EU average for the manufacturing sector. The high share of part-time contracts in the industry has also been confirmed by Belgian and Austrian trade unionists, where labour subcontracting mainly drives precarious employment in the sector.

“Part-time contracts and mini-jobs this is very widespread in Germany amongst women, 49% work part-time, and 78% of part-time workers are female in the food & drink industry.”

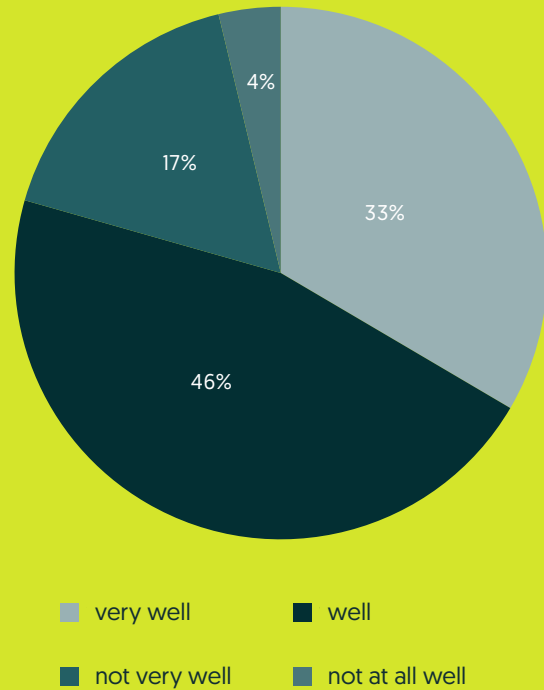
NGG

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

Overall, the work-life balance of women in the food & drink sector has been **assessed as improving** in recent years by the large majority of the interviewed trade unionists. As a Belgian interviewee declared: “The work-life balance of women has been improving, mainly thanks to collective action” (ACV-CSC). Or as reported by a Polish trade unionist “It is slowly improving, in lower-skilled positions there is a good work-life balance. It decreases with higher skilled positions, but equally for both men and women, mostly in the middle management workers who are the most affected” (NSZZ Solidarność).

These observations seem to converge with recent European data which informs of nearly 80% of women in food & drink declaring a good or very good work-life balance [\[Figure 12\]](#). Yet, one in 5 women reports bad and very bad work-life balance in the sector.

Figure 12 WLB in women in Food & drink in Eu-27



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurofound, EWCTS 2021

GBVH

The interviewed trade unionists frequently reported a **lack of national data** on the exposure to GBVH in food & drink, which made it difficult to assess the incidence of the issue. National or EU data may prdy downward trend in the incidence of the issue.

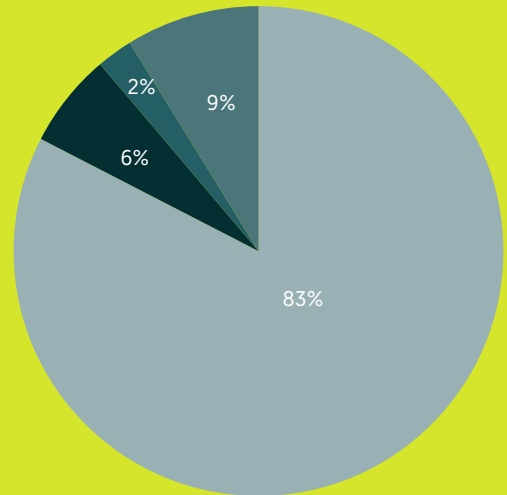
“In the 10 years that I have been a permanent secretary, I’ve never had to deal with such a situation because there is a higher federal law that the employer must respect. Generally, cases of gender or racial violence, if they occur, it’s more between coworkers.”

SETCa-FGTB

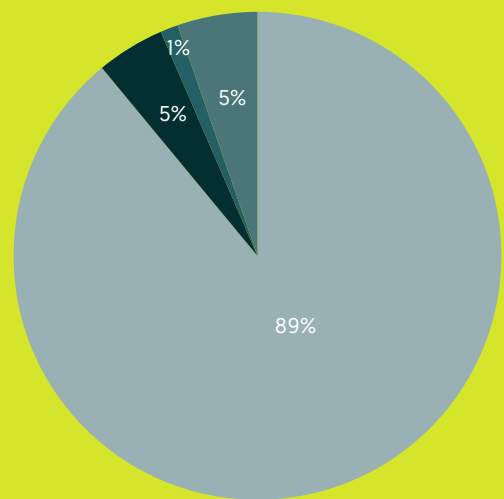
The German interviewee observed that the exposure varies between subsectors of the industry: “The meat sector seems to be particularly affected. Stories the women tell me, like when subcontractors come to them at night in their rooms are really bad stories” (NGG).

These observations seem to converge with recent European data on the exposure of women to GBVH in food & drink estimated at 11% in 2021 [Figure 13], which is below the EU average of 17%.

Figure 13 GBVH in women in Food & drink in EU-27



GBVH in women workers in EU-27 average



■ No/no answer ■ H&V
■ sexual assault ■ verbal abuse

Source: Progressive Policies based on EWCTS 2021

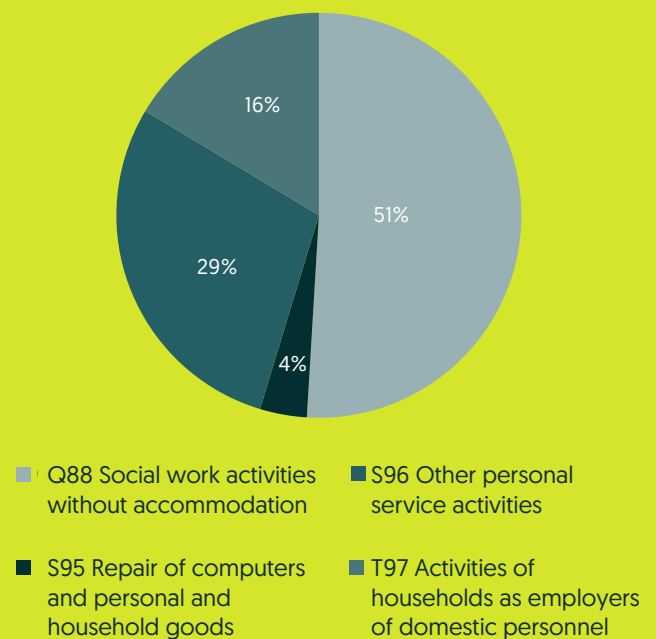
1.3

Domestic work: lack of pay equity and strong intersectionalities

GENDER PAY GAP

Women in domestic work may be the poorest remunerated workers, however, there **is no comprehensive European data available on the earnings or working conditions of domestic workers**. This may be in part due to the significant presence of undocumented **migrant workers** in the sector, a factor that also exacerbates their vulnerability to abusive employment practices (Blackett, 2019; ILO, 2018; Pavlou, 2021). Also, the share of **informal work in the sector is high** - 34% of total work in care services and almost 70% in direct household employment (ELA, 2021). Yet, these figures may be significantly underestimated as domestic workers for the most part provide both care and household services in an intertwined manner.

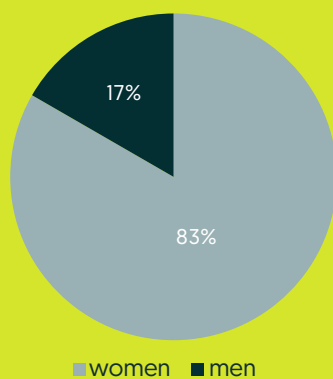
Figure 14 Employment in personal and household services (PHS) in EU 27, 2023 [in thous persons]



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, 2024, Labour Force Survey

There are currently 10 million domestic workers in the EU [Figure 14] who are predominantly female [Figure 15] and **migrant labour** [Figure 16]. Yet, these figures do not capture the informal employment in domestic work. In Western Member States, there are 2,2 million migrant domestic workers compared to just 0,08 million in Eastern

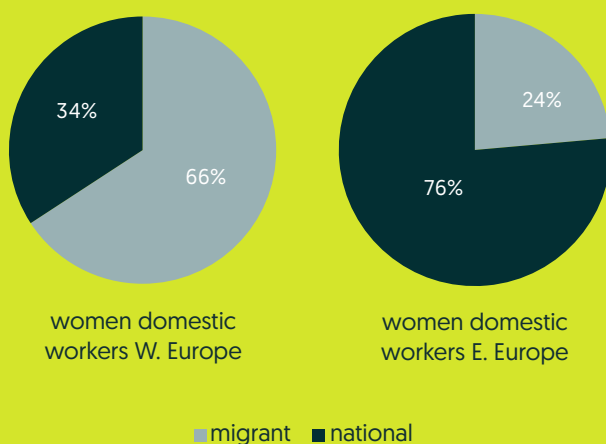
Figure 15 Employment in core domestic work activities in EU27 by gender



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, 2024, Labour Force Survey

*core domestic work activities account for social work activities without accommodation and activities of households as employers of domestic personnel

Figure 16 Women domestic workers in Europe by national/migrant status



Source: Progressive Policies based on ILO, 2015

Member States (ILO, 2015), whereby migrant workers encompass “all international migrants who are currently employed or are unemployed and seeking employment in their present country of residence” (ILO, *ibid.*) Reportedly, migrant domestic workers often experience poorer working conditions and lower wages than national workers (Hobson, Hellgren & Bede, 2015; ILO, 2015; ILO, 2018).

Domestic work is also characterised by **high precariousness** and casualty of jobs, with a high share of part-time work (Jokela, 2017; ILO, 2018), or extremely long working hours in the case of in-house domestic workers.

During the interviews several trade unionists reported a **lack of national statistics** on the gender pay gap in the sector, which coupled with the unavailability of European data, made it impossible to assess discriminatory practices in the levels of pay of women domestic workers compared to men working in the sector. Nevertheless, existing studies provide evidence for an inverse relationship between the share of women workers and levels of pay: the more female-dominated labour the lower the pay in the sector (Boeri, Del Boca, & Pissarides, 2005; Rubery, 2017; ILO, 2018; Jokela, 2019; Harris, 2022). This phenomenon is the most acute in occupations related to care and household activities, which is the least paid and women-dominated work (ILO, 2018; Jokela, 2019; Marchetti et al., 2021).

According to some of our interviews, men are essentially paid the same as female workers in the sector (FNV). Although some indicators of gender based discrimination in pay have been observed by the same Dutch trade unionist: “Men simply are not the preferred workers because women are perceived as having this natural talent for cleaning. Female workers are more valued, yet men earn the same.” These considerations seem to converge with the earlier mentioned research suggesting that the gender pay gap closes faster

in low-pay, precarious jobs, whereby women and men tend to receive similarly poor wages (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Fritsch, Verwiebe & Liedl, 2019).

That said, the gender pay gap must also be considered across sectors to assess to which extent domestic work is valued equally to jobs of equivalent skills and hardship where the latter are performed by men (Pillinger, 2023). It appears from our interviews that such comparison of jobs of equal value is not performed routinely in the sector. This may contribute to the false perception that estimating the gender pay gap in domestic work is irrelevant. Nevertheless, some trade union interviewees did suggest that men industrial cleaners enjoy higher pay levels than female domestic workers, exposing the gender based discrimination in pay.

Moreover, all the trade union interviewees have identified **migrant women domestic workers as persons in the most vulnerable situations in the sector: “particularly those undocumented workers, in informal work, without work permits, experience very bad working conditions”** (SOS Racismo). Concurrent with existing research on the intersectionality of gender and other sociodemographic characteristics such as ethnicity, race, and migrant status increasing the vulnerability to abuse at work (Acker, 2012; Rosette et al., 2018), migrant women domestic workers are indeed more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation at work and possibly comparing to migrant workers in all other industries.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

Existing research confirms high precariousness and casualty of jobs, with a high share of part-time work or extremely long working hours in the case of in-house domestic workers (Jokela, 2017; ILO, 2018). Research has also evidenced that undocumented migration status is associated with slavery-like conditions in the sector (Mantouvalou, 2012; Anderson, 2015; Parreñas, 2015; Pavlou, 2018).

All the interviewed trade unionists from the five Member States have described the work-life balance of domestic workers as “**extremely poor**” caused by **long working hours, weekend and night work, and irregular, unpredictable working hours**. Whereas the working arrangements of **undocumented migrant domestic workers** have been referred to as “even worse than regular workers, **slavery-like conditions**”.

Some interviewees, such as the Belgian and Spanish respondents have observed some recent improvements in the work-life balance of domestic workers, owing to the work of trade unions. Nevertheless, these **modest advancements are only available to regular workers, employed in larger companies, where they can benefit from the direct presence of trade unions**.

GBVH

Studies into the issue indicate that **undocumented domestic workers** are also particularly exposed to **sexual violence and harassment** at work (da Conceição Figueiredo et al., 2018; ILO, 2018; Palumbo, 2017; Papadakaki et al., 2021). The exposure to GBVH increases at the intersection of gender and race, migrant status or ethnic origin. The legal, economic and social factors exacerbate their vulnerability to GBVH, particularly sexual harassment and abuse. Undocumented migrant women domestic workers may be subjected to cultural and gender stereotypes that exacerbate their vulnerability to abuse. Some employers may view these women as “inferior” due to their migrant status, race, or gender, leading to dehumanising treatment. In some cases, domestic workers from certain countries or regions are fetishised or viewed as submissive and easily dominated, making them more likely targets for sexual exploitation.

“Of course, I know it happens a lot because you have the structural violence in a kind of servant-master hierarchical relationship, which breeds GBVH and abuse in the sector.”

NGG

Undocumented migrant workers, lacking legal rights, are highly vulnerable to exploitation. Employers often exploit their fear of deportation to control or coerce them, including through sexual harassment and abuse. With little legal recourse, workers feel powerless, allowing employers to act with impunity. This fear of deportation makes undocumented migrant women reluctant to report abuse, trapping them in abusive situations, as employers may further intimidate them by withholding wages or legal documents to maintain control.

Domestic work often lacks formal contracts, clear job descriptions, or structured working hours, making it difficult to set boundaries

and assert rights. This informality can create opportunities for exploitation, including sexual harassment, as the employer’s authority goes unchecked. Importantly, migrant women often rely on domestic work to support their families, making them economically dependent and less likely to resist or leave abusive situations. Many live in isolation within their employers’ homes, cut off from social support systems and networks that could offer help. This isolation increases their vulnerability, with some employers deliberately restricting their movements and interactions to maintain control.

Many undocumented migrant women come from countries with limited labour protections or have little understanding of their rights in the country where they are employed. This lack of knowledge means they may not be aware of the legal protections they are entitled to if any exist, and they may feel powerless to challenge their employers’ behaviour. Additionally, language barriers can make it difficult for them to access information about their rights or to report abuse.

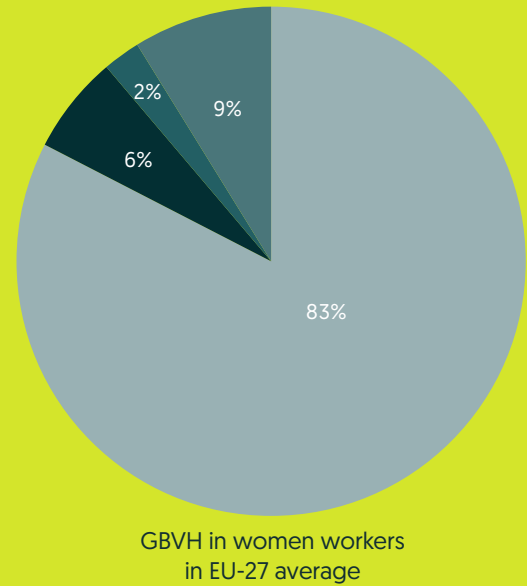
Equally, labour inspectors generally face significant challenges when it comes to entering private homes to inspect the conditions of domestic workers. In most EU Member States, labour inspectors are generally not allowed to enter private homes to inspect the working conditions of domestic workers without the explicit consent of the employer. In countries where domestic work is regulated, labour inspections of private homes still often rely on voluntary cooperation from employers. This can be a major barrier, as employers may refuse to allow inspections, especially if they know that labour violations are occurring.

Indeed, domestic work often takes place behind closed doors, making it difficult for authorities or advocacy groups to monitor. Undocumented workers, in particular, are less visible to government agencies, trade unions, or non-governmental organisations that might otherwise provide

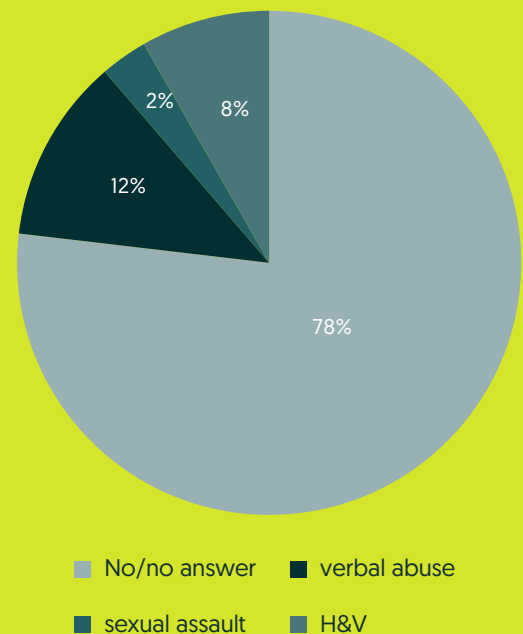
protection or assistance. Many countries exclude domestic workers from labour protections or fail to enforce existing laws, leaving these women with few legal avenues to pursue justice when they face harassment or abuse.

Unfortunately, the **lack of data on the working conditions covering workers employed in all domestic work activities makes estimates of the exposure to GBVH of domestic workers difficult.** Furthermore, as confirmed by the interviewed trade unionists, the experience of **GBVH amongst undocumented migrant workers tends to be largely unreported, obscuring the real incidence of GBVH** in the sector. However, the European workers' survey data shows that as much as 22% of domestic workers employed in care services alone report experiencing GBVH at work (Figure 17). Also, all the trade union interviewees have declared GBVH as a frequent problem, and even on the rise in recent years. The increase has also been attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic-induced staff shortages and the resulting client frustration directed at domestic workers.

Figure 17 GBVH in women in social work activities without accommodation in EU-27



■ No/no answer ■ H&V
■ sexual assault ■ verbal abuse



■ No/no answer ■ verbal abuse
■ sexual assault ■ H&V

Source: Authors elaboration based on Eurofound, EWCTS, 2021

1.4

Occupational segregation in tourism

GENDER PAY GAP

Feminised labour in lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations

Tourism is a sector with a balanced share of women who make up just over 50% of the workforce in the industry [Figure 18]. Nevertheless, the research suggests that **the employment of women in tourism is concentrated in the lower levels of professional careers. Women predominantly work in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, and precarious work contracts** (Costa, Carvalho & Breda, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Robinson et al., 2019; Rydzik & Anitha, 2020; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015).

The use of **feminised labour** in tourism has been primarily identified to reflect the **unequal gender power relations, where women are assigned the share of undesirable and socially devalued work in household and care duties** (Costa et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2013; Alarcon & Mullor, 2018; Mooney, 2018). These activities usually involve e.g. cleaning, dealing with bodily fluids, waste and other unpleasant tasks. Accordingly,

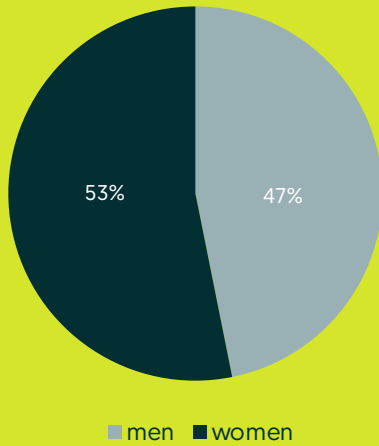
the earnings of women are below those of men. We note a correlation between, on the one hand, the high share of tourism in the national GDP and, on the other hand, the gender pay gap exceeding the EU-27 average of 12,7% recorded for 2022. Cyprus tops the list with a 16,6% gender pay gap in the sector, followed by Croatia (14,6%), and Portugal (14%) [Figure 19 and Figure 20].

“Women in ski tourism are more affected than men as they are employed in services jobs whereas men tend to be employed in skilled, permanent jobs such as mechanics of ski lifts. Men usually hold December - April (full ski season) jobs, and women 1 week contracts.”

CFDT

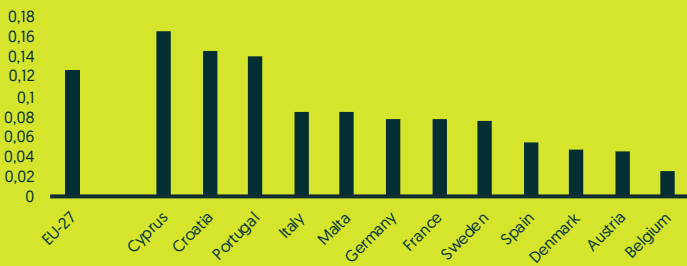
The interview participants represented trade unions across the EU including Austria, Belgium, Germany, Cyprus, France, Italy and Spain. The trade unionists have unanimously emphasised the occurrence of occupational segregation in

Figure 18 Employment in EU-27 Accommodation and Food Services by sex



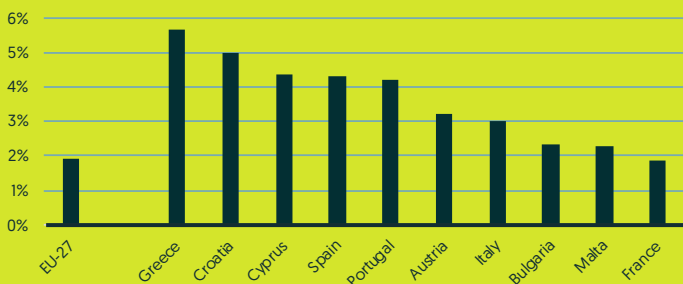
Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, LFS 2023 [lfsa_egan2]

Figure 19 GPG in EU-27 Accommodation and Food services compared to EU-27 average



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, Structure of Earnings Survey, 2021

Figure 20 Share of tourism in national GDP compared to EU-27 average



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, National Accounts, 2021

tourism. **Women in tourism are predominantly recruited for low-skill, low-pay jobs, corresponding to the undervalued labour of housekeeping work.**

“The majority of women are employed in low-level jobs, mostly in manual jobs. In the restaurant industry, there is an archaic subdivision that assigns women to tidying up, cleaning services, and kitchen porters & assistant jobs. In the hotel sector, women are mostly present in tidying up and room attendant jobs, as well as housekeepers on the floors.”

FIST-CISL

All the interviewed trade unionists have confirmed that there is usually a **clear distinction between male and female jobs in the industry**. Men tend to work in higher-skilled, personnel supervisory roles, management, finance, or technical and engineering jobs, whilst women are overrepresented in low-skilled, customer-facing or administrative positions: “There is present vertical segregation. Men are in management positions, and women in lower jobs such as room attendants and cleaners which are feminised occupations” (UGT FICA).

The interviewed trade unionists have also indicated a phenomenon of “**sticky floor**” in the sector. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for women to progress in their career from certain lowest skill, and lowest pay positions. The problem has been particularly observed in room attendants, catering staff, cashiers, as well as tidying and cleaning jobs. Even if there is little room for career advancement, it still involves working a feminised job.

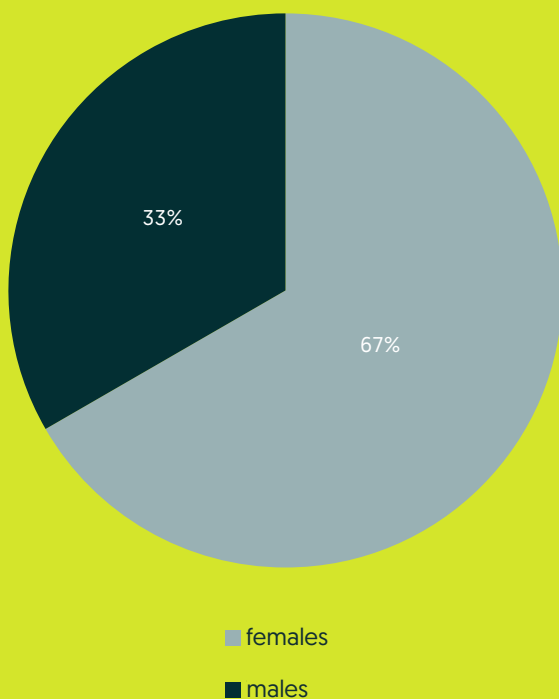
“Well, there are very few possible professional developments when you are a chambermaid, that is to say that to become a governess. It’s quite complicated, and it’s still a feminine job.”

CFDT

Precarious work

There has also been commonly identified the use of precarious work contracts, affecting almost entirely women in tourism. The interviewees observed that women much more frequently hold part-time contracts, and work in outsourced jobs, which are mainly feminised. Likewise, a large share of zero hours, mini-jobs, casual, on-call work has also been reported to be a widespread model amongst women in tourism. These observations are consistent with official data sources.

Figure 21 Part-time work by gender in Accommodation and food service activities, Eu-27, Q4 2023



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurostat, 2024, Labour Force Survey

Indeed, women made up nearly 70% of part-time workers in tourism in the last quarter of 2023

(Figure 21).

The relationship between **part-time work** and **caregiving duties** amongst women workers is a well-studied phenomenon. It is closely tied to traditional gender roles and the unequal division of unpaid care responsibilities in most societies. Women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities for children, elderly family members, or other dependents, are more likely to engage in part-time work as a way to balance both paid employment and unpaid care duties (Waerness, 2018; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Land, 2020; Graham, 2022)

Likewise, women may often be employed in undeclared work. For example, the German mini-jobs model has targeted women to “facilitate” access to the labour market for women with caregiving duties. However, it has been reported by German trade unionists that mini-jobs are not covered by social insurance and that these workers often work more hours than those agreed.

The motherhood penalty

The interviewed trade unionists have also commonly reported that women who have dependent care, particularly childcare, responsibilities experience inferior working conditions and pay. These observations are also concurrent with existing research. Studies indicate that women with children tend to have fewer career development opportunities and remain in lower-paid jobs (Orgad, 2019; Dominguez-Folgueras et al., 2022; Casarico & Lattanzio, 2023; Rowe et al., 2023). Employers may assume that mothers are less committed to their jobs because of their family responsibilities, leading to fewer raises or smaller salary increments. Even after returning to full-

time work, mothers often find it challenging to catch up with their peers in terms of salary, which compounds over time and widens the pay gap.

“Women predominantly perform care duties and that is why work part-time and are discriminated in pay conditions due to childcare duties. In wage negotiations mothers often hear that they can’t stay longer at work, can’t work weekends or holidays, and that is why they can’t receive higher wages”

VIDA

Furthermore, it has been reported in the interviews that even if women are not mothers, they are expected to become ones, and are discriminated already at the earlier stages of their careers in terms of employment, resulting in the poor availability of e.g. better-paid, night work to women.

Migrant workers

Women in tourism at the **intersection of age, ethnicity, race and migrant status have been found particularly exposed to precarious working conditions** in the sector (Alberti, 2016; Alberti & Iannuzzi, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019; Rydzik & Anitha, 2020). Migrant women often face discrimination based on their gender and ethnicity, which can manifest in unfair treatment, fewer opportunities for advancement, and devaluing of their work. The vulnerability of migrant workers can lead employers to exploit them by offering below-minimum wages or withholding payment altogether.

Migrant women workers are frequently paid lower wages than their local counterparts for similar work. This pay gap is often justified by employers citing the workers’ lack of legal status or language skills. In the tourism sector, migrant women may work in environments that lack adequate safety standards, leading to physical hazards and health risks. Long hours without bre-

aks are common, especially in hospitality roles, where migrant women are often expected to work overtime without additional pay. Indeed, all the interviewed trade unionists have confirmed that migrant workers are affected by the most adverse conditions of employment and pay in the sector, being the sum of coexisting gender inequalities.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

Overall, the work-life balance of women in the tourism sector has been assessed by the interviewed trade unionists as poor and no improvements have been observed in recent years. The Eurofound data shows that a quarter of women in tourism experience a poor and very poor work-life balance (Figure 22). Yet, the data does not account for the undocumented migrant workforce, who experience particularly adverse working conditions in tourism.

“In the tourism sector, we record the existence of informal, underpaid work, with a visible presence of migrant women. Their precarious and clandestine condition makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitative working conditions”.

FIST-CISL

The main factors identified during the interviews as driving the disturbed work-life balance of women in tourism are the gender stereotype of viewing women as primary carers, and the lack of adjustable working schedules that would suit the workers, often coupled with poor public childcare.

“It’s definitely very hard to find a balance between work and family. In my opinion, one reason why a lot of women workers leave the sector is that they get the same money when they work in a supermarket and but they know they have fixed shifts.”

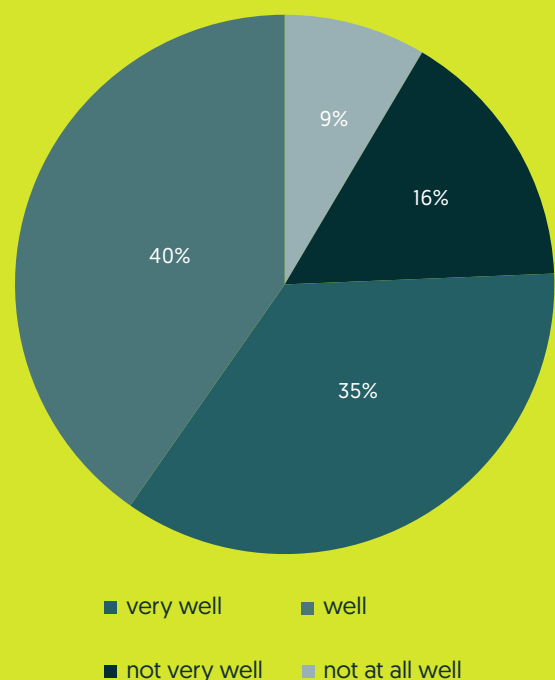
NGG

Due to the nature of the work in tourism, the work organisation involves irregular shift patterns and mobility requirements (in case for example, residents of tourist resorts, tourist guides, and sports instructors) including morning shifts, breaks, and evening work, often extending into late hours. This aspect poses challenges to the work-

life balance of workers in the sector, affecting both men and women, but particularly impacting women, especially those with children.

All the interviewed trade unionists have reported a frequent unwillingness of employers to establish a possibility of adjusting the working time to worker’s preferences, or individual work schedules. Some accounts of slow progress at the company level have been declared by Belgian and Spanish trade unionists, where unions have achieved flexible working arrangements in company collective agreements, however, this is not the most preferred solution for workers who would like to see more convenient possibilities of choosing the working shifts.

Figure 22 WLB of women in Tourism in EU-27



Source: Progressive Policies based on Eurofound, EWCTS, 2021

GBVH

The trade union interviewees frequently reported a lack of national or Eurostat data on the exposure to GBVH in tourism, which made it difficult to assess the incidence of the issue. Several trade unionists observed a recent increase in GBVH in women, particularly perpetuated by customers in hotels, restaurants etc. It has been observed that the **hierarchical relationship** between the customer and women employees in tourism in low-skill, **servant-like jobs** is the main driver of direct manifestations of **sexist behaviours**.

Women in tourism roles, such as hospitality or entertainment, may be objectified, leading clients to treat them as commodities rather than professionals. Also, sexual harassment may be culturally normalised, and victims may feel pressured to tolerate inappropriate behaviour as “part of the job”. Furthermore, women working in isolation are exposed to a higher risk of GBVH, where the absence of witnesses may encourage misconduct directed at female workers.

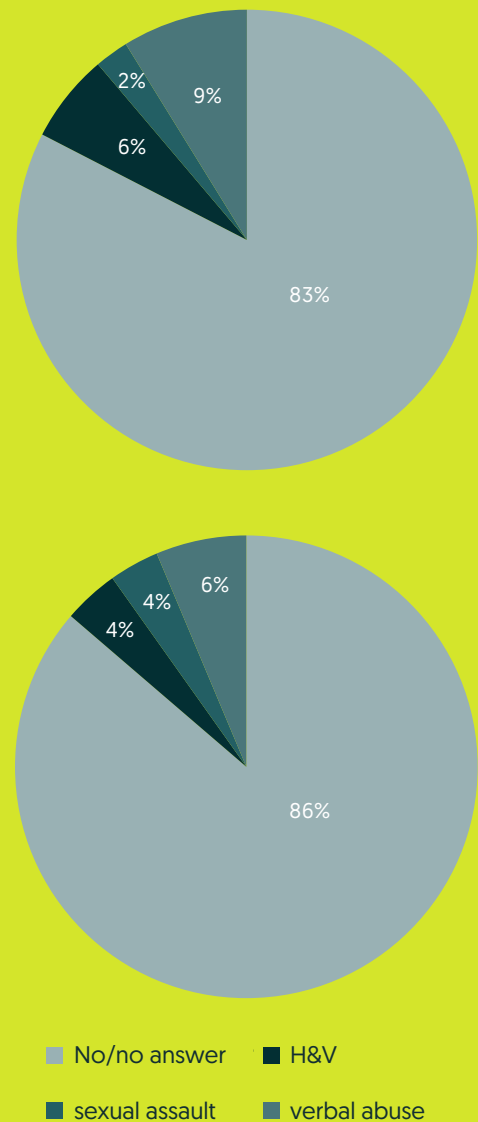
Furthermore, many women in the tourism sector are economically vulnerable, making them hesitant to confront harassers or report incidents due to fear of losing their jobs. Additionally, factors such as atypical working hours and night shifts, exacerbate the risk of third party violence in women workers. The tourism industry often involves socialising, drinking, and partying, which can lead to situations where alcohol-fueled aggression and violence occur. Customers or even co-workers may be under the influence of drugs, increasing the likelihood of violent behaviour. Many women work in informal settings (e.g., hotels, and restaurants), where formal policies against harassment may not be established or enforced.

These observations are confirmed by studies which show that sexual abuse in the sector is primarily perpetuated by third parties: customers and hotel guests (Reuter et al., 2020; Vizcaino, Jeffre & Eger, 2020; Schänzel, H., & Porter, 2023). Similarly, the European Working Conditions

Survey data shows that women in tourism are twice as likely to experience sexual abuse than the EU-27 average, and are most vulnerable to this type of violence out of all four EFFAT sectors

[Figure 23].

Figure 23 GBVH in women workers in Accommodation and Food Services in EU27



Source: Progressive Policies based on EWCTS 2021

2

SECTION

LEGAL PROVISIONS

This section maps relevant legal provisions on gender equality in pay and work-life balance, as well as the prevention of GBVH. The legal policy screening accounts for the most important pieces of global and EU laws, as well as national policies in the core study countries.

2.1

Global and EU legal frameworks

GENDER PAY GAP

ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers (C189)

The ILO Convention C189 constitutes a fundamental global instrument aimed at protecting domestic workers from discrimination and abuse at work. C189 formally recognises domestic work as legitimate and valuable labour, deserving the same rights and protections as any other form of work. This recognition is particularly significant for women, who make up the vast majority of domestic workers globally. By validating their work, the convention helps to combat the societal undervaluation of domestic labour, which is often seen as “women’s work” and therefore less important.

C189 promotes equal treatment by ensuring equal pay, social security, and access to employment benefits for domestic workers. It establishes rights such as written contracts, minimum wages, and decent working conditions, which help reduce the informality and precariousness of domestic work that disproportionately affects women.

The Convention also offers specific protections for migrant domestic workers, addressing their heightened risk of exploitation. This includes rights to retain travel documents and fair recruitment practices, ensuring dignity and respect in host countries.

Additionally, C189 supports domestic workers’ rights to organise and collectively bargain, providing a platform for them to voice concerns and negotiate better working conditions. EFFAT has been calling on EU governments to ratify the C189. Since its adoption in 2011, only 10 European countries have ratified the instrument so far: Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. The ratification of C189 has significant implications for monitoring the country’s compliance with the established protections for domestic workers and handling case complaints.

Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment in employment and occupation

The law serves as the primary EU instrument for ensuring equality between women and men in the labour market, particularly regarding equal working conditions and pay. It establishes the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination based on sex in all aspects of remuneration, including bonuses and benefits.

Member States are required to consider gender equality in their laws and policies, promote transparency in pay structures, and provide access to judicial or administrative procedures for those claiming gender based pay discrimination. In cases of discrimination, the burden of proof shifts to the employer once a complainant presents evidence of discrimination, and victims are entitled to compensation to deter pay discrimination. Member States must also disseminate information on equal treatment and the principle of equal pay to raise awareness among employers and workers.

However, significant weaknesses in the Directive's implementation have been identified by the European Parliament. A 2015 report⁴ noted that while many Member States have aligned their laws with the Directive, effective enforcement remains insufficient. Gender pay gaps persist and have widened since 2006, with only two Member States properly transposing the Directive. The report criticised the lack of clear identification of substantive changes and the failure to modernise equal opportunity laws. Consequently, it urged the European Commission to propose new legislation to the principle of equal pay.

Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions (Directive 2019/1152)

The instrument aims to improve working conditions for EU workers by promoting transparency and predictability in employment. While it addresses employment broadly, it can also help reduce the gender pay gap through increased transparency.

Employers must provide written information about essential aspects of employment, including pay and payment frequency. This transparency helps workers understand their pay conditions, reducing hidden disparities.

The Directive establishes a principle of minimum predictability in work, ensuring that workers are informed about their schedules and any changes in a timely manner. Predictable pay and working conditions can help alleviate uncertainty, particularly for women in precarious jobs.

It also applies to domestic workers and those on short or flexible contracts, prohibiting the abusive use of unpredictable contracts like zero-hour contracts. Member States must limit these contract types to prevent pay uncertainty and inequality.

Workers exercising their rights under the Directive are protected from retaliation, enabling them to seek information about pay without fear of negative repercussions. The law encourages collective agreements to enhance transparency and predictability, which can help address pay disparities.

⁴ Report on the application of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2015-0213_EN.html

Member States are urged to promote awareness and provide guidance on the rights established by the Directive, helping workers understand and assert their rights and contributing to reducing the gender pay gap.

Pay Transparency Directive (Directive (EU) 2023/970)

The Directive, adopted on April 24, 2023, aligns with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and results from the evaluation of Directive 2006/54/EC. It addresses the lack of transparency in pay systems, which hinders the principle of equal pay for equal work, and aims to help workers verify and compare remuneration levels to identify potential gender bias.

The instrument establishes several important obligations for employers. They must disclose initial pay levels in job postings and cannot ask candidates about their pay history, preventing the perpetuation of historical gender based pay discrimination. Employers are also required to implement gender-neutral job evaluation systems to ensure fair pay structures. Workers can request information about their pay and average pay levels by gender for similar roles, helping identify unjustified pay disparities.

Companies with at least 250 employees must report annually on the gender pay gap, including part-time and fixed-term workers. If a gap of at least 5% exists without justification, a joint pay assessment must be conducted.

Workers experiencing gender pay discrimination are entitled to full compensation, including back pay and protection against retaliation when reporting.

Member States must enforce effective penalties for breaches of the Directive, ensuring significant consequences for non-compliance with pay transparency requirements.

Both EFFAT⁵ and ETUC⁶ welcomed the final adopted text of the Directive, highlighting its strengths in closing the gender pay gap. The provisions on transparency about pay levels and disparities enable trade unions to access data necessary for identifying and challenging gender based pay inequalities. With clear information on pay structures and gaps, unions can more effectively negotiate for equitable pay adjustments. The Directive also supports trade union involvement in job evaluation processes, enabling unions' role in assessing and determining the value of different roles, preventing gender bias and ensuring that evaluations are conducted fairly.

⁵ EFFAT Executive Committee unites to Close The Gender Pay Gap <https://effat.org/in-the-spotlight/gender-pay-effat-executive-committee-unites-to-close-the-gap/>

⁶ Parliament backs stronger gender pay transparency directive <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/parliament-backs-stronger-gender-pay-transparency-directive>

Particularly, the principle of a hypothetical comparator has been assessed as a positive development, helping to address the gender pay gap in female-dominated sectors and guaranteeing the right of trade unions to be involved in the job evaluation process (Pillinger, 2023). The concept of a hypothetical comparator, although not explicitly detailed in the text of the Directive, is embedded in Article 19(3). It enables the possibility of establishing a hypothetical comparator of pay in female-dominated sectors where no actual gender pay comparison exists. The principle also allows workers to use evidence such as statistics to demonstrate unequal pay. This helps to address the key issue of achieving equal pay in Europe in the most vulnerable, undervalued, female-dominated sectors, such as domestic work.

That being said, ETUC has voiced concerns over the delay in implementing the Directive. ETUC calls on the EU governments to transpose the Directive immediately, as the lengthy 3-year transposition period could cost women workers on average €17,000 in lost wages by 2026⁷.

⁷ Pay transparency wait would cost women €17,000 <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/pay-transparency-wait-would-cost-women-eu17000>

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-Life Balance Directive (Directive (EU) 2019/1158)

The instrument constitutes the first legal step in promoting gender equality in the labour market by encouraging a more equitable sharing of care responsibilities between men and women.

The directive introduces a 10 working days paternity leave to fathers around the birth of the child. This leave is to be paid at least at the level of sick pay.

The law also establishes a non-transferable parental leave of 2 months, allowing fathers to take on caregiving responsibilities at least during this minimal period.

The instrument also grants the right to each worker a carer's leave of 5 working days and a force majeure leave for a family emergency at a duration specified at the discretion of each Member State. However, the Directive does not specify that both leaves shall be remunerated.

The law also establishes a right to both parents of a child under at least 8 years of age to flexible working arrangements for caring purposes.

The instrument also prohibits discrimination of workers who have exercised their right to the leaves and flexible working arrangements granted by the law.

Although certainly a step towards advancing gender equality in care duties, the practical implementation of the provisions may barely challenge gender stereotypes and women's role as primary caregivers to the benefit of their employment. A comprehensive analysis of the WLB Directive in improving gender equality shows numerous weaknesses in its provisions to achieve the aims of promoting gender equality (Arabadjieva, 2022). The minimum period of paternity leave and non-transferable parental leave are not sufficient to ensure men's equal share of care responsibilities (Chierigato, 2020; Arabadjieva, 2022).

Also, stronger incentives for men to take leave are required to ensure real progress towards gender equality, which essentially consists of greater financial incentives and non-transferability to ensure an uptake of leave by men (Arabadjieva, 2022).

Furthermore, the carer's and force majeure leaves are likely to be taken predominantly by women in those Member States where both leaves are not or only partially remunerated, therefore consolidating the role of women as primary caregivers. The issue can only be addressed by essentially reshaping the Directive to recognise the value of care work and, hence, establishing adequate pay levels during the leaves, ideally at 100% of pay, to ensure a meaningful impact of the instrument in achieving its gender equality goals (Arabadjieva, 2022).

GBVH

ILO Convention 190 (C 190)

The ILO Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 (C190) is the first global instrument to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender based violence. C190 and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206) were adopted at the Centenary Conference of the ILO on 21 June 2019. The ratification of C190 imposes a binding obligation on the respective government to implement laws and policies to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work.

The C190 came into force on 25 June 2021 and has now been signed or ratified by the following 11 European countries (9 EU Member States): Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Following repeated ETUC's demands, the Convention was also ratified by the European Council in March 2024⁸, calling on all EU Member States to ratify the instrument.

The ratifying party must amend or create provisions to prevent and protect victims of work-related, gender based violence, including domestic violence in the workplace, as required by the Convention. The implementing government is obligated to provide detailed reports on adherence to these provisions, and the ILO issues binding recommendations for insufficient implementation.

C190 is a comprehensive international treaty aimed at preventing workplace violence and harassment, recognising the disproportionate impact on women. It emphasises addressing the root causes of gender based violence for effective prevention.

The Convention defines the workplace broadly to include public and private spaces, acknowledging that homes can become workplaces, particularly with teleworking. It also recognises that violence and harassment can stem from work-related communications, including those facilitated by technology, which can enable cyberviolence.

Additionally, the treaty addresses violence committed by third parties and calls for a uniform prevention approach at company and policy levels. It frames workplace violence and harassment as a psychosocial risk to worker safety and health, categorising it as an occupational safety and health (OSH) issue. This introduction of legally binding OSH principles is crucial for addressing psychosocial risks, especially their gendered nature, in light of the lack of regulations on psychological risk factors in EU or national OSH legislation.

ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers (C189)

The C189 aims to protect the rights and improve the working conditions of domestic workers. While the convention addresses a wide range of issues related to the rights and protection of domestic workers, it also includes provisions aimed at preventing gender based violence, recognising that domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to such abuses.

The instrument stipulates that each country ratifying the C189 shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers enjoy effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment, and violence. This protection is extended to all domestic workers, including migrant workers. This directly addresses the need to protect domestic workers, who are often women, from gender based vio-

⁸ Combatting violence and harassment in the workplace: Council invites EU countries to ratify ILO convention <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/03/25/combating-violence-and-harassment-in-the-workplace-council-invites-eu-countries-to-ratify-ilo-convention/>

lence. This can include implementing legal and policy measures that specifically address gender based violence, given that women make up a significant portion of domestic workers globally.

The Convention also requires the ratifying members to ensure that domestic workers enjoy the same standards of OSH as other workers. This can include specific measures to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace, recognising the unique vulnerabilities of domestic workers. The instrument also emphasises the need for effective enforcement mechanisms to protect domestic workers' rights. This includes ensuring that domestic workers have access to complaint mechanisms and legal recourse if they face abuse, harassment, or violence.

Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment in employment and occupation

The instrument recognises that workplace harassment and sexual harassment can be perpetuated on the grounds of sex. Specifically, it defines sexual harassment as “where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment” (Article 2). The law explicitly prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex in the context of employment and occupation. This prohibition includes any form of gender based violence and harassment as forms of discrimination.

The law also obliges Member States to ensure that employers take preventive measures against harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers are required to create a working environment that respects the dignity of individuals and to adopt appropriate policies and procedures to prevent and address such

behaviours. Moreover, the Directive ensures that victims of GBVH have access to effective legal remedies. This includes protection against retaliation for making a complaint or participating in proceedings related to such complaints.

Likewise, the directive facilitates the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws by shifting the burden of proof in cases of alleged discrimination. If a person believes they have been subjected to gender based violence or harassment, it is up to the employer to prove that no discrimination occurred.

Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence

The recently adopted Directive aims to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. The Directive covers various forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, stalking, and cyberviolence.

The instrument establishes stronger protections for victims, including the provision of immediate assistance and support services. This includes access to shelters, legal aid, and counselling. The Directive ensures that victims receive adequate support irrespective of their residence status.

The law emphasises the importance of preventive measures, including public awareness campaigns and educational programmes aimed at preventing violence and changing societal atti-

tudes. It calls on Member States to implement comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of violence and promote gender equality.

Unfortunately, the final text of the adopted Directive did not incorporate the trade union demands expressed during the social partners' consultation phase of the legislative process. Crucially, the Directive does not apply to the working environment, and trade unions have expressed discontent with the Directive "failing to deliver meaningful provisions to make the world of work safer for women workers"⁹

Primarily, the Directive fails to involve trade unions, especially OSH representatives, in preventing workplace violence through social dialogue and collective bargaining. It does not recognise domestic violence as a work-related issue that affects workplace safety or employment. Additionally, it neglects to address third party violence directed at female workers and does not cover various forms of cyberviolence in the workplace. The Directive also lacks protective measures for victims of GBVH at work, including prohibiting employer retaliation against those reporting such experiences. As a result, trade unions continue to demand a new directive specifically addressing gender based violence and harassment in the workplace.

OSH Framework directive (89/391/EEC)

The Directive constitutes an overarching instrument for ensuring minimum safety and health requirements at work. The directive lays down detailed employer obligations on the prevention and elimination of occupational risks, including those present in the psychosocial working environment (Article 6(2) (g)).

The OSH Framework Directive introduces an obligation for the Council to adopt individual directives on the prevention of specific occupational hazards in the working environment. So far, 19 individual OSH directives have come into force, all laying down principles of prevention of occupational risks of the material working environment, and none addressing the psychosocial risk factors, indicated in the Directive.

Nevertheless, the instrument establishes employers' obligation to prevent occupational risks arising from psychosocial factors, including the organisation of work and the use of new technologies, working conditions, and social relationships at work which all present a ground for the emergence of GBVH at work, perpetuated face-to-face and with the use of ICT tools.

An **important weakness** of the OSH Framework Directive needs to be mentioned. The **directive may not apply to domestic workers, as "domestic servants" are excluded from the scope of the Directive** (Article 3 (a)). While EFFAT has not yet received a clear definition of "domestic servants" from the Commission, EFFAT believes that a large portion of domestic workers may de facto fall out of the labour protections granted by the instrument to workers.

This potential exemption constitutes a major impediment in the effective tackling of gender based third party violence and harassment in the domestic services sector, that female domestic workers are particularly exposed to. Furthermore, domestic care and household services are sectors where immigrant female workers often find employment. The conditions are particularly prone to the emergence of racialised third party violence directed at female workers at the intersection of race, gender, origin, and social status.

⁹ Adopted Resolution - On the offensive to combat gender based violence in the world of work <https://www.etuc.org/en/document/adopted-resolution-offensive-combat-gender-based-violence-world-work>

As such, the combination of such factors is conducive to particularly high exposure to the risk of GBVH among domestic workers.

EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-2027

This strategic document is an important recommendation to tackle psychosocial hazards, as well as those arising from teleworking and the digitalisation of the working environment. It is important to note that all forms of violence and harassment at work, as well as discrimination, are considered psychosocial hazards which yet at present have not been recognised in their entity as occupational risk factors in a respective OSH legislation at EU or Member State level.

Therefore, the Commission's commitment to addressing psychosocial risk factors in the current strategic OSH framework constitutes a crucial milestone in regulating the principles of prevention and tackling psychosocial risks at work.

Istanbul Convention

The Istanbul Convention recognises domestic violence as a serious violation of human rights and aims to protect all individuals from violence, including those in domestic work settings. Domestic workers, who are often women, can be particularly vulnerable to various forms of violence, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, both from employers and in their personal lives.

The Istanbul Convention mandates that signatory states provide comprehensive support services for victims of violence, such as shelters, counselling, and legal assistance. This may be particularly important for undocumented migrant domestic workers who more frequently experience violence and can benefit from these services. This can help them escape abusive situations and reintegrate into society.

2.2

National legal frameworks

This section elaborates on the review of national legal frameworks on gender equality in pay and work-life balance, as well as the prevention of GBVH. The screening accounts for the most important pieces of legislation in the nine study countries.

GENDER PAY GAP

The gender pay gap is primarily addressed through **laws on equality and pay transparency**. All study countries mandate equal pay for men and women for the same or equivalent work, with anti-discrimination laws ensuring equal treatment in recruitment, pay, promotion, and training. To enforce this, employers are required to develop action plans to address the gender pay gap, often through company **gender equality plans**.

Belgium, France, and Spain have a strong legislation requiring companies with 50 or more employees to implement gender equality plans and conduct pay audits. Austria, Finland, and Lithuania apply these rules to companies with 25-30 employees.

For instance, the **Belgian Act of 22 April 2012 on gender pay gap transparency** requires gender pay audits every two years, with results shared with employees. If gender pay gaps are found, action plans must be developed.

GERMANY: EQUAL PAY ACT

- GPG pay audits in companies with at least 500 employees
- Reports on addressing GPG in companies with at least 200 employees

Spain's legal framework similarly mandates **wage audits and registers**, while **France uses a Gender Equality Index**, with companies required to publish scores annually.

Employer non-compliance can result in fines and other penalties, ensuring accountability and progress on closing the gender pay gap.

ITALY: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CODE

- Gender equality plans in companies with at least 200 employees

GENDER EQUALITY PLANS IN COMPANIES WITH AT LEAST 50 EMPLOYEES

in

- Belgium: Act on GPG transparency
- France: Gender Equality Index
- Spain: Royal Decree-Law 6/2019; Royal Decree 901/2020; Royal Decree 902/2020

GENDER EQUALITY PLANS IN COMPANIES WITH AT LEAST 20-30 EMPLOYEES

in

- Austria: Equal Treatment Act (GIBG)
- Finland: Equality Act
- Lithuania: Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
- Sweden: Discrimination Act

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Member States primarily implement the Work-Life Balance Directive and national regulations on parental and dependent care leave to support work-life balance. Public childcare services also play a key role, though availability varies. **Nordic countries, Belgium, and Spain** offer the most comprehensive public childcare and policies promoting shared caregiving.

For instance, **Finland and Sweden** provide public childcare for children from as young as nine months, with income-based fees. Both countries also offer extensive parental leave with non-transferable portions reserved for fathers to encourage shared caregiving. In Belgium, the Time Credit System allows employees to reduce work hours for caregiving, with flexible working arrangements supported by law.

In Spain, Organic Law 3/2007 grants fathers four months of non-transferable paternity leave, with six weeks being compulsory. Afterwards, the leave can be split over the first year. Royal Decree-Law 6/2019 promotes work-life balance, requiring employers to offer flexible work arrangements like teleworking and flexible schedules. Public childcare is available for children from birth to age three, with full-day care supported by government subsidies, although availability varies by region. Fees are income-based, with financial assistance for low-income families.

In contrast, **Germany lacks universal all-day childcare**, pushing many women into part-time work due to limited affordable care options. Despite generous parental leave policies, this disparity hampers gender equality in caregiving, as this has been confirmed by a German trade

GERMANY:

Germany: Parental Leave and Parental Allowance Act Caregiver Leave Act; Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Act; Act on Leave for Family Reasons

- 3 years of non-transferable father's leave (must live with the child)
 - Flexible working time available
- BUT
- Lack of all-day public childcare

AUSTRIA, ITALY, LITHUNIA:

Austria: Parental Leave Act

Italy: Decree No. 151/2001; Decree No. 105/2022

Lithuania: Parental Leave Act

- 10-30 days paternity leave
- 2 – 6 months of non-transferable father's leave

BUT

- Poor availability of public childcare

unionist: “The demand for public childcare in Germany far exceeds the supply, with parents recently experiencing unexpected closures of childcare facilities, which is a huge problem. We have communities in Germany that reduce the opening times of childcare to 2 hours a day. And what does it mean for women? This means that, in fact, these are mostly the women who reduce their working time. And the reason why they reduce working time is because they earn less than men” (NGG).

Additionally, **company gender equality plans** in most study countries require employers to promote work-life balance for both men and women. This includes offering flexible work options like shift choices, part-time work, and telework. Employers must ensure both parents have access to parental leave, with a focus on promoting paternity leave to encourage shared caregiving. They must also provide leave options for employees to care for sick or dependent family members.

BELGIUM, SPAIN, FINLAND, SWEDEN:

Belgium: Work and Care
Reconciliation Act

Spain: Organic Law 3/200; Royal
Decree-Law 6/2019

Finland: Parental Leave Act;
Employment Contracts Act

Sweden: Parental Leave Act

- 3-4 months of paternity leave/
non-transferable father's leave
- Flexible working time available
- Accessible public childcare

GBVH

Member States use anti-discrimination and gender equality laws to prevent GBVH at work, with some increasingly addressing it as an occupational safety and health (OSH) issue. Laws prohibit GBVH, including third party violence and cyberviolence.

Belgium, France, Italy and Spain appear to have the most comprehensive legal frameworks addressing GBVH.

In **Belgium**, the **Law on Protection against Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment at Work** requires employers to develop **policies outlining unacceptable conduct, reporting procedures, and consequences**. Employers must appoint a **confidential advisor** to support victims, and the law prohibits retaliation against those who report incidents. Disciplinary actions, including warnings, suspension, or termination, are man-

dated for perpetrators. Additionally, the **Act on Wellbeing at Work addresses gender based third party violence** as a psychosocial risk, requiring all parties to refrain from violence and harassment.

In France, the **Labour Code** prohibits discrimination and harassment based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, requiring employers to take preventive measures. The **Equality between Women and Men Act** extends protections to those facing multiple forms of discrimination. The Penal Code criminalises work-related sexual harassment and violence, with penalties of up to two years in prison and a €30,000 fine. The Labour Code also includes provisions addressing gender based third party violence.

AUSTRIA, SWEDEN:

Austria: Equal Treatment Act (GIBG)

Sweden: Discrimination Act

- GBVH as a face-to-face behaviour explicitly prohibited and defined
- Victims protected and seek compensation

BELGIUM, SPAIN, FRANCE, ITALY:

Belgium: Act on Wellbeing at work; Law on Protection against Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment at Work

Spain: Organic Law 3/2007; Royal Legislative Decree 5/2000

France: Labour Code; Act on Real Equality Between Women and Men; Penal Code

Italy: Decree No. 198/2006; Decree No. 66/2003; The Jobs Act

- Comprehensive employer obligations on GBVH (including GBVH as OSH risk)
- Sanctions/penalties on perpetrators or companies
- Gender based TPV/domestic violence/cyberviolence at work addressed

In **Italy**, laws prohibit discrimination, including harassment based on sex or gender identity, which creates a hostile or degrading environment. Employers must implement policies to prevent and address workplace harassment and take disciplinary action against perpetrators, ranging from warnings to termination of employment. The Jobs Act also recognises **domestic violence as a work-related issue**, granting victims up to 90 days of paid leave.

Spain's Royal Decree 5/2000 imposes **sanctions on employers** for failing to prevent GBVH at work, classifying offences as serious or very serious. Serious offences include verbal abuse or threats, while very serious ones involve physical violence or sexual harassment. Fines and **additional penalties, like suspension of operations**, may apply. The Galician Organic Law 11/2007 addresses **work-related gender based cyberviolence**, and Royal Decree-Law 6/2019 mandates that **employers implement protocols to handle GBVH**, ensuring a safe environment for victims.

Also, **gender equality plans** address GBVH in the implementation of training programs for employees and managers on recognising, preventing, and addressing harassment. Plans include clear policies for reporting incidents of GBVH, ensuring confidentiality and victim protection.

SECTION

3

TRADE UNION PRACTICES

This section describes the outcomes of the qualitative study conducted with trade union interviewees exploring trade union practices and the needs to tackle gender inequalities.

3.1

Comparative

overview

During the interviews, agriculture unions flagged major difficulties in reaching out to workers in small, family farms, which dominate European agriculture.

Farming in Europe heavily relies on seasonal and migrant workers, many of whom are women. These workers often have precarious employment conditions, making it difficult for trade unions to reach out to workers. The temporary nature of their work means they may not be present long enough to engage in union activities or benefit from union protections and become organised.

Equally, a significant portion of agricultural work is informal, with workers lacking formal contracts or legal protections. Women are often overrepresented in these informal roles, where unionisation efforts are particularly challenging due to the lack of formal employer-employee relationships. Furthermore, women workers in agriculture may not be fully aware of their rights or the benefits of union membership, particularly if they are migrants or work in isolated rural areas.

This lack of awareness hinders union organising efforts focused on gender equality. Yet, some **company and sectoral collective agreements** are negotiated in agriculture to address the gender pay gap and provide for improved work-life balance measures.

Similarly, trade unions reported greater difficulties in organising domestic workers on gender inequalities than in other EFFAT sectors such as food and drink or tourism.

Domestic work is a sector that is predominantly female and characterised by unique conditions that complicate unionisation efforts. A large share of domestic work in Europe is informal, with workers often lacking formal contracts or legal protections. This is particularly prevalent amongst migrant workers, many of whom may lack knowledge of their rights, face language barriers, or are undocumented. These factors make them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and less likely to engage with trade unions out of fear of deportation or job loss.

Box 1 EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay (2014)

1. Awareness-raising

2. Job evaluation and classification systems

- avoid gender bias and discrimination in job classification systems
- pursue gender neutral job evaluation
- address the under-representation of women in senior and high paid positions

3. Wage transparency

4. Pay audits

5. Reporting on pay

6. Social dialogue

- crucial role of social partners in addressing the gender pay gap at the workplace
- develop workplace equal pay policies
- enhance the value placed on women's jobs through job evaluation systems free from gender bias

7. Collective bargaining

- raise awareness of the gender pay gap in collective bargaining teams
- make pay equality integral to wage setting
- ensure equity in wages, social protection and employment conditions between all workers, i.e. full-time, part-time, etc.
- minimum wages and pay increases for low paid workers
- increase of wages in female-dominated sectors
- ensure that all benefits are paid to male and female staff equally, e.g. non-monetary benefits, bonuses, pay increments, performance related pay, etc.
- training and guidance on gender equality for employer and trade union representatives in collective bargaining negotiating teams
- promote women's participation in negotiating teams

8. Legislation

9. Accompanying measures

- tackle occupational segregation where women are clustered into female dominated and low-paid job categories or grades
- improve access to higher paid jobs that are typically carried out by men, through skills training and career development for women
- „girls' days“ to break gender stereotypes in the labour market
- working time policies that allow for positive flexibility and family-friendly working hours for male and female workers

Domestic workers, especially live-in workers, are often highly dependent on their employers for housing and basic needs. This dependence can exacerbate the exploitation and make workers hesitant to join unions or demand better conditions, fearing retaliation or dismissal.

The domestic work trade unions responding to the interviews seem to focus their efforts on **policy advocacy in particular on precarious working conditions and exploitative practices used towards migrant workers**. Workplace **collective bargaining is used to a lesser extent** and mostly in larger companies.

Trade unions in the food & drink and tourism sectors predominantly use **collective bargaining** at the company and sectoral levels. This is facilitated by enterprise structure which enables trade union organising. Both sectors are dominated by SMEs, however, large companies employ an important share of the workforce. The employment is more formal and less isolated, although subcontracting practices and the use of the migrant workforce, particularly in tourism, are also present and exacerbate gender inequalities in both sectors.

Yet, trade unions in food & drink and tourism have been able to establish an important presence and use **social dialogue** institutions to negotiate

improved working conditions and pay, with workplace organising facing fewer challenges than in agriculture or domestic work. Accordingly, workplace and sectoral collective bargaining agreements have been established to address gender inequalities, with clauses addressing the gender pay gap, and establishing provisions on work organisation facilitating a gender-balanced share of household and care duties, or company protocols tackling GBVH. For example, Finland has reported the eradication of GBVH owing to persistent social dialogue efforts in combating the issue.

3.2

Collective bargaining

GENDER PAY GAP

EFFAT affiliates continue to be active in the implementation of EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay

[Box 1]. *Just like in the 2017 EFFAT review of the implementation of the Recommendations, the vast majority of our interviewed unions are active in addressing the gender pay gap through social dialogue.*

Sectoral and workplace **collective bargaining is the most frequent trade union action** in tackling the gender pay gap in agriculture, food & drink and tourism, and in domestic work, to some extent. The vast majority of the EFFAT recommended measures are tackled through negotiation of gender pay equality clauses, gender pay audits, obligatory wage registers and reporting on the gender pay gap, or measures tackling the feminised labour, occupational segregation, and glass ceiling still experienced by women in EFFAT sectors.

Gender pay audits and paychecks

The most frequently negotiated measures declared by the interviewed trade unionists across the majority of EFFAT sectors have been **gender pay audits** and **paychecks**. They often make part of trade union negotiated company equality plans that address several aspects of gender inequalities, including the gender pay gap. It appears that the strong activity on these measures is the continuation of EFFAT affiliates' efforts in ensu-

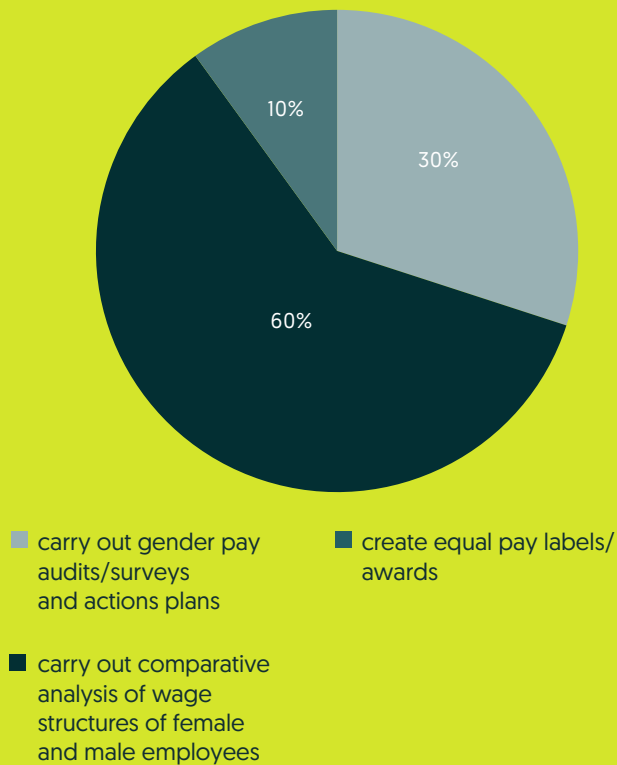
Box 2 the German EG Check tool

The German “EG Check” tool is applicable to companies with over 50 employees and used to identify the gender pay gap by comparing the value of work between different occupations of women and men. The tool corresponds to the concept of the hypothetical comparator referenced in the Pay Transparency Directive. It measures the value of work performed by e.g a female administrative clerk and a male warehouse worker. The tool establishes a set of criteria to identify the value of the jobs and compare the salaries of men and women in these different occupations to identify the gender pay gap.

Source: eg-check.de



Figure 24 EFFAT affiliates measures to improve the monitoring of gender pay gaps



Source: Mid-term review of the implementation of EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay, 2017

ring gender pay equity. According to the 2017 mid-term review of the EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay, almost all EFFAT affiliates practised gender pay audits and comparative gender analysis of wage structures to monitor and tackle gender pay disparities [Figure 24].

The company pay audits are systematic reviews of the company's pay structure to identify and address gender pay gaps. The audit is designed to ensure that workers are paid equitably for equal work of equal value, regardless of gender. The identified gender pay gap, set a negotiated threshold, needs to be rectified.

Such measures have been commonly reported by the interviewed unions across the EFFAT sectors, in agriculture, food & drink and tourism. [Box 5].

For example, the German NGG union representing workers in the food & drink and tourist sectors has provided an account of a Paycheck tool (EG Check) which has been negotiated in their workplace collective agreements. The instrument has been designed to compare the value of different jobs and identify gender pay differences for work of equal value, building somewhat on the concept of the hypothetical comparator [Box 2]. The tool has been designed to evaluate the gender pay

Box 3 EG Check hardship allowance gender pay identification



Comparative aspects	Woman	Man
Operations		
Salary group		
Job demands:		
physical demands		
psychological demands		
Hardship allowance paid (monthly) in the amount of		
Difference monthly		

Box 4 The Austrian Equal Treatment and the VIDA trade union study on the gender pay gap in the cleaning sector

The report compared two wage groups in the industrial cleaning Collective Agreement: Wage Group 6 (mainly women, earning €9.38 per hour for office and production site cleaning) and Wage Group 3 (mainly men, earning €10.38 per hour for specialised cleaning tasks like windows and machines). The assessment found the work to be of equal value, leading to an agreement to equalise wages at €10.38 per hour. The report also recommended changes to the Equal Treatment Law, advocating for non-discriminatory job classification criteria based on equal pay for equal work. It proposed considering factors like care work, psychological and physical job demands, and stress when evaluating jobs, with any resulting pay differences, including overtime and bonuses, to be addressed.

Source: Pillinger, 2021

gap for various aspects such as the gender pay gap in basic pay, overtime, performance premiums or hardship allowance [Box 3].

However, the downside to pay audits and paychecks established by gender equality plans is that these can only be negotiated in companies usually employing over 50 workers, although there are differences between countries.

Where company gender pay audits or gender paychecks have not been directly achieved, trade unions resort to their own studies of the gender pay gap, building upon the hypothetical comparator concept. The findings are used as evidence to negotiate sectoral level agreements rectifying the identified gender pay gaps in female-dominated occupations.

In France, unions have advocated for objective criteria to address the undervaluation of women's skills, such as multitasking, problem-solving, and emotional care. A 2019 **study by the CFDT union compared pay** across eight sectors, inclu-

ding **health and social care (female-dominated)** and male-dominated sectors like building and metallurgy (Pillinger, 2023a). The study found that starting salaries in the health and social care sector were significantly lower than in male-dominated sectors for equivalent skills. This evidence was used to support negotiations for job reclassifications in the public and private health and social care sectors.

Similarly, in 2019, a commissioned by Austria's Ombudsman for Equal Treatment and the VIDA trade union, assessed wage disparities in the cleaning sector. The report compared two wage groups in industrial cleaning: Wage Group 6 (mainly women, earning €9.38 per hour) and Wage Group 3 (mainly men, earning €10.38 per

Box 5 Gender pay equality collective bargaining agreement clauses

Gender pay equality provisions of the CBA concluded b/w Nestlé Group and CFDT, CFE-CGC, CGT, UNSA, CFTC and FO unions, France, 2020-2023

Chapter V on Effective Remuneration of the Nestlé Group CBA outlines the Group's commitment to ensuring equal pay for women and men. Following the 2018 law requiring companies with over 50 employees to establish a Gender Equality Index to measure pay gaps, the Group aimed to maintain an average score of 90 points, targeting 95 to 100 points by 2023. Companies are encouraged to allocate a specific budget during annual negotiations to reduce any identified salary gaps. Key indicators include pay differences between men and women, the percentage of women receiving pay raises compared to men (excluding promotions), and ensuring women returning from maternity or adoption leave receive pay increases if applicable. Also, the parental leave should not contribute to wage gaps.

Gender pay equality provisions of the TCA concluded b/w Danone and IUF (2016)

"Equal remuneration for work of equal value and non-discrimination with respect to working conditions shall be guaranteed to all workers, whether directly employed by Danone or through agencies or an outsourced service provider."

hour). It found the work to be of equal value, resulting in an agreement to rectify the gender pay gap and equalise wages at €10.38 per hour [Box 4].

Sectoral negotiations on pay increases for female-dominated occupations

Another important strategy to address low pay in female-dominated sectors is collective bargaining which prioritises above-average wage increases for lower-paid workers and female-dominated occupations. The Belgian ACV-CSC trade union uses this approach during cross-sector agreement negotiations that are held every two years, which sets the wage norm for sectoral negotiations (Müller, 2019). This is often achieved through a combination of flat-rate pay increases for lower-wage groups with overall percentage increases. Since women are overrepresented in lower-wage jobs, this strategy helps reduce the gender pay gap by flattening the pay structure. The approach also compares wages in female-dominated jobs to similar male-dominated roles, thus using the concept of hypothetical comparator.

“Through collective bargaining, we include rules that first of all guarantee respect for the gender composition of the company workforce in access to training, to avoid the exclusion of female workers because, as mentioned, this is reflected in career progression.”

UILA UIL

In a similar spirit, Belgian trade unions (ABVV/FGTB, ACV-CSC, CGSLB) concluded in June 2022 a sectoral agreement on minimum wage in the Belgian domestic work sector. During sectoral salary negotiations, a significant outcome was the **establishment of a minimum wage, comple-**

mented by a progressive pay scale that increases based on years of service in the sector. This salary structure is publicly accessible and applies uniformly to all workers, ensuring transparency and fairness in remuneration. By setting clear standards, the sectoral collective agreement addresses the issue of low pay for women domestic workers, a group predominantly composed of women, whose work has been undervalued and underpaid. This is an essential achievement of Belgian trade unions in improving working conditions and reducing gender based income disparities within the sector.

Provisions on gender equality in career progression

Other frequent measures in negotiated **collective agreements** have been **provisions on gender equality in access to jobs, training, and career progression.** It appears that over time EFFAT affiliates have become more engaged in tackling the structural gender inequalities through collective bargaining compared to the 2017 EFFAT mid-term review. Back in 2017, EFFAT affiliates seemed to rather concentrate on pay issues [Figure 25]. Our interviewed unions have declared negotiating **collective bargaining provisions addressing the structural discrimination of women in employment driving the gender gap.**

“In tourism, we negotiate clauses that ensure ongoing training programs, with mandatory female labour quotas, aimed at strengthening women’s employment, including **in higher-skilled positions.**”

FIST CISL

For example, the Italian UILA UIL union has addressed **occupational segregation in agriculture** by negotiating measures on training courses for women, valuing the work of women in the

lowest positions, and addressing the barriers to the professional development of women in the lowest skill and lowest pay jobs.

Similar measures have been reported by the Austrian PRO-GE and Spanish UGT FICA in the sector, as well as the Spanish CCOO and UGT FICA unions in **food & drink**.

In tourism, several unions have also declared collective bargaining efforts in **tackling the issue of glass ceiling**. Negotiated measures ensure the **promotion of women to management positions** in workplace collective agreements concluded by the French CFDT and FO, as well as Italian FIST CISL unions. The latter union also negotiates clauses ensuring a balanced share of women at all career levels, including **female quotas in professional training leading to the highest-remunerated positions**.

Figure 25 Measures to reduce the gender pay gap through collective bargaining



Source: Mid-term review of the implementation of EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay, 2017

Prohibition of gender based discrimination in employment and pay

Trade unions also practise negotiating workplace or sectoral collective bargaining agreement clauses directly prohibiting gender based discrimination in employment and remuneration. For example, the **agriculture** FNSZ union in Bulgaria has secured such clauses in **branch collective agreements** in the sector. The Swedish Kommunal and Slovenian ZSSS unions have also confirmed the use of such clauses in their **sectoral agreements**.

“We have 5 branch collective agreements, including irrigation systems, veterinary control, food safety, and agricultural academy scientific staff with negotiated clauses establishing rules for non-discrimination of women in employment and prohibiting gender pay gap.”

FNSZ

Curbing the use of feminised labour

Several trade unions in **the tourism sector**, such as the Spanish CCOO and FeSMC-UGT, as well as Italian FIST CISL unions have negotiated workplace measures tackling the high share of women workers in temporary and part-time work. Accordingly, the unions have prioritised full-time and permanent employment for women

by pushing for collective measures that favour better quality jobs for women, ensuring job stability and career growth.

The unions have also worked to reduce undeclared or informal work in tourism, where women workers lack official contracts and protections.

Efforts have also been made to curb the prevalence of zero-hours contracts, which often leave workers without guaranteed hours or income. These contracts disproportionately affect women, especially in the tourist sector, in hospitality, restaurant or entertainment jobs.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Collective bargaining at the workplace and sectoral levels has also been declared the main instrument in negotiating improved work-life balance across EFFAT sectors, namely agriculture, food & drink and tourism. EFFAT affiliates appear to have intensified their efforts in tackling the patriarchal stereotypes of gender roles in their **collective bargaining strategy**. While in the 2017 mid-term review of EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay 70% of EFFAT affiliates introduced working time policies that allow for positive flexibility and family-friendly working hours for male and female workers, our interviewed unions have reported a wide range of measures **specifically addressed in collective bargaining agreements**, including the **concept of co-responsibility** for caregiving duties as a means to tackle **the structural factors** affecting job quality of women in the EFFAT sectors.

Working time arrangements

The most frequently negotiated measures declared by the interviewed trade unionists across the majority of EFFAT sectors to tackle the poor work-life balance of women have been working time solutions. The most commonly reported have been **adjustable working time clauses**. Such measures have been declared by the interviewed unions in agriculture [Box 6] and all the remaining EFFAT sectors, including the Cypriot SEK union in domestic work.

Several trade unions have reported negotiating collective agreement clauses establishing **fixed and defined notice of working shift** periods, such as work shifts scheduled at least one month in advance, or “**reasonable shifts**”. Such provisions have been declared by the Slovenian ZSSS union in **food & drink**, as well as the Spanish CCOO and FeSMC-UGT, and Italian FIST CISL unions in **tourism**.

Box 6 Adjustable working time arrangements' clauses in CBA for Agro-mechanical workers, UILA UIL, Italy 2018-2020

Article 15 bis on Parental Leave and Assistance to Children of the sectoral CBA for Italian agro-mechanical workers outlines provisions for parental and family support, governed by Legislative Decree No. 151/2001 and subsequent amendments. It allows full-time and permanent workers to request temporary part-time work to care for children up to age 13. Companies must approve these requests within limits based on company size: 1 worker for companies with 3-15 employees, 3 workers for companies with 16-30 employees, and 2% of the workforce for companies with over 30 employees. Workers can return to full-time work once the child reaches 13 or at their request, with 60 days' notice required for part-time requests.

The Cypriot SEK union has negotiated the **prohibition of undeclared working hours** and the extension of the **working time over the limits** established in labour law for the **domestic work sector**. The French FO union **is currently negotiating a 4-day working week in tourism**.

Care and annual leaves

Other frequently declared work-life balance measures include the negotiation of various care, parental, pregnancy, and annual leaves. These range from paid to unpaid leaves or financial help with childcare. For example, the Italian UILA UIL union has negotiated paid dependent care leave and shared parenting in agriculture, while the Slovenian ZSSS union reports on having secured **additional paid and unpaid leave** for agriculture and food & drink workers. The French FO union has also achieved **an obligatory 8 weeks' holiday leave in tourism**. **Additional parental leave** has been negotiated by the Spanish CCOO and FeSMC-UGT, as well as Italian FIST CISL unions **in the**

sector. The latter union has also negotiated public financial help with childcare costs and subsidies to companies hiring women [Box 7].

Box 7 FIST CISL (Italy) bipartite trade union – local governments WLB collective agreements for the tourism sector

FIST CISL has negotiated WLB collective agreements with local authorities to provide workers in the tourism with financial aid for kindergarten or babysitting fees, purchases of school books or aid to companies that hire women.

Box 8 Co-responsibility provisions in the CBA for tobacco leaf processing workers, UILA UIL, Italy, 2014 – 2016

The agreement aims to promote work-life balance, gender equality, and support for parenthood by allowing local-level negotiations on flexible working hours for parents with children under three years old. Additionally, the parties agreed to address childcare challenges, specifically nurseries, through supplementary bargaining. This would involve exploring agreements and support measures to assist families where possible.

Co-responsibility

Several trade unions have also reported on negotiated clauses ensuring an equal share of household and care duties between men and women workers. For example, the **Belgian ACV-CSC and SETCa-FGTB** unions have also secured sectoral measures **promoting gender equality in caregiving duties between men and women in food & drink**. Similarly, the Spanish CCOO and FeSMC-UGT unions have established in their company equality plans measures promoting **men's co-responsibility** for household duties, as well as clauses reconciling work with personal and family life in the **tourism** sector. Also, the Spanish UGT FICA and Italian UILA UIL union have reported such clauses in negotiated equality plans **in agriculture** [Box 8].

3.3

Policy advocacy

GENDER PAY GAP

Policy advocacy in addressing the gender pay gap has been used as **the main instrument by trade unions in domestic work**.

All three interviewed trade unionists emphasised that their primary strategy in combating precarious work and low wages in the sector is through **advocacy on national legislation** and public policy reforms. They view these efforts as essential to addressing the systemic issues affecting workers, particularly migrant women, who often face the harshest working conditions and are most vulnerable to exploitation. Their advocacy work focuses on pushing for stronger labour protections, fair wages, and regulations that curb abusive practices such as unstable employment contracts, wage theft, and unsafe working environments.

By engaging with policy makers, trade unions aim to influence the creation of laws that protect workers from exploitative practices and ensure equal treatment and access to decent work. Special attention is placed on migrant women, who disproportionately face discrimination,

“In the domestic work sector, the wage gap is staggering, many more hours are worked than stipulated by law, without being paid. Raising the minimum wage, valuing the work carried out by women in the domestic work sector, valuing the skills of each worker, and expanding employment opportunities as many women have university studies in their countries of origin and are not recognised, is central to fighting the inequalities affecting domestic workers.”

SOS Racismo

informal employment, and lower wages due to their precarious legal status and limited access to resources. Union efforts include campaigns to raise awareness, building coalitions with other organisations, and presenting research-based evidence to policy makers that highlight the urgency of reform.

The trade unionists also focus on improving enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that existing labour laws are upheld and that companies are

held accountable for violations. By driving legislative change and public policy initiatives, they seek to create sustainable improvements in working conditions, eliminate gender and migrant-based disparities, and promote long-term economic security for workers in precarious sectors. Particularly, the **League of Domestic Workers of the Belgian ACV-CSC trade union** has been very vocal about the exploitative working conditions of undocumented migrant domestic workers. The League has organised several strikes of domestic workers to demand improved legal and labour protections for undocumented migrant workers as well as improved working conditions and pay. The organisation also engages in a social campaign using theatre performing tactics as a means to make undocumented migrant domestic workers publicly visible and organise migrant domestic workers with the trade union movement [Box 9].

The **Dutch FNV** union has been actively advocating for stronger national laws that not only legalise the stay and work of undocumented migrants but also establish effective public structures to combat the abuse of migrant workers. Recognising the vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers, especially those in precarious or informal employment sectors, the union is pushing for comprehensive legal reforms that provide migrants with secure work status, fair wages, and labour protections.

One of FNV's key demands is the **ratification of ILO Convention 189** on Domestic Workers by the Dutch government. This international convention sets labour standards to ensure that domestic workers, many of whom are migrants and women, enjoy the same rights as other workers, such as fair wages, reasonable working hours, and social protection. By advocating for the adoption of this convention, FNV seeks to improve the legal standing and working conditions of domestic workers, who are often excluded from traditional labour laws and protections.

Box 9 The League of Domestic Workers of the Belgian ACV-CSC union



Established in 2017, the League has organised three strikes of undocumented migrant domestic workers in Brussels since 2022, the latest strike took place in June 2024. Through the rounds of strikes, the migrant domestic workers have demanded the right to live and work with dignity. They are advocating for a fair work permit and regularisation of their status, enabling them and others in precarious situations to receive fair wages, stable working hours, and social protections like any other worker.

In April 2023, the League delivered to the Brussels Parliament a petition “Legal Pay Matters” that obtained political attention and support. It contained 3 demands:

1. Protection of victims of GBVH during the complaint procedure;
2. Sanctions on the perpetrators;
3. Access to legal work and job training.

The union's efforts have succeeded in drawing attention to the plight of domestic and migrant workers, elevating their concerns to the national political agenda. By engaging with policy makers, FNV has made the systemic abuse and exploitation of domestic workers a topic of public debate, pressuring the government to consider reforms. This has led to increased awareness and dialogue on the need for comprehensive protections for domestic workers and the ratification of international standards like ILO C189.

In addition to legislative advocacy, **FNV works closely with migrant communities and labour rights organisations** to provide support, education, and representation for workers. Through these efforts, the union not only amplifies the voices of marginalised workers but also contributes to building a fairer labour market in the Netherlands, where the rights of all workers, regardless of their legal status, are upheld.

The **Cypriot SEK** union has been at the forefront of advocating for comprehensive labour reforms aimed at **improving the wages and working conditions of workers in the most precarious sectors**, particularly **domestic work**. One of the union's key priorities has been pushing for **significant increases in the national minimum wage** to ensure that all workers, especially those in low-wage sectors, receive fair compensation for their labour.

In addition to wage advocacy, **SEK is advocating for a law requiring 80% trade union coverage** at the sectoral level to **enhance collective bargaining power for domestic workers**. This would address the sector's low unionisation and fragmented employment, enabling workers to negotiate for better wages, hours, and job security. Increased union representation would help these workers combat abuses like GBVH, unpaid overtime, poor living conditions for live-in workers, and lack of access to social benefits, ensuring better protection and fairer working conditions.

Such legislation would ensure collective agreements are more representative, giving domestic workers a stronger voice in securing their rights.

SEK has been actively raising awareness about the challenges faced by domestic workers, emphasising the importance of recognising domestic work as a vital but undervalued part of the labour market. By advocating for reforms, the union aims **to influence national conversations, encouraging policy makers** to consider long-term solutions to improve labour standards, **protect vulnerable workers, and reduce workplace inequalities**. If successful, SEK's proposals could lead to significant legal and economic improvements for domestic workers in Cyprus, potentially setting a precedent for other sectors with similar issues.

The **Spanish CCOO** union has led a significant initiative to combat the gender pay gap in **the food and drink sector**, specifically focusing on **the canned fish industry** through its **#PescarDerechos campaign**. This campaign addresses the widespread gender based discrimination affecting women in terms and conditions of employment.

As part of the campaign, CCOO conducted a socioeconomic analysis of the canned fish sector, which highlighted the poor working conditions and various forms of gender discrimination, such as unequal pay for equal work. This research has become a foundation for raising public awareness and advocating for policies that aim to rectify these disparities.

The union's efforts include promoting fair pay through collective bargaining, implementing equality plans to combat historical discrimination against women in their professional development, and pushing for the convergence of working conditions in the fish industry with other food sectors. Additionally, the CCOO has called for the establishment of a sectoral observatory to foster social dialogue and drive improvements across the industry. These measures are aimed

Box 10 #PescarDerechos campaign by the CCOO union to combat gender inequalities in the canned fish industry

The fish industry in Spain generates six billion euros in revenue and employs over 28,000 people across 650 companies, with **women making up 60% of the workforce**. Despite the industry's economic significance, working conditions are **precarious**, especially for **women**. Salaries in many job categories are below €14,000 annually, and some are even **below the minimum wage**, reflecting the sector's **undervaluation due to its high female representation**. Within the fish industry, it is women who suffer the worst conditions. **Discrimination originates from selection, recruitment, training and career promotion**. Women face the harshest conditions, including **temporary and part-time contracts, underemployment** (with 32.7% being overqualified for their roles), and a significant **gender pay gap of 29.7%**. The **glass ceiling** in this sector is more of a **concrete wall**, with only 14.8% of women in management positions.

The CCOO union has developed the following **action points** to combat the gender inequalities in the industry:

1. **Labour Inspectorate intervention** to address fraudulent hiring and wage discrimination against women.
2. **Involvement of the Ministry of Equality** to eliminate professional barriers like the glass ceiling.
3. **Engaging large supermarkets** to pressure fish product suppliers to eliminate precariousness and discrimination.
4. **Collective bargaining** to establish fair pay scales based on equal value for equal work.
5. **Implementing equality plans** to correct gender discrimination and improve women's professional development.
6. **Convergence of working conditions** in the fish industry with other sectors. **Creating a sectoral observatory** for social dialogue and to propose sector-wide improvements.
7. **Promoting the anchovy Protected Geographical Indication** to preserve the Cantabrian canneries.
8. **Legal modification of temporary contracts** to equalise access to social protections with fixed-term contracts.



at achieving gender equality and better labour conditions in a highly feminised and undervalued sector [Box 10].

The #PescarDerechos campaign has been instrumental in mobilising workers in the canned fish sector, **leading to several strikes** that emphasised the need for better working conditions. Through these collective actions, the campaign successfully generated a heightened sense of class consciousness among workers, uniting them in their struggle for equity and fair treatment in a highly feminised industry.

One of the campaign's significant achievements was **prompting employers to engage in negotiations with unions**, which **culminated in the conclusion of a national collective agreement for the canned fish sector in August 2022**. This agreement was a crucial step forward in addressing some of the longstanding issues within the industry.

However, despite being at the forefront of this struggle, the **CCOO union chose not to sign the agreement**. The union's decision was based on the **agreement's inadequate measures to address gender pay inequalities**. Specifically, it failed to provide sufficient pay raises for women in the lowest job categories, thereby perpetua-

ting the existing discrimination against female workers employed in the most precarious roles. This outcome highlights the ongoing challenges in achieving genuine equality and fair compensation for women in the sector, illustrating the need for continued advocacy and action¹⁰.

The CCOO's refusal to sign the agreement serves as a reminder of the complexities involved in labour negotiations, particularly in sectors where gender discrimination is prevalent. It underscores the importance of not only achieving collective bargaining outcomes but also ensuring that these agreements effectively address the specific needs and rights of all workers, particularly marginalised groups.

Other policy advocacy actions to tackle the gender pay gap in the EFFAT sectors have been focused on changes to employment policies and improved enforcement of existing laws. For example, the German NGG union has been focusing on the **elimination of mini-jobs** and the **reform of taxation incentives that hinder married women from fully participating in the labour market**. Mini-jobs, which are low-wage, part-time jobs with limited hours and social security benefits, have long been a target of trade unions in Germany due to their contribution to labour market segmentation and precarious employment. Mini-jobs often trap workers, particularly women, in low-paying positions with few opportunities for advancement, social security, or benefits such as health insurance and pensions.

NGG's call to discontinue mini-jobs is part of a broader effort to combat the systemic issues contributing to wage inequality and job insecurity for women. By pushing for an end to these forms of employment, the **union aims to shift women from precarious, part-time roles into more secure, full-time employment with proper**

labour protections and benefits. This move is seen as essential to closing the gender pay gap and ensuring long-term financial security for women, especially in sectors like **hospitality and food services**, where **mini-jobs are prevalent**.

In addition to advocating against mini-jobs, NGG has also **targeted Germany's taxation system**, which includes provisions such as income splitting for married couples (*Ehegattensplitting*). This system **incentivises couples** to have one partner, **usually the wife, work fewer hours or not at all**, as their joint income is taxed more favourably when one earns significantly less. Unfortunately, the **practice discourages many married women from pursuing full-time careers**, reinforcing traditional gender roles and **contributing to gender disparities in the labour market**. NGG aims to reform these taxation policies to promote equal participation in the workforce, enabling both partners to contribute without facing tax penalties.

The union's broader campaign emphasises the need for the labour market and taxation policies to adapt to the changing roles of women in society. Their efforts target the creation of a fairer and more inclusive labour market, aiming to empower women economically and replace precarious, low-wage jobs with stable employment. If successful, these proposals could lead to significant labour reforms that enhance women's economic independence and reduce gender disparities in the workforce.

Furthermore, NGG, just like the **Belgian ACV-CSC union** is advocating for improved **enforcement and better implementation of existing gender pay equality laws** in their respective countries. While legislation aimed at closing the gender pay gap exists in both nations, these unions argue that the laws are not effectively enforced, and gen-

¹⁰ The fish canning agreement, which CCOO did not sign because it "condemns women to another four years of discrimination," is now online https://industria.ccoo.es/noticia:636139--Ya_esta_en_la_web_el_convenio_de_conservas_de_pescado_que_no_firmo_CCOO_porque_%E2%80%9Ccondena_a_las_mujeres_a_otros_cuatro_años_de_discriminacion%E2%80%9D&opc_id=08570d3f0ee2962a3fa2f326ca6141a8

der based wage disparities persist, particularly in sectors where women are overrepresented in low-wage jobs.

In Germany, the NGG union criticises the limitations of existing gender pay equality measures, such as the Equal Pay Act, which allows individual employees to request salary information to identify discrepancies. The union argues that this law has limited effectiveness due to its narrow scope and workers' fears of retaliation. To address this, NGG is advocating for stronger enforcement mechanisms, including mandatory pay audits in companies and higher penalties for violations of gender pay equality regulations. Their goal is to close the gender pay gap, especially in sectors like **food services and tourism**, where women often earn less than men for equivalent work.

Similarly, the **ACV-CSC union** in Belgium is working to ensure that existing gender pay equality laws, such as the Act on GPG Transparency, are properly implemented. This legislation requires companies to provide annual reports on the wage differences between men and women, but ACV-CSC argues that enforcement is inconsistent and that many employers fail to comply with the reporting requirements. The union is calling for more rigorous monitoring and enforcement by labour inspectors, as well as greater transparency in wage reporting. ACV-CSC is also advocating for the use of wage audits and pay gap assessments in collective bargaining negotiations, ensuring that gender pay equity is a priority when sectoral agreements are made.

Both unions **emphasise that legal frameworks alone are insufficient to achieve gender pay equality without proper enforcement, oversight, and a cultural shift in the workplace.** They advocate for stronger government involvement in ensuring compliance, as well as collaboration with social partners, including unions, employers, and policy makers, to create a comprehensive approach to narrowing the gender pay gap.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Trade unions in **agriculture and domestic work** have increasingly turned to **policy advocacy** focused on **improving work-life balance** as a strategic response to the unique challenges of organizing and collective bargaining in these sectors. These industries are often characterised by informal work arrangements and precarious employment conditions, making traditional union organising more complex. In this context, advocating for policies that promote better work-life balance serves as a means to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of workers, particularly women, who make up a significant portion of the workforce in both sectors.

For instance, trade unions have called for measures such as adjustable working hours, paid family leave, and improved access to childcare services. These initiatives not only aim to enhance workers' quality of life but also seek to strengthen union membership by addressing issues that resonate deeply with workers' experiences. Research shows that when unions advocate for work-life balance policies, they can increase engagement among workers who might otherwise feel disconnected from union activities (Brochard & Letablier, 2017).

In contrast, **other sectors tend to concentrate on collective bargaining to address work-life balance** issues. This approach often involves negotiating specific agreements that cater to the needs of their workforce, such as overtime pay, shift preferences, and holiday entitlements. While this can be effective, it may not fully address the broader structural issues that contribute to work-life imbalance, especially the gender stereotypes around caregiving and the poor availability of accessible public care services.

Therefore, a key demand from trade unions across all sectors represented by EFFAT is **the urgent need for improved access to affordable public childcare and elderly care services**. This demand reflects a broader recognition that accessible care services are crucial for supporting

“We have some agreements on flexible arrangements, but it’s always hard as long as you don’t have public childcare, or for example in some parts of Germany we still have childcare that opens only from 9:00 to 12:00 and two times a week from 2:00 to 4:00, Yes, that’s.”

NGG

workers, particularly women, who often bear the primary responsibility for caregiving alongside their professional commitments.

The push for enhanced childcare and eldercare services aligns with efforts to promote work-life balance and gender equality in the workforce. Research shows that affordable care options can significantly reduce the barriers that prevent workers, especially women, from fully participating in the labour market, thereby addressing issues of job precarity and wage disparities (Olchawski, 2016; ILO, 2023).

This has been particularly voiced by the Austrian, Belgian, German, Lithuanian and Spanish unions, whereas the Swedish Kommunal union would like to see **childcare made available for parents working night shifts**.

Trade unions have increasingly emphasised the need for improved public policy on work-life balance, advocating for changes in both legal frameworks and social service provisions. For instance, the **Italian UILA UIL union** in the **agriculture sector** has **proposed legislation** that includes several key measures to **support working parents**. These measures encompass wage supplements for both compulsory and optional maternity leave, **allowing mothers to work part-time while receiving full pay** for the first year of their child's life. Additionally, the proposal calls for **30 days of compulsory paid paternity leave at 100%**, to be taken within the first five months after a child's birth.

Similarly, the **Spanish UGT FICA union** has been pushing for the **introduction of a non-transferable dependent care leave for all workers**. This policy aims to mitigate the temporary absences of women from the workforce, which often negatively impacts their career progression. By securing this leave, the union seeks to create a more equitable environment that allows both men and women to fulfil their caregiving responsibilities without sacrificing their professional development.

3.4

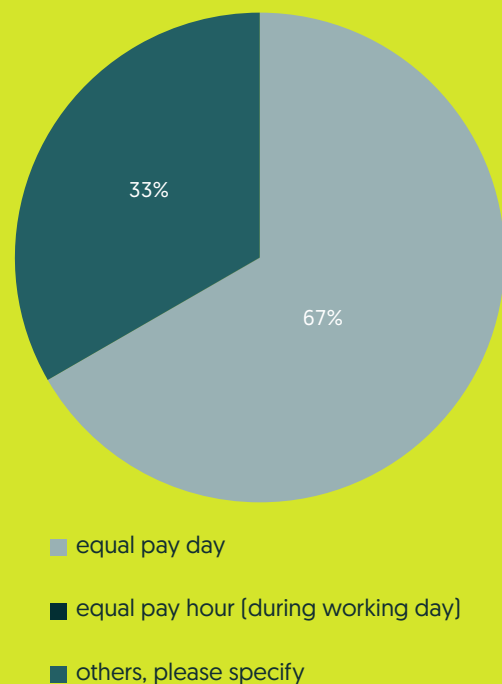
Other activities

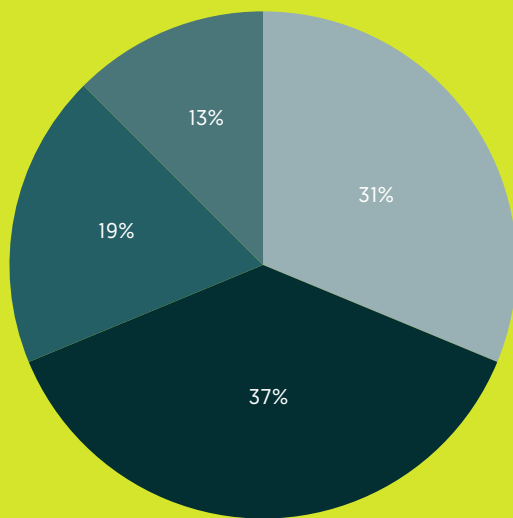
GENDER PAY GAP

Trade unions also invest substantial efforts into practices beyond collective bargaining and policy advocacy on gender pay equity. These activities are primarily aimed at **raising workers'** awareness of labour rights, including the right to equal pay for women and men. These measures continue the work that EFFAT affiliates have pursued in implementing the EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay, as reported in the 2017 mid-term review (Figure 26).

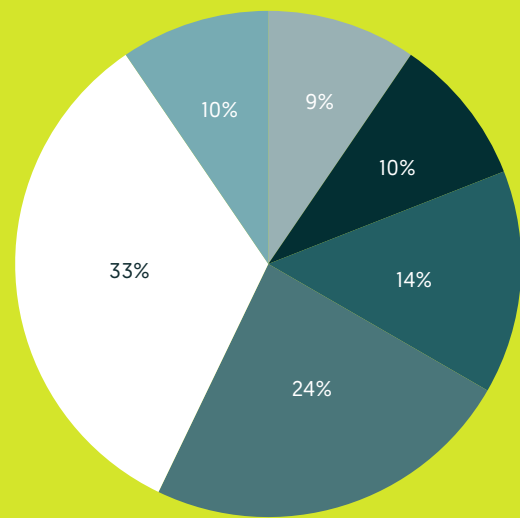
The current efforts often target migrant workers in EFFAT sectors, particularly in **domestic work**. For example, the Cypriot SEK and Dutch FNV unions carry out awareness raising and information activities, targeting migrant domestic workers who are not organised with a trade union, on legal labour rights and those established in collective agreements. The awareness raising activities are also considered a way to **organise workers**, particularly in the domestic work sector

Figure 26 Mid-term review of the implementation of EFFAT Recommendations on Equal Pay, 2017





■ conferences ■ seminars
■ demonstrations ■ others



■ posters ■ leaflets
■ postcards ■ films
■ use social media ■ others

The SEK union is also actively involved in awareness raising actions **in tourism**. The union disseminates information on labour rights and minimum wage law amongst workers and students of tourism-related curricula.

Trade unions in food & drink and tourism also report on **litigation support measures** available to workers seeking justice for gender based discrimination. The Austrian VIDA, Cypriot SEK and Polish Solidarność unions offer **financial and legal help** to workers, or assist workers in mediation and court proceedings launched for discrimination in pay and career progression.

Trade unions may also engage **in direct actions** in cases of severe labour rights violations. For example, the Dutch FNV union organising **domestic workers** has resorted to direct actions when informed of grievous abuse suffered by undocumented migrant domestic workers, such as sexual abuse or enslavement. FNV members have directly liberated undocumented migrants who

had their passports withheld by their employers in private households. The involvement of delegates is explained by the fear of undocumented migrant domestic workers being deported to their countries should the police be informed of their situation.

“Some of our members have liberated migrant domestic workers from houses where their passport had been taken away and they were kept locked in, and couldn’t go outside, or couldn’t contact their family.”

FNV

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The **awareness raising** activities are also widely used across EFFAT sectors to promote an improved work-life balance and gender equality in the share of caregiving duties. The Spanish CCOO, UGT-FICA and FeSMC-UGT unions are actively involved in information campaigns on **co-responsibility** in household and care duties between men and women. The unions practise such activities amongst agriculture, food & drink and tourism workers. These involve the dissemination of information and worker guides, as well as promoting workplace practices that enable improved reconciliation of work and family life.

For example, the *Artemisa* project carried by the UGT union promotes co-responsibility, also as a means to improve career prospects and reduce part-time work of women as primary carers [Box 11].

The unions also invest efforts in assisting workers with legal help in the negotiation of individual, adjustable working time arrangements. Such support measures are widely practised by the vast majority of interviewed unions in all four EFFAT sectors.



Box 11 The co-responsibility project,

UGT, Spain



Spanish UGT union has been carrying out an *Artemisa* project dedicated to training, awareness raising and advice for the promotion of work-life balance and co-responsibility for care duties between men and women in the workplace. The project is subsidised by the Secretary of State for Equality and Against Gender Violence through a subsidy granted and provided for in the General State Budget for the year 2023.

Source: <https://proyectoartemisaugt.org/>

3.5

Implementation of the EFFAT Zero Tolerance recommendations

Trade unions across the EFFAT sectors declare an active engagement with the implementation of the [EFFAT Zero Tolerance recommendations](#).

Collective bargaining

Collective bargaining has emerged as a crucial strategy for trade unions in **the food and drink and tourism sectors** to combat GBVH (Figure 27 and Figure 28). These sectors have made significant strides in addressing GBVH through **workplace collective agreements** and **internal company protocols**. The successful implementation of these measures can be attributed to several factors, including the stronger presence of trade unions and more established social dialogue structures within these industries.

In both sectors, unions have negotiated collective agreements that specifically address GBVH. These agreements often outline clear definitions of GBVH, provide protocols for reporting incidents, and establish responsibilities for employers to ensure a safe working environment. For instance, in the food and drink industry, unions have been successful in integrating anti-harassment clauses into collective agreements, which outline the procedures for address-

ing complaints and the consequences for perpetrators (Box 12). Similarly, in the hospitality sector, unions have achieved an anti-harassment policy including third party harassment by customers or suppliers (Box 13).

In addition to collective agreements, many companies have developed internal protocols aimed at preventing and addressing GBVH. These protocols typically include clear reporting procedures and support systems for victims, training programs for employees and management, raising awareness about GBVH, and fostering a culture of respect (Box 14).

Figure 27 Implemented EFFAT Zero Tolerance for GBVH recommendations in food & drink

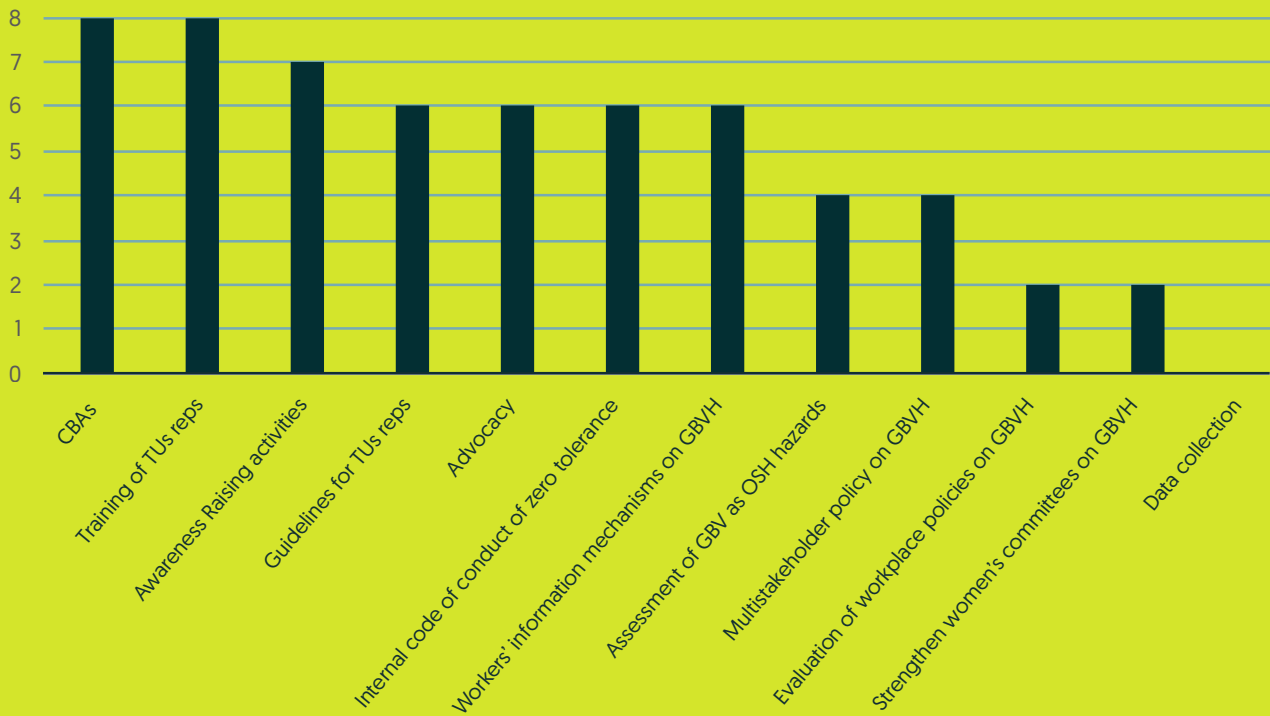
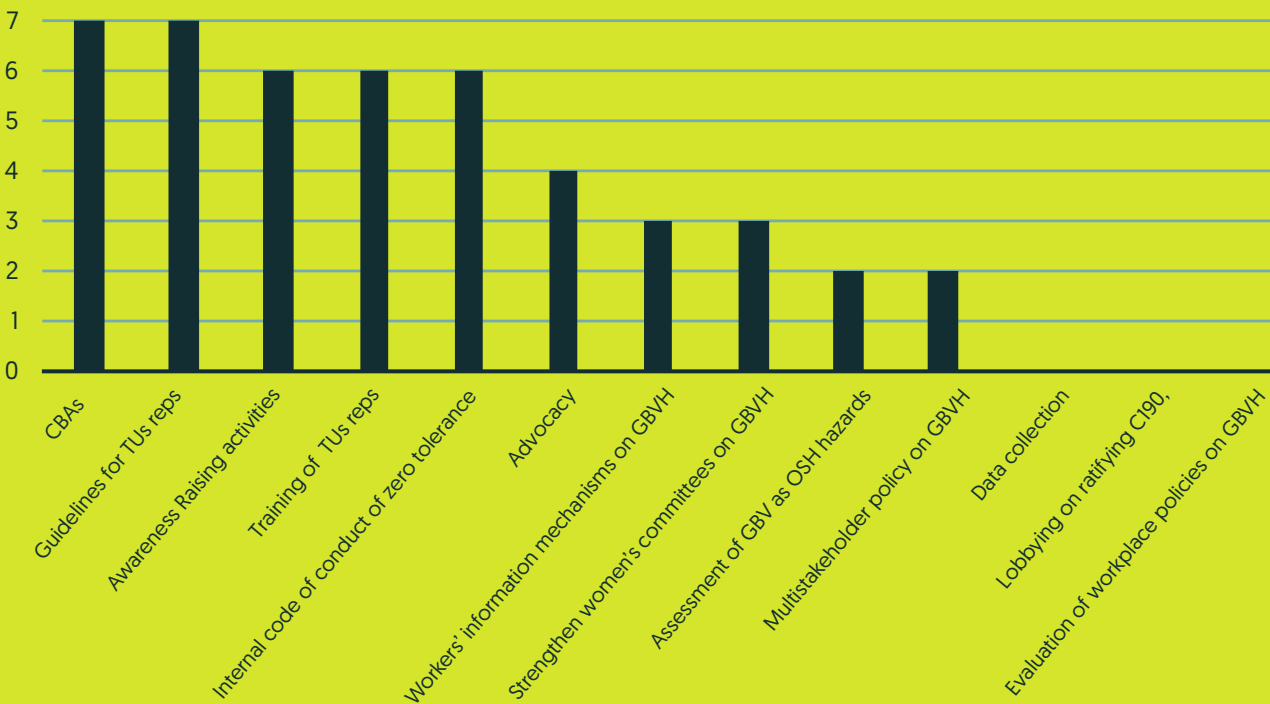


Figure 28 Implemented EFFAT Zero Tolerance for GBVH recommendations in tourism



**Box 12 Sexual harassment policy
of the Chiquita – IUF/Colisba
transactional company agreement,
2013, Annex to Chiquita-IUF/Colisba
TCA 2001**

The company has a strict policy against sexual harassment of employees and job applicants, stating that such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. This policy applies to all individuals involved with the company, including employees and non-employees. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances or conduct that affects employment decisions or creates a hostile work environment.

Employees are entitled to work in an environment free from such harassment and discrimination based on various characteristics. The company emphasises that harassment will not be tolerated, and any individual found to have engaged in such conduct will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Employees are encouraged to report any sexual harassment complaints to their supervisor. If the supervisor is involved in the misconduct, employees can report the issue to designated officials, such as the Director of Human Resources. Complaints will be investigated promptly and confidentially, ensuring that the privacy of the reporting individual is maintained to the greatest extent possible.

Any party dissatisfied with the outcome of a sexual harassment investigation has the right to appeal the decision by submitting written consent to a specified official, such as the Gender Committee or a designated contact manager. The company prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports sexual harassment and considers it a serious violation of its policy. Any individual found to have retaliated will face disciplinary actions, which may include dismissal.

**Box 13 MELIÁ-IUF Joint Commitment
on preventing sexual harassment
Annex to the MELIÁ-IUF international
framework agreement
of December 9, 2013**

Meliá and the IUF are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, ensuring career development for all individuals, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. This commitment emphasises the protection of employees' dignity, rights, and non-discrimination.

Both parties recognise the detrimental impact of sexual harassment in the workplace, which disproportionately affects women but can also impact men and individuals of various sexual orientations. They aim to address sexual harassment comprehensively, ensuring it is not tolerated in any context, including interactions with customers or suppliers.

To combat this issue, Meliá and the IUF focus on educating employees about what constitutes sexual harassment, the expectations for conduct, and the reporting mechanisms available for confidential complaints. In cases where the perpetrator is a Meliá employee, they may face penalties such as redeployment or dismissal, regardless of their position within the company. The parties have identified actions and best practices for communication and follow-up to reinforce these commitments within the organisation and its affiliated entities.

Meliá prohibits any form of retaliation or victimisation against employees who report or observe sexual harassment, as long as the reports are made in good faith based on factual evidence. The company is committed to collaborating with representative trade unions affiliated with the IUF to promote awareness and understanding of its harassment prevention policies.

Box 14

Example of GBVH company protocol in a CBA on Career Development and Well-Being at Work concluded b/w Mondelez Group and CFDT, CGT and CFE-CGC, France 2020

The procedure for handling incidents of **gender based violence and harassment (GBVH)**, beyond sexual harassment, involves six key steps:

Observation: Identify or suspect an incident, offer help to the victim, and refer them to a manager or OSH representative. **Who takes action?** → **Any employee or person responsible for the prevention of GBVH (including elected representatives)**

1. **Reporting:** Inform the direct supervisor and appropriate manager (HR or OSH services) of the situation. **Who takes action?** → **Any employee or person responsible for the prevention of GBVH (including elected representatives)**
2. **Investigation:** Meet with the victim, assess the frequency and severity of the incident, and evaluate risks if no action is taken. **Who takes action?** → **Manager/HR/OSH Services**
3. **Action Plan:** Share findings with relevant parties, investigate further, and implement a tailored action plan based on the seriousness of the case. **Who takes action?** → **Manager/HR/OSH Services or establishment of an Investigation Committee (depending on the gravity of the situation)**
4. **Monitoring:** HR conducts regular follow-up meetings to ensure the action plan is implemented, returning to earlier steps if needed. **Who takes action?** → **Manager/HR/OSH Services**
5. **Consolidation and Archiving:** Summarise the investigation, assess the action plan's effectiveness, and anonymise and archive the case for future reference. **Who takes action?** → **HR**

The effectiveness of these measures in the food and drink and tourism sectors can also be linked to the robust presence of trade unions and well-developed social dialogue structures. A strong union presence often leads to greater collective action, enabling workers to advocate for their rights more effectively. Additionally, established social dialogue frameworks provide a platform for ongoing discussions between unions

and employers, facilitating the continuous improvement of workplace policies and practices related to GBVH.

Awareness raising and policy advocacy

In the **agriculture** and **domestic work** sectors, addressing GBVH through collective bargaining has encountered significant obstacles due to the fragmented nature of the workforce. These sectors often consist of a diverse group of workers who may be dispersed across different regions and working conditions, making it difficult for unions to organise effectively. This fragmentation not only complicates collective bargaining efforts but also weakens the bargaining power of workers who may fear retaliation or job loss for speaking out.

“We have a lot of information but the problem is that we cannot reach the employees. It’s very difficult because the membership rate is a lot lower in Finland in agriculture than in the industrial sectors. We have quite a lot of people as union members in general, but not in agriculture, and I think this is it. We don’t have that kind of a tradition in this sector as people were working previously in the farms, not as workers but as unofficial helpers.”

Teollisuusliitto

As a result, unions in these sectors have turned towards **awareness raising initiatives** and **policy advocacy** (Figure 29 and Figure 30) to address GBVH. They focus on educating workers about their rights and the importance of addressing GBVH, thus empowering them to recognise and report such incidents. This proactive approach aims to foster a culture of zero tolerance for harassment

and violence, encouraging solidarity among workers and prompting employers to take the issue seriously.

For instance, the sectors' unions engage in community outreach programs, workshops, and training sessions to highlight the impact of GBVH and equip workers with the knowledge to advocate for themselves. Policy advocacy efforts often involve demanding stronger legal protections and better enforcement mechanisms to safeguard workers' rights in these industries, as the actions of the **ACV-CSC Belgian League for Domestic Workers**, for example. Some unions, such as the **Bulgarian FNSZ** are particularly active in raising awareness of GBVH in the sector with long-term ongoing information campaigns and approaching the problems as an OSH issue.

Research indicates that raising awareness and advocating for policy changes can lead to more comprehensive strategies for combating GBVH in fragmented workforces. For example, studies have shown that awareness campaigns can significantly enhance reporting rates and contribute to a more supportive environment for victims (Khokhar, 2020).

“My organisation is almost 10 years old. We have a constant campaign. We call it “Let’s open the eyes for the women in agriculture”, trying to address exactly the social tolerance toward the violence itself, but also to prepare our people how to defend and how to act in such situations.”

FNSZ

Figure 29 Implemented EFFAT
Zero Tolerance recommendations in agriculture

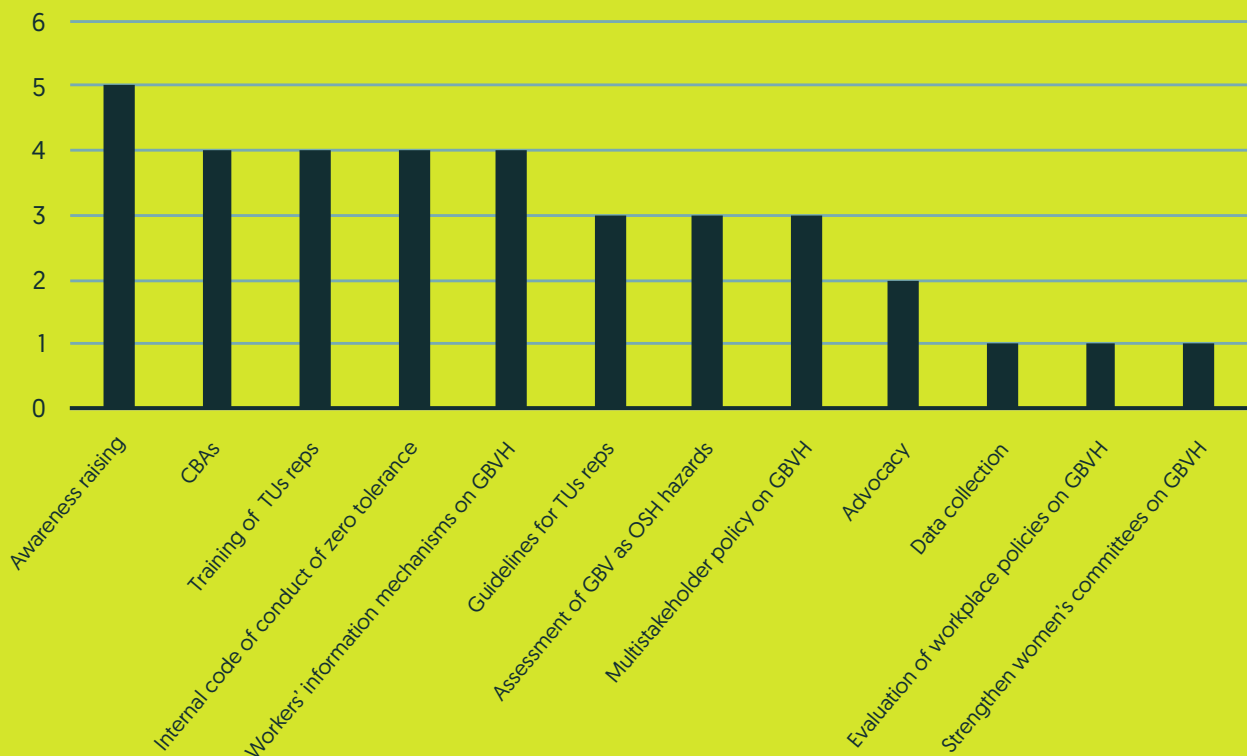
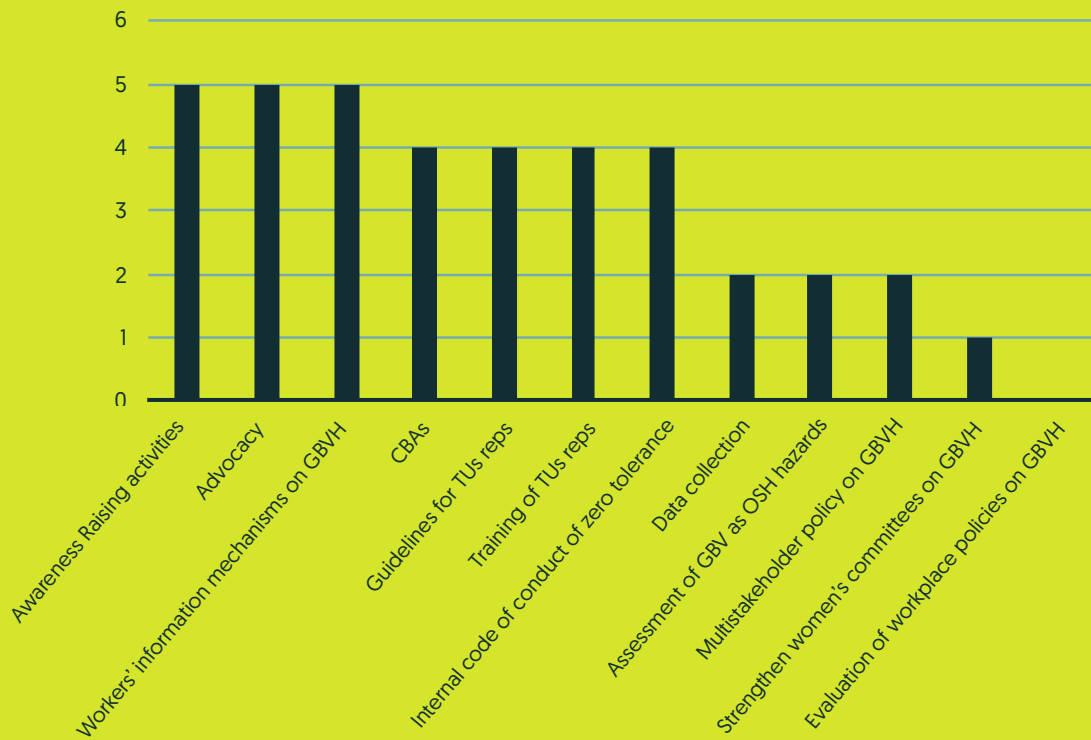


Figure 30 Implemented EFFAT Zero Tolerance recommendations in domestic work



Nevertheless, some trade unions have achieved negotiation of clauses in **branch collective agreements** in the sectors. For example, the Italian **agriculture**, the UILA UIL union has agreed with agro-mechanical workers, securing 6 months of leave (including 4 months of paid leave) for victims of GBVH [Box 15].

Notwithstanding, **in agriculture**, the unions report essential problems with reaching out to isolated workers on the issue. Awareness raising efforts are conducted at the central union level to get through to the workers in non-unionised workplaces, however, this remains a challenge as the impact remains limited. Union representatives note that without established networks or direct engagement, it is challenging to convey essential information to these workers, who might be unaware of their rights or available support services. As a result, there is an ongoing need for innovative outreach strategies, including partnerships with local organisations, community

Box 15 Provisions tackling GBVH in a CBA for agri-mechanical workers, UILA UIL, Italy

Art. 33 - Mobbing, Sexual Harassment And Violence Gender

Under Article 24 of Legislative Decree No. 80 of 2015, female workers who are part of protection measures related to gender based violence have the right to take a leave of absence for up to six months, with a minimum of four months paid. This leave can be utilised over a three-year period, and employees can choose to take it on a daily or hourly basis. During this leave, workers receive an allowance equivalent to their last salary.

leaders, and online platforms, to better connect with isolated workers and foster a supportive environment.

“Our main strategy in the cleaning sector is that we should make the problems visible to the outside world. So we are very focused on getting attention in the media and trying to get the public opinion behind workers. The other thing is we should be the we should offer help when people are in this situation and from our organisation there is this help, but it’s mainly from my leaders and shop stewards.”

FNV

Raising awareness of GBVH and organising workers in domestic work also remains a significant challenge. Unions are actively working to reach out to these workers, including undocumented migrant women, through social campaigns and educational initiatives that highlight the issue of GBVH and the support available from trade unions.

Many undocumented migrant workers are hesitant to report incidents of GBVH due to their fear of contacting the police, which could lead to deportation. This reluctance makes it even more critical to expose the prevalence of GBVH in the sector and to educate workers about the resources and support that trade unions can offer. By fostering awareness and encouraging solidarity, unions can help create a safer and more supportive environment for these vulnerable workers.

Although workplace collective bargaining is the most practised strategy by the unions in **food & drink and tourism**, the interviewed unions also actively engage in awareness raising activities. These primarily target the workplace culture of tolerance for sexist behaviours. For example, the **tourism** trade unions shared a common observation that **employers are not willing to eradicate GBVH as there is a culture** assuming that

“**GBVH simply comes with the job**” and needs to be accepted as part of it. For this reason, unions find it crucial to act on the education and training of both workers and employers on zero tolerance for GBVH at work in the sector.

“Training, education and awareness raising, I think it’s true that within the equality plans we do a lot of training in equality, it’s already a requirement, it’s like a basic measure. I think we should have mandatory training to raise awareness and improve understanding of what gender violence is, especially since it is rooted in society.”

FeSMC-UGT

“The insufficient implementation of laws like the AGG, despite being well-crafted, is largely due to a lack of awareness and the denial of the problem by companies and working councils. Sexual harassment is a pervasive issue, affecting every woman, although there is a significant disconnect in understanding what constitutes harassment, particularly among men. The root of sexual harassment lies in power dynamics and societal structures, where such behaviour is used to objectify women and reinforce hierarchies, rather than being about sexual attraction. To address this issue, a shift in mindset is needed both individually and societally.”

NGG

Tolerance for sexism has also been observed in food & drink. The trade unions have flagged the problem of the insufficient workplace implementation of anti-discrimination laws. The interviewed officials report that this is due to the **poor awareness of employers and workers on the nature of GBVH** and the view that “the job comes with a risk of GBVH that somehow is accepted”.

Policy advocacy in tackling GBVH has been used to some extent by the interviewed unions across the EFFAT sectors. The efforts have been mainly invested in placing demands on national governments to ratify the ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment at Work, in these countries that have not ratified the instrument yet. So far, 11 European countries (9 EU Member States): Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom have ratified the C190. The ratifications are recent and have taken place between 2021 and 2024 and the instrument is in force in all the listed countries but Portugal and Romania where it will enter into force in 2025. As of now, there are no available reviews by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) of the European country reports on the implementation of C190. As the reports are generally submitted every two to five years, we can soon expect implementation reports from such countries as Greece, Italy, Spain or the UK who ratified the instrument in 2021 or 2022. It needs to be emphasised that the ratification alone of the Convention is not sufficient to effectively address work-related GBVH. Governments need to adequately implement the instrument in their national laws and practices to achieve this goal.

EFFAT affiliates can play an essential role in the effective implementation of C190 in their countries, primarily through the monitoring of employer compliance with the provisions of the Convention. This includes verifying if employers have implemented workplace policies that prevent violence and harassment, provide support to victims, and ensure accountability for perpetrators. Equally, through collective bargaining, unions can integrate the principles of C190 into workplace agreements, making its provisions legally binding within specific industries or companies. This is crucial for sectors where government regulation may be weak or slow to implement, such as **agriculture or domestic work**,

allowing unions to directly negotiate protective measures for workers. Unions can also push for stronger national legal frameworks aligned with the instrument by advocating for stronger legal provisions and demanding governments ratify and fully implement the Convention.

Out of the countries represented by the interviewed unions, the C190 is yet to be ratified by Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, and Sweden. The Austrian VIDA and the Dutch FNV unions have confirmed their active efforts in demanding governments ratify the C190. The Dutch FNV has also been active in demanding the ratification of C189 on Domestic Workers. Also, the recent ratification of the C190 by the EU has been the result of trade union demands, including EFFAT affiliates.

4

SECTION

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section puts forward strategic and policy recommendations to address gender inequalities in EFFAT sectors, building upon both the conducted interviews and workshop discussions held with EFFAT members in February and April 2024.

4.1

Overview of challenges to trade union action

The present study has highlighted a number of obstacles to trade union action to fight gender inequalities.

First, there are internal issues. In the context of increasing precarity and multiple attacks on labour rights, some trade unions may struggle to prioritise gender issues. This is particularly true in agriculture and domestic work. As highlighted in the above section I, agriculture and domestic work sectors may be hampered by lower union density, and thus the capacity to engage, in these two highly precarious sectors. Isolated workplaces and a large share of migrant and undocumented workforce present serious obstacles to union work.

In addition, inequalities can often be underestimated and insufficiently communicated upon, including within trade union organisations. Statistics documenting the state of gender equality are indeed incomplete, if not missing altogether. The relative inability to measure the evolution of inequalities also means that it is not possible to evaluate the real impact of prevention measures, both workplace initiatives and legal provisions.

Second, while social dialogue is unions' bread and butter, workplace dynamics are not always conducive to effective collective negotiations. Here again, agriculture and domestic work may pose a comparatively greater challenge for trade unions due to size and the absence of workplace representation.

Additional workplace specificities make trade union work more arduous. For instance, an unbalanced workforce, male or female, exacerbates the risk of gender inequalities. On pay in particular, the more female dominated the occupation, the lower the pay tends to be. Domestic work provides a clear illustration of this relation. Gender stereotypes can also be stronger in some sectors than others. In agriculture, men usually inherit the land, which puts them in a *de facto* stronger economic position. In tourism, sexual harassment tends to be considered as "part of the job" and flexible working hours incompatible with the nature of the work. Finally, gender biased evaluation mechanisms and precarious work arrangements

are likely to play a significant role in the “sticky floor” phenomenon in several sectors, including food & drink.

Third, legal regulations at global and national levels are improving. However, the sometimes-poor application of legal standards and loopholes in the legal frameworks remain an impediment to effective action.

In light of these multiple challenges, our recommendations are four-fold: ensuring that gender ranks high on unions’ priorities, trade union capacity building in tackling gender inequalities, strengthening collective bargaining and union campaigns, and addressing the weaknesses of the applicable legal frameworks.

Not all suggested actions can be pursued at the same time in all sectors. Factors such as the state of social dialogue and the anchorage of gender stereotypes are likely to influence the choice of strategy. Where relevant, the following sections will highlight possible prioritisation, depending on sectoral dynamics. However, it is important to recognise that there is no one size fits all solution and all strategies need to be adjusted to their local context.

4.2

Gender equality

as a core union priority

Fighting for gender equality is not a new trade union agenda. There are many examples of how trade unions are fighting for women through various initiatives and strategies. However, our discussions with EFFAT members have led us to believe that gender equality may not always rank high on every union's list of priorities.

An essential prerequisite for successful action is that gender equality is considered as a core priority. To this end, the following are in particular indispensable:

- **Internal democracy**, with a balanced gender representation in all union structures and in particular in leadership positions and negotiation teams. Statutory rules on gender balance are necessary.
- **Permanent women committees** within trade union structures.
- **Mentorship programmes** to enhance women's leadership skills and building capacities.

- **Internal union policies** that include a zero tolerance approach to direct and indirect discrimination and gender based violence and harassment.
- **Training and awareness raising** to develop a continuous understanding of gender inequalities at the workplace. These programmes should also help build union strategies, for example, taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups such as undocumented workers, and adjusting organising and mobilising strategies accordingly.

As an overarching structure, EFFAT plays a critical role to coordinate and offer a space for an exchange of good practices. Activities could also include the periodic review of women's unionisation rates as well as the proportion of women in union structures across EFFAT membership.

4.3.

Capacity building in tackling gender inequalities

EFFAT affiliates need to enhance their expertise and strategies to effectively tackle sector-specific gender inequalities and their drivers. Trade unions need to be empowered to make the prohibition of gender based discrimination in all its forms the subject of collective bargaining, workplace training, and policy advocacy. To increase trade union capacity in addressing gender inequalities in EFFAT sectors, several measures can be implemented:

Training and Education

- Trade union representatives need to be educated about gender based discrimination, harassment, and inequality in their sectors. Regular training sessions can be organised to ensure they are familiar with gender issues and relevant laws, such as anti-discrimination legislation and labour rights.
- Providing targeted workshops on gender-sensitive issues, including equal pay, career development, sexual harassment, and work-

life balance, can empower union members to identify and address these issues more effectively.

- Union leadership and members should undergo gender sensitivity training to recognise unconscious biases and the specific challenges faced by women and other marginalised groups in the workplace.

Develop Gender-Specific Strategies,

adjusted to the sector-specific drivers of gender inequalities. Creating detailed action plans focused on tackling gender discrimination through negotiations, collective bargaining, policy advocacy, trade union organising and specific agreements addressing pay equity, career advancement, and work conditions can be an effective way of practically addressing the issues in the EFFAT sectors.

Awareness Campaigns

- Promoting gender equality at the workplace by launching campaigns that raise awareness about gender based discrimination and the benefits of gender equality can help foster a supportive environment for trade union organising, collective bargaining and policy advocacy on the issue.
- Combatting gender inequalities with specific campaigns aimed at addressing the issue in the workplace, often in collaboration with NGOs and government bodies, can drive greater change.

Data Collection and Monitoring

- Collecting data on gender disparities in the workplace, such as pay gaps and the underrepresentation of women in certain occupations or job categories, can strengthen union advocacy. Monitoring progress on the implementation of the concluded collective agreements is also vital for holding employers accountable.
- Setting up systems to track incidents of gender based discrimination and GBVH can provide valuable insights into where the problems lie and how best to address them.

Building Alliances and Networks

- Forming alliances with women's rights organisations and NGOs can enhance the trade union's capacity to tackle gender based discrimination by tapping into additional resources and expertise.
- Collaborating with global unions like IUF, ITUC, or other sectoral confederations to share best practices and receive support in addressing gender based issues.

4.4

Collective bargaining

and trade union campaigns

Unions may wish to reflect on how to best include a gender dimension in their organising and mobilising strategies. The trade union toolkit to gender equality and the suggested clauses for company agreements, both documents accompanying this study report, provide a detailed list of desirable union actions and collective bargaining clauses covering the following topics in particular:

Organising and mobilising strategies addressing women,

especially in under-represented occupations such as domestic work and agriculture. Services may be offered in a way that best fit women workers' needs, for instance, women networks, support of undocumented migrant workers or legal aid to victims.

Some thought should also be given to campaigns specifically dedicated to topics of relevance to women. Recruitment and mobilisation constitute the two sides of the same coin. Trade union campaigns on topics that matter to women prove successful in sparking union recruitment.

Social dialogue advancing gender equality at the workplace.

First, companies should be encouraged to introduce or modernise their gender equality policies, including an unambiguous zero tolerance approach as well as an effective and independent grievance mechanism. The introduction of company policies and grievance mechanisms may be considered a priority action for all sectors, as even the smallest or most isolated workplaces need to have a clear policy in place.

Second, social partners should strive to negotiate equality plans, entailing a series of concrete measures tailored to workplace needs. These complex negotiation arrangements may be more likely to be first achieved in larger firms. Concrete measures can include:

- Actions on the gender pay gap, including pay audits. As described in the above section 2.1, the recently adopted Pay Transparency Directive will significantly increase transparency on pay levels and disparities. The

Directive also paves the way for collective negotiations on pay adjustments and job evaluation processes.

- Trade unions should quickly take ownership of these new legal rights. It could be particularly impactful to develop a set of training tools and model clauses with a view to empowering worker representatives on these aspects.
- Quantitative targets for women representation, such as gender quotas in company management, recruitment and vocational training targets, in proportion to the percentage of women in the occupational category concerned.
- Actions on work-life balance, in particular adjustable working arrangements (at the request of the worker) and thematic leaves. The principle of co-responsibility of family care for women and men should govern these negotiations. Collective agreements reducing the unpredictability of working time are also greatly beneficial to work-life balance.
- Actions on GBVH as per EFFAT recommendations (see section 3.5).

Third, gender based discrimination, harassment or violence should be addressed as an occupational safety and health issue. This implies a duty of care on the employer to provide for the well-being of all workers. Among other, the employer should undertake the responsibility of conducting gender sensitive occupational risk assessments and gender sensitive prevention measures.

Fourth, awareness raising activities, targeting in priority Human Resources and Managers, continue to be an essential tool for fighting gender stereotypes.

Litigation

in support of the gender equality agenda, for instance, targeting repeated offenders. Trade unions in tourism may wish to pay particular attention to this point, considering the high number of GBVH cases reported in this sector.

4.5

Advancing policy

advocacy

While social dialogue can be considered as one of the most effective means of fighting inequalities in the workplace, an enabling legal framework is also key to successful union actions. Trade union campaigns targeting policy makers could therefore be developed on the following topics:

Legal requirement to negotiate equality plans.

A legal obligation to engage in collective bargaining on gender issues can pave the way for effective solutions. As described in the above section 2.2, several countries provide interesting illustrations for what equality plans should look like: pay transparency, recruitment, career development, adjustable working arrangements etc. An obligation to engage in collective negotiations is largely preferable to unilateral action by management.

While some issues may be more appropriate for companies of a certain size, basic requirements need to be in place in all companies, such as the adoption of a gender policy and grievance mechanism.

Inclusion of domestic servants within the scope of the EU OSH Framework Directive

EFFAT has demanded the European Commission to specify the workers termed “domestic servants” in the Directive. While awaiting the reply, EFFAT believes that a large share of domestic workers may not be included in the scope of the instrument. Therefore, the Directive needs to be amended with clear language and the inclusion of all domestic workers in its scope.

EFFAT calls for amending the Directive to explicitly include all domestic workers, who are highly vulnerable due to informal employment, isolation, and lack of oversight. Inclusion in the Directive would provide domestic workers with legal protections, ensuring safer working conditions and addressing risks like chemical exposure, heavy lifting, violence, and abuse. It would also formalise domestic work, granting it equal rights, while aligning the EU with **ILO Convention 189** on protecting domestic workers.

Ratification and implementation of ILO Convention C189 on domestic work, C190 on violence and harassment and Istanbul Convention.

The majority of Member States still have not ratified those fundamental instruments.

The advocacy work should not stop at ratification. An adequate implementation of domestic law is also necessary. Requesting that this implementation should be done through tripartite social dialogue is an important demand.

Strategies in support of migrant women workers.

In particular, victims and witnesses must not fear deportation as a result of lodging a complaint. This is for instance a key demand developed by Dutch unions (see above sections 3.3 and 3.4).

Improved parental and dependent family member leaves; affordable child and elderly care services.

Legal frameworks should strive to incentivise men to engage in care responsibilities. Section 3.3 of this report provides illustrations of trade union agendas for improved public policies on work-life balance.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation and design of all legal proposals. This is a way of ensuring that inequalities are not perpetuated by different branches of the law.

Several issues have emerged in the course of the present research, including for instance the access of women farmers to CAP subsidies. Another important aspect is labour inspections.

Their chronic underfunding is an issue for all workers but with a particularly detrimental impact on women in vulnerable sectors. Similarly, the development of precarious forms of working arrangements should be documented as a key driver of gender inequalities.

Enhanced enforcement

Stronger enforcement of women's rights implies legal rights for victims and dissuasive penalties. The [ETUC report *Safe at work, Safe at home, Safe online*](#) lists a series of recommendations to improve access to justice and the protection of victims. These measures can easily be extended to all forms of gender inequalities.

Building alliances

with other civil society organisations to drive policy advocacy campaigns and increase support for victims in isolated workplaces.

Documenting the review of EU law

The above section 2.1 describes the tangible progress of the EU legal framework. Nonetheless, loopholes remain, either because the work dimension is insufficiently addressed (as is the case for the Directive on violence against women and domestic violence) or due to poor implementation (see for instance the Directive on equal treatment in employment and occupation).

This study has shown how EFFAT sectors are particularly affected by these loopholes. EFFAT can thus play an active role in the periodic review of these EU Directives by documenting their concrete impact. EFFAT is indeed in a unique position to provide bottom up information on the state of gender inequalities in vulnerable sectors. A useful starting point would be to request support in the collection of disaggregated statistics, at sectoral and occupational levels.

4.5

Fight against the far right

The recent rise of the far right on the European political landscape has the potential to further exacerbate the structural gender inequalities in the labour market. The far right's support for the male breadwinner model and patriarchal gender norms may result in a rapid withdrawal from gender mainstreaming policies thereby halting the progress on gender equality in the labour market. Furthermore, the far right's support for reduced government spending on public services, including childcare, may increase the part-time and precarious employment of women and thereby exacerbate the gender pay gap, particularly amongst the most vulnerable women employed in the EFFAT sectors.

It is thus essential for EFFAT and its members to continue the fight against the far right, explaining to workers how populist programmes harm women.

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