

The background features a complex geometric design with various shades of green and grey. A prominent light green diagonal band runs from the bottom left towards the top right. Other shapes include a dark grey triangle in the top left, a dark grey trapezoid in the middle right, and several overlapping triangles and quadrilaterals in different shades of green and grey at the bottom.

ANNEX 2

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

DISCUSSION PAPER
For the 2020 Gender
Equality Review Conference

2020 Gender Equality Review Conference

Discussion Paper

This series of four discussion papers was prepared to inform the Third OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, co-organized by the Albanian OSCE Chair-in-Office, the OSCE Secretariat, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), scheduled to take place on 27-28 October 2020. The papers aim to provide a brief overview of the current state of progress with respect to the implementation of OSCE commitments on gender equality. These working papers, inclusive of proposed recommendations, are meant to provide initial stimuli for discussion at the Conference.

The first discussion paper provides a snapshot of major achievements, remaining challenges, and examples of good practices and recommendations in attaining key OSCE's commitments related to women's political participation. It is based on data contained in various ODIHR's resources on women's political participation, the OSCE's "Internal Report - "Mapping Beijing +25 Implementation and OSCE Commitments", and other relevant sources.

In the second discussion paper, women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict

reconstruction are examined on the basis of OSCE studies, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) as well as other UN reports.

Equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere are the main focus of the third discussion paper, which relies on data from the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and regional reports by the UNECE for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review.

The fourth discussion paper gives an overview of the main achievements and remaining challenges in preventing and countering violence against women in OSCE participating States. It is based on data from country and regional review reports for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review and other secondary sources.

All four discussion papers were prepared by gender advisers and staff in the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR. They highlight good practices drawn from information provided by gender focal points in OSCE executive structures.

OSCE documents relating to the economic empowerment of women

- Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere (MC.DEC/10/11)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Economic Participation in the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/ 8/17)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Human Capital Development in the Digital Area (MC.DEC/5/18)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing Violence against Women and Girls (MC.DEC/4/18)
- Ministerial Council Declaration on the Digital Economy as a Driver for Promoting Co-operation, Security and Growth (MC.DOC/5/2018)
- The 1990 Document of the Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe with commitments to “economic activity that accordingly upholds human dignity and is free from forced labour, discrimination against workers on grounds of race, sex, language, political opinion or religion, or denial of the rights of workers freely to establish or join independent trade unions”; “policies that promote social justice and improve living and working conditions”; and “environmentally sustainable economic growth and development”.
- The 2003 OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, which stresses the importance of developing human capital and ensuring basic social benefits such as safety nets for vulnerable groups.

Commitments in the economic and environmental dimension referenced in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality include:

Introduction

Promoting equal opportunities in the economic sphere is defined as a priority in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004 GAP). Almost all OSCE commitments on gender equality refer to the importance of economic participation of women. Access to employment is key in this respect. Yet, women's labour participation continues to lag behind in most countries. Combined with occupational segregation and unequal distribution of unpaid and domestic work, this *“translate[s] into lower current and future earnings, constraining choices and undermining personal independence”*¹.

For the purpose of this report, labour force participation² is selected as one of the key indicators of economic participation, which is discussed in conjunction with key factors influencing it, including:

- laws and regulations
- domestic work and care
- pay
- digitalization / fourth industrial revolution

Labour force participation

Increased female labour participation is not only important for the attainment of gender equality but also for the economy. A much-cited McKinsey report from 2015 argues that, if all countries matched the progress towards gender parity of the fastest-improving country in their region they could add as much as \$12 trillion—or 11 percent—to the global 2025 GDP. A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) entitled “World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends for women 2017” estimates that under certain assumptions a 25 percent gender gap reduction in economic participation by the year 2025 would boost global employment by 189 million or 5.3 percent.

The overall picture of female labour participation and progress in achieving gender equality is one of considerable variation. Structural barriers and discrimination against women persist throughout the OSCE region, preventing women's full access to the job market. Women face discrimination in recruitment, training, employment conditions, promotions, remuneration throughout the region. The number and share of women and men employed in the informal sector differ between sub-regions and must be taken into account when interpreting labour force statistics.

¹ See United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (2019): Gender-transformative economic and social policies to support the empowerment of women and girls in the ECE region, ECE/AC/28/2019/5, para 2, Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting, 29 and 30 October, Geneva, 2019. (<https://undocs.org/ECE/AC.28/2019/5>). The 56 UNECE member states overlap with the OSCE participating states excluding the Holy See, and Mongolia which is a member state of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

² “The labour force participation rate is calculated by expressing the number of persons in the labour force as a percentage of the working-age population. The labour force is the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed.” (ILOSTAT).

According to the World Bank gender statistics data bank³, female labour participation in the OSCE-area ranged between 85.5 percent and 29.3 percent in 2019⁴. The average and median values are 64.9 and 66.7, respectively — which is virtually the same as in 2017. The gender gap (i.e. the difference between male and female labour force participation) has slightly decreased from 12.86 in 2017 to 12.64 in 2019 (see figure 1 below).

the OSCE region has moved closer to the men's rate, but progress has been extremely slow (see figure 1). In fact, in all 51 OSCE participating States, for which data is available, the share of men participating in the labour force remains higher than that of women.

Between 2011 — the year when the Ministerial Council Decision on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere was adopted — and 2020, the rate of women's labour force participation in

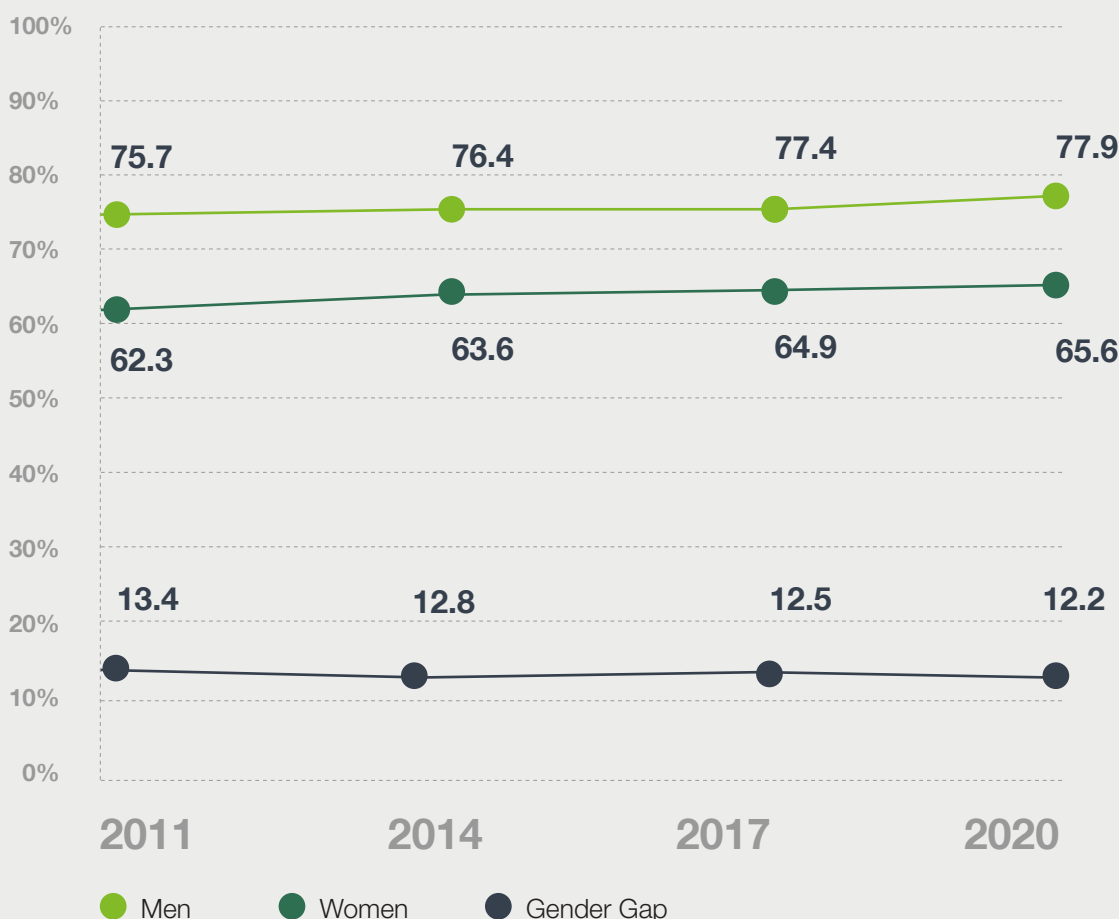


Figure 1: Labour force participation (in percent) by sex and gender in the OSCE region, population aged 15-67, 2017-2020. Calculations are based on ILO estimates available for 51 OSCE participating States. Source: ILO Statistics

³ World Bank DataBank: Gender Indicators Report (https://databank.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.FE.ZS?id=2ddc971b&report_name=Gender_Indicators_Report&populartype=series).

⁴ Includes data for all OSCE participating states except Andorra, the Holy See, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and San Marino.

Economic impact of COVID-19 on women

The COVID-19 pandemic is having different impacts on women and men in various aspects of life. While men represent a higher proportion of global deaths (58 percent according to the World Health Organization (WHO)), women are disproportionately affected by the resulting economic and social fallout.⁵

First, women are more represented in hard-hit economic sectors compared to men. Globally, women make up most of the workers in the formal and informal health and care sector. These professions are some of the most undervalued and underpaid jobs. Informal domestic workers are particularly at risk of economic hardship. Many are without a formal contract, which often implies precarious working conditions and limited access to social-protection rights. In Europe and Central Asia, informal workers have lost an average of 70 percent of their income during the first month of the pandemic.⁶ In addition, women are over-represented in temporary, part-time and precarious employment, which also generally involves lower pay and weaker or no social protection.⁷ For instance, over 70 percent of self-employed women face reductions in paid working hours or job loss.⁸

Finally, the closure of schools and workplaces due to global lockdowns has intensified the burden of unpaid care and household duties for women. While men's overall contribution to unpaid care work has increased, 70 percent of women have reported spending more time on at least one unpaid domestic work chore, such as cleaning, cooking or laundry.⁹ In this context, women are more likely than men to have difficulty in achieving a good work-life balance, particularly single mothers.

Overall, the pandemic's economic consequences, including job and income losses and a looming recession, is likely to further undermine women's economic resilience, thereby increasing their risk of poverty. In this respect, both in Europe and Central Asia, more women (60 percent) than men reported greater difficulties covering basic expenses, such as food supplies, rent and utilities.¹⁰

⁵ UN Women (2020): From Insights to Action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19, New York: UN Women (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (2020): Covid-19 and gender equality (<https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>).

⁸ UN Women (2020): The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary Results from a Rapid Gender Assessment. Istanbul: UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods#view>).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Laws and regulations

Women’s economic participation depends on an enabling environment, both in terms of laws and regulations, social norms and practices. The 2020 “Women, Business and the Law” (WBL) report¹¹ by the World Bank tracks laws that prevent or facilitate the full economic participation of women across six areas, namely mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship assets and pension. Although the report does not measure the implementation of laws, the WBL Index shows the degree of political commitment to gender equality. Of 52 OSCE participating States¹² examined in 2020, eight states score 100 on the index, meaning that there is no discrimination in the selected laws, and eight states score below

80 with 67 being the lowest score. In total, 42 participating States have at least one law in place that creates an obstacle to women’s economic participation. The report identifies reforms introduced between June 2017 and September 2019 aimed at improving gender equality in employment and entrepreneurial activity in 10 OECD economies.¹³ These reforms include a range of measures such as the introduction of legislation to combat domestic violence, the protection from sexual harassment in the workplace, parenting leave for fathers, women’s equal access to financial services, equal pay, equalization of retirement age, and removing barriers for women to enter certain jobs and professions.

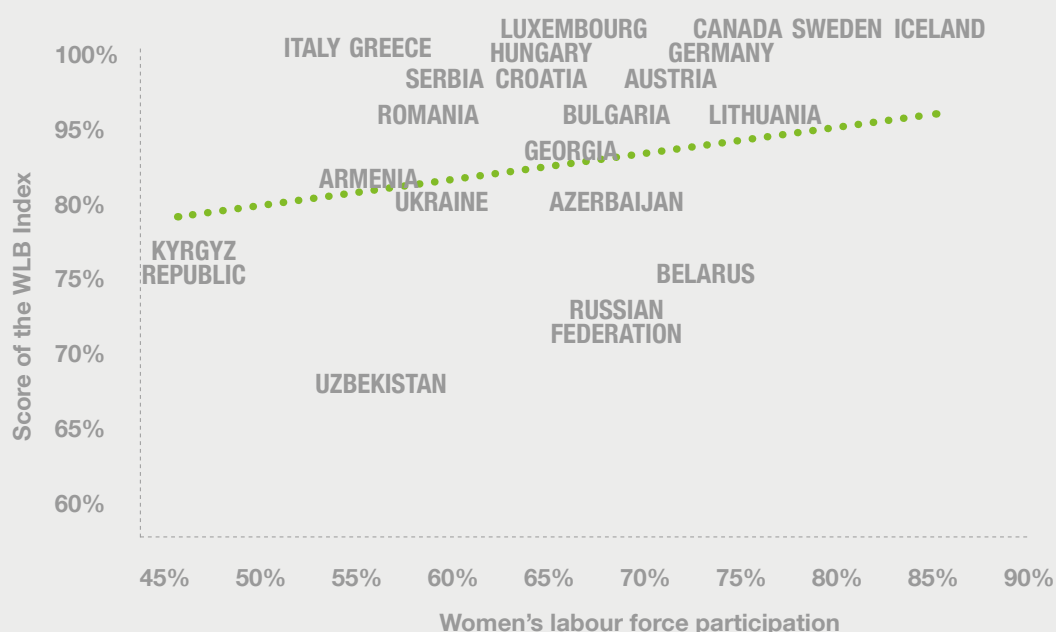


Figure 2: Percentage of women aged 15-64 in the labour force by participating State, and WBL Index scores (2020). Higher values on the WBL Index indicate less legal discrimination. Source: ILO Statistics 2020 and World Bank WBL Index 2020

¹¹ World Bank Group (2020): Women, Business and the Law 2020, Washington: The World Bank (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf?sequence=6>).

¹² Excluding Andorra, the Holy See, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Turkmenistan (<https://wbl.worldbank.org/>).

¹³ Armenia, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Moldova, Slovenia, USA (New York State). See WBL 2020, p 36-43.

Figure 2 shows that there is a link between laws ensuring greater equality of economic opportunity between women and men and higher female labour force participation. There is also a positive correlation with income levels, fertility rates and female education, as well as with the reduction of the wage gap. Increased incomes lead to stronger bargaining power within households and lead to overall better outcomes for women themselves, their children, and their families.

However, despite reforms aimed at the removal of legal barriers and closing loopholes in legislation, progress is uneven among the participating States and change has been slow in the OSCE region. And even though gender-sensitive legal frameworks contribute to women's higher participation in the labour force, discriminatory social norms and practices still play a significant role in confining women to their caring and reproductive roles.

The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)¹⁴ reveals the intensity and various forms of discrimination stemming from the unequal distribution of power between men and women in the family, the economic sphere and public life. This results in restricted physical integrity, lower access to financial and productive resources and civil liberties. Sexual harassment in schools and workplaces for example affects women's education and employment. The lack of child or elderly care facilities or the absence of family friendly job policies which result in an unequal distribution of domestic

responsibilities has a similar impact.¹⁵ "Time poverty" for women and girls results in less time for studies and paid work. Due to domestic responsibilities, 20 percent of Eurasian¹⁶ women aged between 15 and 25 are not in education, employment or training compared to only 2 percent of men.

A number of countries still impose restrictions on employment for women in certain sectors or types of jobs that are deemed hazardous, arduous or morally inappropriate. A large gender pay gap may also discourage women from seeking paid employment. Women are less likely to get bank loans and are more likely to pay higher interest rates or require higher collateral; in turn women's ability to provide collateral to secure a loan is restricted by the low rates of female land- and asset ownership.

GENDER WAGE GAP AND OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Gendered occupational segregation in employment remains a characteristic of the workforce across the region and is a perpetuating factor for the economic disadvantages faced by women, such as the gender wage gap¹⁷.

The gender wage gap remains persistent, despite OSCE commitments that call for gender equality in wages and other international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8 and 10¹⁸.

¹⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019): Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019 Global Report - Transforming Challenges into Opportunities, Paris: OECD Publishing(<https://doi.org/10.1787/bc56d212-en>).

¹⁵ See also section on domestic work and care.

¹⁶ SIGI 2019 Regional Report for Eurasia, OECD, 2019 <http://www.oecd.org/fr/social/sigi-2019-regional-report-for-eurasia-f6dfa21d-en.htm>. The 12 countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

¹⁷ The gender wage gap is calculated as the ratio of the wage of woman to that of a man in a similar position. See World Economic Forum (WEF) (2020): Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Geneva: World Economic Forum (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

¹⁸ SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities.

Many national mechanisms have been put in place—including national laws on equal pay—but to date, no country has closed the gender wage gap and progress in bridging this differential has either stalled or advanced very slowly both at global and regional levels (see figure 3). Gender wage gaps vary substantially within the OSCE area with the EU sub-region having the smallest gap of an average value of 14.8 percent¹⁹ in 2018 among the sub-regions.

The Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere calls on participating States to “establish effective national mechanisms for monitoring progress in this field, such as on closing pay gaps”.²⁰ Some participating States (including the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden and Denmark) have indeed implemented policies and regulations for greater transparency in pay. Iceland also amended its Gender Equality Act to include an equal pay provision requiring an equal pay certification from employers.

Vertical and horizontal occupational segregation disproportionately affect women

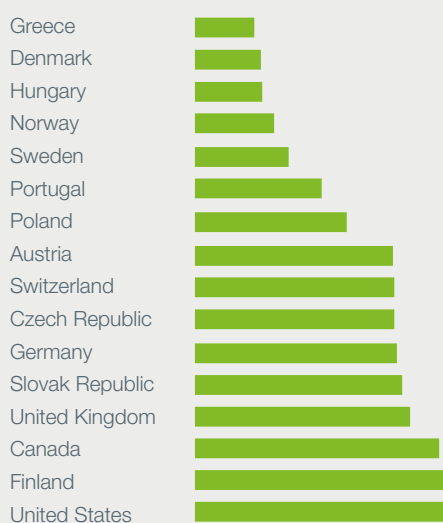


Figure 3: Gender wage gaps in OSCE participating States, 2018
Source: OECD

that are generally employed in lower-paid, non-technical jobs such as care and domestic work or who work in precarious conditions as is the case for part-time and seasonal employees. Working mothers tend to face the highest level of in-job discrimination where adequate work-family policies or paid parental leave are lacking. The ‘motherhood employment penalty’²¹ affects mothers as there are less of them in employment compared to women without children. Also, there is a tendency for wage gap between two categories of women. This penalty coupled with the uneven distribution of unpaid care work and childcare further exacerbate the differential in earnings and occupation not only compared to men but also to other women without dependents.

Women are also heavily under-represented in senior management positions across the entire OSCE region with the notable exception of Poland (41.2 percent), the Russian Federation (42 percent), Mongolia (43 percent) and Latvia (43.5 percent), where a high share of managerial positions are held by women (see figure 4).

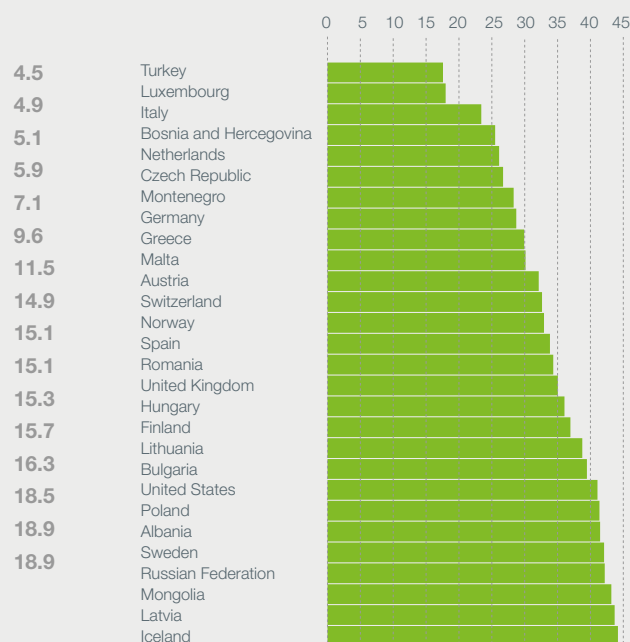


Figure 4: Women's share of employment in managerial positions (senior and middle management), in percent
Source: ILO Labour Force Survey (2019)

¹⁹ As percentage of male gross earning. See Eurostat Gender Pay Gap Statistics (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics)

²⁰ MC.DEC/10/11, para 5.

²¹ https://www.ilo.org/brussels/information-resources/news/WCMS_737634/lang--en/index.htm

DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE

The Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere calls on States to promote the sharing of domestic work, and parental and caregiver responsibilities, by expanding paternity leave; promoting non-discriminatory employment policies and practices and equal access to education and training; taking measures to facilitate combining employment with family responsibilities; and seeking to ensure that any structural adjustment policies and programmes do not have an adversely discriminatory effect on women.”

The 2020 Global Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum has measured the time spent on unpaid domestic work per day by women and men respectively. On the global level, the report finds that “[a]cross

advanced and developing countries there is a negative relationship between women’s relative amount of time spent on unpaid domestic work and economic participation and opportunity gender gaps”.²²

Gender inequalities in domestic work and care are striking, also in countries where the gender gap in labour participation is smaller.

The tendency is clear: the more hours women spend on unpaid work and care, the less they participate in the labour force.²³

A group of participating States (Sweden, Finland, Canada, and Denmark) has one of the highest shares of women’s labour participation (ranging from 75.1 to 81.2 percent), while having some of the lowest rates of time spent by women in unpaid work. In contrast, countries such as Turkey

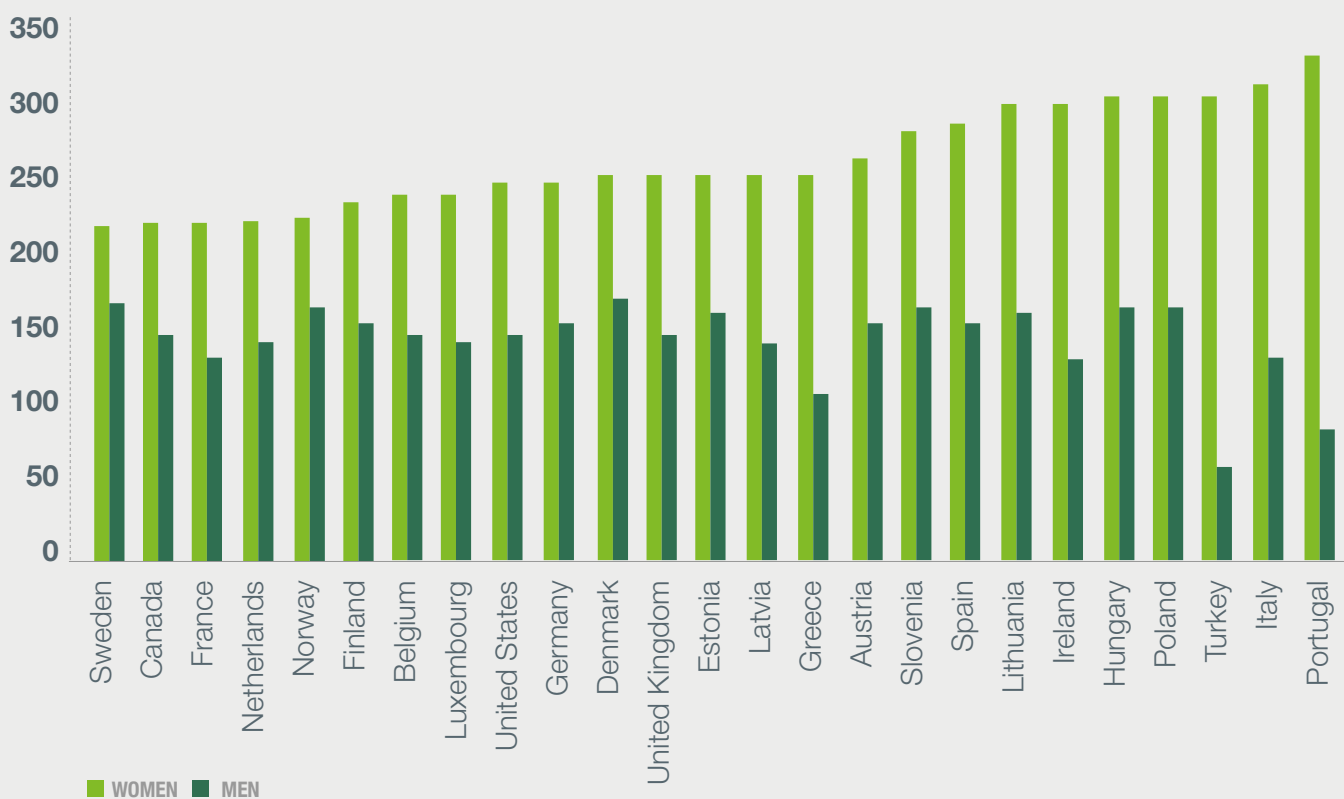


Figure 5: Time spent (minutes per day) on unpaid work by sex and participating State, population aged between 15-64, 2020. Source: OECD statistics

²² WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

²³ Exceptions are North Macedonia and Kyrgyzstan.

and Italy have low shares of women in the labour force (38.8 percent and 56.2 percent respectively) and high rates of time spent by women in unpaid care work. However, correlation is not always as clear cut: In Portugal or Lithuania, for instance, there is a relatively high percentage of women in the labour force (72.4 percent and 77 percent respectively) as well as high rates of time spent in unpaid work by women (328.2 minutes in Portugal and 292 minutes in Lithuania). Presumably, women’s labour force participation in these countries is influenced by other factors.

THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

Rapid digitalization and automatization will transform the labour market and represent crucial opportunities for women as more profitable, high-skilled jobs become available in the next years. Artificial Intelligence offers

great opportunities for women’s economic empowerment but could also reinforce gender stereotypes and discrimination. Diversity among developers could help manage that risk.

The Ministerial Council Decision on Human Capital Development in the Digital Area encourages OSCE participating States to “promote education, vocational training and retraining, in particular for women and girls, and especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as a key measure to reduce digital divides and to advance the empowerment of women by promoting opportunities, including in the economy.”

According to UNESCO, the persistent gender disparity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education is

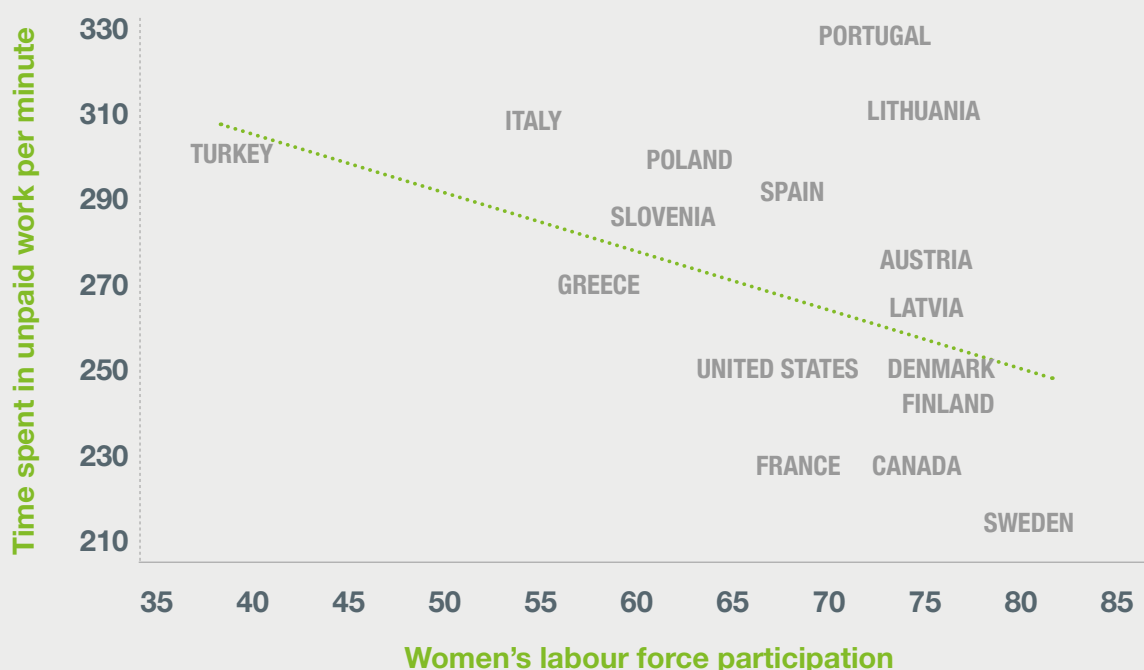


Figure 6: Percentage of women (aged between 15-64) in the labour force and time spent in unpaid care work per minute by participating State.
Source: OECD Statistics (2018) and ILO estimates (2020).

²⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Girls’ and women’s education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), (<https://en.unesco.org/stemed>)

alarming, especially as STEM careers are often referred to as the jobs of the future, driving innovation, social wellbeing, inclusive growth and sustainable development²⁴.

STEM attainment is an important indicator of progress achieved by the participating States in ensuring gender parity in the future of work. Research shows that “earning a STEM degree increases women’s chances to entering high-paying industries by 19% as well as the chances of advancing in the workplace”. According to World Bank data gathered from 42 OECD countries in 2016, an average of 34.2 percent of STEM graduates were women²⁵, but according to the European Commission there are still practically four times more men in ICT-related studies than women in European Union countries²⁶.

This is mainly attributed to the persistence of unconscious bias, which determines what is gender-appropriate and what is not in the labour market. It is also worth noting that many of the high scoring countries on gender equality indexes, like the Nordic countries, are at the bottom half of the list on male/female tertiary STEM education graduates in 2017²⁷.

As shown in figure 7, gender segregation in STEM education leads to gender segregation in employment with men holding the vast majority of jobs in sectors such as Cloud Computing, Engineering, Data and Artificial Intelligence.

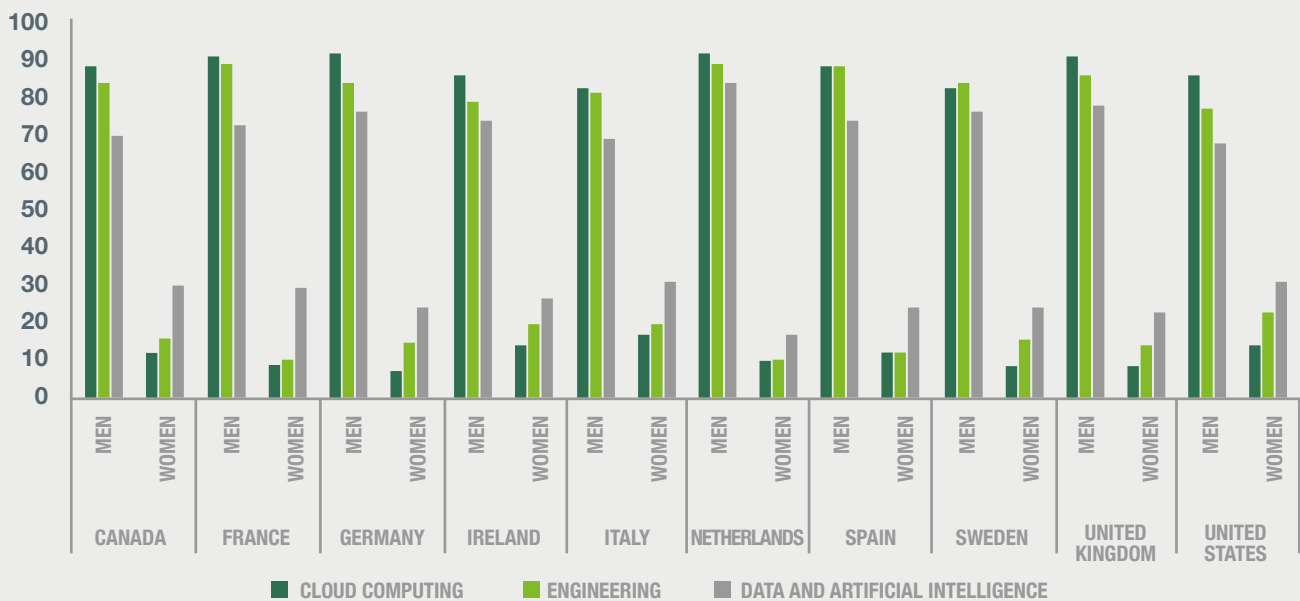


Figure 7: Share of women by professional cluster and participating State (2020)
Source: World Economic Forum (WEF), Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

²⁵ Data varies significantly among OSCE countries ranging from 48.7 percent in Albania, 44.33 percent in Georgia and 44.09 percent in Poland to 28 percent in Belarus, 26 percent in Austria and 22 percent in Switzerland.

²⁶ European Commission (2018): Women in the Digital Age, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/84bd6dea-2351-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>).

²⁷ WEF Global Gender Gap report 2020

GOOD PRACTICES BY OSCE EXECUTIVE STRUCTURES ²⁸

OSCE executive structures have contributed to the implementation of relevant Ministerial Council decisions by supporting participating States with the implementation of their commitments. This part of the briefing paper provides a non-exhaustive snapshot of how OSCE executive structures have contributed to national efforts to promote gender equality in the economic and environmental dimension of comprehensive security.

IMPROVING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The ODIHR's publication "Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender Sensitive Legislation"²⁹ offers a step-by-step guide on how to implement gender-sensitive legislation. It includes recommendations on how to conduct a gender needs analysis in a given sector, assess the gender implications of specific laws, integrate gender-focused activities in new legislative acts, and develop gender-sensitive indicators that can facilitate the monitoring of a law's implementation. The guide provides practical recommendations for creating enabling legislation for gender equality and can be applied in the economic and environmental sectors.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

As a result of the work of several OSCE executive structures, awareness of gender-related issues in anti-corruption work has increased. For instance, the exchange of good practices in the fight against corruption among men and women law-makers and relevant agencies from six participating States in the Western Balkans in the context of an OSCE-organized workshop contributed to greater knowledge of gendered impact of corruption. Also, anti-corruption messages

and equal representation of both men and women in addressing corruption were highlighted during an anti-corruption week organized by the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan. At the same time, a public information campaign drew attention to the need to increase access of women and girls to new technologies and innovative digital tools to fight corruption. The Gender Issues Programme of the Secretariat has also started exploring the gender dimensions of corruption aiming at deepening the understanding of the gendered impact on women and girls and identifying ways of addressing them in the OSCE's work.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SPHERE

Several good practices emerged with regard to the creation of conditions that are conducive for women to participate in existing markets, capacity-building to improve access to employment and empowerment to ensure their meaningful participation in economic decision-making. The OSCE provides a platform for local women's businesses to learn, exchange and network during national and international forums that allow to develop women's entrepreneurship through innovation and investment. This type of interactive learning has been offered by a number of OSCE field operations, namely the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, the Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, the Centre in Ashgabat, the Programme Office in Dushanbe, the Mission in Kosovo and other field presences. Another positive example is the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into disaster risk management in Serbia by working with partners to develop a gender-sensitive Model Plan for Managing Risks of Natural Hazards in Local Governance

²⁸ The information in this section is derived from annual reports of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2017-2019).

²⁹ Available at <https://www.osce.org/odihr/327836#:~:text=ODIHR's%20Making%20Laws%20Work%20for,of%20legislation%20on%20people's%20lives.>

Units. The model plan was implemented by local authorities to develop local disaster risk management plans that give due consideration to gender and vulnerability.

OSCE executive structures also made a difference for individual women by helping them to become entrepreneurs and find employment, in particular in the more remote, rural areas. The Programme Office in Nur-Sultan for example supported the economic empowerment of women from rural areas with a focus on the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. It facilitated women's involvement in the green economy,

and promoted the adoption of organic agriculture. Also, Women's Resource Centres and NGOs were supported by executive structures—including in Armenia, Serbia and Tajikistan—to deliver skills training in vocational education, strategic and financial management, marketing, and other relevant areas. Women from disadvantaged groups (women from rural areas and women with disabilities, and Roma women) have benefitted from such trainings and related mentorship programmes.

Recommendations for Consideration

1. STRENGTHENING OSCE COMMITMENTS TO PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

The existing OSCE commitments recognize multiple causes of the persistent inequalities in labour markets—including women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work—and call for the promotion of a more equal distribution of domestic work, as well as parental and caregiver responsibilities by expanding paternity leave. While calling for policy and legal measures and concrete action to promote women's economic empowerment, OSCE commitments also need to recognize the structural problems that are embedded in prevailing social norms and practices that prevent women's full and equal participation in labour markets. In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, the existing digital gender divide will further widen unless the participating States commit to addressing multiple structural problems across economic, social, political and cultural areas.

As progress in female labour force participation has been slow, numerous studies and assessments by experts have highlighted the need for transformative approaches to gender equality. Such transformative measures require further legal and policy reforms eradicating discriminatory laws and loopholes, as well as measures that foster deep changes in social attitudes and practices on gender roles in society. The shift in social attitudes and practices should start from early childhood education and continue throughout the life cycle. If men and women, boys and girls could change stereotyped visions of their respective roles in the family and society, they can make different choices for education, jobs and careers. Equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men will require re-thinking masculinities and changing men's roles around family life. The promotion of caring responsibilities by amending laws and policies on parental leave can be an important part in this regard and goes hand-in-hand with reforms in pay transparency legislation.

The OSCE should also consider strengthening and expanding commitments on violence against women and harassment at work, educational institutions in both the public and private sectors (see the Discussion Paper Four on Preventing and Combatting).

2. STRENGTHENING OSCE SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

A number of OSCE MCDs calls for activities to women's economic empowerment. As this paper shows, the existing disparities in women's economic and social wellbeing are linked to the disproportionate distribution of domestic and care work. OSCE executive structures should develop and implement innovative approaches to awareness raising and support the efforts by participating States in addressing women's unpaid care and domestic work, fostering improved data collection, and legislative support to address macro-economic policies from a gender perspective.

In the digital era, OSCE executive structures should continue supporting development of human capital with a strong gender perspective in order to address existing digital divide. OSCE can provide a platform for sharing good practices on STEM education that promote gender equality, and continue investing in building skills and capacities of women and girls in priority economic areas with focus on digital skills.