



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## EU HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE “PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET – BENEFIT FOR THE SOCIETY” ZAGREB, 30-31 JANUARY 2020

## SUMMARY

The Office for Gender Equality made these conclusions and recommendations based on stakeholders' debates divided in four panels. 201 representative of governments, European Commission, European Parliament, civil society, academia, private sector and international organizations from 28 countries, attended the Conference. Each of the panel addressed an influencing factor that prevents women's full participation in the labour market. The conference Programme is annexed to this document. The panellists' presentations may be downloaded from the link: <https://bit.ly/2SYcw5u>

## INTRODUCTION

These conclusions and recommendations are the result of the two-day intense discussion which culminated after more than one year of preparations. On behalf of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Office for Gender Equality (hereinafter: OGE) sums up what has been learned and what was proposed in order to achieve full women's participation in the labour market in the European Union.

The Conference was organized by the OGE, with the support of the European Commission, and in the collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. The involvement of many researchers, experts, politicians and civil society was vital for the success of this Conference. We thank them all for their significant contributions.

### The rationale behind the High-level Conference:

- Raise awareness about the results EU has reached so far and prompt new actions at the EU level in removing particular obstacles of women's lower participation in the labour market.
- Explore effectiveness of existing measures to overcome lack of adequate skills of women when responding to the needs of the labour market.
- Address particular challenges of social and legal protection in non-standard employment from gender perspective.
- Open up dialogue among Member States on defining a new set of comparable care- related indicators.
- Standardize the approach and to consolidate procedures related to combating violence, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, including cyber violence.

The aim of the Conference "Participation of women in the labour market – benefit for the society" was thus three-folded: (a) to provide a space for discussion about the possibilities of decreasing the employment gap between women and men by addressing influencing factors to women's full participation in the labour market; (b) to get acquainted with effectiveness of activities and measures that Member States implement or plan to implement to decrease employment gap between women and men; (c) to open up a dialogue about unifying indicators to track progress and discuss legal and social protection of women in the labour market.

Necessary skills in the labour market, non-standard employment, long-term care and harassment at work were the main broad strands on which the discussions were structured. In addition, some specific areas of major concern such as education, gig economy, stereotypes in the employment and

intersectional experiences in access to the labour market (women with disabilities, LGBTIQ etc.) were also subject to in-depth deliberations. The Conference also offered conceptual clarifications on terms related to the gender equality in the labour market and familiarized the audience with initiatives on the EU and Member States level.

The subsequent conclusions and recommendations that arose from this Conference constitute guidance for those concerned with women's participation in the labour market. This guidance may be used by people working in different sectors at national, regional, local and global level. There are a number of EU measures already available that could provide the basis for an immediate action.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Conclusions and Recommendations are divided into four sections, each of them briefly describing a challenge which hinder women's full participation in the labour market and what was proposed at the Conference to achieve an increase in the number of women in the labour market. These recommendations offer a mitigation strategy to tackle specific challenges.

### Supply and demand of skills and occupations on the labour market from gender perspective

Changes in technologies - automation, digitalisation, internet coordination – are manifestly reflected in the labour market. These adjustments to the digital era impose specific challenges to Member States, such as changes in a demand of job types, work patterns, and working arrangements. Women have been specifically affected by these changes. Occupational segregation has been visible in STEM (natural sciences, informatics, engineering and mathematics) where men dominate and in EHW (education, health and social care) where female workers encompass majority. Other issues, such as possible negative impact of digitalization in female-dominated sector and wage gaps disproportionately affect women.

- Gender roles and choices of careers influence segregation between women and men in the labour market. To support the employability of workers and the full participation of women and men in the labour market, a long term investment in skills, especially digital skills, is necessary from both, employers and state.
- Gender stereotypes and traditional roles in society contribute to the unequal distribution of opportunities in the labour market. As the choice of an adequate occupation is a very important factor of success and of reaching equal opportunities in the world of work, it is necessary for states, since early age of the children, to employ programs which will dismantle stereotypes and increase interest of young people in non-traditional, gender-neutral occupations.
- Future planning of measures to decrease the obstacles to women's employment must be carefully discussed with all relevant stakeholders, including academics, employers and employee organizations, and be adequately funded.

#### Example of a good practice:

“Girls day” – open day in technical companies – a project made by the German government encouraged the inclusion of 2 million girls in one-day training and included 110,000 companies. Trainings were organized in “male-jobs” (craft and STEM occupations). This event increased motivation and interest of girls for “male” occupations and opened the possibility of their subsequent employment in the companies participating in the open day.

## Gender dimension of non-standard, atypical employment

Atypical forms of work include part-time work, temporary work, fixed-term work, casual and seasonal work, group employment / platform work, bogus self-employed workers, voucher workers and household workers. Some forms of atypical work involve a higher risk of insecurity, while others carry certain challenges, such as health hazards. In many cases, abuse of atypical contracts by the employer was noted. Due to specificity of women's experience in the labour market their share in the non-standard employment is higher than the share of men.

- From 2013 to 2019 the number of women in non-standard occupations in the EU increased, specifically the number of women with higher education. To ensure adequate and full participation of women in the labour market not only number but also a quality of work must increase.
- As women are out of necessity more represented in atypical work arrangements there is a need for more efficient work-life balance policies and focus on adjustment of organization of work within institutions and companies rather than on flexibilization of contractual arrangements.

## Availability, quality and affordability of home-based long term care

Long-term care is defined as a series of services provided to people with reduced functional capacity, which are therefore dependent on assistance in basic activities. Since women have been considered by the society as caregivers, they have been disproportionately affected by both, labour at work and labour at home, performing unpaid care and housework. In that sense, women work more hours in comparison to men. In order for men and women to be equally represented in the labour market, the issue of home-based long term care of employed women and men must be addressed using a wide range of tools, from legal and policy measures to targeted actions and funding.

- The need for long-term care services is growing within the European Member States. Women are more likely to change working hours and working method to adjust it to home responsibilities. The lack of formal long-term care poses a risk to their economic independence.
- To ensure work-life balance **employers** are recommended to implement measures, such as flexible working hours, flexible workspaces, job sharing, time savings. They are further recommended to ensure paid absence from work due to the urgent need for care of dependent family members.
- **States** are strongly recommended to recognize the value of unpaid care work, monitor its contribution to the economy, and collect data on its frequency.
- To ensure comprehensiveness of long-term care states should provide quality and affordable care services not only for children, but also for sick and elderly family members, including programs of lifelong learning and active aging activities.
- States are also recommended to tackle stereotypes about the gender roles in the family, at work and in the education system.
- Investment in research about innovative housing solutions, smart urban and rural intergenerational planning, and adjusted public infrastructure would ease the burden of care disproportion on women.
- In many EU countries, working conditions in the care sector are precarious and of a low quality. Home based care services are often insufficient and difficult to access, in particular for certain groups, such as families of low-income or low-education, migrants and women belonging to ethnic or racial minorities. This resulted in forced unpaid provision of care within the family

household or entrusting care work to domestic workers who often have irregular or illegal employment contracts, work in precarious conditions and have limited social rights.

- **The EU** is recommended to strengthen its investment in so-called care economy, including the establishment of adequate working conditions and adequate minimum wages, while respecting collective bargaining processes and labour market principles. It is further recommended to promote measures of combating undeclared work in care and nursing and to promote the professionalization of care workers. For instance, it may encourage Member States to provide care workers with personalized professional training and to create a lists of local accredited carers, as well as to establish “helpdesks” for carers and families of care recipients.

### Harassment and sexual harassment in the world of work

Nearly half of women around the world have experienced sexual harassment at work. According to Eurofound, one in six female worker in Europe has been exposed to unwanted sexual attention and sexual abuse. Harassment and sexual harassment at work worsens working conditions as it creates a feeling of work overload in victims, influences on work-life balance, work efficiency and early retirement. To address the problem Member States implement different laws, policy measure and other actions. However, these measures have not been standardized and often not very efficient. The International Labour Organization’s Convention No. 190 offers a holistic and comprehensive approach in confronting harassment and sexual harassment in the world of work.

- **The EU** is recommended to apply a uniform, unequivocal definition of harassment and sexual harassment and a standardized vocabulary for all types of offences related to violence at work.
- When developing a holistic approach to the problems of harassment in the world of work States should take into account that sometimes national values and culture not only maintain and perpetuate, but also promote inequalities and violence.
- Holistic approach must contain measures focused on prevention, intervention, treatment and rehabilitation which are then applied at the level of the organization, state and the EU.
- **States** are recommended to ratify the International Labour Organization’s Convention No. 190 which encompasses prevention and protection from harassment, training of key stakeholders, and development of guidelines for action.

## AGENDA

Opening and welcoming session:

- Vesna Bedeković, Minister for Demography, Family, Youth and Social policy
- Helena Dalli, European Commission (video message)

### Supply and Demand of skills and occupations in the labour market from gender perspective

Opening note:

- Maria Jepsen, Deputy Director, EUROFOUND *“Future jobs, current challenges”*

Panel discussion:

- Christina Haaf, Competence Center for Technology, Diversity and Equal Opportunities
- Predrag Bejaković, Researcher, Institute for Public Finances, HR
- Blaženka Divjak, Minister for Science and Education, HR
- Elisabetta Capannelli, Country Manager, World Bank

### Gender dimension of non-standard, atypical employment

Panel discussion:

- Emiliano Rustichelli, Vice-Chair of Employment Committee (EMCO)
- Agnieszka Piasna, Senior researcher, European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)
- Henri Lindeberg, Development specialist, Estonian Tax and Customs Board
- Rebekah Smith, Deputy Director for Social Affairs, BusinessEurope
- Kristina Posavec, Deputy State Secretary, Central State Office for the Development of the Digital Society

### Long-term care and women’s labour market participation

Opening note:

- Michele Palma, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunity: *“Challenges for gender equality in a rapidly ageing society”*
- Jolanta Reingarde, Programme Coordinator, EIGE: *“Home-based long term care”*

Panel discussion:

- Ulrike Neufang, Vice Chair, Social Policy Committee
- Bettina Kromen, Acting Head of Unit, EC –DG EMPL
- Vesna Leskošek, University of Ljubljana, SLO

### Harassment and sexual harassment in the world of work

Opening note:

- Helge Hoel, Professor Emeritus, University of Manchester: *“Bullying and sexual harassment at the workplace, in public spaces and in political life in the EU”*
- Valentina Beghini, Senior Technical Officer, ILO: *“Presentation of new ILO Convention and Recommendation Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work”*

Panel discussion:

- Marina Monaco, Advisor, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
- Dubravka Šimonović, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women
- Jackie Jones, European Parliament, FEMM Committee
- Anne Dankert, Advisor, Dutch Trade Union Confederation CNV,

### Concluding comments, Recommendations, Closing remarks

- Irena Moozova, Director, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission
- Margareta Mađerić, State Secretary, Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy