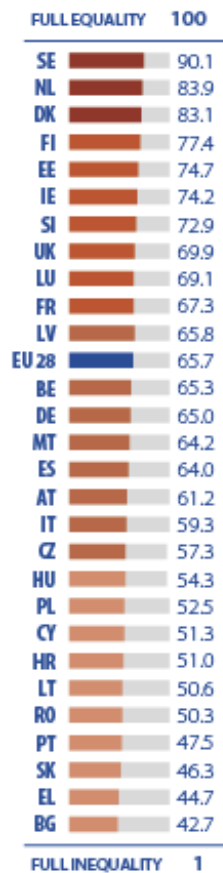


Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

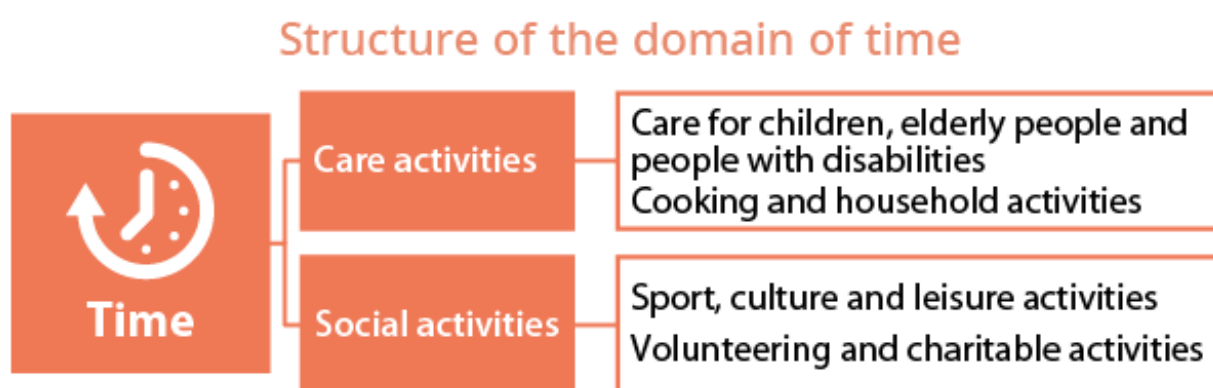
5. Domain of time

The time that women and men have for personal matters and their families has become a broadly debated issue in the EU. Besides the need for self-care and care for others, it implies the negotiation of boundaries between paid and unpaid work (Hochschild, 1997), as well as the negotiation of the role of carers within families and society. Through gender stereotyping, domestic and care work (mostly unpaid) is associated with women, and paid work with men. As a result, the unequal distribution of time spent on caring and housework activities between women and men remains a major hurdle to progress on gender equality. Hence, current and future policy initiatives need to aim for a more balanced distribution of time spent at work and home for everyone. They should also aim for a better gender distribution of unpaid care and housework or to improve the value of care work in general.



The disproportionate amount of time women spend on care and domestic chores impacts upon their participation in employment and opportunities for social, personal and civic activities, reinforcing gender segregation in education and the labour market. It also affects women's employment patterns and prospects by exacerbating their involvement in precarious work, with consequences for gender gaps in pay and pensions (EIGE, 2015c, 2016b, 2017d). Gender inequalities in unpaid labour are all the more relevant as women's overall participation in paid work has increased without a corresponding change in time-use patterns. This means that, on a daily basis, women are increasingly expected to carry the 'double burden' of balancing paid and unpaid activities. As a result, when both are considered, women work an average of 55 hours per week compared to 49 hours worked by men (Eurofound, 2017a, p. 116).

To address the inequalities on caring activities, the European Commission issued a proposal for a directive on work–life balance for parents and carers in 2017. Under the umbrella of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the proposed directive promotes a gender-equal sharing of care responsibilities and establishes 'minimum requirements related to paternity, parental and carers' leave and to flexible working arrangements for parents and workers with caring responsibilities'. The Directive was adopted on 20 June 2019.



The domain of time measures gender inequalities in the allocation of time for care and domestic work and social activities. The first sub-domain of care activities measures gender gaps in women's and men's involvement in the care and/or education of their children, grandchildren and older and disabled people. It also measures their involvement in cooking and housework.

The second sub-domain explores how many women and men engage in social activities. Concretely, it measures gender gaps in women's and men's participation in sport, cultural or leisure activities outside of their home, combined with their engagement in voluntary and charitable activities.

There has been no new published data in this domain since the last edition of the Index, and the next wave of survey data (European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)) will not be released before 2021, posing challenges for regular and better tracking of progress in this area. Given the lack of new data, this chapter mostly provides a brief summary of previous findings and presents some additional information on policy developments and vulnerabilities of specific groups.

Recognising that gender gaps in employment are most acute between women and men with caring responsibilities, the European Council reaffirmed the so-called Barcelona targets in the European Pact for Gender Equality. The first target called on Member States to ensure that 33 % of children below 3 years of age attend childcare facilities. This is now a reality for the EU as a whole, although significant variations exist among Member States. A second target, aiming to provide childcare for 90 % of children from the age of three to mandatory school-going age, progressed to a promising EU average of 85 % in 2017^[1]. With the second target nearly met and the first being consolidated, the European Commission is considering a review of the Barcelona targets following consultations with Member States (European Commission, 2018f). Member State-specific information on the Barcelona targets and how they link with gender equality is provided in Section 9.4 of this report.

Footnotes

[1] Eurostat, Children in formal childcare or education by age group and duration – % over the population of each age group – EU-SILC survey 'ilc_caindformal'.
