

Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

Gender equality inching slowly forward in a fast-changing world of work

The score of 72.0 points in 2017 highlights the incremental overall progress made in the domain of work since the 71.5-point score in 2015 and the 70.0-point score in 2005 (Figure 9). EU-level progress since 2005 was driven by the achievements of Member States that already had higher overall scores for this domain (SE, IE, LU, ES and DE) and that improved at a speed double the EU average. Cyprus and Malta also showed very strong progress between 2005 and 2017. On the other hand, and despite slowly improving situations, Italy and Greece demonstrated they had the most ground to make up, while Romania remained the only Member State with a domain score lower than that of 2005 (Figure 10).

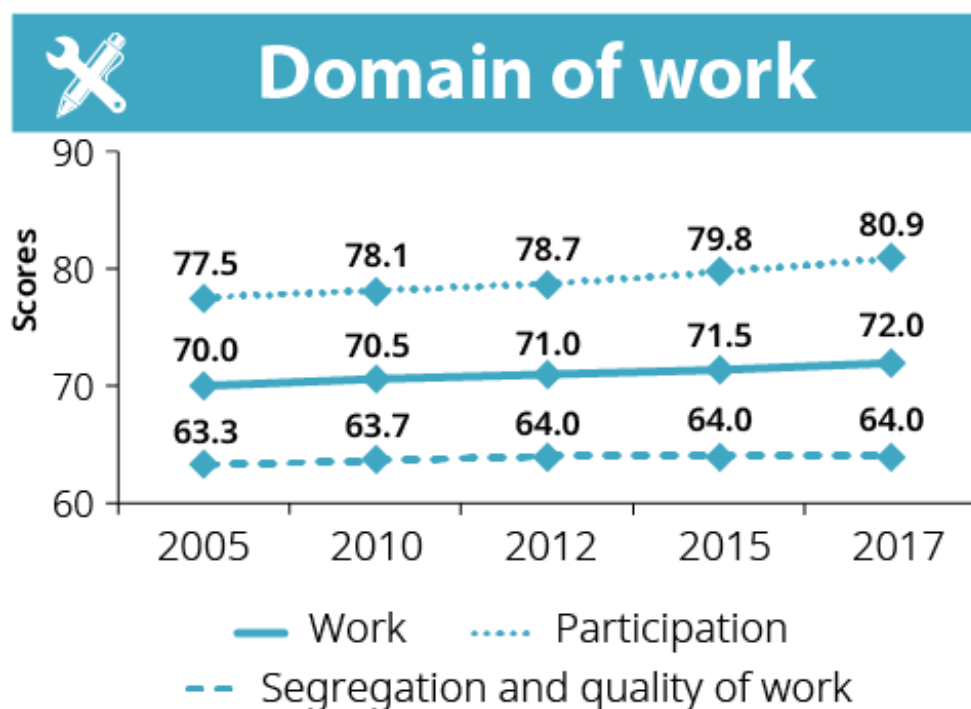


Figure 9: Scores for the domain of work and its sub-domains, EU, 2005-2017

A breakdown of the two sub-domains revealed contrasting levels of progress. Participation attained a score of 80.9 points in 2017 (Figure 9). This represents a sturdier improvement from the 77.5 points in 2005 and a more balanced situation for women and men. The advance was largely due to gains in employment participation rates in some Member States, particularly Ireland, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia. Between 2015 and 2017, improvement in these Member States exceeded 2 p.p.

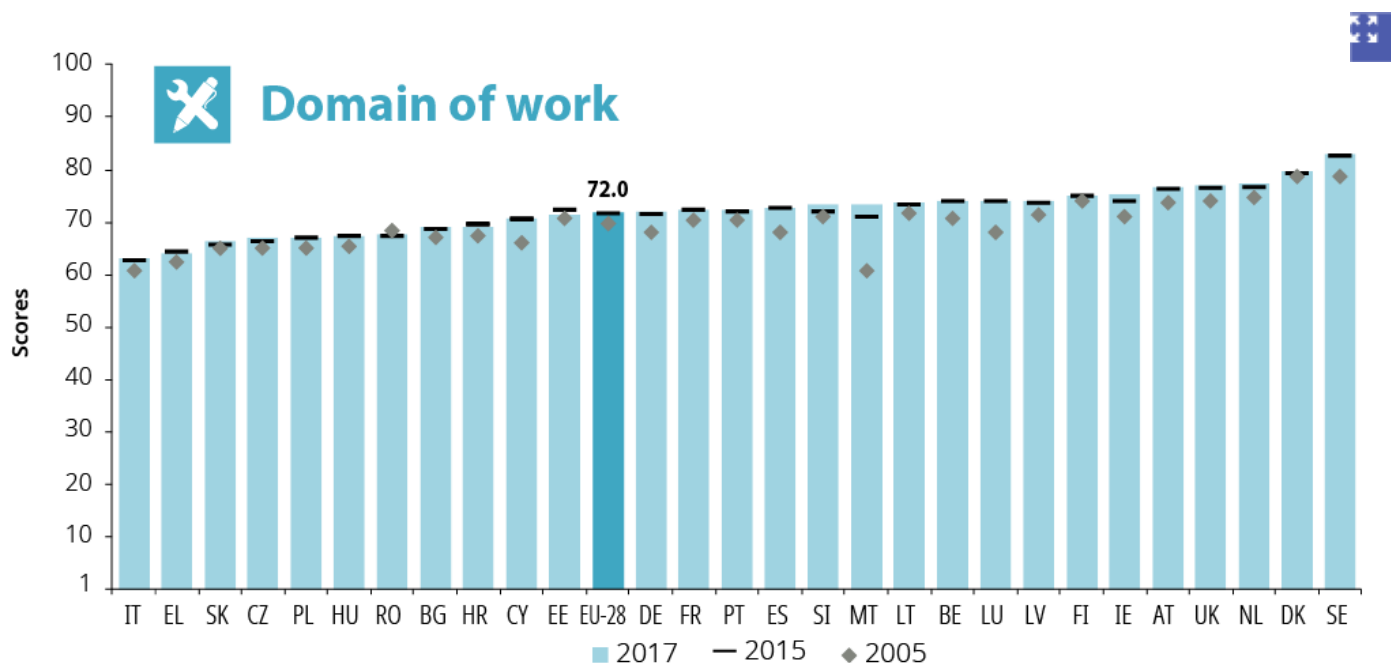


Figure 10: The domain of work scores for EU Member States, 2005, 2015 and 2017

In comparison, and despite slowly rising employment rates, gender segregation remains a particular challenge for the EU and all Member States. The segregation and quality of work sub-domain, with a far lower score of 64.0 points in 2017 (Figure 9), continued its stagnation, registering barely any movement from 2005 (63.3 points). Among Member States, scores in this sub-domain varied, ranging from Slovakia's 53.5 points to the Netherlands' 74.2, but also showed no significant change since 2015. The exception was Estonia, whose score decreased by 1.7 points to 57.0 from 2015 to 2017.

The latter scores show that the effectiveness of measures to reduce gender segregation in employment remains limited, with women mostly occupying jobs in sectors that have generally lower remuneration levels, lower career prospects and fewer options for upskilling (EIGE, 2017c), revealing enduring inequalities. The segregation and quality of work sub-domain results underline that to achieve gender equality in the work domain, systematically and effectively tackling these persistent challenges and inequalities is critical. Although a strong emphasis was put on equal access to the labour market for a long time, the quality of working conditions, working time, precarious work and social protection related to the non-standard forms of employment should more consistently become gender-related and important concerns for EU policymakers and others (EIGE, 2017d; Eurofound, 2018d; ILO, 2018a).