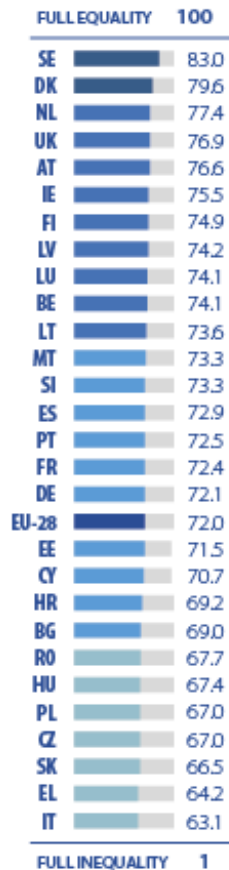


Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

2. Domain of work

Phenomena such as digitalisation, globalisation, migration and demographic change, including ageing, have not only transformed the EU labour market but also the primary considerations in the debate over the future of work (European Commission, 2019). With paid work being the main source of income for most families and individuals, policies tackling the changing world of work need to put gender considerations at the heart of responses (ILO, 2019). Existing gender inequalities have to be addressed first and foremost to ensure gender injustice is not perpetuated and to improve the lives of both women and men from different generations and backgrounds.

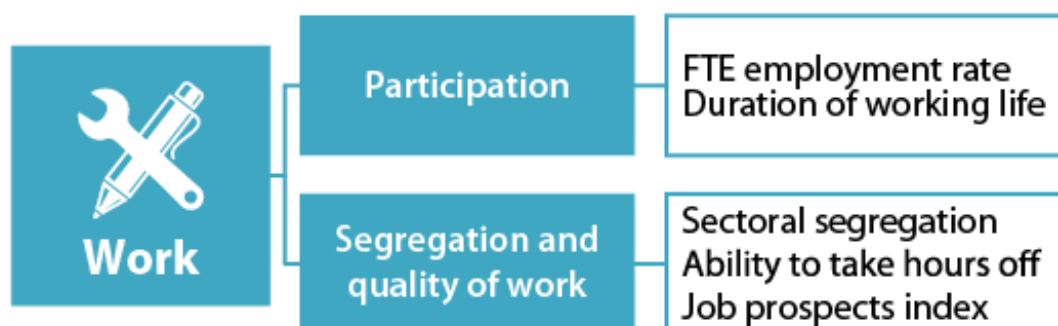


Although the gender gap in labour-market participation has narrowed over the years, the goal of the Europe 2020 strategy to reach a 75 % employment rate for women and men alike remains elusive for women. While their employment rate in 2018 was just above 67 %, the 79 % rate for men had already surpassed the EU goal^[1]. This gender gap reflects numerous structural barriers inhibiting women’s labour-market participation and other inequalities concerning the quality and accessibility of paid work.

Gender segregation in the labour market is a well-known reality. It restricts life choices and the education and employment options of women and men, and determines the status of their jobs. Segregation also drives the gender pay gap, further reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates unequal gender power relations in the public and private spheres (EIGE, 2017e). Environmental, demographic and socioeconomic changes are increasing the demand for care workers, predominantly women trapped in low-quality jobs (ILO, 2018a).

The vast under-representation of women in sectors such as ICT points to a major waste of highly qualified human resources and economic potential (EIGE, 2018d). Reducing gender segregation across science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs would increase the GDP in the EU by an estimated EUR 820 billion and create up to 1.2 million more jobs by 2050 (EIGE, 2017a). To achieve this economic and social growth, continuous efforts are needed to move towards a social model that enables both women and men to be earners and carers.

Structure of the domain of work



The domain of work measures the extent to which women and men can benefit from equal access to employment and good working conditions. The sub-domain of participation combines two indicators: the rate of full-time equivalent (FTE) employment and the duration of working life. The FTE employment rate takes into account the higher incidence of part-time employment among women and is obtained by comparing each worker’s average number of hours worked with the

average number of hours worked by a full-time worker (EIGE, 2014b).

Gender segregation and quality of work are included in the second sub-domain. Sectoral segregation is measured through women's and men's participation in the education, human health and social work sectors. Quality of work is measured by flexible working-time arrangements and job prospects with flexibility of work capturing the ability of both genders to take time off for personal or family matters. The job prospects index (a Eurofound job quality index) captures continuity of employment defined by the type of employment contract, job security, career advancement prospects and development of the workplace in terms of the number of employees. It is measured on a scale of between 0 and 100 points, where 100 indicates the best job prospects. In 2017, a roadmap for Member States to integrate a gender perspective into the European Pillar of Social Rights was set out in its key principles. This included active support for secure and adaptable employment, fair wages, social dialogue and work–life balance (European Commission, 2017b).

In recent years, work–life balance has become a priority policy area for the EU. A key objective of the proposed work–life balance directive is to increase women's participation in the labour market and support their career progression through better sharing of both women and men's parental and caring responsibilities (European Commission, 2017c). The directive, among other initiatives, builds on the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, which also presents measures for work–life balance.

The fast-paced evolution of the world of work, partly through digitalisation, has made it critical to enhance women's and men's skills to ensure equal access to and participation in the labour market. Of particular concern is improving access to secure and quality jobs, especially for women in vulnerable situations such as victims of gender-based violence (Council of the European Union, 2017).

Similarly, the need to reform social protection systems to facilitate fair and decent working conditions for women and men in typical employment situations is highlighted in the proposal for a Council recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (European Commission, 2018e).

Overall, only a simultaneous and holistic response to gender-related challenges in the world of work would ensure sustainable economic growth and more active management of the social and public finance risks of population ageing and global uncertainties.

Footnotes

[1] Eurostat: Employment rate by sex, age group 20-64—% (t2020_10)