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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance

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Delegations will find attached the research note on "Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance" prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

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# Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance

Research note

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## Foreword

The gender pay gap uncovers the different realities women and men face in their professional and personal lives. The statistics speak for themselves. Across the EU, women earn on average, 16% less than men. This is a result of many already identified factors: women are concentrated in lower level and lower paid jobs, work more hours (in both paid and unpaid work), take longer career breaks, and are more likely to choose part-time work to reconcile work and care responsibilities. The price to pay is high: women's pensions end up being 37 % less than men's.

Even higher education does not protect women from earning less. Although women are more highly educated than men across the EU, men still hold most of the top leadership positions in companies. For women with tertiary education, the pay gap rises to 25 % against them and the higher they move up the career ladder, the more the pay gap widens.

To tackle this unfair situation, we must dismantle gender stereotypes that underpin the gender pay gap. A key issue is the uneven concentration of women and men in the labour market, especially in sectors that are facing a skills shortage. In fields dominated by men, such as ICT, employees are often expected to work long hours, be constantly available and feel pressure to prioritise work over their families. This is a major barrier that restricts men from taking on more family responsibilities and discourages women from staying in such jobs or taking them in the first place. Getting more women into these jobs would not only help solve the problem of skills shortages, but would potentially create more family friendly working conditions. Work-life

balance initiatives can help in sharing responsibilities at home more equally, but only if both women and men have support from their employers to take advantage of these measures.

Several initiatives are being prepared at EU level, to guide the change in this direction. The European Commission's Proposal for a Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers aims to improve access to parental leave and flexible working, as well as increase the take up of these arrangements by men. The EU Action Plan, designed to reduce the gender pay gap includes a variety of policy options to combat pay inequalities. These include equal pay for equal work, getting more women into top-level management positions and encouraging companies to attract and retain women or men into jobs where they are underrepresented.

This research note is part of EIGE's work to monitor EU progress towards gender equality and support the presidencies of the Council of the EU. I would like to thank all the institutions and experts who contributed, particularly the Romanian government, the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the Commission and its High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, EUROSTAT, EIGE's Experts' Forum and especially our staff. I am confident that our research offers solid evidence and useful solutions to bridge the gender pay gap and improve work-life balance for women and men across the EU.

Virginija Langbakk,  
Director

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

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## Country Abbreviations

<b>BE</b>	Belgium
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria
<b>CZ</b>	Czechia
<b>DK</b>	Denmark
<b>DE</b>	Germany
<b>EE</b>	Estonia
<b>EL</b>	Greece
<b>IE</b>	Ireland
<b>ES</b>	Spain
<b>FR</b>	France
<b>HR</b>	Croatia
<b>IT</b>	Italy
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus
<b>LV</b>	Latvia
<b>LT</b>	Lithuania
<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg
<b>HU</b>	Hungary
<b>MT</b>	Malta
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>AT</b>	Austria
<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>EU-28</b>	28 EU Member States

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## Introduction

Despite many years of policy attention to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in matters of employment and occupation,<sup>1</sup> as well as equal pay,<sup>2</sup> the gender pay gap remains a political priority at EU and national level. The gender pay gap in the EU shows that, on average, women's gross hourly pay is 16 % lower than that of men.<sup>3</sup> Women's employment rate and working hours are also lower than men's, with over 8 % of women aged 20-64 never having worked, compared to 3 % of men (EIGE, 2017c). The accumulated impact of gender inequalities in employment results in a 40 % gender gap in overall net yearly earnings and, over the life course, a consequent 37 % gender gap in pensions to the disadvantage of women.<sup>4</sup>

Women's limited economic independence not only restricts their own opportunities in their public and private lives, it also places numerous constraints on men, impeding inclusive and cohesive development for all. Thus, the EU's objective of closing the gender pay gap within the overarching goal of achieving gender equality in the EU and worldwide - including delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda - marks a much needed step forward. The Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 notes the "elusive" gender equality in financial resources over the life course and calls for further action to reduce the gender pay gap, as well as the earnings gap and pension gap, in order to fight poverty among women (European Commission, 2015). The gender pay gap is also taken forward by the European Pillar of Social Rights. For the first time, the Commission has adopted an EU Action Plan 2017-2019 -Tackling the gender pay gap - which lists a broad set of measures to combat the gender pay gap, including the need to

combat occupational gender segregation, tackle the care penalty, raise awareness of the gender pay gap and unveil inequalities and stereotypes.<sup>5</sup>

The aim of this research note is twofold. Firstly, it provides an overview of the gender pay gap across the EU, with insights on how it relates to the gender gap in overall earnings and, consequently, the gender pension gap. It reviews the major causes and variations of the gender pay gap across the life course and for different groups of employees (e.g. by educational background, occupation, length of service, etc.). Secondly, it explores the links between the gender pay gap and emerging policies aimed at improving work-life balance, with a focus on the role of measures put forward by the Commission's "New Start" initiative on work-life balance for working parents and carers,<sup>6</sup> such as parental and carer's leave and flexible working arrangements. Work-life balance measures may not only contribute to an increase in women's labour market participation, but also to the closing of the gender gap in pay (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011; ICF and Cambridge Econometrics, 2016).

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of the gender pay gap and its related terms, reviewing the main underlying factors and gender pay gap statistics for different employee groups. Chapter 2 focuses on the work-life balance as one of the major factors underlying the gender pay gap, gathering evidence from a wider literature review, as well as microdata analysis. Chapter 3 overviews EU policies aimed at tackling the gender pay gap, and briefly presents examples of national measures with the potential to support the reduction of gender inequalities in pay. Finally, Chapter 4 highlights the take-away messages with respect to the current gender pay gap situation in the EU.

<sup>1</sup> Directive 2006/54/EC.

<sup>2</sup> Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)(1957).

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics)

<sup>4</sup> Pension adequacy report 2018 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19417&langId=en>

<sup>5</sup> EU Action Plan 2017-2019 "Tackling the gender pay gap", available at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-action-plan-2017-2019-tackling-gender-pay-gap>

<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:2017DC0252&from=EN>

# 1. Gender pay gap: placing concepts into context

## 1.1 Gender pay gap and related concepts

The *gender pay gap* in the EU remains stubbornly persistent, being currently estimated at 16 % (Eurostat, 2018a), i.e. European women's average gross hourly wages are 16 % lower than those of men. The focus on the *hourly wages* implies that factors such as monthly working hours or the share of women and men in formal employment are beyond the scope of the indicator. Measurement at the level of *gross* rather than *net* wages shows that the effect of national taxation systems is not taken into account. Thereby, the gender pay gap – as a gross hourly pay measure – offers important but limited information about the income inequalities present in the labour market. For the purposes of better informed policy discussions, the gender pay gap indicator is often accompanied by other measures enabling a wider assessment.

Eurostat has developed a *gender overall earnings gap*. This is a synthetic indicator, which measures the impact of the three factors combined: (1) average hourly earnings; (2) monthly average of the number of hours paid; and (3) the employment rate of women compared to men (Eurostat, 2018b). The gender gap in overall earnings, which is at around 40 % in the EU-28, gives a more comprehensive picture of the level of economic independence and labour market opportunities of women and men. Both the gender pay gap and gender overall earnings gap were recently used to describe national and EU level situations with respect to inequalities in pay, in the 2018 Commission's Statement on the Equal Pay Day.<sup>7</sup>

The variations in levels of the gender pay gap and overall earnings gap show quite diverse labour market situations for women across the Member States (Figure 1). Estonia has the highest gender pay gap (25 %), while four countries (CZ, DE, UK, AT) have a gap higher than 20 %. By contrast, the gender pay gap in Luxembourg, Italy and Romania is lower than 6 %. In some countries (e.g. SI, HR, RO), the lower gender pay gap corresponds to the lower gender overall earnings gap, while other countries

with lower levels of gender pay gap (e.g. IT, MT, EL) have high gender overall earnings gaps. Such variation in gender gap levels require cautious interpretation in view of country specific contexts, given that a low gender pay gap might not necessarily mean that gender equality in labour market opportunities has been achieved.

Several factors are relevant in this context. In a number of countries (IT, RO, MT), a low gender pay gap is largely associated with low women's employment (e.g. 60 % of Italian women are active in the formal labour market – employed or unemployed – compared to an EU average of 72 %). In these countries, women with lower qualifications<sup>8</sup> tend to be economically inactive. On average, those women who are in employment have higher qualifications than men, leading to a lower gender pay gap.

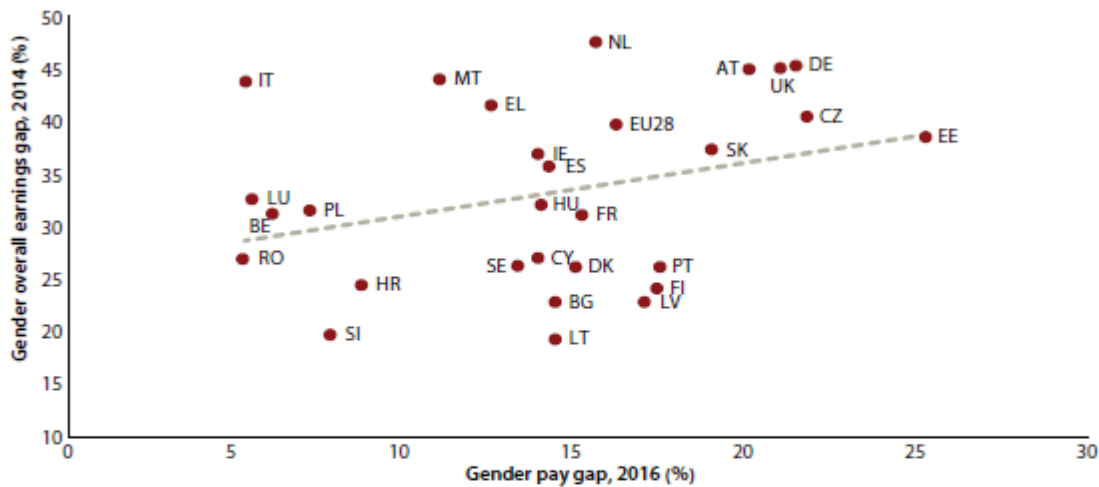
In the countries with the highest overall earnings gaps (NL, UK, AT, DE), women's participation in the labour market is high, but predominantly in part-time work (e.g. 74 % of women work part-time in the Netherlands). In countries with a moderate gender pay gap and low overall earnings gap (e.g. LT, SE, LV), the high rate of women's participation in the labour market is undermined by high labour market segregation, which typically indicates a disproportionate share of women employed in jobs and sectors that are lower paid and less valued (Rubery & Koukiadaki, 2016). The lower level of regulation of labour markets, including wage-setting mechanisms, has been linked to higher national gender wage gaps (Christofides, Polycarpou, & Vrachimis, 2013). In addition, within a number of countries (e.g. SE, DK), moderate gender pay gap levels reflect a positive influence of more equal levels of earnings across all (OECD, 2017). A combination of these, together with the factors described in Chapter 1.2, demonstrate that the gender pay gap cannot be seen as negligible in any country and that a thorough understanding of its underlying causes is as important as the measurement itself.

Gender pay gaps accumulate over people's lives, cementing life course gender income inequalities. Wages and other earnings (as well as a number of employment and

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2018). EU and national factsheets on the gender pay gap, included in *Equal Pay Day: Statement by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Marianne Thyssen and Vera Jourová*, 26 October 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Although, on average, 17 % of women with low qualifications in the EU were inactive in 2014, the share of this group rose to 36 % in Greece, 28 % in Romania, 27 % in Italy, 24 % in Belgium, 23 % in Croatia and Slovakia, and 22 % in Ireland and Bulgaria (EIGE, 2017c).



**Figure 1: Gender pay gap (GPG) and gender overall earnings gap, by country (%)**

Source: EIGE presentation and Eurostat data [earn\_gr\_gpgr2] and [teqges01]

Note: reference year of gender overall earnings gap is 2014; reference year of gender pay gap is 2016, except for Greece, Ireland and Croatia, whose latest available year was 2014.

old-age pension system related factors) over the life course determine old-age pension entitlements (EIGE, 2015a; European Parliament, 2017). The EU gender gap in pensions in 2016 was 37% to the detriment of women, impacting significantly on women's quality of life after retirement (EIGE, 2015a, 2015b; European Commission, 2018a). The largest gender gaps in pensions are noted in the Netherlands and Malta (above 45%), with the lowest in Estonia (2%) (European Commission, 2018a, p. 69).

While this report focuses on the gender pay gap, it is important not to lose sight of gender gaps in overall earnings and pensions (see Annex for the most recent data). It should also be noted that there are multiple ways of calculating the gender pay gap. Complementing Eurostat's conventional way of measuring the gender pay gap across the EU, this report (Chapter 2) provides information on *gender gaps in net monthly earnings* – a measure estimated from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) data.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluates the gender pay gap via measures such as the gender gap in *median* earnings of full-time employees,

or the gender gap in *mean*<sup>10</sup> full-time, full-year *annual* earnings by level of education (OECD, 2017).

The available array of measures not only reflects the complex nature of the gender pay gap, but also the limitations of the data on which such an indicator can currently be estimated. For instance, although the Structure of Earnings Survey (SES)<sup>11</sup> is typically considered the main basis for estimating the gender pay gap across the EU, it collects a limited set of information about people in employment. It does not cover some important characteristics likely to affect gender pay gap, such as household composition or employment history.

## 1.2 Gender pay gap underlying factors

The gender pay gap represents a long-standing challenge in policy and research. At the outset, it is important to note that there are some misconceptions about the gender pay gap (Oelz, Olney, & Tomei, 2013). While some have equated the gender pay gap to the concept of 'equal pay

<sup>9</sup> Earnings are estimated from EWCS variable Q104, referring to Income from the main job, excluding old age pensions, and are net of taxes and social security contributions.

<sup>10</sup> Median values are sometimes preferred because mean averages are subject to distortion by outliers, producing a wider gender pay gap, typically because, in most countries, men are over-represented among individuals with very high earnings. The use of the median means that the data may not fully capture cross-national or temporal differences in the representation of women and men across the spectrum of different grades, responsibilities and pay positions.

<sup>11</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/structure-of-earnings-survey>

for equal work<sup>12</sup>, in reality the gap is a far broader concept than pay discrimination alone (Oelz *et al.*, 2013). Generally, the gender pay gap may be viewed as the monetary facade of gender equality. As such, it not only portrays gender inequalities within the labour market but is also an important factor in sustaining and perpetuating wider gender inequalities. Factors underlying and manifesting overall gender inequalities – such as gendered stereotypes and cultures – are simultaneously impacting and perpetuating the occurrence and persistence of the gender pay gap.

With respect to the functioning of the labour markets, a number of pathways serve to form the gender pay gap. These include such major labour market biases as horizontal (occupational) and vertical segregation within the labour market, gender bias in working intensity, human capital formation across the life course, and factors linked to gendered organisational cultures and interlinks between private life and the labour market. This chapter briefly outlines these significant influences on the labour market, while Chapter 2 elaborates further on work-life balance as the underlying source of gender inequalities in pay.

Gender segregation in the labour market is often regarded as being among the most significant reasons behind the gender pay gap (Boll, Rossen, & Wolf, 2017). *Horizontal segregation* refers to the concentration of women and men in different sectors and occupations,<sup>13</sup> e.g. pre-primary education and care fields being traditionally dominated by women, while men dominate construction and engineering jobs. Fields traditionally dominated by women tend to be less valued and lower paid than those dominated by men (EIGE, 2018, p. 11; Oelz *et al.*, 2013, p. 17). *Vertical segregation* refers to the concentration of women and men in different grades, levels of responsibility or positions.<sup>14</sup> As men tend to be over-represented in decision-making positions, women, on the other hand, tend to work predominantly at lower level and lower remunerated positions (Boll *et al.*, 2017, p. 411; EIGE, 2018, p. 11; ICF and Cambridge Econometrics, 2016; Oelz *et al.*, 2013, p. 17). The existing literature attributes a somewhat higher impact to addressing vertical segregation when it comes

to reducing the gender pay gap, compared to that of horizontal segregation (Bettio, 2002; Boll *et al.*, 2017, p. 407; Goldin, 2014).

Human capital related factors, such as level of education and training or work experience, remain important in explaining the gender pay gap, although differences in human capital between women and men have narrowed over time. For example, the gender gap in educational attainment is now reversed in most countries (e.g. women are more likely to have university degrees than men in 20 EU Member States).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, gender differences in the type of education (e.g. fewer women enrolling in the STEM fields and few men in education, health and welfare studies<sup>15</sup>), remains a significant determinant of the pay gap (Blau & Kahn, 2017, p. 813; Goldin, 2014, p. 116). This is reflected in subsequent gender segregation in the labour market (European Commission, 2018c, p. 125), to the detriment of the EU economy (EIGE, 2017a).<sup>16</sup> Compared to men, women's human capital is more likely to depreciate during the life course, as family responsibilities such as childcare and housework (still considered primarily women's responsibilities) cause them to be away from work for longer periods and to be less engaged or selected for training relevant to career progression (Albrecht, Thoursie, & Vroman, 2015, p. 3; Blau & Kahn, 2017, p. 817; Boll *et al.*, 2017, p. 410).

Gender-specific working patterns, such as women's predominant engagement in part-time work, has repercussions for the gender pay gap. In addition to working fewer paid hours, part-time workers may have lower hourly wages than full-time workers (Boll *et al.*, 2017). Temporary work (which is often remunerated at lower rates than permanent jobs (Boll *et al.*, 2017, p. 412) and career breaks, including those due to care leave, as well as unemployment, contribute to the gender pay gap. Women's more frequent and longer career breaks to cover care and other household needs (PayScale, 2018, p. 5) are reflected in pay structures which grant better remuneration to those employees – mostly men – who are more visible at work, work longer hours and have uninterrupted working schedules. Pay consequences in respect of less intensive and more flexible working arrangements are multi-fold and

<sup>12</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1247>

<sup>13</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1423>

<sup>14</sup> BE, BG, CY, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, UK. (EIGE, 2017b, p. 31)

<sup>15</sup> STEM refers to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; more detail on the study can be found in (EIGE, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Narrowing the gender gap in STEM may contribute to an increase in EU GDP per capita by 2.2 %, to 3 % in 2050, and total EU employment may rise by 850,000 to 1,200,000 jobs by 2050. Higher productivity of STEM jobs is likely to result in higher wages (EIGE, 2017a).

closely relate to their disproportionate take-up by women. This biased take-up creates certain organisational cultures, which ultimately lower the value of caregivers and, thus, women's work.

Other organisation-level factors are important in explaining the gender pay gap. Organisational cultures can reinforce women's and men's traditional gender roles and expectations of long hours, physical presence and constant availability, positioning the ideal worker as being free from any constraint or responsibility outside the workplace (Thébaud & Pedulla, 2016). As such, the organisational requirement of working long hours can prevent women from working full-time while combining family responsibilities (Evans, 2002; Smithson J., Lewis S., Cooper C., & Dyer, 2004). Arguably, the way jobs are structured and remunerated remains one of the most significant obstacles to gender equal pay, with considerable reductions to be expected if companies were to move away from practices "to disproportionately reward individuals who laboured long hours and worked particular hours" (Goldin, 2014, p. 1091).

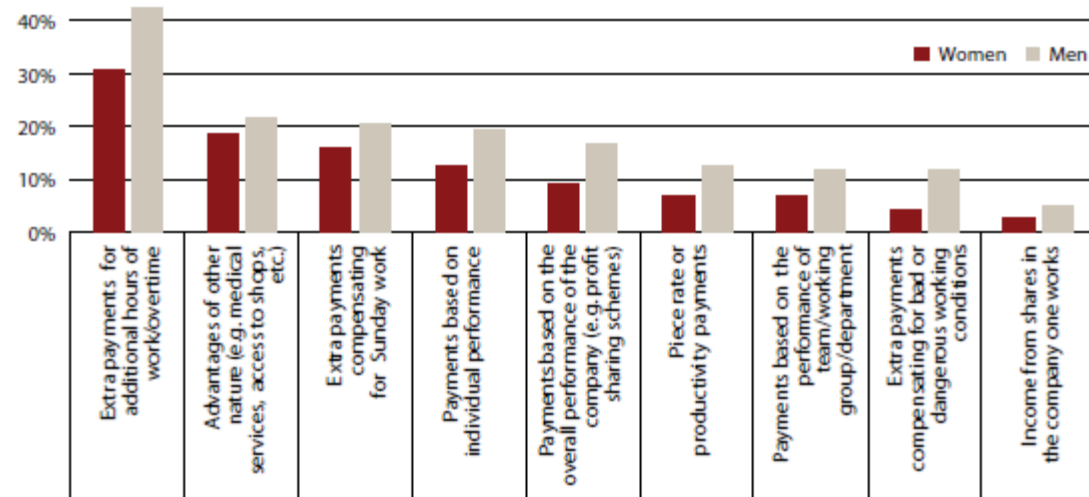
The size of the workplace is another important factor in the gender pay gap. The share of women employees tends to be higher in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Women represent 50 % of employees in companies with 10-249 employees but their share drops to 17 % in companies with more than 250 employees.<sup>17</sup> Workplace

size can affect wage setting mechanisms, financial benefits and career development opportunities. In enterprises with a lower trade union density, more dispersed salary levels and stronger vertical segregation tend to be observed, including lower pay for women (Anspal, Rööm, & Kraut, 2011; Oelz *et al.*, 2013).

Research has shown that not only are women less likely to work at companies that offer higher premiums to their employees, but they receive premiums of lower value in comparison to men working in the same companies (Card, Cardoso, & Kline, 2015; EIGE, 2018; Flory, Leibbrandt, & List, 2014, pp. 122-155; McKinley, 2016). As noted by EIGE (2017a) in its recent research on gender segregation in education and labour markets, "the gender gap in bonuses is found to be the greatest gap across different remuneration sources, both in terms of the share of women and men receiving them and in terms of the generosity of bonuses". Fewer women than men in the EU receive any type of main salary supplementary earnings (Figure 2).

An important proportion of the gender pay gap is referred to as "unexplained" (Anspal *et al.*, 2011, p. 4; Blau & Kahn, 2017). This implies that differences in the average characteristics of women and men employees, as observed in survey data, cannot capture the considerable heterogeneity of people's characteristics (Anspal *et al.*, 2011). The "unexplained" gender pay gap is also linked

**Figure 2: Share of women and men in the EU receiving main salary additional earnings, by type (% 2015)**



Source: EWCS, EIGE calculation, based on 2015 microdata

<sup>17</sup> EIGE calculation, based on EWCS 2015 data.

to women's discrimination in hiring, in career progression and generally limited opportunities in the labour market (European Commission, 2018b). Recent experimental studies suggest that gender differences in wage bargaining may widen the gap (Leibbrandt & List, 2014, pp. 2016-2024). Important knowledge gaps in respect of the gender pay gap remain, showing the need for a better understanding of how gender intersects with other individual characteristics, such as race, or certain ethnic or immigrant backgrounds that are systematically linked to social inequalities (Card *et al.*, 2015, p. 33).

### 1.3 Gender pay gap across different employee groups

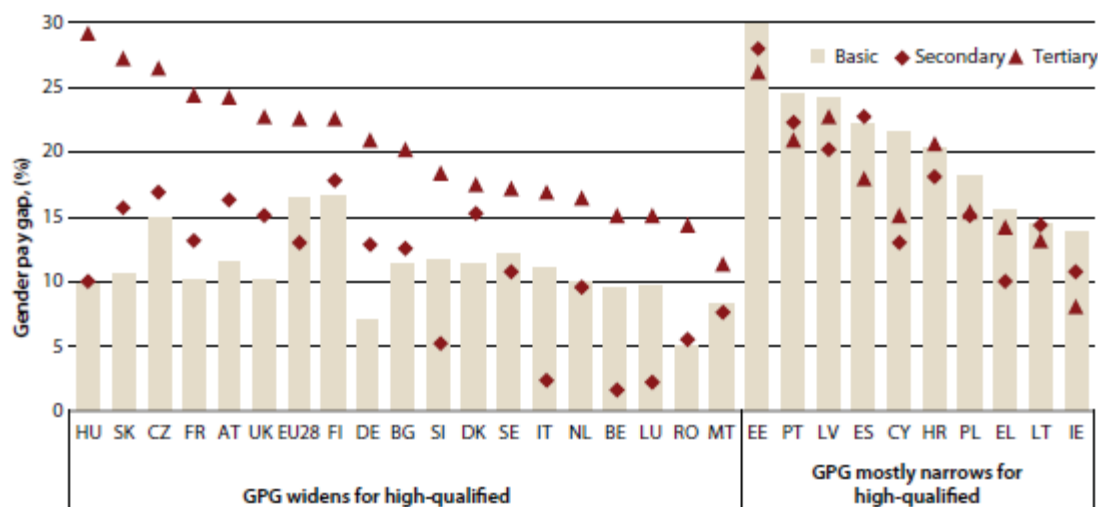
Gender pay gaps vary not only across countries, but also within countries and between different employee groups. This section briefly highlights some of the important dimensions that have the potential to further exacerbate gender pay inequalities.

The gender pay gap between women and men with high qualifications in the EU is, on average, greater (25 %) than that for other qualification levels (Figure 3),

with particularly large pay differences (more than 25 %) a between women and men with high qualifications noted in Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia. In some countries (HU, SK, FR, DE) the gender pay gap among the highly qualified is not only large but significantly greater than the gender pay gap observed among low-qualified employees. A somewhat reverse pattern is noted in a number of EU countries (e.g. EE, PT, LV, ES, CY, HR, PL, EL, LT, IE), where gender pay gaps among low-qualified employees are typically higher than among those with high qualifications. Overall, gender pay gaps for those with basic and secondary education levels vary considerably from country to country, with the average gender pay gap in the EU being somewhat lower for those with secondary education (14 %) than basic education (16 %).

In the EU, on average, the gender pay gap across all educational levels increases with age and income. If the gender pay gap is only 3 % in the age group 20-29, it reaches 22 % among those aged 40-49 or older. Among the different age groups - and despite differences in educational attainment levels (Figure 4) - the largest increase in the gender pay gap is observed in the age group 30-39 (compared to 20-29), potentially showing the impact of increased work-life balance strains (also

**Figure 3: Gender pay gap, by country and educational level (% , 2014)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on Eurostat data.

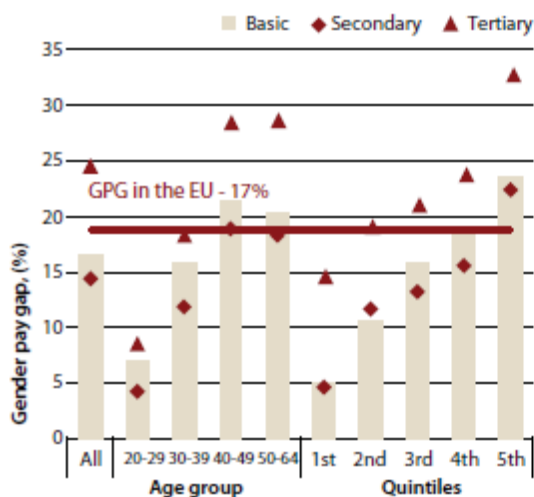
Note: here and further on, the gender pay gap (GPG) is calculated according to Eurostat's methodology.<sup>18</sup> It presents the difference between average gross hourly earnings of female and male paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees. It is considered unadjusted, because it gives an overall picture of gender pay inequality and thus measures a broader concept than equal pay for equal work. It covers all employees working in firms with 10 or more employees.

<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/SDG\\_05\\_20](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/SDG_05_20)

see Chapter 2). From age 40 onwards, the gender pay gap remains more or less consistent across the respective educational levels. The gender pay gap also progressively increases alongside income levels (Figure 4), with the highest gender pay gap (33 %) found among those with tertiary education and the highest income (fifth quintile). This may be influenced by vertical gender segregation. In the EU, on average, the gender pay gap progressively increases with the level of income: at 7 % in the first income quintile, 13 % in the second, 15 % in the third, 18 % in the fourth, and 26 % in the fifth.

Research shows that the gender pay gap for workers with high educational qualifications typically widens alongside increases in their wages (De la Rica, Dolado, & Llorens, 2008). This is often referred to as the “glass ceiling effect” for women (Christofides *et al.*, 2013), whereas the progressive concentration of men at the managerial levels is observed. In some country contexts, however, the gender pay gap can narrow among workers with low educational qualifications upon increase of their earnings. This pattern is observed in southern European countries, such as Greece or Italy, where female labour market participation is relatively low (De la Rica *et al.*, 2008) and women with lower education levels are more often expected to disengage from the labour market. This influences employers’ attitudes in setting lower wages for women. Those women who “survive longer” in the labour market subvert such expectations, consequently

**Figure 4: Gender pay gap in the EU, by educational level, age group and pay quintile (% , 2014)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on Eurostat data.

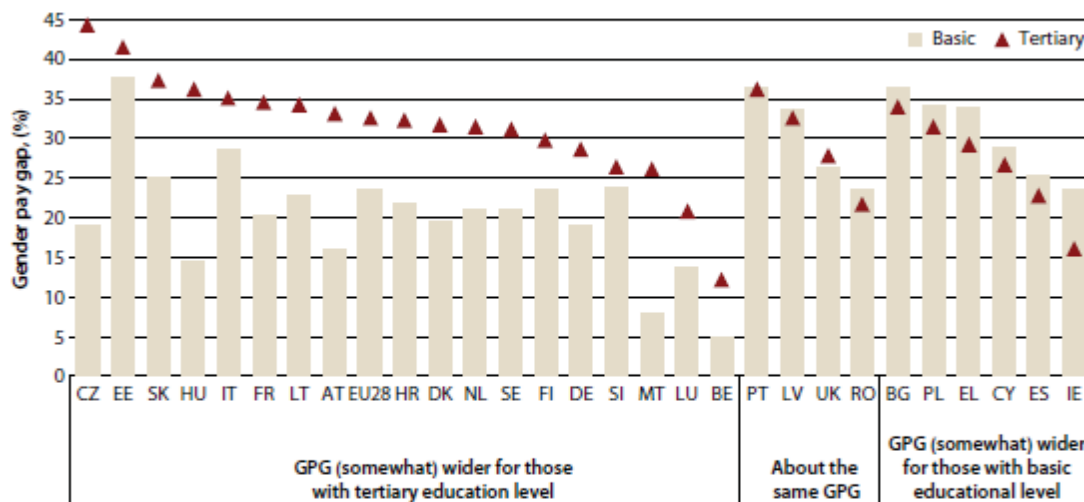
reducing the gender pay gap among women and men with low qualifications but higher earnings. This phenomenon is usually absent in countries such as Sweden, where de-familiarisation policies work to pull less-educated women into the labour market, making the gender pay gap more stable across incomes of low educated people (Evertsson *et al.*, 2009). Arulampalam *et al.* (2007) observed that generous policies concerning the reconciliation of work and family life reduce the mean and median unexplained gender wage gaps, with positive effects on the welfare of women employees and encouraging other women to enter the labour force.

Overall, country contexts - especially policies on family, social protection or employment - are significant factors in determining gender pay gap levels across different employee groups (Evertsson *et al.*, 2009). Similar conclusions were reached in research among 23 EU Member States, which showed that public policies supporting the reconciliation of work and family life were instrumental in reducing the mean and median unexplained gender wage gaps, especially with regard to high earners (Christofides *et al.*, 2013).

Figure 5 shows the differences in the gender pay gap among the highest income earners – the group of employees where gender differences in pay are most pronounced at EU level. Gender biases in pay can be quite different among the highest earners if low and high educational backgrounds (different job profiles) are taken into account. Across the EU, very few countries (PT, LV, UK, RO) show gender pay gaps with marginal differences among those that earn the highest incomes (fifth quintile) but have different educational levels (Figure 5). In the majority of Member States, like the EU average, the gender pay gap is considerably greater for high earners with tertiary education than those with basic education. Particularly large gender pay gaps (>40%) among high earners with high qualifications are found in Czechia and Estonia.

Across the EU economic sectors, the gender pay gap in financial and insurance activities is one of the highest, as is that in manufacturing (Figure 6). The current levels of gender pay gap at the sectoral level (particularly to the disadvantage of older women) are still primarily determined by accumulated gender pay inequalities across the life course. For example, the gender pay gap is notably large (>30%) among elderly people working in trade, manufacturing, financial or scientific sectors (NACE codes

**Figure 5: Gender pay gap among the high income earners, by country and educational level (% , 2014)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on Eurostat data.

Note: The high income earners are those whose gross hourly pay is in the top (fifth) quintile; countries are grouped on the basis of difference in gender pay gap between the educational levels: ‘about the same’ refers to a difference in gender pay gap from -2 to 2 percentage points (p.p.), with due implications on thresholds for the other categories.

G, C, K, M), compared to younger workers. Nonetheless, the reverse trend can also be noted in certain areas of economic activity, such as entertainment and the arts (NACE code R), where the gender pay gap among the young is much greater than among older workers.

Besides age, the gender pay gap across economic sectors varies in line with other characteristics, such as educational level. For example, highly qualified men earn much more than women in financial and insurance or trade jobs, whereas the level of education does not lead to much of a pay differential between women and men in education or administrative and support jobs.<sup>19</sup>

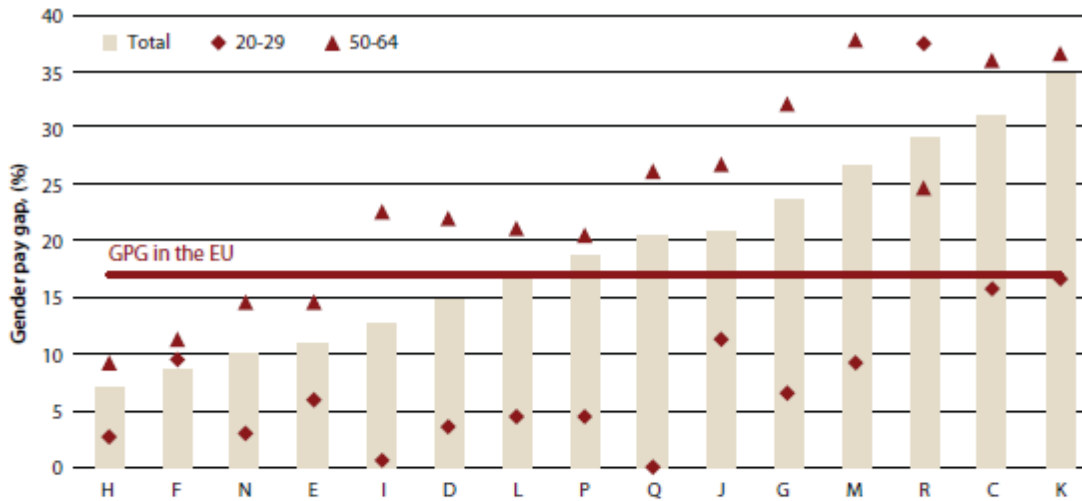
The variation in the gender pay gap between some of the largest occupations in the EU (EIGE, 2018) shows the complex relationship between pay, occupational characteristics and the prevailing representation of women and men in given occupations (Figure 7). Very large gender pay gaps are found among health professionals, stationary plant and machine operators, and business and administration associates. Significant variation in occupational gender pay gaps may be partially linked to the fact that major differences in gender pay are due to *within* rather than *between* occupational features,

hinting at the strong role of vertical segregation and other women’s pay-relegating factors at the occupational and organisational level.

Recent research reports of a specific negative relationship between the feminisation of an occupation and the level of wages, giving evidence of average wages declining for companies with 65 % or more women employees (ILO, 2018, p. 76). A strong negative relationship has also been demonstrated between occupational gender pay gaps and the amount of working hours pertaining to these occupations (Goldin, 2014; Goldin & Katz, 2008). Goldin (2014) notes that this implies that occupational gender pay gaps exist because working hours in certain occupations are remunerated to higher levels (i.e. pay has a non-linear link to working hours) if provided at particular moments and continuously. For example, flexible working schedules come at a very high price in corporate, financial and legal jobs, while essentially no part-time or flexi-time penalties exist in respect of pharmacists’ earnings (i.e. pay is linked to working hours in a linear fashion) (Goldin, 2014). The same report noted that occupations with smaller gender pay gaps underwent a number of structural changes, such as ensuring a higher substitution among employees, which helped

<sup>19</sup> EIGE calculation, based on Eurostat data.

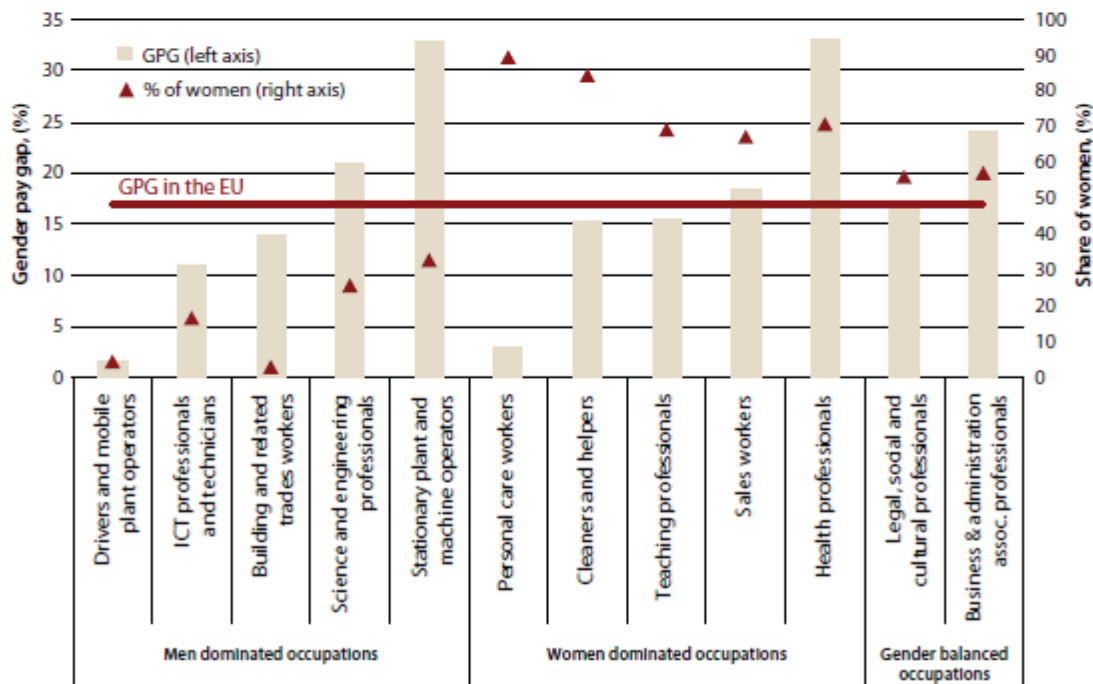
**Figure 6: Gender pay gap in the EU, by economic sector and age group (% , 2014)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on Eurostat data.

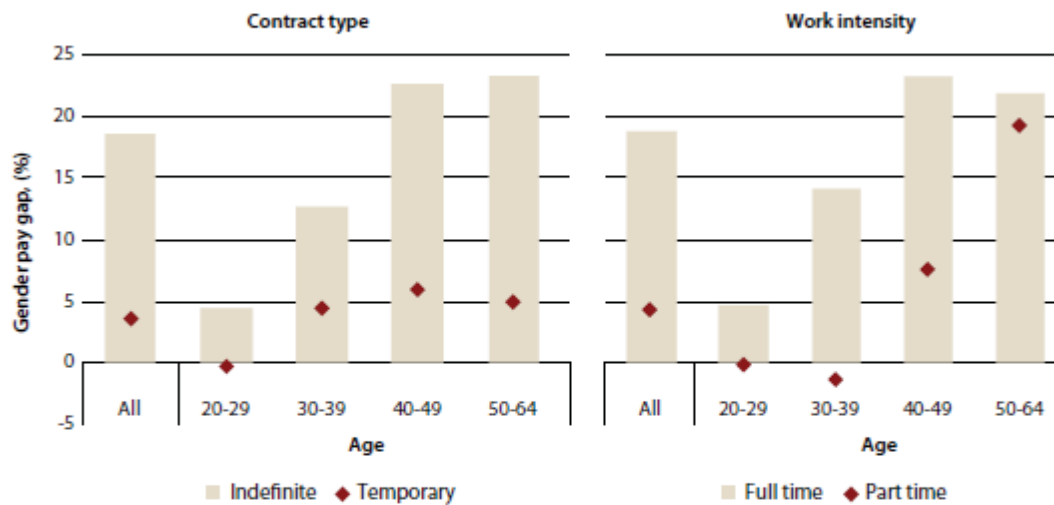
Note: The figure refers to the following NACE codes: C) manufacturing; D) electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; E) water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; F) construction; G) wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; H) transportation and storage; I) accommodation and food service activities; J) information and communication; K) financial and insurance activities; L) real estate activities; M) professional, scientific and technical activities; N) administrative and support service activities; O) public administration and defence, compulsory social security; P) education; Q) human health and social work activities; R) arts, entertainment and recreation.

**Figure 7: Gender pay gap and gender segregation in the EU, by occupation (% , 2014)**



Source: Eurostat and EIGE (2018).

Note: Eurostat figures refer to the gender pay gap across occupations.

**Figure 8: Gender pay gap in the EU, by contract type, work intensity and age group (% , 2014)**

Source: EIGE calculation, based on Eurostat data.

both in responding to employee pressures and providing economies of scale.

At EU level, the gender pay gap is smaller among workers with temporary rather than indefinite contracts. Age and level of qualification also matters. In the age group 20-29, the overall gender pay gap among workers with temporary or indefinite contracts is not substantial. Gender differences in pay increase considerably with age among jobholders with indefinite contracts, signalling the impacts of career interruptions and vertical segregation. The gender pay gap across different age groups of temporary workers is lower and displays a rather constant pattern. Temporary contracts are often related to specific, possibly lower qualified jobs, where the pay might be generally more “suppressed” and regulated (i.e. minimum wage), compared to pay levels of indefinite contracts over a longer time span. Across the EU, few countries (CY, MT, LT, BG) show a gender pay gap larger among jobholders with temporary contracts than those with indefinite contracts. Based on Eurostat 2017 data, in the EU, 14 % of women employees and 13 % of men employees worked under temporary contracts.

In the EU overall, the gender pay gap among women and men working part-time is generally lower (4 %) than among full-time workers (19 %) (Figure 8). This statistic must be interpreted in the wider context of high shares of women working part-time. Thus, the gender pay gap is estimated across groups of women and men with rather different characteristics. In 2017 in the EU, 19 % of total employment was part-time, with 31 % of women and 8 % of men working part-time.<sup>20</sup> Despite the overall gender pay gap being lower among the women and men working part-time, it reaches the same level of gender pay gap among full-time workers in age group 50-64. This reflects the fact that the groups of women and men staying in the labour market at that age are already smaller (due to inactivity), and show different characteristics. It also points to the impact of accumulated pay inequalities over the life course. In a number of EU countries (HR, PT, ES, SI, CZ, PL, FR, BE, IE), the gender pay gap among part-time workers is considerably higher than among full-time workers, with the largest differences in the gender pay gap found in Croatia (8 % in full-time, 22 % in part-time jobs), Portugal (13 % in full-time, 25 % in part-time jobs) and Spain (10 % in full-time, 19 % in part-time jobs).

<sup>20</sup> Based on Eurostat data (lfsi\_pt\_a).



## 2. How work-life balance impacts on the gender pay gap

To shed some light on this important nexus, the concept of work-life balance must first be briefly introduced. The literature refers to work-life balance as having two key dimensions: 1) an engagement in multiple roles in work and non-work life; and 2) a minimal conflict between the roles of work and non-work (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). This implies an "engagement in multiple roles with an approximate equal level of attention, time, involvement or commitment" and the importance of minimising the potential conflict between work and life roles (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Since dual earning couples are most common in the EU, achieving work-life balance implies not only greater access of women to paid work but also greater involvement of men in caregiving tasks, which could potentially lead to lower work intensity for men (Hobson, 2011; Hobson & Fahlén, 2009). Studying the impact of work-life balance on the gender pay gap is thus particularly relevant.

This section will elaborate Chapter 1 findings in relation to life course and flexible working conditions, providing a further overview of gender inequalities in pay in relation to some important dimensions of work-life balance: 1) over the life course, highlighting the importance of emerging role as a carer (e.g. children); and 2) in relation to flexible working arrangements, whose aim is to reduce work-life balance conflicts. The estimations of the gender gap in net monthly earnings are made on the basis of EWCS data<sup>21</sup> and refer to differences in earnings from the main job. As such, the latter indicator is more comparable to Eurostat's estimation of the gender gap in overall earnings than to the gender pay gap *per se*. The gender gap in net monthly earnings is not adjusted to hours worked, thus pointing to the gaps in economic empowerment between women and men due to their formal engagement in the labour market. Across various intersections of the latter indicator, an estimation across different life stages of adulthood (18-50 and older) - taking into account singlehood and partnerships with and without children - is presented. This allows a closer

look to the influence of the work-life balance on gender inequalities in pay.

### 2.1 Gender gap in net earnings across the life course

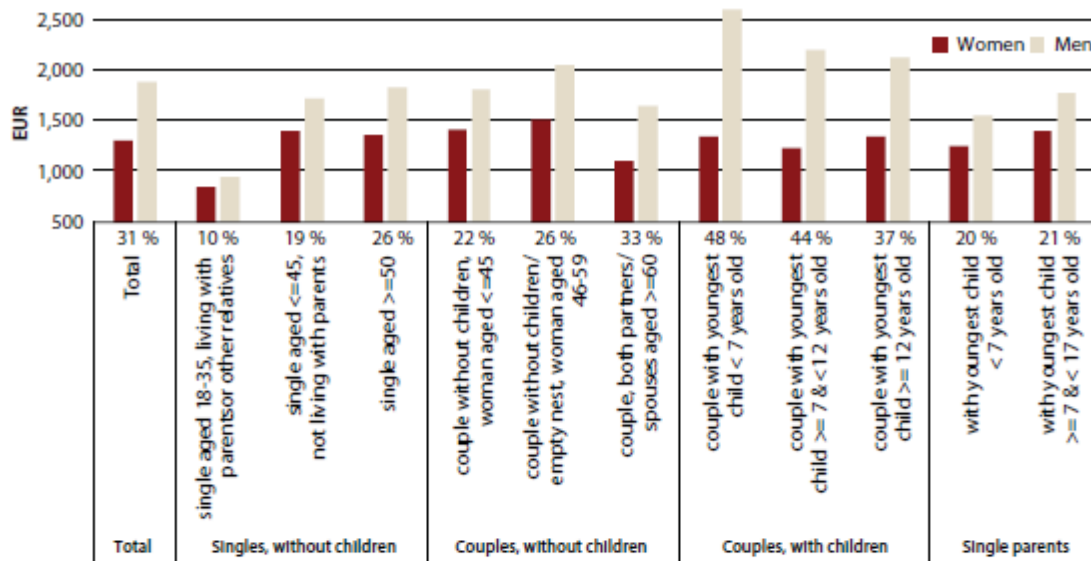
*"When we were young, it was very unusual for a man to swap or even quit a job just because his wife wanted to work too. When the kids got older she found a job. Moreover, no one was thinking that the social structure would change and pensions would reflect what one had actually earned."*

Ricardas (EIGE, 2015b)

Across different life stages, gender gaps in net monthly earnings are greatest for women with younger children (Figure 9). While the total gender gap in net monthly earnings in the EU stands at 31 % (to the detriment of women), for couples with children under the age of seven, it reaches 48 %, the highest level observed across the life stages examined. This life stage is associated not only with the levelling off of women's earnings, but also to a notable increase in men's earnings. The family formation implies an earnings' "penalty" for mothers and a "reward" for fathers, a finding consistently observed in wider research (EIGE, 2017b, p. 23; ILO, 2018). Among couples whose youngest child is over seven years of age, the gender gap begins to reduce, but remains considerably higher compared to women in partnerships without children or in comparison to other life stages. In single parent families, with children of different ages, gender gap in net monthly earnings is at about 20%. Despite majority of single parent families being led by women, this statistics shows that earnings of both women and men in such intense care situation of children is reduced. The existent but lower gender gap in comparison to what is observed among couples with children is mainly due to much lower earnings received by single fathers in comparison to fathers living couples, whereas earnings of single mothers are only a fraction

<sup>21</sup> The EWCS measures earnings as the *Net monthly earnings from the main job (variable Q104)*, as distinct from the gross earnings provided in the SES survey (on the basis of which the gender pay gap – an hourly gross measure – is estimated). To identify gender gaps in net monthly earnings, average earning levels in EUR across relevant dimensions are compared, with the gender gap referring to the difference between women and men (in absolute value or as a percentage of men).

**Figure 9: Net monthly earnings in different life stages, EU-28 (2015)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on EWCS (2015) data

Note: indicated percentages refer to gender gap in net annual earnings for the respective group; the typology of life stages is developed by Eurofound, including: Single people (18-35 years), living with their parents or relatives; Single people (under 46 years) without children; Younger cohabiting couples (women under 46), without children; Cohabiting couples with youngest child under seven years; Cohabiting couple with young children between seven and 12 years; Cohabiting couple with teenage children between 13 and 18 years; Mid-life 'empty nest' couples without resident children; Older cohabiting couples without resident children; Single people (aged 50 years or older), without resident children. In addition, data for single parent families is reported.

lower in comparison to earnings of mothers living in couples. The lowest gender gap in net monthly earnings is observed among the youngest generations having no children.

The described pattern of gender gaps across the life course is observed in all EU Member States. The lower earnings of women with children are typically attributed to women working less when children are young (Gauthier, 2018) and receiving lower pay (i.e. hourly earnings) when children are older (Lundborg, Plug, & Rasmussen, 2017). This decline in earnings is typically referred to as the "motherhood penalty" or "motherhood pay gap" (Budig, Misra, & Boeckmann, 2012; ILO, 2015).

The pay penalty for women does not just relate to reduced work intensity, but remains after adjusting for work experience, education levels or reductions in working time, and could be associated with employment in more flexible and family-friendly jobs with lower wages, in anticipation of future caregiving roles (Wey, 2015). Other influences are also at play, including discriminatory practices in recruitment and stereotypical

promotion decisions, perpetuated by cultural attitudes and expectations in respect of the employment of women as mothers or potential mothers (Budig et al, 2012; ILO, 2018).

State remedies exist to reduce gender gaps in relation to the care of children. Research notes that public policies in favour of reconciling family and work have a positive impact on women's labour market participation (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2017). The provision of subsidised childcare services are found to have the most significant impact on gender equality outcomes (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2017). Overall, parental leave across the European countries is associated with positive effects on women's labour market participation, despite having a higher negative effect on wages of highly skilled women (Akgunduz & Plantenga, 2012). However, the effects of parental leave policies and childcare services vary in relation to general gender equality attitudes: positive effects on the gender pay gap are noted in societies where a mother's employment is culturally supported, while neutral or negative effects occur in societies where support for traditional gender roles remains high (Budig et al., 2012, p. 163).

## 2.2 Working patterns and gender gap in net earnings

Flexible working arrangements constitute an important element of work-life balance. They include flexitime (flexible start and end times), job-sharing, telecommuting/working from home and part-time work (Russell, O'Connell, & McGinnity, 2009; Winder, 2009), as well as "...time banking or working time accounts and annualised hours" (Goudswaard *et al.*, 2012, p. 13). Some studies show that flexible working is available primarily to high-skilled workers or workers in certain privileged occupations (Winder, 2008, 2009). Research undertaken in 27 EU Member States showed that workers in female-dominated sectors, such as education or care work, were half as likely to access flexitime than workers in male-dominated or gender equal sectors (Chung, 2018). Data from EWCS show that flexibility is far from being the norm, with over half of workers in the EU (57 % of women and 54 % of men) having working time arrangements set by employers with no possibility for change. By contrast, about one-fifth of workers report being able to adapt their hours within certain limits.<sup>22</sup>

Different types of flexible working arrangements have various effects on work-life balance and on the gender pay gap (Winder, 2009). For example, there are mixed results regarding working from home, with findings showing that such arrangements can both decrease and increase work-life conflict (Eurofound and International Labour Office, 2017; Russell *et al.*, 2009). Russell *et al.* (2009) found that part-time work and job sharing reduce work-life conflict, particularly for parents, but usually offer lower wages on average and lead to limited social protection, including pension entitlements and other social benefits (Spasova, Bouget, Ghailani, & Vanhercke, 2017), contributing significantly to the gender pension gap (EIGE, 2015a). According to Smithson *et al.* (2004, p. 116), the pay penalties for part-time work are high "... partly due to the segmentation of part-time work to certain occupations, to the marginalisation of part-time work within organisations, and to the unequal access of part-timers to other benefits." Similarly, current research notes that although workplace flexibility generally supports women's employment and work-life

balance, it did not prove to lead to narrowing gender earning gaps (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2017).

Generally, flexible working arrangements are considered the most supportive of work-life balance where employees can exercise autonomy and control in their use. Nonetheless, *de facto* availability of flexibility does not necessarily imply equal access or uptake, especially in the context of women and men's segregation across different types of occupations and hierarchy positions. For example, 19 % of male workers and 14 % of female workers report having access to full control over their working hours.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, some or full flexibility in working time arrangements is related to higher levels of absolute earnings, for both women and men (Figure 10). However, men earn significantly more than women in jobs where they can adapt their working hours within certain limits (gender gap of 38 % to the detriment of women) and in jobs where they entirely determine their working time (gender gap of 33 %). The gender pay gap among employees with no possibility of introducing changes in their working hours is lower, at 24 %. These differences in gender gaps are largely determined by absolute levels of men's earnings, whereas women's earnings change somewhat less across different levels of autonomy in setting working hours. This may be due to women more frequently requesting (and being granted) access to the flexible working arrangements available, which may lead to loss of earnings or career progression. Generally, the EWCS data show that the distribution of flexible working arrangements between women and men is less different than the financial penalty linked to the arrangements taken-up by women. This could be due to potential barriers to women in accessing jobs and positions which offer higher flexibility in working time arrangements and do not introduce a pay penalty.

The effect of flexible working arrangements on the gender pay gap may vary by sector or occupation. Smithson *et al.* (2004) find that employees largely associate certain flexible working arrangements - specifically working part-time or working from home - with, for example, women workers in accountancy. Uptake of such arrangements in this profession were found to negatively affect promotions and pay (Smithson J. *et al.*,

<sup>22</sup> In 2015, 57 % of women workers and 54 % of men workers in the EU-28 had their working time arrangements set by their company/organisation with no possibility for change, while 19 % of both women and men workers could adapt their working hours within certain limits (e.g. flexitime) (EIGE calculation, based on EWCS 2015 data).

<sup>23</sup> EIGE calculation, based on EWCS (2015) data.

2004). Generally, working arrangements which allow for flexibility in working time are often seen as feminine, as they allow for more time for household work and family responsibilities. Conversely, working arrangements which entail extensive overtime or travel are often seen as masculine, as emphasis is put on the breadwinner model (Leuze & Strauß, 2016).

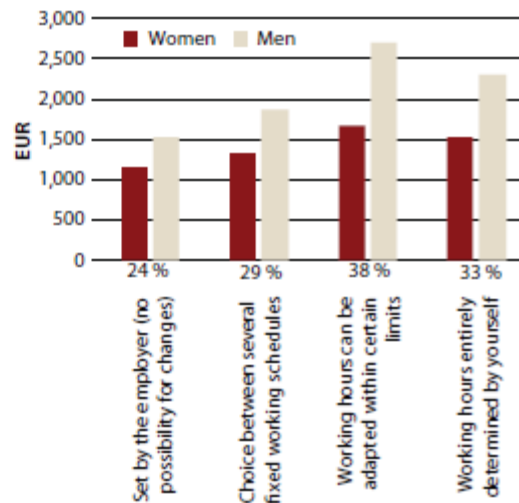
Similarly, research shows that women and men tend to use work flexibility for different purposes. While women report using flexible working times to better reconcile work and care responsibilities, men are observed to opt for increased work intensity and longer hours, thus aggravating existing inequalities in pay, career prospects and involvement in care work (Hofäcker & König, 2013; Holth, Bergman, & MacKenzie, 2017).

Women and men are not equally likely to work long hours. EWCS data show that 14 % of men, compared to 6 % of women, tend to work long hours on nine or more days per month.<sup>24</sup> The majority of women (77 %) never work more than 10 hours per day, compared to 59 % of men. This can be attributed either to their occupations requiring less continuous physical presence, part-time work or staggered hours, or to personal constraints such as care responsibilities.

Generally, the gender gap in earnings is lower among employees working long hours on a regular basis (Figure 11). Women and men regularly working long hours per day (between five and eight more days per month) receive nearly the same earnings. Men who never work more than 10 hours a day earn significantly more than women in the same situation (gender gap of 33 %). Overall, the more frequently employees indicate working long hours, the higher their earnings. This pattern does not entirely correspond to women's earnings, where those with the most frequent exposure to long hours (nine days or more per month) have lower earnings than those working long hours less often. As a result, the gender earnings gap is very significant (30 %) among this group of workers and could be predominantly linked to women and men being concentrated in very different jobs, with women under the latter working arrangement predominantly working in healthcare and social work (29 %), education (12 %) or accommodation and food service (12 %) jobs, men are most frequently engaged in manufacturing (14 %), construction (13 %), transportation and storage (11 %) jobs. Such segregation across

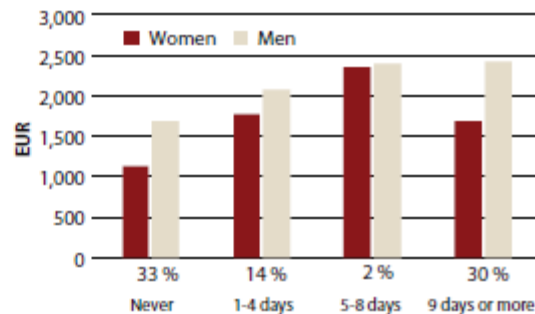
<sup>24</sup> EIGE calculation, based on EWCS (2015) data.

**Figure 10: Net monthly earnings by autonomy in setting own working hours, EU-28 (2015)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on EWCS (2015) data.  
Note: indicated percentages refer to gender gap in net annual earnings for the respective group.

**Figure 11: Net monthly earnings by frequency of working more than 10 hours a day per month, EU-28 (2015)**



Source: EIGE calculation, based on EWCS (2015) data.  
Note: indicated percentages refer to gender gap in net annual earnings for the respective group.

economic areas of activities is less pronounced among the employees who work long hours less frequently.

Long hours not only go hand-in-hand with higher earnings but also with notably higher work-life conflicts. According to Goldin (2014, p. 1091), companies "disproportionately reward individuals who laboured long hours

and worked particular hours". Recent research in Slovenia, for example, shows that men in managerial positions face particular work-life conflicts due to the expectation that they will work long hours and meet unplanned work

demands (Hrženjak & Humer, 2018). Men in precarious forms of employment (such as self-employment or contract work) also face similar expectations of constant availability (Hrženjak & Humer, 2018).

## 3. What policies tackle the gender pay gap?

### 3.1 EU policy framework

The EU policy to close the gender pay gap has a long history and remains among the key priorities of the European Commission. Closing the gender pay gap contributes to the overarching goal of achieving gender equality in the EU and to reaching the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda.<sup>25</sup> Tackling the gender pay gap is also in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, namely principle 2, on ensuring gender equality in all areas and principle 3, on equality of opportunities.<sup>26</sup>

The EU bodies introduced a set of directives and recommendations to enforce application of the equal pay principle for women and men and to reduce the gender pay gap. Article 157(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) obliges each Member State to ensure that the principle of equal pay for female and male workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied. Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU provides that equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equal pay is incorporated in Directive (2006/54/EC<sup>27</sup>) on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast). Article 4 of this Directive established the principle of equal pay and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex in all aspects and conditions of remuneration. The legislative framework of equal opportunities and equal pay was extended to self-employed women and men with the adoption of the Directive 2010/41/EU<sup>28</sup> in 2010.

In 2014, the European Commission adopted a Recommendation on strengthening the principle of equal pay between women and men through transparency (2014/124/EU),<sup>29</sup> which sought to reinforce the Recast Directive by introducing a set of concrete measures to promote pay transparency between women and men. In total, 10 measures were proposed, with a focus placed on pay reporting, pay audits, collective bargaining and the right of employees to request information. In 2017, the Commission issued a report on the implementation of the Pay Transparency Recommendation in Member States. It found that only 11 Member States had legislation on pay transparency in place, and only Sweden had all four key measures implemented in its national legal framework.<sup>30</sup> More recently, the Commission launched a public consultation, with the aim of gathering input from citizens, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders on the ways in which the Gender Equality Directive (2006/54/EC) and the 2014 Pay Transparency Recommendation could be better implemented and enforced.<sup>31</sup>

The European Commission also issued a Proposal for a Directive on Work-life Balance<sup>32</sup> for Parents and Carers, which has two specific objectives: (1) to improve access to work-life balance arrangements, such as leave and flexible working; and (2) to increase the take-up of family-related leave and flexible working arrangements by men. If adopted, the Directive is likely to have a positive effect on reducing the gender pay gap.

Tackling the gender pay gap has also been part of strategic EU level documents on gender equality. The Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 identified tackling the gender pay gap as one of the key priorities for action.<sup>33</sup> The European Commission's Strategic

<sup>25</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1.

<sup>26</sup> Commission Recommendation of 26 April 2017 on the European Pillar of Social Rights, C(2017) 2600 final.

<sup>27</sup> Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).

<sup>28</sup> Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC.

<sup>29</sup> Commission Recommendation of 7 March 2014 on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency, 2014/124/EU, OJ L 69, 8.3.2014.

<sup>30</sup> Report from the Commission on the Implementation of Commission Recommendation on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency, COM(2017) 671 final.

<sup>31</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-3415794/public-consultation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-3415794/public-consultation_en)

<sup>32</sup> Commission Proposal for a Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU, COM(2017) 253 final.

<sup>33</sup> Commission communication on the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, COM/2010/0491 final.

Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 maintained the same five key areas for action (including the gender pay gap) as its predecessor. In 2017, the Commission proposed the EU Action Plan for 2017-2018 on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap,<sup>34</sup> which translated the policy commitment to close the gender pay gap into a list of concrete actions. The Action Plan proposes eight strands of mutually reinforcing policies that tackle the gender pay gap from multiple angles, including pay transparency measures, actions to combat gender segregation in occupations and sectors, work-life balance policies aimed at reducing the financial care penalty, initiatives related to better valorisation of women's skills, awareness-raising activities, and initiatives focused on enhancing social partnerships to tackle the gender pay gap.

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), in particular, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are among the key financial levers for the pursuit of the Strategic Engagement's objectives and to implement measures foreseen in the EU Action plan. Approximately, EUR 1.6 billion of the ESF spending is granted for investments that target "access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work", and the ERDF dedicates an additional EUR 1.25 billion for childcare infrastructure.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the Commission supports Member States' efforts to tackle the gender pay gap through the European Semester process, which provides a framework for steering and monitoring Member States' economic and social reforms in areas such as job creation, enhancing labour and skills supply, fostering social inclusion, combating poverty and promoting equal opportunities. In 2017, the gender pay gap was addressed in the Country Reports of nine Member States (DE, EE, IE, ES, IT, AT, PL, RO, SK).<sup>36</sup> Later that year, the Commissions' Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) followed, which encouraged Member States to invest in childcare facilities, eliminate fiscal disincentives and adopt other measures to address the gender pay gap. In 2018, the gender pay gap situation was reviewed in the Country Reports of eight Member States (AT, CZ, EE, FI, DE, PT, SK, UK), with Estonia receiving a CSR encouraging it to take measures to reduce the gender pay gap.

### 3.2 Measures aimed at tackling the gender pay gap

*"What should the state do to ensure that men and women are cared for on an equal basis when they grow old? I have no idea. I guess it's fair that a man could take parental leave too, as well as contribute more at home. Though men of my generation would disagree. The thought never crossed my mind to ask our sons whether they'd temporarily quit their jobs if their wives were worried about their work record and careers. I'm not sure. Unless, of course, the state would coerce us to leave and raise children. I don't really know."*

Ricardas (EIGE, 2015b)

This section briefly outlines the variety of policy options (broadly corresponding to the different strands of the EU Action Plan to tackle the gender pay gap) that are available to combat pay inequalities.

Defining 'equal pay for equal work or work of equal value', together with the corresponding concepts of 'pay', 'work' and 'work of equal value' is particularly important – and complex – given that women and men are segregated into different sectors and positions, with little direct comparability and that female-dominated professions are historically undervalued (EIGE, 2017). While most Member States have yet to put clear definitions in place, Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands are considerably advanced. For example, Ireland's legislation not only defines 'pay', but also establishes conditions where women's remuneration can be adequately compared with a male counterpart in pay discrimination cases. It defines equal work as: the same or similar work, that be considered interchangeable; work that similar in nature under similar conditions; or work that is equal in value considering skills, responsibilities and working conditions (European Equality Law Network, 2018).

Pay transparency legislation (e.g. right of employees to obtain information on pay levels; requirement for companies to report their pay levels; pay audits at company level; or the obligation for social partners to address equal pay in collective bargaining (European

<sup>34</sup> Commission communication on the EU Action Plan 2017-2019. Tackling the gender pay gap.

<sup>35</sup> EIGE (Forthcoming 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Report from the Commission on the Implementation of the Commission Recommendation on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency, COM(2017) 671 final.

Commission, 2014<sup>37</sup>) facilitates effective application of the equal pay principle in practice. It reveals potential gender bias or discrimination in the pay structures at company, sector or economy level, and contributes to raising overall awareness and better comprehension of the root causes of the gender pay gap, alongside appropriate remedies.

Across the EU, Sweden has the most comprehensive set of pay transparency measures (European Commission, 2017), which were first introduced in 1994 and subsequently expanded significantly. For example, in 2017, the scope of applicability of the pay audit requirement was increased to companies with at least 10 (previously 25) employees and on an annual basis (previously every three years). Swedish companies must analyse pay differences and prepare action plans to tackle unjustified pay gaps (the latter applies only for companies with more than 25 employees). Pay transparency measures are more effective in tackling the gender pay gap if data are reported with disaggregation by gender and employment position. For example, the UK pay transparency regulation obliges reporting on 14 distinct metrics, including median and mean gender pay gaps, the gender gap in bonus pay, or share of women and men across pay quartiles (Government Equalities Office, 2018a). A survey carried out on the effectiveness of the UK transparency legislation showed a positive change in employer attitudes since the introduction of the legislation, with 24% of those employers seeing the gender pay gap as a high priority at the introduction of the legislation, increasing to 35% in the subsequent round of reporting (Government Equalities Office, 2018b). However, it is crucial that pay transparency legislation targets a broad range of companies in order not to limit its effect on the gender pay gap. In some EU countries, for example, pay transparency legislation applies solely to relatively large enterprises (e.g. in Austria and Germany it applies only to companies with more than 150 and 200 employees, respectively), omitting a substantial share of smaller companies. In Denmark, although the company size requirement is low (35 employees), only those enterprises with at least 10 employees of each gender employed within the same work function (i.e. with the same 6-digit ISCO code) are required to report pay data.

Wage gap calculators that facilitate gender pay gap calculation at company level or inform employees on

their salary compared to broader trends in the labour market could support more effective implementation of pay transparency legislation. For example, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, in cooperation with scientists and consultants, developed the Pay Transparency Monitor.<sup>38</sup> The Monitor helps companies not only to calculate their gender pay gap but also to review their salary definition rules and structures for potential areas of discrimination, as well as providing information on their compliance with reporting obligations under the Pay Transparency Law in Germany.

Collective bargaining plays an important role in ensuring wage transparency and thus reducing the gender pay gap, with the Commission's Recommendation on Pay Transparency (2014/124/EU) encouraging Member States to oblige social partners to discuss equal pay matters in collective bargaining settings (European Commission, 2014). In 2017, five Member States (BE, DE, FI, FR, SE) had such legislative provisions in place (European Commission, 2017). In Belgium, for example, the law mandates a discussion of measures to tackle the gender pay gap at sectoral level collective bargaining agreements. Similar requirements also exist for cross-industry agreements signed between management and employees (European Commission, 2017). In France, the legislation adopted in September 2018 established common indicators for companies to measure inequalities in pay and career progression. Following the assessment, social partners will discuss corrective measures to achieve equality in pay and career opportunities by 2022. Every year, the French Ministry of Labour will hold a national conference to discuss progress. In Denmark, the protection of an employee who requests information on pay or makes a claim on pay discrimination could form part of collective bargaining.

Gender-neutral job evaluation can help to clarify the value of different jobs and the skills, experience and responsibility demanded of the worker, as well as providing information on job characteristics and pay scales. Such methodologies are already developed and could be shared more widely between the Member States. For example, in 2013, the French National Ombudsman (*Le Défenseur des droits*) published an extensive guide to gender-neutral job evaluation (*Le Défenseur Des Droits*, 2013) for social partners, work inspectors, academics and NGOs working for gender equality. The guide explains job evaluation systems and

<sup>37</sup> The European Commission listed these four actions as the key measures ensuring wage transparency in its Recommendation on Pay Transparency (2014/124/EU).

<sup>38</sup> Available at: <https://www.monitor-entgelttransparenz.de/>



their overall function, presents examples of both discriminatory and non-discriminatory job evaluation and contains a step-by-step guide to building non-discriminatory gender-neutral job evaluation systems.

Strong national equality bodies are instrumental in ensuring that laws on pay transparency and equal pay are implemented effectively. The Commission's Recommendation on Pay Transparency (2014/124/EU) invited Member States to ensure that national equality bodies have sufficient powers to address gender pay discrimination and pay transparency obligations, and to represent victims of pay discrimination (e.g. to alleviate any procedural and cost-related obstacles) (European Commission, 2014). Such possibilities already exist in some Member States, with some having a mandate to request information on pay levels and represent individuals before the national courts in pay discrimination cases (e.g. AT, FI, SE), others having powers to hear and decide on pay discrimination cases brought forward by alleged victims (e.g. BE, FR, NL) (European Commission, 2017) and to issue sanctions (e.g. administrative fines or excluding companies from public procurement) if pay discrimination is confirmed.

Gender-sensitive design and implementation of a broad set of policies, such as family-related leave, flexible working arrangements and accessibility and affordability of formal care services, can facilitate a better balance between care and work responsibilities for carers and simultaneously reduce the gender pay gap. Some countries (e.g. DE, FR, HR, IT, AT, PT, RO, SE) aim to promote better share of caring responsibilities between women and men by introducing additional incentives for fathers to take parental leave, including extended leave duration if fathers take a certain share of parental leave (e.g. DE, HR, IT, AT or PT), bonus payments (FR) if both parents take some parental leave, or a 'parental leave quota' that is only available for father and cannot be transferred to a partner within a parental leave policy design that sets this entitlement on a family level (e.g. RO or SE) (Blum, Koslowski, Macht, & Moss, 2018). To support women and men intending to return to the labour market after care leave, the United Kingdom has, for example, introduced programmes within which employers provide (re)training for carers.

More research and monitoring activities, awareness-raising campaigns and dissemination of good practices can further support efforts to tackle the gender pay gap. For example, measures can target an improved gender balance in companies, occupation and sectors by combating various stereotypes. The 'Go MINT'<sup>39</sup> initiative in Germany features more than 280 partners from the public and private sectors, academics, social partners, media, companies and trade unions, collaborating in joint actions or implementing individual projects to encourage women to study and seek career in STEM fields. Among the measures targeting company level changes is Cyprus' gender equality certification scheme for both public and private companies. Within the scheme, certification as an 'Equality Employer' is awarded to companies adopting an integrated system to promote gender equality at work, while 'Best Practice' certification is awarded for individual practices. EU level initiatives also exist, such as the Equal Pay Day, held in late October or early November each year and representing the day on which women stop earning while men keep earning until the end of the year. The organisation of the day brings particular attention to the gender pay gap issue in some Member States, such as the Czech Republic, where it is marked by a high-profile two-day conference with some 2,000 participants.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, 'Time for Pay all Day- 16:02'<sup>41</sup> (which highlights that women are not paid for their work past the indicated time) was initiated by the Swedish Women's lobby in 2012, since which time it has found broad support from other women's associations, trade unions and organisations working on women's rights.

Although individual initiatives to tackle the gender pay gap are important, the farthest reaching effects are seen when different activities are closely coordinated and complement one another. As the gender pay gap is caused by multiple factors, so, too, it requires a broad and systematic policy response, involving a wide range of actors, such as government institutions, social partners and civil society organisations. Any comprehensive policy response to tackle the gender pay gap should be followed by continuous monitoring and evaluation activities that help to identify the most effective measures and thus achieve the best results in the long term.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.komm-mach-mint.de>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.equalpayday.cz/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://sverigeskvinnolobby.se/eng/project/1552-campaign-on-the-gender-pay-gap/>

## 4. Conclusions

**Measurement of gender inequalities in pay must go beyond the gender pay gap and consider the wider context of women's and men's employment opportunities** (for example, monthly working hours and share of women and men in formal employment). A low level of gender pay gap might give a false sense of gender equality in labour market opportunities, as it may be caused by low women's employment overall (e.g. RO). Similarly, a high prevalence of part-time work among women can lead to much larger gaps in overall earnings (e.g. NL) than reflected by the gender pay gap. On average, the gender pay gap in the EU stands at 16 %, while the gender overall earnings gap is close to 40 %. Pay inequalities in employment extend to older age as well, as demonstrated by the EU gender gap in pensions, which currently stands at 37 %. Assessing gender differences in pay on the basis of a set of complementary measures, including the possibility to better account for the influence of tax and social security systems, would better identify the circumstances and causes of pay inequalities and thus inform more targeted policy approaches.

**Gender norms and stereotypes underpin the gender pay gap.** Despite numerous changes in women's economic behaviour and educational attainment levels, gender inequalities in pay persist. This shows that some structural causes remain pervasive, even while new challenges arise. Men still dominate decision-making positions, with women concentrated in lower level and lower remunerated occupations and positions. Women's human capital is more likely to depreciate during their life course, given that the burden of family responsibilities may push them away from both work and training. Women's predominant engagement in part-time work and their higher take-up of career breaks and flexible working arrangements go hand-in-hand with the lower social value of jobs taken by women. In addition, a number of organisational practices, such as valuing visibility at work and long, continuous presence on the job, create particularly large gender pay gaps for certain employees, e.g. in corporate, financial, legal or manufacturing jobs.

**While the pay gap is very low when entering the labour market, the difference grows substantially along the career path and alongside increasing family demands.** Among those aged 20-29, the average EU

gender pay gap is at minimal level of 3 %. However, it rises with age, stalling at 22 % in the 40-49 age group. These increases coincide with two major patterns: increasing work experience and income levels, and intensification of family responsibilities. If the average gender pay gap in the EU is at 7 % in the first income quintile, it reaches 15 % in the third and 26 % in the fifth income quintile. In addition, gender pay gaps widen for those with higher qualifications, showing disadvantages that accumulate alongside career progression. Aside from structural barriers at work, an increase in the gender pay gap is synonymous with the rollout of a vast array of life events, such as formation of family and increasing family care responsibilities. Across different life stages, the largest gender inequalities in pay occur for women living in couples and having children under seven years of age. Having children imposes a significant and persistent penalty on women's pay. No similar penalty applies to men's pay and applies to a lesser extent to the pay of women without children. Overall, the widening of the gender pay gap along the career and life paths shows the need for increased take-up of work-life balance arrangements by men specifically, as well as the need to introduce provisions that facilitate and encourage men in assuming an equal share of caring responsibilities with women.

**The gender pay gap varies considerably across different jobs but, overall, women earn less than men in all sectors.** Gender pay gaps are particularly large in financial and insurance activities (35 %), as well as in manufacturing (31 %), with bigger "pay penalties" observed for older women. In some sectors, youth can be a disadvantage: in entertainment and the arts, for example, the gender pay gap is 38 % among 20-29 year olds, compared to 25 % among those aged 50-64. The gender pay gap is particularly large (33 %) among health professionals, showing the strong impact of vertical segregation and the under-valuing of jobs with predominantly high shares of women employees. Similarly, despite women's higher educational attainment - which is supposed to provide an advantage for women in the labour market - the average gender pay gap in the EU is 25 % among those with tertiary education and lower for those with lower educational attainment levels. In this regard, the situation varies extensively between countries. For instance, the gender pay gap reaches 44 % among employees with tertiary education in Czechia

but is just 12 % in Belgium. Overall, gender pay gaps across different groups of jobholders and occupations show substantial disadvantages for those employees whose organisations and jobs place a higher value on longer working hours and full-time availability at work, thus particularly disadvantaging women. To better capture the impact of these underlying factors and adjust possible policy responses, it is of the utmost importance to examine various break-downs of the gender pay gap, combining the effect of individual, organisational and household characteristics.

**Limited use of work-life balance arrangements by men exacerbates the gender pay gap.** Women in the EU are still expected to shoulder the bulk of care responsibilities, especially when other caring options are scarce. As such, they are more likely than men to request and be granted access to flexible working arrangements, with the take-up among men remaining low. Large gender gaps in net monthly earnings are found among employees with greater freedom to set their own working hours and is mainly due to women and men using work flexibility for different purposes. While women tend to use flexible working arrangements to better reconcile their

work and care responsibilities, men are more likely to use such arrangements for increased work intensity and longer working hours, thus aggravating existing inequalities in pay. Women and men who regularly work long (more than 10) hours per day receive about the highest and most equitable earning levels. However, few women are able to work long hours on a regular basis, due to their care responsibilities. Men show greater ability to work long hours, but at the cost of particularly increased work-life conflicts. The expectation to work long hours and be constantly available not only limits men's family engagement, but also constitutes one of the biggest obstacles towards closing the gender pay gap. It highlights the fact that flexible working arrangements might not always be effective in reducing the gender pay gap and may in fact reinforce traditional gender roles in the family and society at large. If flexibility is seen as an important policy instrument to increase the ability of jobholders to adjust to a changing labour market and to achieve better work-life balance, gender equality, as a solution to the problem, could usefully figure more prominently in the policy measures addressing flexible working arrangements.

# Annex

**Table 1. Gender pay gap, gender overall earnings gap and gender gap in pensions in the EU**

Country	Gender pay gap (%)	Gender overall earnings gap (%)	Gender gap in pensions (%)
Year	2016	2014	2016
EU-28	16.2	39.6	37.2
BE	6.1	31.1	26.6
BG	14.4	22.8	27.4
CZ	21.8	40.4	13.4
DK	15.0	26.1	7.8
DE	21.5	45.2	42.1
EE	25.3	38.4	1.8
IE	13.9*	36.8	26.1
EL	12.5*	41.4	28.4
ES	14.2	35.7	33.8
FR	15.2	31.0	32.7
HR	8.7*	24.4	22.7
IT	5.3	43.7	36.8
CY	13.9	26.9	48.7
LV	17.0	22.8	15.4
LT	14.4	19.2	17.5
LU	5.5	32.5	43.1
HU	14.0	32.0	15.2
MT	11.0	43.9	44.8
NL	15.6	47.5	45.4
AT	20.1	44.9	40.6
PL	7.2	31.5	21.8
PT	17.5	26.1	32.6
RO	5.2	26.8	25.2
SI	7.8	19.6	15.8
SK	19.0	37.3	8.1
FI	17.4	24.1	23.7
SE	13.3	26.2	28.3
UK	21.0	45.0	34.8

Source: Eurostat [earn\_gr\_gpgr2], [teqges01]; (European Commission, 2018a).

Note: the reference year of the gender pay gap is 2016, except for Ireland, Greece and Croatia (whose latest available year was 2014).

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