



D2.1. OVERVIEW OF POLICIES THAT PROMOTE GENDER EMPOWERMENT ACROSS EUROPE

**RETHINKING INCLUSION AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT: A
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**



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SHORT SUMMARY DELIVERABLE

Objectives

The objective of this report is to summarize and compare the main findings regarding the promotion of gender empowerment in state policies and different domains of everyday life in Austria, Spain, Belgium, Italy, and Poland. The following areas covered include: labour market policy, education policy, health policy, family policy, gender representation in political, economic and social elites, migration and minority policy, as well as the role and position of civil society in gender empowerment and inclusion.

Main findings

Partner countries face similar challenges in terms of establishing mechanisms aimed at eliminating gender inequality but differ in terms of the authorities' approach towards this issue. This translates into specific solutions that are adopted by different countries.

SHORT SUMMARY

The report presents a comparative summary of the situation regarding gender equality in different areas of life in project partner countries.

The ReIncluGen Project

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Contributors	All partners

D2.1. Overview of policies that promote gender empowerment

1. GENERAL CONTEXT

Five European countries participate in the ReIncluGen project: Austria, Belgium, Italy, Poland and Spain, and they differ in terms of how gender empowerment is framed and how the problem of gender inequality is addressed by respective countries' national and regional policy makers. In addition, they also differ when it comes to the socio-cultural context, which has shaped how gender relations have developed in each of these countries. Although long-term data supports the claim that overall the level of gender equality has increased, neither of the project participant countries has reached a situation of total gender equality in all aspects of everyday life and they face a series of challenges, which have been described in detail in country reports that focus on the policies in each country part of the ReIncluGen project¹ and that sketch more in-depth the broader policy context in which the ReIncluGen will conduct fieldwork. Here, we would like to offer a comparison of some of the aspects that seem of particular importance as far as the issue of gender empowerment and inclusion are concerned. Particularly, below we discuss such areas as labour market policy, education policy, health policy, family policy, gender representation in political, economic and social elites, migration and minority policy, as well as the role and position of civil society in gender empowerment and inclusion.

Below we present a brief summary of what women's lives look like in the project's participant countries, with reference the different components of the Gender Inequality Index (GII), developed by the United Nations. The gender inequality index provides insights into gender disparities in health, empowerment and the labour market. It is a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. Higher values in the GII indicate worse achievements. Low status restricts women's opportunities and freedom, giving them less interaction with others and fewer opportunities for independent behaviour, restricting the transmission of new knowledge, and damaging their self-esteem and self-expression. It is a particularly important determinant of two resources for care: mothers physical and mental health, and their autonomy and control over household resources. Low status restricts women's capacity to act in their own and their children's best interests. There is a demonstrated association between women's status and malnutrition in children.

¹ Available upon request

Poland

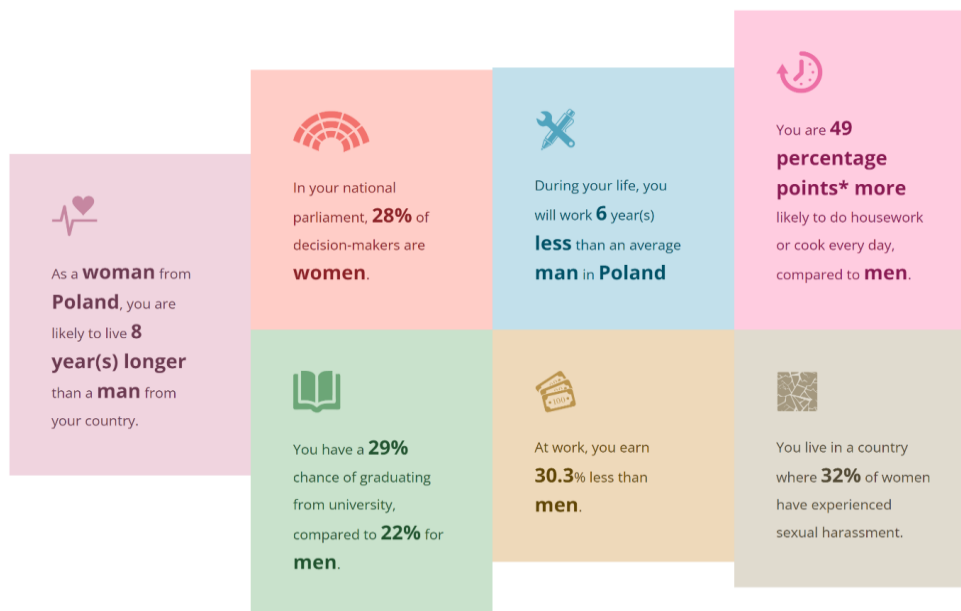
There is no explicit definition of “gender empowerment” or “gender inclusion” in foundational Polish policy documents. These are addressed through regulations related to equal treatment. For example, under the Constitution adopted in 1997, Poland grants women and men equal rights; Article 33(2) states that ‘Women and men shall have equal rights, in particular regarding education, employment and promotion, and shall have the right to equal compensation for work of similar value, to social security, to hold office and to receive public honours and orders/medals.’

The 2022-2030 National Action Programme for Equal Treatment was adopted in May 2022 to integrate the principle of equal treatment into national policies. The programme sets out the objectives and priorities of activities for equal treatment, and its aim is to eliminate discrimination from social life in Poland. The individual priorities of this document have been constructed to take into account the main areas of social and economic life, rather than on the basis of challenges concerning the grounds for discrimination. The programme includes the following priorities: anti-discrimination policy, labour, education, health, access to goods and services, raising awareness of discrimination, data collection and research, co-ordination.

The action programme underscores that the term “gender” refers to women and men, as well as girls and boys, which ensures its consistency and eliminates possible doubts about its interpretation in the future. Poland opposed the possibility of including a third gender, separate from male and female, when implementing new harmonized EU identity cards. Prior to that, Poland and Hungary were systematically attempting to remove the word “gender” and “gender equality” from documents prepared and agreed on by EU member states. Representatives of both countries insisted that the term gender is not used in the EU treaty, therefore EU documents should refer to “equality between women and men”. For example, in November 2020, Poland and Hungary strongly opposed an EU plan to “promote gender equality and women’s empowerment” as part of the bloc’s foreign policy.

To sum up, women in Poland have higher chances than men to graduate from university, but they are not as likely as men to reach the level of national policy makers and to earn as much money. In contrast, women are more likely to take care of the house and the family, which results from the traditional views regarding social gender roles among Poles. When it comes to health care, women in Poland live longer than men, though they retire earlier.

FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX RESULTS FOR POLAND



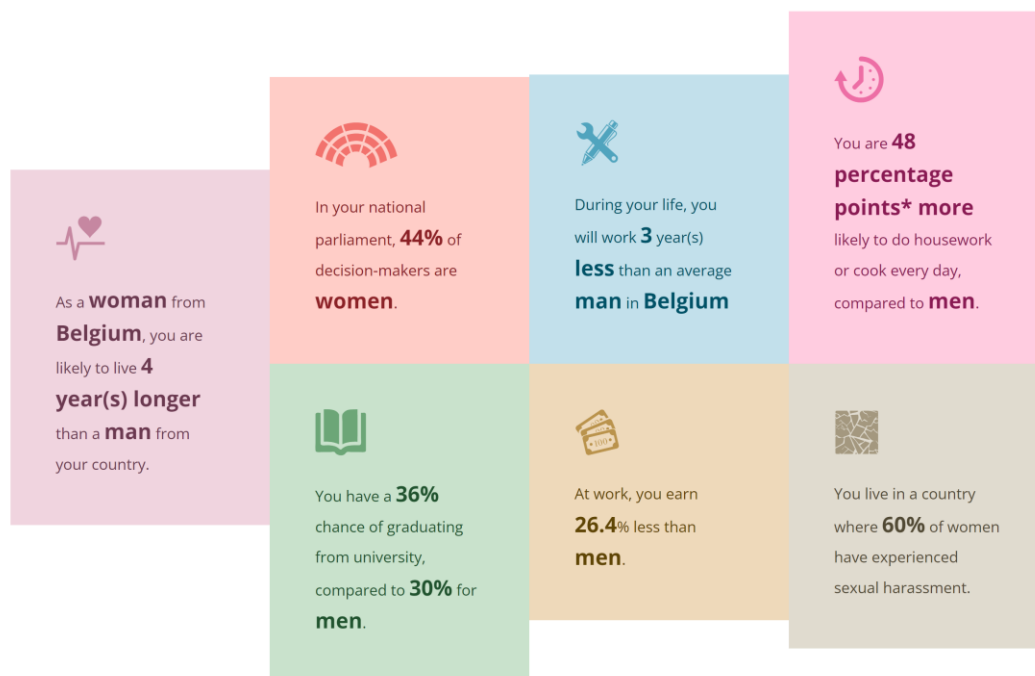
Belgium

In Belgium, the most significant national document is the constitution. Gender empowerment is not explicitly mentioned, however Art. 10 states that “*equality between men and women is guaranteed*” and Art. 11 says that “*Enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised for Belgians must be provided without discrimination*” with Art. 11bis stating that “*The law, federate law or rule referred to in Article 134 guarantees that women and men may equally exercise their rights and freedoms, and in particular promotes their equal access to elective and public mandate*”. International law, however, overrules the constitution.

On a federal level, Belgium decided in 2015 to enforce the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constructed by the United Nations. SDG5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all woman and girls. The Federal Institute for Sustainable Development (FIDO) compiled five ways to implement the SDGs, this includes strategic documents for Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels-Capital Region and the German-speaking community.

To sum up, almost half of Belgian policymakers are women, but in comparison to men, women still earn less. Belgian women on average work less than men, but their salaries are lower, though they are more likely than men to graduate from university. Interestingly, over half of Belgian women have experienced sexual harassment, which is the highest of all project participant countries.

FIGURE 2: SUMMARY OF GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX RESULTS FOR BELGIUM



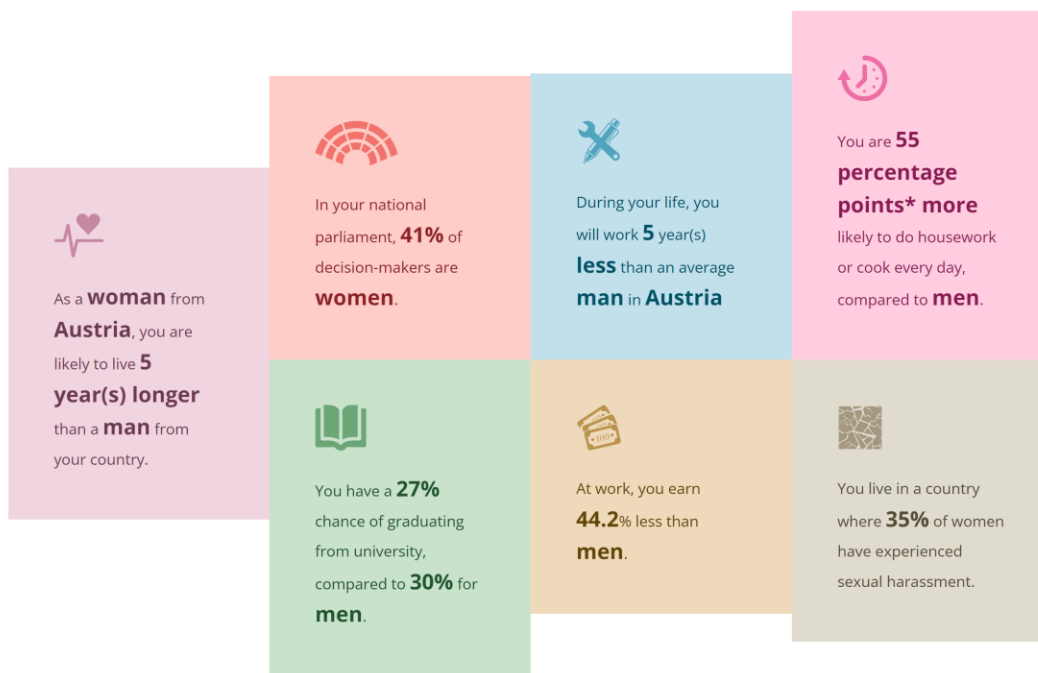
Austria

Gender empowerment in Austria follows definitions of international and EU policy documents. It goes mainly along the lines of gender equality (e.g. in education, the labour market, managerial positions and pay), as well as protection of women and provision of support. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the most comprehensive international legal document that ensures gender equality. The first four articles of CEDAW have constitutional status in Austria (B-VG), which was ratified in 1982. Explicitly, the Austrian Constitution (B-VG) stipulates equal rights for men and women, and prohibits discrimination based on gender (Art. 7.)

Austria as a federal state has implemented several national laws as well as local regulations in the 9 federal states to promote gender equality in education, employment, and political representation. The current composition of federal ministries, as well as their government funded civil extensions form the political bodies that work towards reducing national and regional gender segregation in education, employment, health, research, and social sectors.

To sum up, Austrian gender wage gap is alarmingly high and Austrian women are much more likely to do housework than men. From all project participant countries, Austria is the only one where men have a higher, albeit by a small margin, chance of graduating from university.

FIGURE 3: SUMMARY OF GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX RESULTS FOR AUSTRIA



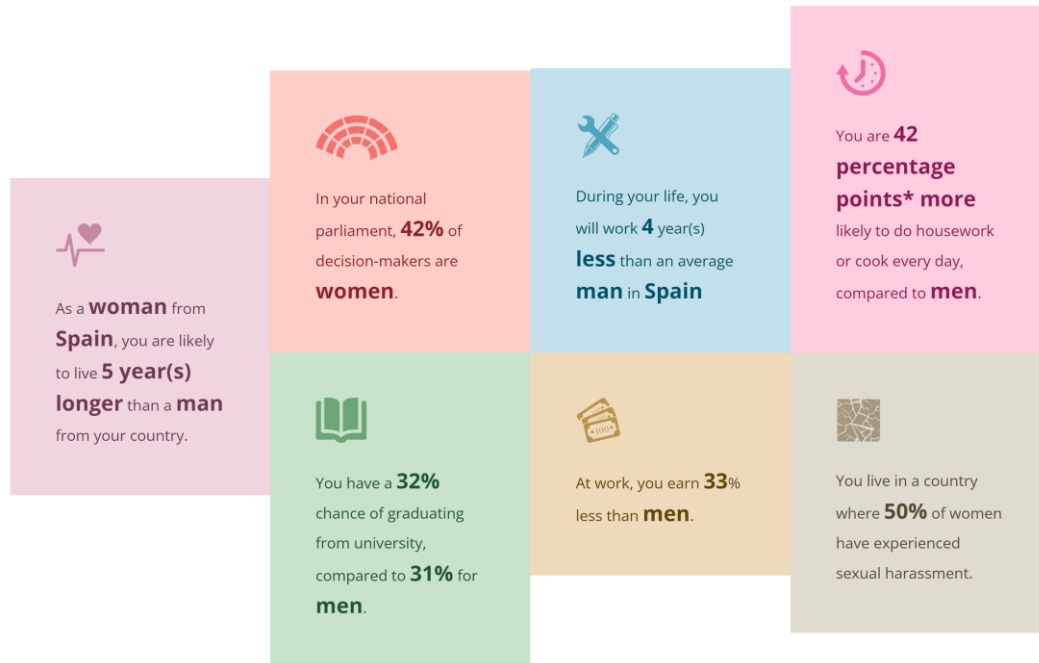
Spain

Two very important Spanish laws on gender empowerment: the 2004 Comprehensive Act (Ley integral) against Gender-based Violence and the 2007 Equality Act between Women and Men, which were later adopted in all the Autonomous Communities, with political powers transferred but at very different speeds depending on the political colour of each regional government. They are the first two laws that refer explicitly to the concepts and the agenda on "gender empowerment" (in Spanish *agency capacity* is more frequently used) that also mention for the first time the concept of "gender mainstreaming" in all the areas of public policy, following the definitions of the political documents of the European Union (EIGE, 2023). In addition, in 2008 the Ministry of Equality was created, and the role of the Women's Institute was reinforced to monitor the implementation and results of equality policies, through new observatories and equality plans.

In 2011, Spain signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). And in 2017 the State Agreement Against Gender Violence was approved, which endowed the 2004 Act with a budget of €1,000M.

To sum up, the chances of graduating from university in Spain are almost equal for women and men, though women still earn less and retire earlier than men. Female representation in parliament has reached almost half, but women are still more likely to do housework and cook than men.

FIGURE 4: SUMMARY OF GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX RESULTS FOR SPAIN

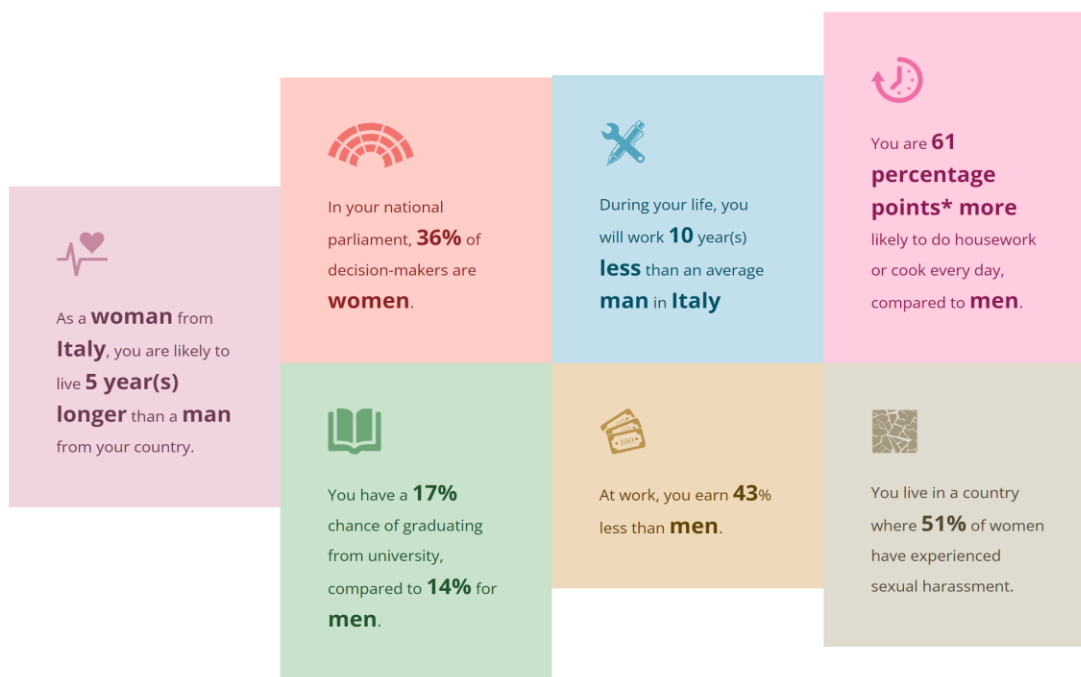


Italy

The Ministry of Equal Opportunities presented a national strategic plan for the period 2021-2026 to promote equal opportunities and empower women. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026, which is inspired by the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, with a long-term perspective, represents the outline of values, and the direction of the policies to be implemented in terms of gender equality. There are five priorities: Work, Income, Skills, Time, and Power. The goal is to gain 5 points in the ranking of the EIGE Gender Equality Index.

To sum up, although women in Italy are more likely than men to graduate from university, this level is much lower than in the rest of the project participant countries. Italy is also the country where women are most likely to do housework and cook and work the least, as compared to men.

FIGURE 5: SUMMARY OF GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX RESULTS FOR ITALY



2. LABOUR MARKET POLICY (WAGES)

Overview of legal frameworks

In terms of labour policy, it can be noted that authorities of all the countries participating in the project have included specific legislative regulations providing frameworks for equal treatment in the workplace. These apply to such aspects as equal pay for equal responsibilities, equal treatment at all stages of employment, equal access to work and information, equal promotion possibilities, and equal work conditions among others. In some countries these rights have been incorporated into the Constitution (e.g., Italy), in other countries – they are guaranteed by specific national and regional laws and labour codes (e.g., Austria). However, in practice differences between the situation of men and women in the workforce remain, which also applies to retirement conditions, and can be observed in various indexes measuring inequality. Specific data referring to each country can be found in their respective reports, here we provide several conclusions.

Economic (in)activity

As far as economic activity and unemployment are concerned, these seem particularly problematic in Italy and Spain. These two countries are facing relatively high unemployment rates in general, but the situation of women is especially worrying, as the rates of female unemployment are higher than those of male unemployment and, in turn, rates of economic activity – lower. Moreover, this situation strongly affects women migrants, who are employed in the most precarious positions and whose work

relationship is not regulated. According to data provided by Eurostat² (see Table 1) as far as employment activity is concerned, Austria and Spain display the highest rates, while Italy – the lowest. However, all countries in question display a similar rate of female activity in the workforce.

TABLE 1: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVITY (20-64 YEARS), PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Belgium	67,6	68,3	68,3	68,2	68,5	69,3	69,9	69,3	70,8	71,7
Spain	72,9	73,1	73,4	73,7	73,4	73,2	73,7	72,5	74,7	75,0
Italy	57,0	58,0	57,7	59,0	59,8	60,2	60,5	58,1	59,4	60,5
Austria	73,9	74,1	74,1	75,0	75,2	75,2	75,8	74,8	75,8	76,6
Poland	63,5	64,4	64,9	65,5	66,3	67,1	67,3	67,4	70,7	72,3

When it comes to unemployment (see Table 2), this rate is lowest in Poland (2,9%), with Austria (4,2%) and Belgium (5%) right behind with up to 5% of unemployed women. In general, it can be noted that the level of female unemployment has been gradually decreasing throughout the last decade. However, despite the major progress Spain has made in this respect, noting a 10% decrease since 2013, the level of unemployment remains relatively high, especially when compared to the rest of the partner countries, and can be viewed as problematic.

TABLE 2: FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT (20-64 YEARS), PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN THE LABOUR FORCE

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Belgium	8,1	7,9	7,8	7,5	7,1	5,4	4,8	5,3	5,7	5,0
Spain	26,2	25,0	23,2	21,1	18,8	16,8	15,7	17,2	16,5	14,5
Italy	12,9	13,6	12,5	12,6	12,2	11,6	10,9	10,3	10,5	9,2
Austria	5,2	5,4	5,4	5,5	5,0	4,7	4,4	5,7	5,9	4,2
Poland	11,2	9,7	7,8	6,2	4,9	3,9	3,6	3,3	3,4	2,9

Gender-specific issues

When it comes to gender pay gap, this issue is complex, as results vary significantly, depending on the methodology of data collection and index calculation a specific institution employs. Therefore, here we decided to present data gathered by Eurostat, as they seem to provide the possibility for comparison (see Table 3). There, the gender overall earnings gap is a synthetic indicator. It measures the impact of the three combined factors, namely: (1) the average hourly earnings, (2) the monthly average of the number of hours paid (before any adjustment for part-time work) and (3) the employment rate, on the average earnings of all women of working age - whether employed or not employed - compared to men. Among the 5 countries participating in the project Belgium (26,4%) displays the lowest wage gap and it is the only country in the set with the value of this indicator below 30%. Poland (30,3%) and Spain (33%) follow suit, though Italy (43%) and Austria (44,2%) remain behind. Importantly, comparing the value of this indicator across time, it can be noted that neither of

² See: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser

the project participant countries has made significant improvements when it comes to the wage gap problem.

TABLE 3: GENDER OVERALL EARNINGS GAP, PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENCE IN EARNINGS

	2010	2014	2018
Belgium	35,9	31,1	26,4
Spain	38,0	35,7	33,0
Italy	44,0	43,2	43,0
Austria	46,7	44,9	44,2
Poland	29,1	31,2	30,3

Note. Economic activities included: Industry, construction and services (except public administration, defense, compulsory social security).

Conclusions

All in all, despite the legislation in place, there are still some serious differences between the situation of women and men in the workforce. Looking at the Work component of the Gender Inequality Index, displayed in Figure 1, we can in fact see a significant disparity in this respect between men and women. According to that data, Austria is the country with the lowest level of gender inequality at work, followed by Belgium and Spain with scores above 70%. Poland and Italy both fall below that mark. Importantly, there is a large disparity – 14% – between Austria and Italy, which may point to some context-specific factors influencing this state of affairs.

FIGURE 6: WORK SCORES OF THE GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX, 2022.



Some of the countries have introduced special programmes, aimed also at the private sector, to address this issue and eliminate the barriers that cause such a situation. Gender equality plans are now also being introduced in many public, as well as private institutions, but for the effects of these we will need to wait for at least another couple of years. Finally, the political discourse in some countries (e.g., Poland) aims to discourage women from pursuing professional careers by stressing the importance of traditional, family-oriented values, which may have a detrimental effect for the topic in question.

3. EDUCATION POLICY AND GENDER (IN) EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

There are different government attitudes towards gender equality in school education from establishing gender equality in the mainstream politics to ignoring the issue.

Austria. In Austria gender equality in education is a part of broader national program. Since the early 2000s the Austrian federal government has committed to the sustainable implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy³ in all policy areas through several ministerial resolutions. Gender Mainstreaming in schools means to integrate the gender perspective in all areas of learning and teaching, in the organization of schools and in the actions of all those involved in order to enable gender-fair learning. Austria's federal government ministries have further developed gender equality goals since the implementation of performance-based budgeting in 2013, with a focus on closing the gender gap in MINT (mathematics, engineering, natural sciences, and technology) and EHW (education, health, and welfare) fields.

In education, the "Reflexive Gender Pedagogy and Equality" policy, based on the 1995 "Education for the Equality of Women and Men" policy, was last announced on October 31, 2018.⁴ It aims to expand opportunities beyond gender stereotypes in schools by providing a framework and factual basis for discussions and pedagogical practices. Teachers, school leaders, and administrators are responsible for implementing the policy on a regional level.

A significant milestone was achieved in reducing gender segregation in subject selection by combining the elective subjects of textiles and technical work at the 5th grade level through the School Organization. The IBOBB concept of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research⁵, and the compulsory subject "Career Orientation" curriculum for the 7th and 8th grade explicitly provides gender-reflexive training and career guidance. Reducing horizontal gender segregation in university studies is therefore a core goal of the strategy for the social dimension in higher education to increase the proportion of female and male students in each university field of study.

Poland. In Poland is quite different situation than in Austria. Ministry of National Education do not run any program goal for gender equality. According to the Ministry, the teaching of subject "Family Life Education" has been a priority in the directions of the educational policy of recent years. Topics covered in the classes serve to strengthen the process of identification with one's sex, "prepare for

³ Gender Mainstreaming BKA 2023: URL: [<https://www.imag-gmb.at/gender-mainstreaming/rechtsgrundlagen-zu-gm.html>]; (24.03.23).

⁴ Grundsatzterlass 2018: URL: [<https://rundschriften.bmbwf.gv.at/rundschriften/?id=793>]; (24.03.23).

⁵ IBOBB 2023: URL: [<https://portal.ibobb.at/themenschwerpunkte/geschlechtssensible-berufsorientierung/>].

fatherhood and motherhood" and teach "respect for life from the moment of conception until natural death". Sex education implemented in Polish schools corresponds to type A sex education (abstinence-only sex education). It pays particular attention to the importance of 'family values' and excludes other types of sexual and reproductive health education, such as birth control and safe sex. The report 'Gender in textbooks' published in 2016 makes it clear that harmful stereotypes for girls and women are still perpetuated in school textbooks. In career guidance (which is underdeveloped), there are no programmes in place to encourage people to enter non-traditional gender professions.

The campaign Women to polytechnic!/Women to the Science! – the largest project promoting technical, engineering and science faculties among young women – was initiated in 2007 not by Ministry of National Education but by the Conference of Rectors of Polish Technical Universities and the Perspektywy Educational Foundation.

Belgium. In Belgium, since the 1970s, several constitutional reforms have transformed Belgium into a complex federal state, comprising three regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels), three linguistic communities (Dutch, French, and German) and a federal government. Department of Education is organized and managed by the (cultural) linguistic communities. Report refers to Flemish educational system. While in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century, in Flanders, educational policy makers were focused on the underachievement of women in education. This has been changing gradually, and since the nineties, policy makers and scholars have turned their attention to the underachievement of men in education. Nowadays, women outperform men in education (Derks & Vermeersch, 2001; Van Houtte 2004; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Voyer & Voyer 2014).

Currently, when it comes to the design and attention of policymakers concerning gender in education, a lot of attention has been paid to early school leavers or young people that are not in education or training (NEET). In line with European guidelines to 2020, also in Flanders, an action plan to reduce early school leaving was set up, in which gender is seen as a risk factor to reduce early school leaving⁶. Another point of attention has been to include more women in STEM (or STEAM) (Van Houtte, Vanderwegen & Vermeersch, 2014; Van Praag et al., 2021). This is visible in the Action plan STEM⁷ or the so-called STEM agenda 2030 Flanders, that in general aims to stimulate the number of graduates in careers in technology, exact sciences, and mathematics. Starting in 2012, the Flemish Ministry of Education set up an action plan to stimulate more girls to enrol and graduate in STEM in secondary education (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) and in MST (Maths, Science & Technology) in higher education. By doing so, this action plan aims to include 'more girls' and consider ethnicity. A third point of attention is that migrant newcomers who do not speak Dutch

⁶ [Vroegtijdig schoolverlaten | Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming \(vlaanderen.be\)](https://www.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2019/09/10/vroegtijdig-schoolverlaten)

⁷ [STEM-actieplan cijfergegevens.pdf \(vlaanderen.be\)](https://www.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2019/09/10/stem-actieplan-cijfergegevens)

are promoted to enrol in a Dutch language course⁸, as part of their integration process. For non-EU members, this is often accompanied with an obliged citizenship course. In some cases, these language courses are required to qualify for welfare support.

Italy. The Italian education and training system is based on the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy of educational institutions. The State has exclusive legislative competence for the general rules on education and for determining the essential levels of services that must be guaranteed throughout the national territory. The school system can be described as inclusive, integrating all children regardless of their origin and/or physical/mental disabilities, however, there is no information about gender in the report. Children with special learning needs are assigned specialists to provide them the targeted support.

The autonomous province of Bozen - South Tyrol has a unique school system situation. Each of the three linguistic groups (Italy, French, German) has their own special offer. This is reflected at the provincial level by the three different school administrations. Gender issues seem to be giving way to other issues in the Italian Bozen – South Tyrol province. Pupils more often come from families with different cultural backgrounds. Currently, there are heated discussions in schools and at the political level. In recent years, German-speaking schools have been increasingly called upon to accept children who do not have sufficient competencies in German language. This refers to children with a migratory background as well as children from Italian-speaking families. The reasons why families choose German schools for their children can be quite different from family to family, but it is obvious that in most areas of the autonomous province of Bozen - South Tyrol, being fluent in the German language is more important than being fluent in Italian.

Schools are open to all children with migratory background, including whose parents do not have a valid residence permit. The schools must also accept the entry of new children during the school year. In 2010, the government stipulated that no more than 30% of the pupils in a class should have a migratory background and that the 50% limit must not be exceeded. Targeted language courses are also offered for foreign children whose language skills are not sufficient for school entry (Portale Immigrazione, 2023)

Spain. Although there are national education laws and regulations, education policy in Spain is completely decentralized, and actual powers almost exclusively belong to regional governments.

Education has been one of the most controversial political battlegrounds in Spain and with every change of government an educational reform is carried out. After the conservatives won the elections, large financial resources were diverted to finance the private education sector. Therefore, the number of state-funded private-owned schools grew. This process ran parallel in time with massive new

⁸ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/cursisten/een-cursus-nederlands-als-tweede-taal-nt2-volgen>

arrivals of migrants. Native families, including middle-class, and even working-class families, fly away from public schools in their neighbourhoods. Some state-funded private schools use quasi-legal strategies to make families pay fees and are allowed to apply their own recruitment rules, which has resulted in social and ethnic segregation. In public schools, students with a migrant background are over-represented. This situation has not changed since 2010. In addition, in-service teacher education related to improving care for immigrant students was cut back, and language and curricular support for immigrant students was no longer funded and virtually disappeared from schools' services. Education as the key to social integration has been the mantra at the core of the political discourse. The focus of action has been put on language learning and (failed) attempts both to reduce segregation between schools and promote the performance of working-class, immigrant students. However, it is worth mentioning the recently introduced approach to promote competency-based learning, specifically in relation to improving VET itineraries and programs, where working-class students and students with a migrant background are overrepresented.

Clear frameworks for intervention regarding controversial topics specifically affecting girls from certain migrant groups such as debates around dress codes, exemption from physical education activities, barriers to remaining in education after compulsory stages, etc., are still absent from the education policies. Thus, decision-making with respect to girls' full participation in education resides with local school management teams.

Even though girls outperform boys in all the education stages, recent reports show that they are less confident in their abilities as early as age 6. In recent years "coeducation" is being implemented as a mandatory area with a special focus on sex-education to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls, which has grown in recent years (see corresponding section). However, the feminist movement has claimed that the contents taught do not respond to its original goals since the label Coeducation is used to introduce gender identity ideology rather than focusing on overcoming gender-based oppression.

Early leavers in education and training

Early leavers are defined as individuals aged 18-24 who have completed at most the lower secondary education and were not in further education or training (ELET) during the four weeks preceding the labour force survey (LFS). Leaving education early can have significant consequences for the individual, as well as for society, in the long term. In 2022, an average of 9.6% of young people aged 18-24 in the EU were early leavers from education and training.

The countries with the lowest proportion of early leavers were Poland where the share was below 5%. The highest shares were found in Spain (13.9%). The largest reductions (in percentage point terms) between 2012 and 2022 were observed in Spain too (-10.8 pp).

TABLE 4: EARLY LEAVERS EDUCATION AND TRAINING AGED 18-24 BY SEX AND LABOUR STATUS, 2022

Country	Total	Young women					Young men				
		Total	Of which				Total	Of which			
			Employ- ed	Not employ- ed	Of which			Employ- ed	Not employ- ed	Of which	
					Would like to work	Not wanting to work				Would like to work	Not wanting to work
EU	9,6	8,0	2,9	5,1	2,5	2,6	11,1	5,9	5,2	3,5	1,7
Austria	8,4	7,4	3,6	3,8	2,1	1,7	9,5	5,8	3,7	2,9	-
Belgium	6,4	4,8	1,5	3,3	1,5	1,8	8,0	4,2	3,8	2,4	1,4
Italy	11,5	9,1	2,3	6,8	4,2	2,7	13,6	6,5	7,1	5,4	1,8
Poland	4,8	3,7	-	3,1	-	2,6	5,7	2,9	2,9	1,0	1,9
Spain ^(*)	13,9	11,2	4,4	6,8	4,9	1,9	16,5	8,4	8,1	6,5	1,6

Source: Early leavers from education and training. Statistics Explained (2023), s.10.

Some examples from how policies dealt with early school leaving.

Austria. Early school leaving and educational poverty remain a relevant area of concern for gender equality action in education, especially for young women with a migration background. Among this group, the risk of early school leaving is almost three times higher than the average (Geisberger 2020). 29% of girls aged 15 to 24 with a migration background have at most a compulsory school leaving certificate and are not enrolled in any further education (compared to 11% in: Statistics Austria: Educational Career Monitoring, 2012).

Belgium. When it comes to the design and attention of policy makers concerning gender in education, recently, a lot of attention has been paid to a specific group of students: early school leavers or young people that are not in education or training (NEET). Within this group, men disproportionally more often leave school without an educational qualification, which makes significant groups of men very vulnerable on the labour market (Eurostat, 2023; see also Van Praag et al., 2018).

Spain. The worst indicator of education in Spain is that the average ELET in the country is still one of the highest in the EU and also one of the most polarized by gender and immigrant status: native boys leave education and training earlier (around 20%) than girls (around 10%) and although the ELET rate is very high for second generation girls (around 30%), that of second generation boys is even higher (around 40%). Regional variations in ELET rates are high, from almost 30% in the islands, the cities in Northern Africa, Murcia or Andalusia, through lower than 10% in the Basque Country, partly due to diverse productive sectors and labour market demands across the country. The problem was masked for a while by a strong demand for low-skilled labour where boys who were early school leavers found relatively well-paid jobs (Carrasco, Narciso & Beltran, 2015). The dynamics of early school leaving of girls were easily naturalised and remain largely unexplored.

Women in STEM

In all the countries participating in the project Rethinking Inclusion and Gender empowerment the percentage of woman who studies on STEM is notably lower than men. In many countries, programs are installed which main purpose is to increase the number of female students on these degrees.

Austria. In regard to the subjects of general and equal access, promotion in choice of education for women in MINT jobs and the continuous inequality in paths to stereotypical careers still persist and highly demand further research political addressing (cf. KLA, 2018).

Belgium. Over the last years, the percentages of women in respectively STEM and MST are in 2000-2009 between 41-43,4% and 25,4%-27,3%. These percentages remain relatively stable over time. Again here, within these tracks and careers, there are considerable differences in terms of gender composition of each track. For instance, in higher education, 81% of students enrolled in the Master Pharmaceutics are female, while this is only 11% in the Master Industrial sciences and technology (Ministry of Education Flanders, 2009).

Poland. In Poland, in the 2021/2022 academic year, women constituted 44% of the total number of students at technical HEIs (both public and nonpublic), but constituted 49% of the graduates. The share of women among graduates in new technology was only 18%; in ICT, it was 17%. To achieving gender equity on labour market it is important to enhance the presence of women in new technologies and innovation. Degree programmes in new technology range from technology manufacturing to advanced data analysis. Between 2017 and 2022, the proportion of women among new technology students remained at 16%. Within the group of new technology courses, degree programmes in information and communication technology (ICT) are of key importance. Empowering women in ICT is conducive to the economy growing and to societies becoming more inclusive. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of women majoring in ICT increased by 26%, while the number of men increased by 15%. The share of women among ICT students grew modestly over the period analysed (from 15% to 16%). It seems that the campaign Women to polytechnic!/Women to the Science! (promoting technical, engineering and science faculties among young women) initiated in 2007 by the Conference of Rectors of Polish Technical Universities and the Perspektywy Educational Foundation has brought positive results. Since the launch of the campaign, the proportion of women (students) at polytechnics has steadily increased. In period of 2013-2022, at public technical HEIs, the share of women increased from 13% to 15%.

Spain. Spain has a strong tradition in education for equality. There are currently national and regional programs to promote girls' participation in STEM-related careers and, because of school lockdowns, which revealed the unequal preparation of schools for online teaching and the availability of infrastructure to do so adequately, a national strategy to increase digital competencies has been

launched. It is worth mentioning the *Women's Legacy: Our Cultural Heritage for Equity*, an Erasmus+ project lead by Spanish scholars commissioned by the Department of Education in Valencia, to analyse the persistence of androcentric curricular contents and the low presence of women's contributions and experiences in the contents of compulsory education.

Other relevant issues

More issues related to gender equality in education were mentioned that are relevant for the project relating to intersectional inequalities in education. For instance, gender and social status often interfere. In Austria, studies on the influence of social background indicate that girls from less educated families and families with a low social status are more affected by educational inheritance and have lower chances of upward mobility than boys. Nevertheless, Heilemann (2021) points out that for their review period, the rate of Austrian men and women completing upper secondary and post-secondary education is relatively similar, whereas for third-country women it is slightly higher than for their male counterparts, 24% versus 20% (cf. Heilemann 2018:12). Another issue that frequently is mentioned, refers to the intersection between gender and migration and/or religious affiliation. For example, this concerns Muslim women's outfits that are in some cases prohibited in schools. In addition, there are some specific gender-related symbolic topics that have been dividing school and educational policy makers as well as public debates (and media discourses). This was especially the case when it concerns the wearing of headscarves in schools. In Flanders (Belgium), in 2009, state schools officially banned the wearing of headscarves in schools.

A second main issue that was raised concerns the lack of adequate data that makes it difficult to diagnose gender differences. Ethnic inequalities intersect with gender inequalities, which is often not grasped within these broad statistics that cover gender inequalities (Van Praag et al., 2021).

Third, apart from crucial intersections between gender and ethnicity, in terms of educational choices, support and early school leaving, some additional gendered stereotyping and discrimination may occur. Finally, In public and scholarly debates, some attention has been paid to the trend in which the profession of teachers has been feminised over the years, how to attract more men and how this feminisation of teacher bodies contributes to gender differences and inequalities in education.

4. HEALTH POLICY

Overview

All of the countries participating in the current project provide their citizens with universal health coverage, mostly under some form of social security structure. This includes both basic as well as specialist healthcare, but the range of services and the degree of cost-sharing or reimbursement vary, also as far as medicines are concerned. All have implemented various measures to address women-

specific health issues such as free breast and cervical cancer screenings, contraception, pregnancy screenings, and reproductive health measures. Specifics for each country can be found in their respective reports, here we provide some points of comparison.

Life expectancy

Based on data provided by Eurostat (see Tables 5 and 6), life expectancy at birth is overall higher for women than for men in all the countries in question, reaching above 80 years of age for those born in 2020. The lowest rate is in Poland (80,7 years) and highest in Spain (85,2 years). Therefore, it can be noted that on average, women live longer than men. However, when we consider the Healthy Life Years (HLY) at birth indicator, it turns out that both men and women are expected to live in a healthy condition for about the same time (see Tables 7 and 8). HLY is a health expectancy indicator which combines information on mortality and morbidity. The data required are the age-specific prevalence (proportions) of the population in healthy and unhealthy conditions and age-specific mortality information. A healthy condition is defined by the absence of limitations in functioning/disability. The indicator is calculated separately for males and females. The indicator is also called disability-free life expectancy (DFLE).

TABLE 5: LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH – MALES, YEARS AT BIRTH

	2010	2015	2020
Belgium	77,5	78,7	78,6
Spain	79,2	80,1	79,6
Italy	not available	80,3	80,0
Austria	77,8	78,8	78,9
Poland	72,2	73,5	72,5

TABLE 6: LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH – FEMALES, YEARS AT BIRTH

	2010	2015	2020
Belgium	83,0	83,4	83,0
Spain	85,5	85,7	85,2
Italy	not available	84,9	84,5
Austria	83,5	83,7	83,6
Poland	80,7	81,6	80,7

TABLE 7: HEALTHY LIFE YEARS AT BIRTH – MALES, YEARS AT BIRTH

	2010	2015	2020
Belgium	64,0	64,4	63,6
Spain	64,5	63,9	66,3
Italy	not available	62,6	67,2
Austria	59,4	57,9	58,2
Poland	58,5	60,1	60,3

TABLE 8: HEALTHY LIFE YEARS AT BIRTH – FEMALES, YEARS AT BIRTH

	2010	2015	2020
Belgium	62,6	64,0	64,0
Spain	63,8	64,1	66,3
Italy	not available	62,7	68,7
Austria	60,8	58,1	59,3
Poland	62,3	63,2	64,3

Reproductive rights

An important aspect when it comes to women's healthcare are reproductive rights, which are defined differently in the project's participant countries. Some authorities follow the framework set out by the United Nations and other international organizations, in which reproductive rights are understood as rights to health, related to fundamental human rights. However, this is not the approach of the current Polish government, which has restricted access to abortion, emergency contraception, and in vitro fertilisation. In the European Union (EU) almost every country has legalized abortion on request or on broad social grounds. Poland together with Malta are the only EU member states that maintain highly restrictive laws. According to the European Atlas of Fertility Treatment Policies⁹, a tool developed to compare the level of fertility services and policies across Europe, including measures of: regulations, treatment, education, and funding, the situation in the project's participant countries vary significantly. Belgium is the only country that scored "excellent" in the ranking, meaning that it has good regulations and funding, as well as good access to treatment for most patients. Spain scored as "very good", meaning it has quite good access to these resources, Austria and Italy scored "medium", because treatment and funding are accessible only to certain groups, and Poland closed the ranking as "exceptionally poor", meaning there is no state funding and access to treatment is very limited.

Conclusions

All in all, looking at the Health component of the Gender Inequality Index (Figure 2), we can see a disparity in access to healthcare services between men and women. Spain (91,7) and Austria (91,3) have almost reached a situation of complete equality in access to healthcare for men and women, Italy (89,0) and Belgium (88,5) follow suit, with Poland closing the ranking (83,6).

FIGURE 7: HEALTH SCORES OF THE GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX, 2022.

⁹ <https://fertilityeurope.eu/atlas/>

ES	91.7
AT	91.3
IT	89.0
BE	88.5
PL	83.6

¹ European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2022

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5. FAMILY POLICY

Overview of family policy

The demographic situation of European countries depicts an trend in which women give birth later and later and fewer children. In 2021 among the EU Member States the lowest fertility rate were recorded in Malta (1,13), Spain (1,19) and Italy (1,25). In Spain and Italy mean age of women at birth of first child were the highest in Europe.

TABLE 9: FERTILITY RATE AND STATISTICS

Country	Total fertility rate (live births per woman) ¹	Live births outside marriage (share of total live births, %) ²	Mean age of women at birth of first child ¹	Share of live births by birth order, (%) ¹		Share of live births from, (%) ¹	
				first child	third or subsequent child	foreign-born	and native mothers
EU	1,53	41,8	29,7	45,5	18,7		
Austria	1,48	41,5	29,9	47,6	16,9	35	65
Belgium	1,60	52,6 (2018)	29,5	44,0	20,9	32	68
Italy	1,25	38,1	31,6	46,6	14,9	21	79
Poland	1,33	26,7	28,1	44,2	21,5	3	97
Spain	1,19	49,3	31,6	49,9	14,0	27	73

Source: data for 2021 ¹ [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Tab01_Total_fertility_rate,_1960%E2%80%932021_\(live_births_per_woman\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Tab01_Total_fertility_rate,_1960%E2%80%932021_(live_births_per_woman).png); ² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage_and_divorce_statistics#A_rise_in_births_outside_marriage

Family policy mainly concerns governments' efforts to increase female fertility. Governments use various solutions to support women's decisions to have children. Most popular concern parental leave and child benefits.

Maternity/Paternity/Parental leave. In most countries, parental leave can be shared between the child's parents. However, fathers rarely take the leave. For 23 EU member states, on average only 10 per cent (of the available leave) of fathers take parental leave ranging from 0,02 per cent in Greece to 44 per cent in Sweden. Fathers in Belgium (about 25 per cent) and Italy (about 10 per cent) use

parental leave most frequently than fathers in Poland, Spain and Austria (in these countries the share of fathers is less than 5%).

Formal care of small children. The second important pillar of support of government for women's decisions to have children is the formal childcare systems.

TABLE 10: FORMAL CHILDCARE, BY AGE OF CHILD AND DURATION OF CARE, 2021 (% SHARE OF CHILDREN IN EACH AGE GROUP)

Country	Aged less than three years			Aged from tree years up to the minimum compulsory school age		
	1-29 hours per week	30 and more hours per week	1 and more hours per week	1-29 hours per week	30 and more hours per week	1 and more hours per week
EU	15,1	21,1	36,2	31,8	51,6	83,4
Austria	18,4	10,1	28,5	43,5	22,5	66,0
Belgium	17,8	33,9	51,7	14,0	83,8	97,8
Italy	15,7	17,7	33,4	26,5	65,2	91,7
Poland	4,4	12,8	17,2	21,3	44,2	65,5
Spain	30,0	25,3	55,3	55,1	42,8	97,9

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Formal childcare, by age of child and duration of care, 2021.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Formal_childcare_by_age_of_child_and_duration_of_care_2021.png)

The use of formal childcare is determined by both the availability of care facilities and cultural patterns of care for children. Among children under the age of 3, formal childcare benefits are highest in Belgium and Spain, among preschool children in Belgium, Spain and Italy. We will provide an example of childcare policies in Belgium.

Belgium has a decentralised system of government, with responsibilities for social policies divided between the federal government, regional governments, and municipalities. Regarding access to childcare, each region of Belgium is responsible for providing its own childcare services. In Flanders, for example, the government provides financial support to families for day-care and after-school care¹⁰. A report by UNICEF-IRC (2021) analyses policies related to early childhood education and care (ECEC) across 41 high- and middle-income countries. In Belgium, it finds that the availability and affordability of childcare services vary across regions and socio-economic groups. While there are universal subsidies for childcare in place, families still face high out-of-pocket costs, especially for children under the age of three. In addition, the supply of childcare places is insufficient in some areas, particularly for infants. It also notes that the quality of ECEC in Belgium could be improved. There are no mandatory qualifications for ECEC staff, and staff-child ratios are higher than recommended. Moreover, there is limited support for children with disabilities and for children from migrant or disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, Belgium has made progress in expanding access to ECEC, but there is room for improvement in terms of affordability, quality, and inclusiveness

¹⁰ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-bevoegdheden>

Abortion. Abortion is mainly mentioned to be an issues in countries where women have limited access to it. In Poland, the provisions of the law are the most restrictive in Europe (the law allows only abortion when it threatens the life of the woman and when it is the result of a crime). In Italy, women can request the voluntary interruption of pregnancy within the first 90 days of gestation for health, economic, social or family reasons. In Poland and Italy, limited access to abortion is also a result of the conscience clause and the invocation of it by medical personnel. In Italy, the ISS surveillance system annually collects aggregated regional data on conscientious objection - an option given to healthcare personnel to refuse to carry out voluntary pregnancy interruptions. In 2020, the share of conscientious objection was high, especially among gynaecologists: 64.6% compared to 67.0% in the previous year. Among anaesthetists, the percentage of objectors is lower, with a national value of 44.6% (43.5% in 2019). Even lower, compared to doctors and anaesthetists, is the percentage of non-medical personnel objecting in 2020, at 36.2% (37.6% in 2019) (Ministry of Health, 2020). As reported by the association D.i.Re (2016) practising abortion has therefore become for Italian women an osculated course against time, with the possibility of travelling up to 800 kilometres to find a public facility where they can have an abortion. For this reason, Italy has already been condemned for some time by the European Court of Human Rights for its failure to fully implement law 194 'Norme per la tutela sociale della maternità e sull'interruzione volontaria della gravidanza', a law that was created in 1978 to allow even the poorest women to be admitted to a public health facility and have an abortion without running risks.

Domestic violence. In Europe and beyond, domestic violence remains an issue, which is also seen to be part of many legal frameworks. For instance, Belgium has a legal framework that addresses issues related to gender violence and domestic violence. The Belgian Penal Code criminalizes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and economic violence. Since 2001, Belgium has a policy to fight gender-based violence through national action plans (NAP). Currently, NAP 2021-2025 is active, containing 201 measurements (federal, on a community level and regional) to fight gender based violence. In recent years, Belgium has seen an increase in public awareness of and political attention to issues related to gender violence and domestic violence. This year there will be an additional five Family Justice Centers (FMC) making a total of 9, with at least one in every Flemish province. In 2020, 1845 families requested help, by 2022 this increased with 40% to 2588.

Poland has a 2005 law on preventing domestic violence, but according to feminist circles, the state does not pay due attention to domestic violence, whose victims are primarily women and children. In 2020, the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) government came up with ideas, fortunately unrealized, to denounce the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the so-called anti-violence or Istanbul Convention). First aid can be sought by victims of violence on telephone lines. Adults can use the National Emergency Service for Victims of Family Violence "Blue Line". There has also been a Helpline for Children and

Youth for 8 years. Its service was undertaken by the Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę Foundation (then the Nobody's Children Foundation). The functioning of the Helpline for Children and Youth was threatened in early 2022, when the government completely stripped it of financial support. The operation of the phone was then saved by an online collection - Internet users managed to achieve this goal in a dozen hours after the start of the collection the amount of more than a million zlotys (243,000 euros).

6. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ELITES

Overview of the legal context

To increase the number of women in parliaments, legislated candidate quotas have been included to electoral law or some parties established number of women on their candidates' lists (voluntary quotas) (www.quotaproject.org) in several countries. According to the quota study project, in 30 European and West world countries quota systems exist at the beginning the 2000th including 11 post-communist countries. In all countries included in the ReIncluGen project (exception Austria), quota have been introduced. In Belgium and Italy women should constitute 50% of candidates to parliaments and other governing bodies, in Spain - 40%, in Poland 35%¹¹.

TABLE 11: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS¹²

Rank in world ranking *	Name of country	% women in national parliaments**	% women in European Parliament***
34	Austria	39.9	42.1
21	Belgium	42.7	38.0
56	Italy	32.3	40.7
78	Poland	28.3	34.6
23	Spain	42.7	44.0

Note. The data in this table have been compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the basis of information provided by national parliaments. Parliaments are classified according to the percentage of seats held by women in lower or single parliamentary chambers. The figures correspond to the number of seats filled in parliament at the given time. The ranking may evolve over time based on updates received from national parliaments.

¹¹ Source: Quota project, <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/search.cfm>.

¹² <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?month=4&year=2023>

Practices and implementation (government, business, academia)

Women are underrepresented in governments of all levels, business and academia even their numbers increased in recent years. They numbers differ in compared countries. In some of them policy to increase number of women in the sectors is supported by special regulations. They are shortly described below.

Austria. Until its restructuring in 2022 and inclusion into the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry for Women, Family, and Youth was responsible for developing and implementing policies, programs, and projects aimed at addressing gender-based inequalities, cooperating among other with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), the largest and most influential business association in Austria, various government-funded women's organizations, national and regional trade unions (ÖGB). Local governments also contribute to promoting gender equality and empowering women in their communities and local structures. The quota system has also been introduced In the economic and business sphere. Austria has implemented various measures to promote gender equality and representation.

In decision-making bodies and leadership positions in the national private economic sector in 2022, the percentage of women on executive boards and in management positions of the 200 Austrian companies with the highest turnover was 8.9%. In 2016, 28,5% of these companies had no women in executive function or on supervisory boards (AÖF/IST 2016:9). The Act on Equality between Women and Men in Supervisory Boards (GFMA-G 2017) is aiming for at least 30% women and men on supervisory boards of publicly traded companies and companies with more than 1,000 employees. The overall percentage of women on supervisory boards of all publicly listed companies is 28.8% and on boards 8.2% (cf. Federal Chancellery, 2022).

Women occupying 46.7% of federal government representative positions in comparison to 31% according to a report in 2016 (AÖF/IST 2016), and further 41.5% of the National Council, and 41% of the Federal Council in 2022. In academic and scientific fields, the Austrian Federal Act on Universities (UG 2009/2021) requires universities to promote gender equality in research and teaching. In 2015, the real quota was drastically low in international comparison, with only 15% of personnel holding a professorship being women (cf. AÖF/IST, 2016:10). Finally, one of the most controversial topics in the discourse on gender representation in Austria has been the continuous use of quotas in politics. The lack of affordable childcare is seen as a barrier to women's participation in the upper management and workforce, while gender stereotypes and biases are seen as barriers to women's participation in politics and academia (AÖF/IST, 2016; KLA, 2018). The lacking political recognition of ways in which matters of gender intersect with other forms of oppression has also been a topic of discourse in Austria.

Belgium. Belgium has been working to promote gender equality and equal opportunities since the 1980s, by adopting legal measures at the federal and regional levels. These measures include a Gender Mainstreaming Law, a Gender Act, and the inclusion of a specific provision on gender equality in the Belgian Constitution. Belgium has a fairly high representation of women in political power positions, especially at a federal level and in parliament. However, worldwide violence against women in politics (VAWIP) is a significant problem, including Belgium despite its high presence of women in politics. Looking at the share of members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory board or board of directors 37.1% are women and women active as the share of board members of a central bank is 35%. The lowest score is for the social level, 38.5% of the board members of research funding organisations are women, women that are board members of publicly owned broadcasting organisations count up to 30.3% and regarding members of highest decision making body of the national Olympic sport organisations 21.2% are women¹³.

Italy. In the summer of 2021, the Ministry of Equal Opportunities presented a national strategic plan for the period 2021-2026 to promote equal opportunities and empower women. In terms of women's participation in economic, political, and administrative decision-making processes, Italy has made progress in recent years. Since 2022, Italy has, for the first time, a female prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, and at the same time, the government is still very male-dominated. Currently, 6 out of 26 ministers are female, compared to 8 out of 23 ministers in the previous government. Legislation in Italy like in other European and non-European countries have introduced or are in the process of introducing gender balance rules in the top bodies of the most important companies in the economy, including companies listed on regulated markets. In Italy, these rules were first enacted with Act 120 of 2011 (the so-called Golfo Mosca law), which imposed gender balance in the administration and control bodies of listed and publicly controlled companies. The quota initially imposed was 1/3 of the members; subsequently, for listed companies only, it was increased to 2/5 by the 2020 Budget Law (l. 160 of 2019) and, recently, Article 6 of l. 162 of 2021 extended the new provisions to the Boards of Directors of publicly controlled companies.

Poland. The introduction of quota is one of the most important regulations opening way for women to parliament and other elected political bodies (described earlier). Women constitute minority in government. Three women are ministers among 27 persons being in the positions. Beside number of women occupy positions of deputies. The same has place in political parties. In companies, according to Eurostat Polish women constitute 21% of board members and 13% of members of board of trustees of the biggest listed companies, which is lower than the European mean. In academia, according to

¹³ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/domain/power/BE>

THE World University Rankings 2022 the percentage of women among the leaders of top universities exceeded 20%. The number of women in the positions is increasing. These changes are also observed in Poland. However, only 23 women are the rectors in the term 2020-2024 in 123 Polish universities – more than ever before. Finally, political discourses concerning women's situation is recently dominated by such urgent problems as growing limitation of reproductive rights, worsening medical support for women, especially pregnant ones. The dominated issues are: very limited access to abortion, in vitro as medical treatment not covered by state any longer, cases of death of pregnant women because medical doctors don't want or are afraid to make decision to terminate pregnancy.

Spain: On March 7, 2023, the Spanish government approved the Anteproyecto de Ley Orgánica de Representación Paritaria de Mujeres y Hombres en los Órganos de Decisión (2023 Equal Representation Act between women and men), which aims to guarantee equality on electoral lists, the state public sector, listed companies, large companies and professional associations. The basis for this act dates back to the beginnings of democracy in Spain. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 laid the foundations for legislation against sex discrimination and for granting the public authorities the responsibility of promoting the conditions for the freedom and equality of the individual and of the groups in which he or she is integrated to be real and effective. In 1983, el Instituto de la Mujer (the Women's Institute) was created (agency for the fight against gender inequality at the national level) and in January 5, 1984. Between 2002 and 2005 four regional governments modified their electoral acts to impose parity in elections to their Legislative Assemblies. The 2007 Equality Act promoted parity (40/60) in the electoral lists of political parties and in the executive committees of companies. The consequences of the 2008 crisis led to the suppression or loss of status of Equality institutions. Since the return of the social democratic party to power in 2018 (in coalition with the left-wing party Unidas Podemos since 2020) and because of the strong pressure from the feminist movement in recent years, the feminist agenda is again put at the center of current policies at least at the discursive level.

Listed companies must ensure that their boards of directors have at least 40% female directors by July 1, 2024. The new regulation will also apply to large unlisted companies, which are those with more than 250 employees or an annual turnover of more than 50 million euros. These companies will have an additional deadline, until July 2026, to comply with the rule. The principle of balanced representation will also have to be complied with in the governing boards of professional associations and in tribunals, award juries or public recognitions. At the political level, electoral candidacies will have to have a parity composition by means of zipper lists, candidacies integrated by persons of one and the other sex alternatively ordered. The Government will also have to be governed by the principle of a balanced presence of women and men, and no sex will have a presence of less than 40% in the Council of Ministers. After the 2008 crisis, the "austerity" policies and with the change of government

in 2011, from the social democratic PSOE party to the conservative PP party, the conditions for the implementation of the 2007 Equality Act did not exist with the consequent decrease in budget items and loss of visibility. Although parity representation models have been promoted or adopted by centre-left parties, an increase in the presence of women has also been observed in centre-right parties.

As far as the economic world is concerned, according to the 2021 report women are gaining more and more presence in the management bodies of listed companies. The female presence on boards experienced an increase to 29.3% (26.1% in 2020), which reached 34.2% in the Ibex 35. In 2021, this increase occurred in all categories, although it was more significant for independent female directors. Executive female directors also increased to 6.4% (5.6% in 2020). In senior management positions, the presence of women on boards is still below 20%.

In science, in 2023 women constitute 42% of the researchers in Spain (in 2015 it was 40%). The progress is still slow. The gender gaps have persisted and even increased in some cases like in other countries. There are fewer students in STEM areas (especially engineering and technology), women drop out of their scientific careers more frequently than men, and women's careers progress more slowly than those of their men colleagues.

In political party discourses, in general, centre-left parties consider the lack of female presence as a structural problem based on social inequality and hold public authorities responsible for its solution through the promotion of active equality policies. However, parity representation has been questioned from conservative and liberal sectors. Some argument against parity representation is that it goes against meritocracy. This type of discourse can also be observed among groups of professional women who face the questioning of their worth if they have access to their jobs through quotas. The far right represents a family-based approach, although it also appeals to meritocracy and considers that parity laws infringe on the freedom of companies and are in fact discriminatory against men.

7. MIGRATION AND MINORITY POLICY

Migration policies play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of migrants, including their access to rights and opportunities. This comparative analysis summarizes the findings from subchapters on migration policies from national reports from Austria, Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Spain, with a specific focus on the relation between migration and gender equality and inclusion. By exploring various dimensions such as legal frameworks, labour market integration, family reunification, and social inclusion, this summary aims to shed light on the similarities, differences, and potential challenges faced by these countries. The analysis highlights the importance of promoting gender equality within migration policies to ensure the fair treatment and empowerment of all migrants, regardless of their gender.

Overview of Legal Frameworks

Each of the countries engaged in the ReIncluGen project has its own comprehensive legal framework for migration, but have also implemented some EU-level regulations and directives designed to manage migration flows. In case of Austria, migration policy is primarily governed by the Residence Act and the Asylum Act. The country distinguishes between various types of immigration, including family reunification, labour migration, and humanitarian protection. Belgium's legal framework for migration is governed by the Aliens Act and various associated regulations. The country recognizes the importance of a holistic approach to migration, encompassing labour migration, family reunification, and asylum seekers. Italy's migration policy is primarily governed by the Consolidated Immigration Act. The country has undergone significant changes in recent years to address migration challenges and streamline immigration procedures. Italy's legal framework includes provisions for labour migration, family reunification, and protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Poland's legal framework for migration is based on the Act on Foreigners, which regulates the entry, stay, and departure of foreigners. The country has experienced an increasing influx of migrants in recent years and as a result had to adapt its legal framework. Poland's migration policies focus on labour migration, family reunification, and integration of recognized refugees. Finally, Spain has a comprehensive legal framework for migration, primarily governed by the Organic Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners. The country recognizes the rights of migrants and has implemented various measures to facilitate their integration. Spain's legal framework encompasses labour migration, family reunification, and protection of refugees and asylum seekers.

Gender-Specific Provisions and Considerations

When looking at policies across countries, some country-specific considerations can be made. For instance, Austria has made efforts to address gender-specific considerations within its migration policies. The legal framework recognizes the specific vulnerabilities faced by migrant women, such as gender-based violence and discrimination. Measures have been implemented to provide support and protection for female migrants, including access to shelters, counselling services, and gender-sensitive asylum procedures. In addition, Belgium has taken steps to integrate gender-specific provisions within its migration policies. The country acknowledges the unique challenges faced by migrant women and emphasizes the promotion of gender equality. Belgium has implemented measures to ensure access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities for female migrants. Efforts have also been made to combat gender-based violence and human trafficking.

Another example concerns Italy, who recognizes the importance of addressing gender-specific provisions within its migration policies. The legal framework aims to protect the rights and well-being of migrant women, including provisions for gender-sensitive asylum procedures and access to

healthcare. Italy has also implemented initiatives to promote the social and economic integration of migrant women, including language courses and vocational training programs. And also in Poland, efforts have been made to address gender-specific considerations, despite their focus on general migration provisions in their legal framework. The country recognizes the need to protect migrant women from gender-based violence and discrimination. However, further emphasis is required to ensure adequate support services, including shelters and counselling, are available for female migrants. Also, Spain has incorporated gender-specific provisions within its legal framework for migration. The country recognizes the specific vulnerabilities faced by migrant women and has implemented measures to address gender-based violence and discrimination. Spain emphasizes the importance of promoting gender equality in all aspects of migration, including access to education, employment, and healthcare for female migrants.

When analysing the legal frameworks of these countries, it is evident that Austria, Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Spain recognize the importance of gender-specific provisions within their migration policies. Efforts have been made to address the specific vulnerabilities faced by migrant women, such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited access to resources. However, there are variations in the level of implementation and effectiveness of these provisions, indicating areas for improvement to ensure comprehensive gender equality within migration policies.

Common Challenges in Gender-Responsive Migration Policies

In all studied countries, the gender-specific provisions within migration policies often face challenges in implementation and enforcement. This is mainly due to a lack of dedicated resources and funding allocated to gender-responsive initiatives. Additionally, there is a need for capacity building and training of immigration officials, law enforcement agencies, and service providers to effectively address gender-specific concerns. Strengthening coordination and collaboration among relevant stakeholders is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of gender-responsive migration policies. However, this topic is rarely treated as priority and therefore remains underdeveloped.

In terms of gender-related challenges, we can point out to several main issues: access to services, gender-based violence, economic empowerment, and intersectional discrimination. Migrant women frequently encounter barriers in accessing essential services, including healthcare, education, legal support, and social welfare. Language barriers, cultural norms, and a lack of awareness about available services hinder their access to those welfare provisions. While only some of the service providers are equipped with multicultural skills, and gender equality training, it makes it challenging for them to effectively cater to the diverse needs of migrant women. Female migrants are also disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. They also face additional challenges in seeking protection and justice due to language barriers, fear of reprisal, and lack of knowledge about their rights.

Importantly, gender also affects access to decent employment opportunities and fair wages. Discrimination, limited recognition of qualifications and skills, and a lack of support for female entrepreneurship often hinder migrants economic empowerment. Accessible childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements are rarely available to migrant women in the studied countries, which results in barriers to entering the labour market or reconciling work and care. Moreover, in all countries included in this report, migrant women face multiple forms of discrimination due to their country of origin, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Intersectional discrimination compounds the challenges they encounter in accessing services, finding employment, and seeking justice in case of violence or rights violation.

Successful Initiatives and Best Practices

Among successful initiatives concerning women migration we can list Austrian gender-sensitive asylum procedures that consider the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women. The country has also established specialized support services for survivors of gender-based violence, including counselling, legal aid, and safe accommodation. Also in Belgium, gender mainstreaming strategies were introduced to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into all migration policies and programs. The country has also implemented awareness campaigns and training for professionals to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality among migrant communities. In case of Italy, initiatives to enhance the social and economic integration of migrant women were developed. Programs providing language courses, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support have helped empower migrant women and improve their access to employment opportunities. In Poland it's mainly civil society organizations that have initiated programs to support migrant women. These initiatives include legal aid, language courses, and social integration programs tailored to the specific needs of women migrants. Lat but not least, Spain has implemented comprehensive measures to address gender-based violence among migrant women, including the establishment of specialized units within law enforcement agencies. The country has also promoted gender equality in the labour market through initiatives such as gender quotas and affirmative action policies. These successful initiatives and best practices can serve as inspiration for developing gender-responsive migration policies as well as civil society interventions. Key elements include the integration of gender perspectives, provision of specialized support services, economic empowerment measures, and the recognition of intersectional discrimination.

Gaps and Challenges

While Austria has taken steps to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination in migration policies, several gaps and challenges remain. Implementation of integration programs and equal access to social services for migrants often fall short, leading to inequalities. Language courses and

vocational training may not reach all migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and nationality persists, despite anti-discrimination laws. Furthermore, there is a need for more comprehensive and sustained efforts to foster understanding, acceptance, and social cohesion between migrant and host communities.

Belgium's emphasis on social inclusion and anti-discrimination measures in migration policies is commendable, but there are implementation gaps and persistent inequalities. Integration programs may not effectively reach marginalized migrant groups, hindering their access to language courses, vocational training, and social services. Discrimination, particularly based on race, nationality, and religion, continues to be a challenge. Efforts to promote diversity and intercultural dialogue often face barriers, and there is a need for stronger collaboration between government and civil society organizations to address discrimination and ensure equal treatment for all migrants.

Similarly, Italy's efforts to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination in migration policies are significant, but same challenges persist. Integration programs, such as language training and employment support, may not adequately reach all migrants, leading to inequalities in access to opportunities. Discrimination based on race, religion, and gender remains a concern, despite anti-discrimination laws. While social inclusion initiatives exist, there is a need for sustained efforts to foster understanding, interaction, and acceptance between migrant and host communities. Moreover, gaps in social services and support for vulnerable migrant groups need to be addressed to ensure equal treatment and inclusion.

In Poland, different attempts to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination in migration policies face significant challenges and inequalities. Integration programs, including language courses and support for labour market integration, may not effectively reach all migrants, particularly marginalized groups. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, and gender persists, and there is a lack of comprehensive efforts to address these issues. Collaboration between the government, civil society organizations, and migrant communities needs strengthening to tackle discrimination and promote social inclusion. Equal access to social services and support for vulnerable migrants should be prioritized to address existing gaps.

While Spain places a strong emphasis on social inclusion and anti-discrimination measures, there are gaps and persistent inequalities in their implementation. Integration programs may not reach all migrants, hindering their access to language courses, vocational training, and social support services. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, and religion continues to be a challenge, despite anti-discrimination laws. While efforts are made to promote intercultural dialogue and social cohesion, there is a need for greater effectiveness and sustainability. Ensuring equal access to social services and addressing the rights and well-being of all migrants, including vulnerable groups, should be a priority for achieving genuine social inclusion.

To summarize, in all ReIncluGen countries, the implementation of social inclusion and anti-discrimination measures in migration policies falls short of addressing some significant gaps and persistent inequalities. There is a pressing need for more comprehensive and sustained efforts to overcome barriers in access to services, tackle discrimination, and foster genuine social inclusion. Collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and migrant communities must be strengthened to address these critical issues and work towards creating more equitable and inclusive societies for all migrants.

Gender-responsive migration policies should acknowledge and address the intersecting forms of discrimination and ensure inclusive and tailored support for marginalized groups. Intersectional approaches can involve targeted outreach programs, culturally sensitive services, and recognition of diverse needs and identities within migration policies. By addressing these common challenges, countries can work towards developing more inclusive and effective gender-responsive migration policies. It requires a holistic approach that involves policy reforms, resource allocation, capacity building, and close collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, and international stakeholders. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of gender-responsive measures are essential to ensure their long-term impact and effectiveness. Furthermore, outreach programs, interpretation services, and community engagement initiatives can play a vital role in ensuring equal access to services for all migrants. Comprehensive strategies are needed to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including awareness campaigns, training for law enforcement officials and service providers, establishing safe shelters, and specialized support services for survivors. Gender-responsive migration policies should also focus on promoting equal opportunities in the labour market, addressing discriminatory practices, providing skills training and recognition of qualifications, and supporting entrepreneurship among migrant women.

While other countries, such as Austria and Spain, also have measures in place to address the needs of women migrants, Belgium's comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming, anti-discrimination measures, and collaboration with civil society organizations contribute to its relatively more developed approach in regulating and supporting migration, with a specific focus on women migrants.

Conclusion

Among the five ReIncluGen countries, Belgium can be considered as having a relatively more developed approach to regulating and supporting migration, with a particular emphasis on women migrants. It has implemented gender mainstreaming strategies in its migration policies, recognizing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women migrants. Belgium has also strong anti-discrimination laws that protect individuals from discrimination based on various grounds, including gender. These laws provide a legal framework to address gender-based discrimination and promote equal treatment

for women migrants. Moreover, the country offers a range of support services tailored to the needs of women migrants, like language courses, vocational training, and social support programs aimed at facilitating their social and economic integration. Efforts are made to address gender-based violence and provide specialized assistance to survivors. Importantly, the Belgian government actively collaborates with civil society organizations that specialize in diversity promotion, women's rights and migrant support. This partnership strengthens the support network for women migrants and ensures that their specific needs are taken into account in policy development and service provision.

At the same time, Poland faced biggest challenges in terms of regulating and supporting migration and have the most limited approach to women migrants compared to other studied countries. While Poland has implemented integration programs to support migrants, including language courses and assistance in accessing the labour market, there are still limitations in terms of the effectiveness and coverage of these programs, which can impact the support available to women migrants. Moreover, civil society organizations in Poland have initiated some programs to support women migrants, but these initiatives are not widespread enough or fully integrated into government policies. This results in gaps in addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women migrants. Poland has laws in place to address discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. However, there is still a need for enforcing these laws and raising awareness about the rights of women migrants to ensure equal treatment and protection. The availability and accessibility of support services for women migrants in Poland vary by city or region, so while efforts are being made, supporting women migrants across country, particularly those in vulnerable situations, remain aa challenge. Last, but not least, there is a great need for strengthening collaboration between the government, civil society organizations, and migrant communities. Due to the government right-wing orientation many organizational efforts directed to women migrants are not supported nor recognized. In this situation, local governments and private donors are main sponsors and supporters of such actions. Due to Ukrainian refugee crisis, Poland's approach to regulating and supporting migration, particularly concerning women, is quickly evolving, and efforts are underway to address these challenges. However, compared to countries with more developed approaches, Poland requires further attention and resources to enhance its policies and support mechanisms for women migrants.

8. ROLE AND POSITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

Overview

Civil society organizations play an important role in advancing gender equality both in terms of shaping how gender empowerment and inclusion are understood but also how they are practiced. Such organizations are present in all of the project participant countries and through a bottom-up approach have the potential to influence policy makers' decisions. Not only do they hold governments accountable translating their declarative commitment for the support of gender empowerment and equality into laws and policies, but also into implementation and enforcement. Through their activity they respond to the immediate needs of women who are excluded from public policies and services. They also face a series of obstacles and need to adapt their chosen form of action to the changing world, which requires constant re-thinking and re-shaping of the funding, mobilization and partnership models, as well as their management style. This requires a high level of innovation and transformation.

Civil society organisations engaged in the promotion and implementation of gender empowerment choose different forms of action, from permanent, regular activities, such as organizing meetings, workshops and campaigns, to more *ad hoc* undertakings, such as protests or submissions of legislative proposals. When it comes to the specific areas, in which CSOs operate, these include reproductive rights, labour force, health care, political participation, migrant rights, social policies, and many more.

Summary of CSO landscape in participant countries included in the RelIncluGen project

Austria. CSOs in Austria receive funding by the state and address issues where the state is not active enough or does not want to be involved. The role of CSOs in the different fields has been mentioned in the chapters above. For example, organizations that provide support to migrant women through counselling and cultural and language courses. Or organizations that provide information on forced marriage, violence, health care (FEM Süd, Frauenberatung, Frauenhäuser). In addition, the topic of abortion and contraception being legal, but not free, is a sphere where CSOs are involved. The sphere of education, Free Girls Movement provides assistance with access to education and advise to girls and young women who traditionally are not encouraged to receive education (especially from migrant background). Organizations like IG24 are specifically concerned with care workers, especially live-in care workers, who are mostly from migrant background. The organization makes up for the lack of action on this topic on the part of the state. Finally, some of the parties have women's organizations, that belong to them informally. For example, the socialist party of Austria (SPÖ) also has a women organization, which belongs to them informally. The "Frauen SPÖ" (Women of SPÖ) work towards minimizing the gender pay gap as well as preventing domestic violence or helping victims of it. Further topics of relevance to them include women poverty, pension, work, health care, women and Covid as

well as gender empowerment on the international level.¹⁴ Similarly, the Green Party of Austria (die Grünen) have an informal organization called “Die Grünen Frauen” (The Green Women) working towards empowerment in regard to work, sexual harassment, reproductive rights, sexuality in general, health, gender-fair language, the empowerment of migrant women in particular, an equal pension and pay, violence protection and prevention, as well as many more.¹⁵

Belgium. In Belgium the ‘equality of women and men’ has been perceived as an official and separate policy area since 1997. Before this was seen as part of the ministry of employment and labour. On the Flemish level ‘equal opportunities’ or so-called ‘state feminism’ is a ministerial authority (Hondegheem & Nelen, 2011). Important here is that the institutionalization of gender empowerment did not occur in explicit response to women’s movements but was rather as a result of European policy based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). When comparing with other European countries Belgium introduced ‘state feminism’ quite late. For a long time, the priorities of the ‘equal opportunities’ working group were centred around three themes: 1) the position of women on the labour market, 2) eliminating violence against women and 3) participation of women in politics.

Within the first terrain actions were focusing on education, affirmative actions, work-life balance, equal pay, maternity leave and sexual intimidation at work. Regarding the second theme of violence the priority was on breaking taboo topics and on the promoting juridical rights of women. As for the third, the political participation of women actions were focused on promoting more research and introducing quota within political parties. Despite all of these actions, research has shown that there is a lack of a vision and theoretical thinking on gender empowerment and inclusion (Hondegheem & Nelen, 2000). In contrast with the Netherlands, in Belgium there doesn’t seem to be a tradition of defining and theorizing political aims around certain societal challenges or problems (Keuzenkamp in Hondegheem & Nelen, 2000). This also reflects in the word ‘equal opportunities’ and ‘equality of women and men’: gender is not referred to and is certainly not approached from an intersectional lens.

Women's organizations and feminist associations are subsidized by all levels of government: federal, regional, and local. More broadly, civil society in general is widely consulted by political authorities on many issues relating to gender empowerment and tackling the issue of violence against women (www.eige.europa.eu). Civil society organizations were also consulted as part of the development of the Federal Plan on Gender Mainstreaming and more recently in formal consultations on the development and monitoring of the Action Plan to Combat Gender-based Violence 2020-2025.

Italy. Relative to the issue of gender empowerment, the Italian Third Sector is among the most virtuous work areas, showing an important female component in social organizations: more than 1.8 million

¹⁴ Frauen SPÖ (2023): <https://frauen.spoe.at/aktuelle-kampagnen/>

¹⁵ Die Grünen Frauen (2023): <https://frauen.wien.gruene.at/themen/>

volunteers are women (38 percent); 636,171 are female workers, more than twice as many as male workers (313,830). The areas with the highest female presence are social assistance, civil protection, social cooperation and health care, where the percentage exceeds 70 percent (Forum Terzo Settore). An even better figure is found in NGOs, where the percentage of women in leadership and presidency positions in Italian NGOs is well above 30 percent. In fact, in 30.9 percent of cases women can be found at the top of the work hierarchy. A similar figure applies to top managers and/or general secretaries: the percentage of positions held by women stands at 33.7 percent while that of men is 66.3 percent. More generally, of the 20,127 human resources employed by NGOs in international cooperation, 46 percent are women 54 percent are men (Open cooperation).

Spain. In Spain, there is a wide range of CSOs, social enterprises, non-profit organisations and social movements that play a fundamental role in the inclusion of migrant women and girls; on the one hand, because the system of reception, asylum and other services to migrants is primarily outsourced, and on the other hand because in Spain there is a strong tradition of social movements and associations that carry out social advocacy. The large number of long-established feminist organisations and platforms throughout the country does not differentiate between the demands and needs of women concerning their immigrant backgrounds and adopting an active secular perspective on the inclusion and empowerment of all women.

During the various periods of social democratic government, feminist platforms and organisations that were semi-institutional were promoted by the public administration, especially since the 2007 Equality Act came into force, among which the following stand out for their political influence and advocacy: the CEDAW shadow platform, made up of all the feminist organisations that choose to join it, and which carries out the annual prescriptive UN Women report on the development and deficits of the government's equality policies; the Forum for Feminist Politics, present in 10 large cities (in others, alternative centres and spaces were created, such as Ca la Dona, or Women's House, in Barcelona), which participates in and helps organise for the annual calendar of feminist demands and mobilisations together with the rest of the feminist movement (8 March, 25 November, etc.), and the Federation of Progressive Women, which is very close to the PSOE. Many women's organisations in medium-sized and small towns across the country that are still active also emerged during these periods.

There are also state-level organisations and platforms dedicated explicitly to demanding critical issues on the feminist agenda, such as PAP-OOMM (Plataforma Abolición Prostitución, for the Abolition of Sexual Exploitation), Feminicidio.net and Plataforma 7N (against violence against women), Confluencia Movimiento Feminista (against the erasure of women due to gender identity laws), CIAMS (Spanish branch of the International Coalition for the Abolition of Surrogate Motherhood); or those that focus on thematic and professional areas, such as DoFemCo (Docentes Feministas por la Coeducación, teachers of all education stages), AMIT (Asociación de mujeres

investigadoras y tecnólogas), the association of progressive women lawyers THEMIS, and many others. Finally, one specific feature of the Spanish feminist movement is the international coordination with international platforms, with specific connections to Latin American women's organisations, both at the government and grassroots levels.

Poland. There are 138,000 registered non-governmental organisations, including 107,000 associations and 31,000 foundations in Poland, according to the REGON Register, as of the end of 2021. New NGOs have registered every year and about 5,000 new NGOs did so in 2021. Voluntary Fire Brigades, of which there are 16,500, are also formally 'associations' but have not been included in this survey as they have unique funding sources. Not all registered NGOs are actually active. According to Statistics Poland, approximately 50% of registered organisations conduct operations. This report shows statistics representative of the population of active foundations and associations (excluding Voluntary Fire Brigades), i.e. of approximately 70,000 foundations and associations in Poland.

Polish civil society is largely feminized, with 60% of staff being female and 47% of the managerial board as well. However, women as a social group are not among the top beneficiaries of CSOs in Poland, as these include mainly children and youth, local residents, individuals with health conditions and the elderly. 35% of all activity conducted by CSOs in Poland is focused on sport and recreation, 15% on culture and art, and 14% on education. However, there does exist a number of active CSOs working in the area of gender empowerment and inclusion, focusing on reproductive rights, social policies related to health and family, but also the workforce and politics. They engage in different kinds of activities, organize workshops, support groups, run campaigns aimed at raising awareness regarding different systemic forms of gender discrimination, and many more. In recent years, the most burning issue related to women's rights was the abortion ban introduced in 2020, which led to massive street protests across the entire country. The organizations responsible for the mobilization of these protest proved an important public actor capable of uniting the society in an unprecedented opposition to a restriction to women's rights. This issue is still relevant and CSO-led protest continue.

Additionally, in the wake of the war in Ukraine, many Polish CSOs have engaged in activities aimed at helping female war refugees and their children by providing not only immediate support, but also long-term help with legal, psychological, educational and maintenance issues. As a result of the war, Polish CSOs re-shaped their activities in order to accommodate the needs of a new group of people.

9. OVERAL CONCLUSION

The present deliverable provides the broader contexts in which our fieldwork will take place and sketches already some first differences and similarities between countries. This deliverable is based on in-depth reports on the policies per country and aim to provide a first moment of reflection on these topics within and across these countries. Partner countries face similar challenges in terms of establishing mechanisms aimed at eliminating gender inequality but differ in terms of the authorities' approach towards this issue. This translates into specific solutions that are adopted by different countries.

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