



www.d4d-ks.org

Democracy for Development

Demokraci për zhvillim

Demokratija za razvoj

POWER (LESSNESS) OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET IN WESTERN BALKANS



POWER (LESSNESS) OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET IN WESTERN BALKANS

Pristina, November 2022.



Copyright © 2022. Democracy for Development (D4D).

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of D4D, GADC, ISSP, CRPM and BFPE.

This research is prepared by:

Authors:

- ~ Democracy for Development Institute, Dr. Judita Krasniqi Hajdari (Kosova)
- ~ Center for Research and Policy Making, Kristijan Trajkovski (North Macedonia)
- ~ Institute for Strategic Studies and Prognoses, Ivana Jovičević and Anđela Lučić (Montenegro)
- ~ Gender Alliance for Development Center, Mirela Arqimadriti (Albania)
- ~ Foundation BFPE for Responsible Society, Svetlana Stefanović and Mirjana Đorđević (Serbia)

Disclaimer: All the viewpoints expressed in this research are of authors and do not automatically represent the stances of the Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina.

Acknowledgments:

D4D would like to express the gratitude to the Norwegian Embassy to Prishtina for financially supporting the project “Untapping Development: Increasing Women’s Access to Employment” in the framework of which this research project has been realized.

—

TABLE OF CONTENT

Executive Summary	8
Methodology	9
Kosova	10
Albania	19
North Macedonia	32
Montenegro.....	43
Serbia	55

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Labor Market Indicators 2019 - q3 2021.....	10
Figure 2. Labor Market Indicators 2019 - q3 2021 (in thousands)	11
Figure 3. Employment participation by activities and gender q3 – 2021	12
Figure 4. Employment of Women by professions in % (q3-2021).....	12
Figure 5. Gender gap in labor force participation and employment.	23
Figure 6. Gender gap in unemployment, 15-64 years old (2018-2021).....	25
Figure 7. Educational level of unemployed jobseekers 2016-2021.....	26
Figure 8. ALMPs beneficiaries by age (2018-2021)	27
Figure 9. Gender pay gap by economic activity (2016 – 2021).....	28
Figure 10. Ownership of active enterprises 2016-2021.....	29
Figure 11. Gender Gap -	39
Figure 12. Working age population by status in activity and sex (in thousand)	44
Figure 13. Number of hours of unpaid care and domestic work, by activity (women)	46
Figure 14. Unpaid care and domestic work done by women and men, respectively.....	47
Figure 15. Population of age 15+ in Serbia	55

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Professions by gender 2019-2020	13
Table 2. How many hours did you spend during the day on house work during pandemics (cleaning and cooking)?.....	15
Table 3. Type of employment, by gender;	16
Table 4. Labor market indicators	37
Table 5. Activity rate by sex (15-64)	38
Table 6. Employment rate by sex (15-64).....	38
Table 7. Unemployed persons (15-64).....	38
Table 8. Inactive population in 2021 per statistical category	39
Table 9. Unemployed persons 2019 - VII 2022	44
Table 10. Women over age of 15, by activity, 2020	45
Table 11. Number of hours women spend in unpaid care and domestic work.....	46

ABBREVIATIONS

KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
LFS	Labor Force Survey
CEDAW	International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CEIC Data	Financial Data & Economic Indicators
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ALMP	Active Labor Market Policies
VET	Vocational Education and Training
EU	European Union
SSO	State Statistical Office
ILO	International Labor Organizations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's participation in Kosovo's labor market is lowest when compared to other countries. Women continue to be discriminated against in employment, and their level of inactivity reflects a lack of the necessary conditions for equal access to the labor market for women. Although women comprise almost half of the population and half of the working age population, on the q3, 2021, only 22,5% of women were part of the labor force in comparison to 58,9% of their male counterparts. Only 17% of women are employed per q3,2021, and in comparison to same period in 2020, this percentage increased only for 3-point percentage. (Kosovo).

The World Bank estimates that Albania loses out on an additional 20% per capita GDP every year due to women's under-participation in the labor force and lower average wages earned by women relative to men in similar positions. The 2021 World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index report, ranks Albania 25th out of 153 economies reflecting the impact of the earthquake and COVID-19 pandemic. (Albania)

Having children in Albania significantly alters women's use of time. The average time spent on the care of small children under seven is 58 minutes for men and 8 hours and 25 minutes for women. (Albania)

There is a nearly equal distribution of working age women and men in North Macedonia, but despite that balanced structure, there are significant gender gaps in the country's labor market. Gender gaps are prevalent in the activity rates, employment, and pay. The conditions and circumstances that are the root cause of those gaps have not been eliminated, and patriarchal social norms continue to solidify traditional gender roles. (North Macedonia)

More than half (55.1%) of the working-age female population is inactive in the labor market. There are several reasons for women's inactivity, but the main reason is related to the traditional gender roles, which still dominate society after marriage/partnership or after having children. Many women remain inactive as they accept the role of full-time housewives and compared to men, they spend three times more time in household activities. 44.1% of the inactive women are recorded in the statistical category *housewives*.

The activity rate for 2019 was 57.4%, the employment rate was 48.7%, the unemployment rate was 15.1%. Of the total number of active populations 44.4% are women, while out of inactive people 60.1% are women. Of the total number of employees, 44.1% are women, and of the total number of unemployed 46.0% are women. (Montenegro).

The difference in earnings between men and women in Montenegro is 13.9%, which means that women earn only 86.1% of the average salary paid to men for the same work.(Montenegro)

In Serbia, the traditional gender stereotypes still have a significant impact on women's employment and lead to discrimination in the labor market. Comprehensive programs and support measures from relevant institutions are necessary in order to improve the position of the women in the labor market in Serbia. (Serbia)

The **activity rate** of people aged 15 and over in the first quarter 2022 was 55.2% and the activity rates among men and women were 63.8% and 47.2%, respectively. The **unemployment rate** of people aged 15 and over amounted to 10.6%, specifically 10.5% for men and 10.8% for women. Out of the total, 77,433 people are engaged in active employment policy measures for the 'hard-to-employ' persons category in National Employment Agency June 2022 report, of which 44,554 are women (58%).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this regional report contains both qualitative and quantitative data. The primary data were collected through qualitative research methods, while quantitative data were collected from the existing datasets from five different countries concerning women's rights in the labor market.

This research is conducted by five (5) organizations in five (5) Western Balkans countries namely Kosova, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. As a part of this joint research, all participants shared the same methodology. Qualitative methods used in this research consist of a number of interviews with stakeholders focus groups with women of different age, employment status, regions, etc, and with different stakeholders. In addition, all countries used the official statistical models supplied by international or other institutions to complete the general understanding of women's participation in the labor market.

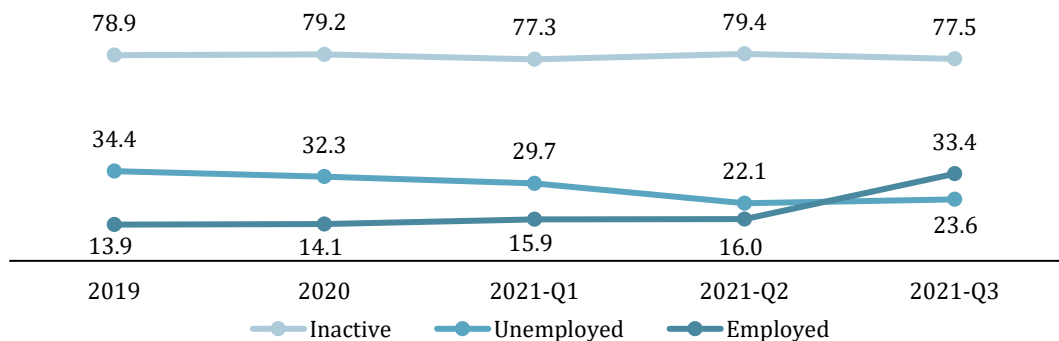
KOSOVA

Introduction

Gender equality as a democratic value, has a direct impact on economic and social development of Kosovo. Equal participation of women in the labor market and equal opportunities with the aim of improving the position of women in the society as a whole, have an impact on their economic empowerment. Therefore, participation of women in the labor market should not be treated only as a right or need, but as an action that will change the decision making position of women in the family, increase the household budget and improve the economic wellbeing of the family.

Women's participation in Kosovo's labor market is lowest when compared to other countries. Women continue to be discriminated against in employment, and their level of inactivity reflects a lack of the necessary conditions for equal access to the labor market for women. Although women comprise almost half of the population¹ and half of the working age population, on the q3, 2021, only 22,5% of women were part of the labor force in comparison to 58,9% of their male counterparts.² Only 17% of women are employed per q3,2021,³ and in comparison to same period in 2020,⁴ this percentage increased only for 3-point percentage. Although the percentage of employed women is extremely low, unemployment rates are not the most concerning category. Unemployed women in q3 2021 account only 23,9%, 8.6-point percentage higher than men of the same category. In parallel, the most concerning issue pertaining women's economic engagement and inclusiveness are the high rates of inactive women in the labour market, out of which there are 77,5% inactive. This figure is the lowest one in the last decade, compared to the percentage of inactive women in 2012⁵

Figure 1. Labor Market Indicators 2019 - q3 2021



Source: Labor force surveys 2019; 2020; 2021-q1; 2021-q2; 2021-q3;

Meanwhile, gender equality as a principle and value is strongly embodied in Kosovo legislation, starting from direct application of international conventions on the rights of women and regional conventions including European Charter of Human Rights and lately the Council of Europe Convention against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (referred to as the

¹ According to Kosovo Statistics Agency in Kosovo the sex ratio at birth for 2019 or the coefficient of masculinity is 110.6 males per 100 females while the gender ratio of the population was in 2019 represented with 100 males for 95.3 females. See Women and Men in Kosovo, December 2020, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6118/women-and-man-2018-2019.pdf>

² Labor Force Survey - q3 2021 - Kosovo Agency of Statistics - <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/7072/afp-tm3-2021.pdf>

³ Ibid

⁴ Labor Force Survey q3 - 2020 - Kosovo Agency of Statistics - <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5826/anketa-e-fuqis%C3%AB-pun%C3%ABtore-afp-tm3-2020.pdf>

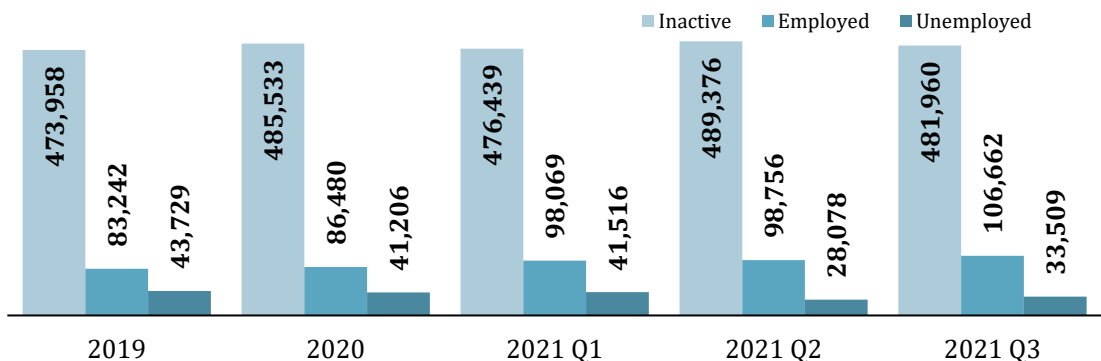
⁵ Opt.cit

Istanbul Convention)⁶, reflected in the Kosovo Constitution, Law on Gender Equality and other laws of Kosovo. Nevertheless, women in Kosovo continue to face different forms of discrimination at all levels of the society, starting from family, to labor market, local and central institutions.

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

Although Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe as the average age of the population is 32 years old.⁷ Kosovo leads with highest rates of poverty and unemployment, especially unemployment among youth.⁸ The labor market in Kosovo continues to uphold the characteristic of high unemployment and inactivity of women, followed by high youth unemployment and high discrepancy between employment of women and men. In the last decade, the lowest rate of inactivity of women has not dropped lower than 75%, while the employment rates have never crossed 17%.⁹ While in 2008 after the declaration of independence the unemployment rate was 47.5%, the data from the third quarter 2021 show that the general unemployment has dropped to 33.4% while only 17.7% of the population are employed, while almost 60% (59.54) of the population of working age are inactive, which means that they do not work, nor are actively seeking for a job.¹⁰ Although the statistics show that there has been an improvement of women's employment rates in the last 10 years, the situation of participation of women in the labor market continues to be concerning. According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) the inactivity rates between 2019 up to q3 2021, show that there has been a decrease for 1,4 percent, the real numbers show (Fig.2) that between 2019 up to q3 2021, the number of inactive women has decreased for approximately 8000 women. There is a positive increase of employed women and a slight decrease of unemployed women.¹¹

Figure 2. Labor Market Indicators 2019 - q3 2021 (in thousands)



Source: Labor force surveys 2019; 2020; 2021-q1; 2021-q2; 2021-q3;

However, the number of women that continue to be out of the labor market (both inactive and unemployed) for q3 2021 is 515,469 thousand. The following indicators restrain the

⁶ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008, Art. 22. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=3702>

⁷ See Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Women and Men in Kosovo, December 2020. Available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6118/women-and-man-2018-2019.pdf>

⁸ Kosovo Agency of Statistics, World Bank Group. Consumption Poverty in the Republic of Kosovo. World Bank Group 2019, <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4901/povertystatistics-2012-2017.pdf>; (accessed on 13 June, 2021). According to World Population Review, Kosovo ranks as the third poorest country in Europe, with about 30% of the population living in poverty <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countryrankings/poorest-countries-in-europe>.

⁹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics - [http://askdata.rks-gov.net/api/v1/sq/ASKdata/Labour market/Anketa e Fuqisjë Punëtorë/Quarterly labour market/tab27.px](http://askdata.rks-gov.net/api/v1/sq/ASKdata/Labour%20market/Anketa%20e%20Fuqisje%20Punetore/Quarterly%20labour%20market/tab27.px)

¹⁰ Opt Cit. 1;

¹¹ KAS – Labor Force Survey 2019 to q3 2021.

participation of women in the labour market as shown by current researches, as discussed below:

Gender division of professions:

Labor market in Kosovo is characterized by a division of the professions according to gender, reflected in the disproportional employment rates between women and men in particular sectors.¹² The official statistics from KAS show that women are concentrated in some particular sectors such as Education, Wholesale and retail trade, Health and Social Work and lower representation in the public administration. In other sectors, women participate with lower percentages from 0.1% up to 5. Nevertheless, the labor division in professions are a reflection of the gender divisions.

Fig. 3 and Fig 4. show that in the division of professions, women lead at professional levels and office workers and assistants, however, as of q3 2021, only 6,8% of women work in managerial positions.

Figure 3. Employment participation by activities and gender q3 – 2021

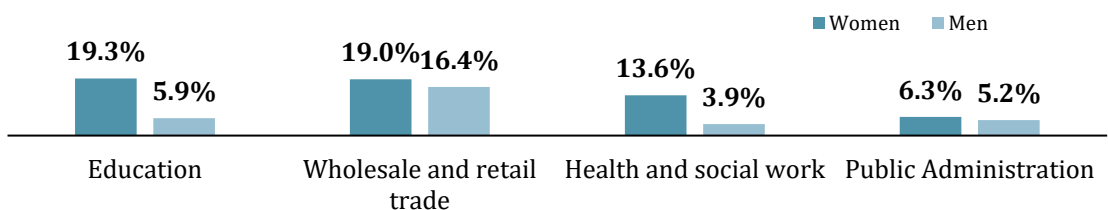
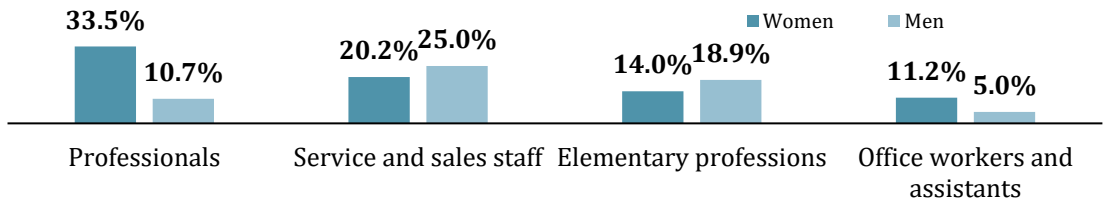


Figure 4. Employment of Women by professions in % (q3-2021)



As for institutional representatives *the responsibility remains with the government for uneven development of economic sectors (economic sectors in which women are more concentrated, are less developed than those where men are concentrated. There is a huge disproportional development among different sectors, especially those where women are more concentrated. In this regard, with more development of economic sectors equally, to comply with the professions and skills that the middle age population possess, also women of middle age, would be able to benefit from their skills, rather than end up in informal economy. The responsible institutions are responsible to know for each citizen in Kosovo, what skills they have, what educational qualifications they have, and based on labour market needs provide their contribution, with the market benefiting from their skills and qualifications. In parallel, the economic sectors analysed as under-represented in the labour market, should be given more priority, rather than end up with unused labor force.*¹³ Similarly, the labour market indicators also show deeply rooted nature of discrimination. The data from KAS show that in

¹² Krasniqi, J., "Increasing Women's Access to Employment". D4D Institute. <https://d4d-ks.org/en/papers/increasing-womens-access-to-employment/>

¹³ Interview – Employment Agency 2022;

2019 and 2020, Labour Force Survey, women comprise a higher percentage of family unpaid workers.¹⁴ Particularly this is more pronounced in Professional level shown at Table.1.

Table 1. Professions by gender 2019-2020

Family unpaid workers	2019		2020	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Professional workers	5.1	1.5	5.0	0.4
Office workers and assistants	0.7	5.4	4.9	0.8
Wholesale and retail	33.0	24.9	23.8	20.3
Elementary Professions	19.5	34.0	21.1	35.8

Source: LFS – KAS.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Kosovo has a solid legislative framework on gender equality. As a young state, its legislative framework was based on best country practices, therefore, Kosovo legislation starting from the Constitution provides a good foundation for gender equality. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo in addition to its gender sensitive language and gender balance in its structure, it incorporates human rights principles from international human rights standards that derive from international treaties and conventions. Kosovo is not a signatory country of CEDAW, the Constitution of Kosovo specifically enlists CEDAW as directly applicable and in case of conflict supersedes public bodies decisions (Article 22 of Kosovo Consitution).¹⁵ Additionally, in September 2020, Kosovo Assembly also voted constitutional amendments enlisting the Istanbul Convention as also directly applicable. The approach promotes the direct applicability of international conventions for the purpose of increasing institutional and social capacities of understanding the importance of gender equality, and embedding it at the core of each legal and policy level initiatives.¹⁶ The legislative framework that define, protect and promote the employment of women start from the Constitution of Kosovo, Labor law, the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, the Law on Inheritance in Kosovo, and other laws that directly promote, guarantee and protect gender equality as a legal, political, economic and social value.

Besides the Laws, the Government adopts several strategies which represent national strategies and particular sectorial strategies on employment, which represent the objectives of the government regarding employment, including particular policies and action plans that need to be developed to achieve the objectives. As the *Sectoral Strategy on Employment 2018-2021* has expired at the end of 2021, the Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers is drafting up a new strategy on Labor Market and Employment, which for difference, will be a *multi-sectorial* strategy, expected to be finished by the end of 2022 or beginning of 2023.

Over the years a number of documents have been created by various Kosovo governments that aim to guarantee gender equality, increase the participation of women in the labor market, improve the conditions of women's access to property and inheritance and encourage women's participation in entrepreneurship. Some of the main documents among them are:

- ~ National Development Strategy 2016-2021
- ~ Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024
- ~ Sectorial Strategy for Employment 2018-2022
- ~ Concept Document for National Development Strategy 2030

¹⁴ Opt cit. KAS Labor Force Survey q3-2021;

¹⁵ See Constituion of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 22, available at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=3702>

¹⁶ Ibid, Art. 22.

~ Program for Economic Reform 2021 – 2023;

Additionally, the main legal mechanisms dealing with the implementation of the law on gender equality are the Agency for Gender Equality – Office of the Prime-Minister of Kosovo, Offices for gender equality within institutions, Office for Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Anti- Discrimination; the Ombudsperson Institution and the Office for Gender Equality within this institution, as well as offices for gender equality within local governments.

The existing legal and institutional mechanisms are sufficiently represented. However, practice lags behind. According to institutional representatives, more needs to be done for implementation purposes, as well as the increased institutional cooperation among different ministries is needed to improve results.¹⁷ One of the biggest paradoxes with the issue of gender equality in Kosovo is the huge gap between well drafted laws and policies and their poor implementation.

Over the years many stakeholders have also raised concerns of unfavourable legal conditions for women working in the private sector. This, according to CSO representative is because the Law on Gender Equality lacks implementation. Although the Law on Gender Equality obliges all other laws in Kosovo for representation of women and men within the parity system approach of 50%-50%¹⁸, implementation lags behind. For example the Laws on Local Elections and General Elections continue to implement only the 30% quota.¹⁹ This is also prevalent in other areas such as in decision-making and representation of women in the government for example, with only recently the Kosovo government has managed to have around 40% of women ministers in comparison to men.

Further, according to CSO representative, the private sector needs to be empowered, meanwhile the Labor Law is the main obstacle due to several reasons such as: flexible working hours, , maternity leave, health and security at the working place and care (children and elderly care) as women are seen as primary care-givers according to social norms. Civil society have been advocating for changes intensively in the past decade , however a National Strategy for Economic Development still needs to be drafted for Kosovo. This strategy should also include a gender perspective with the on-going technological and digital trends which will increase the interest of youngsters and will cost dearly to older generations, who will not be able to keep up with technology and stay current in the labour market.²⁰ The existing disproportion between gender sensitive legislation and gender blind policies and strategies, affects women negatively in the labor market. Ms. Ajdini from Businesses Alliance of Kosovo considers that not only the gender equality laws and labor policies need to be reviewed and harmonized, there are also other laws and mechanisms that need to be functionalized, in order to enable an environment that would support the increase of women’s participation in the labour market. “There is a lack of institutional capacity to sanction and punish violations of women’s rights, because in most cases men are still paid more than women for the same work and the same position.”²¹ Ms. Ajdini supports this claim through a research conducted by the Alliance for Businesses in Kosovo that concluded that for the same work and position, men and women are paid differently. The average monthly salary for women is 369 EUR whilst for men the monthly salary is 465 EUR.²²

¹⁷ Interview – Institutional Representatives, 2022;

¹⁸ Law on Gender Equality – 05/L-020 - <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10923>

¹⁹ Law on General Elections of the Republic of Kosovo – 03/L-073 – Art 110 - <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2544>

²⁰ Interview with CSO representative.

²¹ Interview Businesses Alliance in Kosovo.

²² AKB – Labor Market 2019 – Average salary by gender;

Additionally, from the perspective of female entrepreneurs, Ms. Arta Istrefi – founder of Women Entrepreneurs Kosova, also believes that there is a huge scepticism in the ability of women to lead, thus, women are always inclined to pursue a career towards sectors that are paid less. In her view, this will continue as long as the laws are not fully implemented.²³

SOCIAL NORMS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

It is evident that Kosovo despite its European perspective, contains a lot of discriminatory societal practices towards women. In consequence, of the presence of this patriarchal environment, many private matters which affect women's participation rates such as family obligations and childcare, are influenced by discriminatory societal norms. Women are considered as primary caretakers of the family, including full responsibility to raise the children. On the other side, women end up performing up to 5-6 hours averagely per day in care work, which does not allow them to engage actively in the labor market, and economically maximize their skills, equaling to unpaid work.²⁴ This category of women are called inactive, as they are neither employed, while having insufficient time for labor market activities.²⁵ Women's discrimination particularly was revealed during COVID-19 pandemics, which revealed the multiple marginalization in which women in Kosovo went through, due to the existing traditional discrimination, the crisis situation and the neglection by the institutions.²⁶

Table 2. How many hours did you spend during the day on house work during pandemics (cleaning and cooking)?

	W	M	Total
no hrs spent for house work	3.3%	23.5%	13.7%
1-2 hrs	27.2%	47.3%	37.5%
2-4 hrs	33.8%	23.7%	28.6%
4-6 hrs	22.4%	3.3%	12.6%
6-8 hrs	12.7%	1.5%	6.9%
other	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%
total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Low salaries: The average salary in Kosovo in 2021 in the public sector was gross 484 EUR, while in the private sector 419 EUR.²⁷ Women are mainly concentrated in particular sectors, an average net payment in the education sector is 461 EUR, for the retail sector is 356 EUR, in the health sector 559 EUR. Women are predominantly concentrated in the aforementioned sectors. Meanwhile, according to CEIC Data, in 2017 the household expenditure per capita in Kosovo was 1703 USD annually. In the focus group with women, it was reported that despite working for the same employers, gained experience did not result in salary enhancements. Only 35% of women participants had working contracts. However, low salaries also hinder the ability of women to shift the caretaking stereotypes and accept employment due to the opportunity cost reflected below:

Lack of day care centers or inability to afford them: There is a limited number of public day care centers in Kosovo, meanwhile private day care centers in Kosovo many times have unaffordable prices, particularly for women who have more than 1 child. According to CSO representative, even for mothers who work in the private sector, public day care centers are not

²³ Interview with Arta Istrefi – Women Entrepreneurs Kosova

²⁴ Krasniqi, J. "Who pays the highest price: the impact of COVID-19 on employment of women in Kosovo". *D4D Institute*. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/D4D_PI_21_ENG_FIN.pdf

²⁵ Abazi Morina, L & Delibashzade, R. "Women's Inactivity in the labor market- Factors hindering women's participation in the labor market". *D4D Institute*. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_12_W4D_ENG_WEB.pdf

²⁶ Krasniqi, J, Hajdari, L. "The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on double marginalisation of women in Kosovo". *Przegląd Europejski*. 2021 | 4(62) | 115-129 <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bumeta1.element.desklight-56e7904f-ce3c-455f-9fce-b5f1540e9e3>

²⁷ <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6950/niveli-i-pagave-n%C3%AB-kosove-2021.pdf>

appropriate because of their working schedules;²⁸ In the focus group conducted for this research, women participants declared that they work as child-care providers for children of other families, while their own children of the same age, are left without care at home, as they cannot afford to send them to day-care centers.²⁹

Maternity Leave: Women in Kosovo are highly discriminated by the definition of maternity leave in the Labor Law. Over the years, CSOs have raised the concern of several dimensions that the issue of maternity leave is discriminating women. According to the Labor Law³⁰, women have the right to maternity leave for 1 year (six months with 70% of the payment, three months with the 50% of the average salary in Kosovo supported by the government, and three months of unpaid leave). Differently, fathers have the right to only two days of paid leave and another two weeks of unpaid leave. This directly influences the participation of both parents in parental responsibilities for raising children, and equal share of responsibilities.³¹ In the focus group led by D4D with women in Fushë Kosova, young women expressed many types of discrimination they experience by the private sector, being asked if they plan to get married soon, prejudiced they will become mothers in a short time, just by being seen as future mothers, impacting their level of employability.³²

Public Transport: Access to public transportation, differs for women residing in rural areas for women in urban areas. . While women in urban areas have easier access to public transport, women in rural areas struggle not only with stable transportation flexible to their working schedule. . In the research conducted by D4D in 2021, while 49.2% of women declared that care for family, housework and children were the reason why they did not look for a job, approximately 9% of women responded that transport was the reason for their inactivity.³³

Table 3. Type of employment, by gender;

	2018		2019		2020	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
Employee	70.5	80.6	70.8	85.1	69.6	84.8
Self-employed with employees	9.3	2.2	7.6	2.2	11.4	4.2
Self-employed without employees (own - account worker or free-lancer)	14.5	11.5	17.0	6.6	14.6	6.1
Unpaid family worker	5.7	5.6	4.5	6.2	4.4	4.9

²⁸ Interview with CSO representative.

²⁹ Interview with women in Fushë Kosova.

³⁰ Labor Law – Article 49 and 50. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2735>

³¹ Kerqeli, A., “Shifting Paradigms: Equity through parental leave” D4D Institute. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_13_ENG_WEB.pdf

³² Interview with women in Fushë Kosova.

³³ Field Research on why didn't you look for a job in the last 6 months - OMNIBUS/UBO Consulting, March, 2022.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing women's access to employment is a challenge which obviously requires the involvement of all state and social actors, institutions, universities, businesses, media, and other influential actors. In particular, their support should be invested in promoting gender equality in the labor market as a value and responding to gender-based discrimination practices that are directly endangering women's participation in the labour force and the democratic development of Kosovo state.

Gender discrimination practices remains a strong challenge towards women's economic empowerment, reflectively the labor market, power relations in the society, institutions, and family are largely patriarchal. Women are primarily seen in their care-giving role, keeping them away from the labor market. The labor divisions are highly gendered including in the professions chosen, by women's work and care remaining predominant in the unpaid sector and under-valued. Furthermore, even though Kosovo as a young state supports gender equality through legal and policy measures, by also re-instating the importance of gender equality in its Constitution, the lack of will to undertake actions and enforce mechanisms to implement existing laws still lags behind. This shows that gender equality in practice is still not being prioritized as its importance is under-valued.

To improve the position of women in the labor market the following recommendations are issued to pave the way forward for increasing the workforce participation of women in Kosovo:

- ~ Employment policies need to respond to the current situation of women's employment (level and type of education, skills, age, obstacles, economic condition, place of residence, etc).³⁴
- ~ A national survey assessment on women's participation in informal economy needs to be conducted by responsible state institutions;
- ~ The existing gap between women in rural and urban areas needs to be evaluated in order for craft specific gender sensitive policies related to increasing workforce participation of women in rural areas;
- ~ Address specific issues related to social and cultural barriers for women's participation in the labor market, by opening affordable day care centers, affordable and frequent transport to allow women from rural areas to have equal access to working opportunities, enforce the implementation of law by enforcing the monitoring institutions and mechanisms;
- ~ Harmonizing education policies with labor market demands;
- ~ Revise the existing labor laws, to adopt parental leave, in order to allow both parents to equally share care responsibilities in raising children, in order to raise awareness of the society and changing the existing cultural practices seeing only women as primary care takers;³⁵
- ~ Creating programs to support women's entrepreneurship, through special programs and incentives;
- ~ Adopt special regulations that ensure equal gender property inheritance for women not only in laws but also in practice, initially by regulating the practice of resignation from the right to property and inheritance.

³⁴ Gashi.A., "Food for Thought: Suggestions for the upcoming employment strategy". D4D Institute.2022. <https://d4d-ks.org/en/papers/food-for-thought-suggestions-for-the-upcoming-employment-strategy/>

³⁵ Democracy for Development (D4D). "Social Security Fund: Financial Coverage of Parental Leave".2021. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/D4D_PI_23_ENG_FINAL_print.pdf

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abazi Morina., L & Delibashzade. R, "Women's Inactivity in the labor market- Factors hindering women's participation in the labor market". D4D Institute. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_12_W4D_ENG_WEB.pdf
- Kosovo Alliance for Businesses– Labor Market 2019 – Average salary by gender;
Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008, Art. 22. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=3702>
- Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008, Art. 22. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=3702>
- Democracy for Development (D4D). "Social Security Fund: Financial Coverage of Parental Leave".2021. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/D4D_PI_23_ENG_FINAL_print.pdf
- Field Research on why didn't you look for a job in the last 6 months- OMNIBUS/UBO Consulting, March, 2022.
- Gashi. A., Rizvanolli. A., "The Cost of Patriarchy: Excluding Women from the workforce is the main bottleneck to development. Democracy for Development (D4D). 2015. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-02-16-Inactivity_web.pdf
- Gashi.A., "Food for Thought: Suggestions for the upcoming employment strategy". D4D Institute.2022. <https://d4d-ks.org/en/papers/food-for-thought-suggestions-for-the-upcoming-employment-strategy/>
- Interview– Businesses Alliance in Kosovo, 2022.
- Interview CSO Representative, 2022.
- Interview Institutional Representative;
- Interview with Arta Istrefi – Women Entrepreneurs Kosova
- Interview with Employment Agency of Kosovo, 2022.
- Interview with women in Fushë Kosova, 2022.
- IPSOS Poll - https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/pdf_beacon_w_balkans.pdf
- Kerqeli. A., "Shifting Paradigms: Equity through parental leave" D4D Institute. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_13_ENG_WEB.pdf
- Kosovo Agency of Statistics - [http://askdata.rks-gov.net/api/v1/sq/ASKdata/Labour market/Anketa e Fuqisë Punëtorë/Quarterly labour market/tab27.px](http://askdata.rks-gov.net/api/v1/sq/ASKdata/Labour%20market/Anketa%20e%20Fuqis%C3%AB-pun%C3%ABtor%C3%ABe%20afp-tm3-2020.pdf)
- Kosovo Agency of Statistics – Labor Force Surveys 2019 to q3 2021. <https://ask.rks-gov.net/sq/agjencia-e-statistikave-te-kosoves/sociale/tregu-i-punes>
- Kosovo Agency of Statistics, World Bank Group. Consumption Poverty in the Republic of Kosovo. World Bank Group 2019, <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4901/povertystatistics-2012-2017.pdf>; (accessed on 13 June, 2021). According to World Population Review, Kosovo ranks as the third poorest country in Europe, with about 30% of the population living in poverty <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countryrankings/poorest-countries-in-europe>.
- Krasniqi, J. "Who pays the highest price: the impact of COVID-19 on employment of women in Kosovo". D4D Institute. https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/D4D_PI_21_ENG_FIN.pdf
- Krasniqi.J, Hajdari. L, "The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on double marginalisation of women in Kosovo". *Przegląd Europejski*. 2021 | 4(62) | 115-129 <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-56e7904f-ce3c-455f-9fce-b5f1540e9e93>
- Krasniqi.J., "Increasing Women's Access to Employment". D4D Institute. <https://d4d-ks.org/en/papers/increasing-womens-access-to-employment/>
- Labor Force Survey - q3 2021 – Kosovo Agency of Statistics - <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/7072/afp-tm3-2021.pdf>
- Labor Force Survey q3 – 2020 – Kosovo Agency of Statistics - <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5826/anketa-e-fuqis%C3%AB-pun%C3%ABtor%C3%ABe%20afp-tm3-2020.pdf>
- Labor Law – Article 49 and 50. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2735>
- Law on Gender Equality – 05/L-020 - <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10923>
- Law on General Elections of the Republic of Kosovo – 03/L-073 – Art 110 - <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2544>

ALBANIA

INTRODUCTION

The World Bank estimates that Albania loses out on an additional 20% per capita GDP every year due to women's under-participation in the labor force and lower average wages earned by women relative to men in similar positions.³⁶ There has been progress, as the labor market for women in Albania maintained a positive trajectory over the last decade, accompanied by increasing employment opportunities for both men and women (European Commission, 2021).³⁷ The 2021 World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index report, ranks Albania 25th out of 153 economies (compared to rank 20 for 2020) (WEF, 2021)³⁸, reflecting the impact of the earthquake and COVID-19 pandemic.³⁹

Labor Market Survey data show that during 2021, 1,411,308 people registered in Albania's workforce, men accounted for 55.4 % and women for 44.6 % of the total.⁴⁰ Employment included more than 1,24 million persons, of which 55.5 % were men and 44.5 % women.⁴¹ The labor market landscape for 2021 shows that 60.9 % of the population aged 15-64 years old was employed, 8.3 % was unemployed and 30.7 % was economically inactive (outside the labor force).⁴² As a result of the pandemic, unemployment rose particularly among vulnerable groups including women, young people, Roma and Egyptians, and people with disabilities (European Commission, 2021).⁴³ By the end of 2021 unemployment reached 2019 levels, with slight differences between men and women unemployment. Whereas in 2019 the gender gap in unemployment was 0.2 percentage points in favor of women, in 2021 unemployment was 0.5 percentage points lower for men.⁴⁴

This report provides an overview of the current labor market, including how governance and mechanisms influence women's employability through active labor market policies and their framework. The report closes on a few final remarks that need to be expanded in future discussions by incorporating key labor market stakeholders.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

Labor market governance and the National Agency for Employment and Skills – The labor market's institutional framework has undergone a reform process, which addressed long-term needs by re-structuring the governance chain.⁴⁵ The existing legal framework lays down principles, institutional framework, and mandates for labor market policies. This framework includes the Labor Code, law no. 15/2019 "On employment promotion ", law no. 146/2015 "On Jobseekers" etc., and additional bylaws. Implementation of this legislation falls in line with key strategic documents adopted by the Government of Albania. This also represents the framework for an equal access of women and men to opportunities in the labor market.

³⁶ World Bank. 2019. Albania to Enhance Gender Equality in Access to Economic Opportunities with World Bank Support. Washington DC.

³⁷ European Commission. 2021. Albania Progress Report, Pg.92.. Brussels. Belgium

³⁸ World Economic Forum, 2021. Global Gender Gap Report 2021

³⁹ The United Nations has developed a tracking tool to assess the gender-sensitivity of policy measures in response to COVID-19 and Albania has recorded some of the key measures were targeting women's economic security.

⁴⁰ INSTAT, Labor Market 2021, 2022. Tirana. Albania

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ European Commission. 2021. Albania Progress Report, Pg.93. Brussels. Belgium

⁴⁴ INSTAT, Labor Market 2021, 2022 . Tirana. Albania

⁴⁵ Skills Development for Employment Programme, UNDP, MoFE. 2020. Technical Note Series: Employment and VET Policy Reform in Albania.

Further, the reform addressed policy issues and engaged with the government to promote job creation, up-skilling, and enhance social welfare.⁴⁶ There was also progress throughout 2019-2020 in consolidation of key governing institutions.⁴⁷ The existing governance includes the Directorate for Employment and Vocational Training Policies at the Ministry of Finance and Economy⁴⁸ and the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES). The Directorate drafts policies and develops legislation to provide a favorable environment for labor market developments, whereas the NAES heads up the implementation of active and passive labor market policies. The reformed NAES was established in 2019, and functions via regional directorates and local employment offices, ensuring quality services are provided to beneficiaries.⁴⁹ The reform aimed to establish a new modern workforce development agency based on EU's best practices⁵⁰. According to the 2021 OECD assessment, this new agency develops a modern delivery process, including a new information technology system, provision of individual counselling and individual action plans, as well as the systematic introduction of employer services.⁵¹

After undergoing the reform process, NAES is equipped with the legal framework needed to carry out an extensive list of services. NAES, has streamlined processes, creating *modus operandi*, ensuring parallel application between regional and local offices, and developing guidance manuals. It has already implemented best practices in the Balkans and Europe, such as the Individual Employment Plan, which increased the chances of success for unemployed jobseekers. The reformed NAES successfully implements approaches through 12 regional employment directorates and 40 local employment offices, which doubled from 2019.⁵² Data from NAES shows that the agency has reached 400 staff members, undergoing a necessary expansion to implement their revised program.

Despite these changes, insufficient human and technical capacities continue to affect the design, implementation, and monitoring of employment policies and measures overall.⁵³ The reform has suffered the effects of political restructuring through various governments. Currently, labor affairs are under the administration of the Ministry of Finance and Economy, operating with a small administrative structure.⁵⁴ This restructuring neglected to consult civil society and other social partners.⁵⁵ Building upon the reform and institutional strengthening to set the foundations for a stronger labor market policymaking pool of experts within the public administration.

Active labor market policies (ALMP) – One of the key objectives of the National Employment and Skills Strategy is to enable a gradual transition from passive to active labor market policies.⁵⁶ Thus, implementing and monitoring active labor market policies that match market needs is of utmost importance. NESS monitoring reports on the design of ALMPs based on need assessments of special groups (people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, people with lower or no education etc.) and implementation of integrated monitoring and evaluation framework based on standardized indicators and reports, etc.

ALMPs are regulated by Law 15/2019 “On employment promotion” and the respective Decisions of the Council of Ministers. ALMPs known as programs that aim to retain employees

⁴⁶ Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2018. Annual Progress Report of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020. Tirana, Albania

⁴⁷ Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2021. National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022; Annual Progress Report 2020

⁴⁸ Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2017. Structure of the Ministry: Directorate for Employment and Vocational Training Policies

⁴⁹ Council of Ministers. 2019. DCM No. 554, dated 31.7.2019 “On the establishment, organization and functioning of the NAES”

⁵⁰ Skills Development for Employment Programme, UNDP, MoFE. 2020. Technical Note Series: Employment and VET Policy Reform in Albania.

⁵¹ OECD (2021), Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcb2e2a9-en>.

⁵² National Agency for Employment and Skills. 2021. Annual Report 2020. Tirana, Albania

⁵³ European Training Foundation. 2020. Education, Training and Employment Developments 2020.

⁵⁴ OECD. 2021. Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2019. National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022. Tirana, Albania

in the labor market, support unemployed jobseekers to enter the labor market. They passed through a review process in 2019, which restructured them to meet the needs in the labor market. However, there were unforeseen delays in their implementation, mainly due to COVID-19.

In summary, these programs can be categorized as on-the-job training, wage-subsidies, internship, community works and self-employment programs, providing support for training, employers' compulsory social and health insurance, and lump sum financial support for business ideas. Alongside these programs, there are several support measures for jobseekers with compounded vulnerabilities such as: transport bonus when the place of residence over 2 km from the place of work, (in the amount of approximately EUR 13 per month); kindergarten and nurseries bonus for single parents and each child under six years of age, in the amount of approximately EUR 25 per month., workplace adaptation bonus for people with disabilities up to approximately EUR 1 600 etc. Other categories supported are orphans, single parents with children under 6 years, parents of children with disabilities, victims and potential victims of trafficking, victims of domestic or gender-based violence, recipients of economic assistance, Roma and Egyptians.

Financing of labor market policies and women employability – The government's budget is the dominant source of financing for labor market policies and the implementation of the National Employment and Skills Strategy. There are, however, several donors which provide complementary support to specific subtopics such as organizational development of labor market institutions, capacity building for VET, etc. Yet, there is no report on the overall support to labor market development and employment policies, making it difficult to form a complete picture of the support for women in the labor market.

Data from the Ministry of Finance and Economy illustrate a slight decrease in the financing of labor market policies⁵⁷, linked to the phasing out of the strategy. Unfortunately, no distinct analysis can be carried out to understand the share of spending in support of women. However, within the Economic Reform Program documents contain minimal key indicators related to the number of women jobseekers benefiting from active labor market policies to the number of registered women, estimated to be around 67% annually.⁵⁸

Simultaneously, it is of high priority to improve administrative efficiency and budget spending. The budget committed to employment policies for 2016-2020 has not been fully executed. Indeed, this could affect budget allocations in the future at a steady decrease. Experts suggest that a better spending rate of the budget commitments would result in faster achievements of employment targets. The scenario is different when considering the budget managed from the National Agency for Employment and Skills. Data for the years 2016-2018 illustrates an improved performance and budget planning process. The performance in 2020 was impacted by COVID-19, causing the phasing out of some employment promotion programs and the late adoption of other programs. Few committed funds were carried over in 2021, to ensure maximum efficiency.

Employment promotion programs are normally supported by a stable budget allocation. In 2015, budget commitments increased as planned in the NESS 2014-2020, from around EUR 2.15 million in 2014, to EUR 3.6 million in 2015⁵⁹, and to EUR 3.9 million in 2016.⁶⁰ However, shifting to active labor market policies is a priority. Budget allocations and expenditures for passive measures not only remain high but have increased considerably from 2020. It is

⁵⁷ National Budgets 2016-2021 available at www.financa.gov.al

⁵⁸ Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2021. Gender Budgeting Indicators. Tirana. Albania

⁵⁹ Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2021. National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022; Annual Progress Report 2017.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2021. National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022; Annual Progress Report 2019.

important to note that the budget for employment promotion programs also increased in 2020, reaching EUR 4.8 million. Yet, these figures are highly skewed in favor of passive labor market policies even in the 2022 budget, despite when financial allocations in an overall low.⁶¹

Gender roles and challenges facing policymakers – Various stakeholders in Albania have worked to improve the status of women and to promote gender equality. Barriers to fully realizing women’s potential remain persistent, particularly in access to the labor and participation in decision-making.⁶² The National Institute of Statistics released for the first time the Gender Equality Index in Albania,⁶³ the country scored 60.4 points, whereas the EU average was 67.4 in 2019. In the power index, Albania’s scored 60.9 points, much higher than the EU average of 51.9.⁶⁴ The power index demonstrates gender inequality, and the higher score reflects a persistent issue in Albanian society. Albanian perceptions of gender equality expect women to behave within traditional gender roles, remaining subservient to men.⁶⁵ Traditional norms in Albanian society consider women inferior to men, forming one of the key aspects of gender-based discrimination.⁶⁶ In several cases, lack of awareness of fundamental rights and lackluster enforcement of legislation enable the marginalization of women.

First-hand experience of social workers and experts confirms that females in Albania are expected to behave according to strict societal norms; they have to be obedient, responsible, caring, and feminine, take care of children and families and choose a profession that allows them to meet these expectations.⁶⁷ Gender inequalities within the family directly coincide the distribution of power and the right to decision-making.⁶⁸ A predominant belief in traditional Albanian culture places men as the head of the household and with that the responsibility of ensuring the financial wellbeing of the family.⁶⁹ This belief system is prevalent in rural areas of the Albanian economy where men are perceived as owners of the family property, thus placing women as “farmer’s wives”.⁷⁰

Within the traditional social construct women hold unpaid family labor positions, enabling their dependency on men. In 2018, one in three men and one in four women believed that females belong in the domestic sphere while males should pursue their careers and other leadership opportunities.⁷¹ Women remain the ones caring for children, often without any support. The sharing household responsibilities with men occurs in some cases, yet the chores men engage with are often simply home repairs and paying bills.⁷² In rural areas, women take on the majority of activities that are confined within the household often requiring intensity and commitment⁷³, while men are more likely to be involved with agricultural assets, mobility and decision-making.⁷⁴ Social roles in rural areas lead men to engage extensively in capital investments, thereby reducing women's access to and control over agricultural assets and decision-making. Possible divergences from this narrative are linked to age, education, regions, gender, economic status, and migration history. These differences and factors, possibly create

⁶¹ OECD (2021), *Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development*

⁶² UNDP. 2019. *The United Nations Mid-Year Report for the Republic of Albania*. Tirana, Albania

⁶³ INSTAT. 2020. *Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania*. The Gender Equality Index in Albania was developed with EIGE's support under the EU Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA), funded by the European Union.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ UN Women. 2019. *2018 Public perceptions of gender equality and violence against women – Info sheet for Albania*.

⁶⁶ UNICEF Albania. INSTAT Centre for Social Rights. 2007. *Women and Children in Albania: Double Dividend of Gender Equality*

⁶⁷ UN Women in Albania. 2020. *Stories: Take Five: "Stereotypes shape our interactions with others and with the world"*. February

⁶⁸ FAO. 2016. *Gender equality, agriculture and rural development in Albania: Gender equality assessment in the country*. Budapest

⁶⁹ UNICEF Albania. INSTAT Centre for Social Rights. 2007. *Women and Children in Albania: Double Dividend of Gender Equality*.

⁷⁰ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. 2016. *Gender equality, agriculture and rural development in Albania*, Budapest

⁷¹ UN Women. 2019. *2018 Public perceptions of gender equality and violence against women – Info sheet for Albania*

⁷² UNDP, UN Women, Embassy of Sweden. 2016. *A Pilot Study: Public Perceptions and Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Albania*. January.

⁷³ Activities that are stereotypically defined as "women's responsibilities" are related to: caring for family affairs, children and other family members; manual work in agricultural production and processing; animal care; milking and cheese production.

⁷⁴ FAO. 2016. *Gender equality, agriculture and rural development in Albania: Gender equality assessment in the country*. Budapest A

an environment less favorable for women, particularly those with vulnerabilities, such as reduced access to information or education.

The new Strategy for Gender Equality contains an active engagement between governmental institutions with women's inclusion in the labor market.⁷⁵ Policies that aim to solve this issue face significant barriers to action, including traditional Albanian gender norms. Transforming gender roles and social norms requires that the gender gap diminishes in labor market participation and earnings.⁷⁶

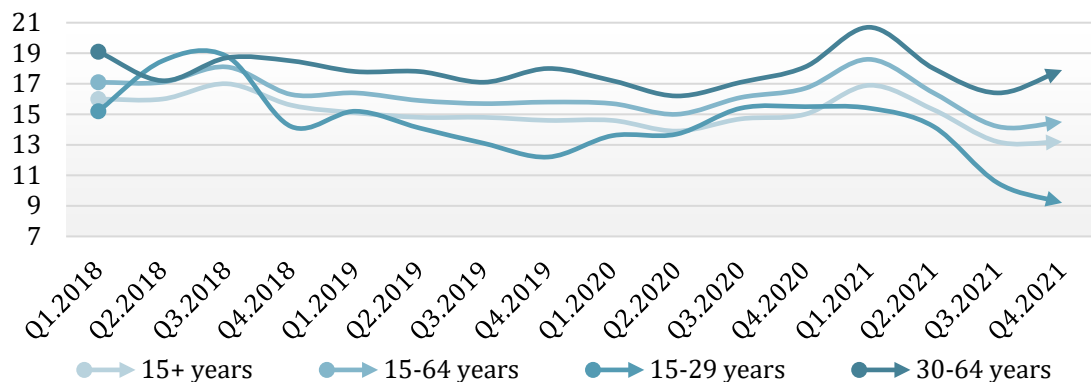
STATE OF PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

Despite a difficult economic situation, data show that Albania presents some of the best labor market indicators in the Balkans.⁷⁷ The following section presents a descriptive overview of the labor market dynamics in the last few years, with a particular focus on women's role in Albania's labor market.

Gender gaps in key labor market indicators – Labor Force Survey data illustrate positive labor market dynamics in the past year. In 2021, employment increased by 0.4 percentage points compared to the previous year and unemployment decreased by 0.2 percentage points at 0.5 percentage points lower for men than women.

Inactivity Rate and labor force participation – In Albania, 55.5% of employed and 34.5% of unemployed individuals are men. 22.7% of the male population aged 15-64 and 38.6% of the female population from the same group are outside of the labor force. Participation in the labor market has experienced positive trends in recent years. Post-pandemic, the labor force participation of 15+ years old decreased by almost 2 percentage points but recovered by Q3 2021. Labor force participation levels for men aged 15+ are recovering at a slower rate when compared to women of the same group. The gender gap in quarterly data during 2018-21 for different age groups ranged from 10.2% to 20.7%, showing the highest discrepancy for the population aged 30-64 years old and lowest for the population aged 15-29 years old.

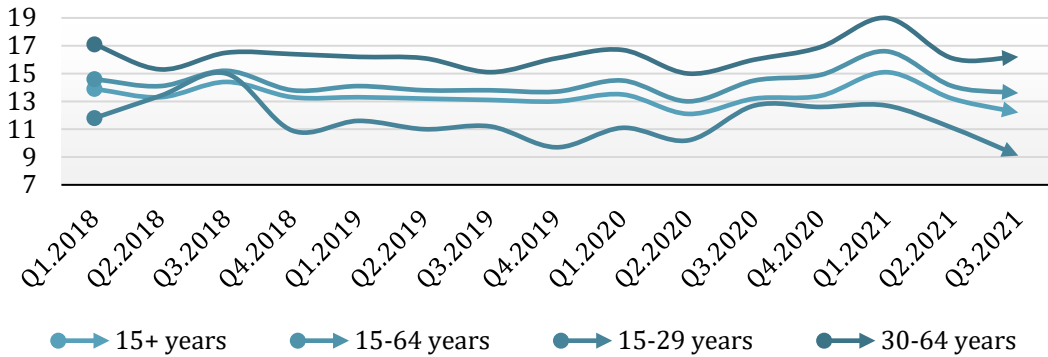
Figure 5. Gender gap in labor force participation and employment.



⁷⁵ Ministry of Health and Social Protection. 2020 National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030, Tirana. Albania

⁷⁶ UN Women. 2019. 2018 Public perceptions of gender equality and violence against women – Info sheet for Albania

⁷⁷ World Bank. 2021. Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 20. Greening the Recovery. Fall 2021. World Bank



Source: INSTAT, 2022

Employment – By the end of 2021 (Q4 2021), the employment rate for men and women aged 15-64 years old, was 70.8% and 56.6%, respectively. Over a three-year period between 2018-2021, the gender gap in the employment rate averaged 14.2 percentage points, with the lowest levels reached throughout the pandemic and the highest in Q1 2021. Data was divided by educational levels to illustrate the correlation between gender gap and education level. Jobs with a lower gender gap are associated with higher levels of education among employees. In fact, during the pandemic the gender gap in employment was lowest for those with medium and low levels of education in the second quarter of 2020, as more men lost jobs than women. Overall, in 2021, the employment gender gap for ages 15-64 years old is 14.4 percentage points.

Employment and education - Although more women are completing high levels education, men with high levels of education are still much more likely to be employed. In the last few years, employment gender gap for highly educated individuals has fluctuated from -0.9 to 5.2, with a much larger fluctuation for the less educated. The employment gender gap has deepened for those with low level of education, yet the ones who have suffered most are those with a medium level of completed education. Education levels contribute to gender disparities in the labor market.⁷⁸ For instance, inadequate education is one of the main barriers towards the inclusion of youth in Albania's labor market (RCC, 2021).⁷⁹ Participation rates are higher for women, out of 33 thousand students that graduated from higher education in 2020, 65.3 % were female, still 1.1% less compared to the previous year.⁸⁰

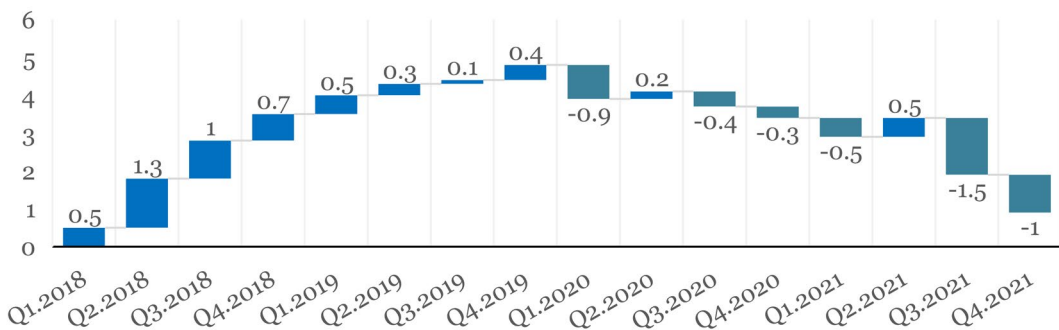
Unemployment - By the end of 2021, a total of 162,560 people were estimated to be unemployed, among them 54.5% were men and 45.5% were women. However, progress towards reducing women's unemployment was halted by the pandemic⁸¹. Alongside other indicators, in 2019, women's unemployment reached historically low rate, with extremely low gender gap of almost 0.1 percentage points in Q3 2019.

⁷⁸ UN Women. 2021. Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in Albania - A position paper by UN in Albania

⁷⁹ Regional Cooperation Council. 2021. Performance of Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights; 2021 review on Albania. Esmeralda Shehaj in collaboration with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

⁸⁰ INSTAT. 2021. Women and Men 2021. Tirana. Albania

⁸¹ Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2021, National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022; Annual Progress Report 2020

Figure 6. Gender gap in unemployment, 15-64 years old (2018-2021)

Source: INSTAT, 2022

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the unemployment gender gap displayed opposite figures, demonstrating that unemployment is rising at a higher rate for women compared to men. This phenomenon was not present in 2015, when in Q3 and Q4 the gender gap was (-0.3) and (-0.6) percentage points respectively. Geographically, the employment gender gap was highest in Diber and Lezha, with male unemployment higher than that of females. The opposite is true for the regions of Vlora and Durres, whereas the rest of the country maintains an unemployment gender gap between 2.4 and -1.5 percentage points. Youth unemployment remains high, at 27.1 %, 0.6 percentage points higher than 2020. No significant trend is noticeable in youth gender gap dynamics. However, what can be noted is that gender gap developments post-pandemic parallel development gender gaps in unemployment for all the working age population.

Self-employment – By the end of 2021, a total of 399,363 people reported themselves as being self-employed. Survey results show that 47.9 % of workers are employees in businesses, 32.0 % are self-employed (overseeing employees or without employees) and 20.1 % are contributing family workers (women are 1.5 times more likely than men to be contributing family workers).⁸² There is no stable trend on gender gap data for the self-employed population. For instance, gender gap in self-employment in Q2 2020 was only 12.7 percentage points, yet in Q2 2021 it reached 16.9 percentage points, almost reaching 2018 levels. During 2020, there was, however, an increase in the number of self-employed women, accompanied by a slight decrease in the number of self-employed men. This trend is, albeit arguably, related to the pandemic with workplace alterations such as working from home and new benefits arising from the government support packages.

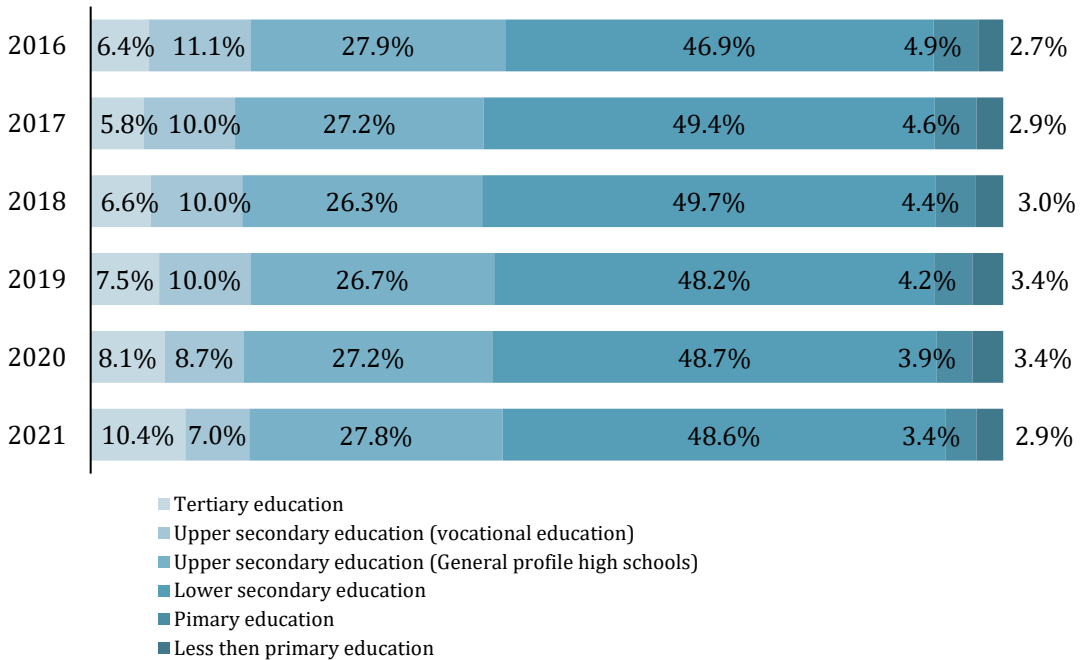
Part-Time Employment – In 2021, the share of people engaged in part-time employment in Albania was the same as in 2020, roughly 16.0 % of the population aged 15-64 years old. Compared to previous years there was a 1 percentage point decrease in men engaged in part time work and a 1.2% increase in women engaged in part-time work. Data shows that gender differences are more severe among people with low education levels between the ages of 15-64. The gender gaps in part-time employment/work are in favor of women because there are policies providing incentives for part-time employment opportunities. These are the adoption of flexible or reduced working hours alongside additional teleworking opportunities⁸³. Additional occupational incentives could bolster inclusion in the workplace work.

⁸² INSTAT. 2022. Labor Market in 2021. Tirana. Albania

⁸³ Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, Economic benefits of gender equality and women empowerment in the Western Balkans six.

Temporary Employment – In 2021, temporary employment accounted for 9.7 % of employed women and just 5.1 % for employed men, with an overall indicator of 7.3% for ages 15-64 years old. The gender distribution for temporary employment in 2021 was atypical, showing that, on average, men are more involved in temporary work, with an average share of total employment hovering around 9.5% between 2018-2021. Data shows that the lowest gender gap in temporary employment occurred in Q2 2020, during the hardest phase of the economic lockdown. Historically, mostly men and women with a low level of education take on temporary jobs.

Figure 7. Educational level of unemployed jobseekers 2016-2021



Source: NAES, 2022

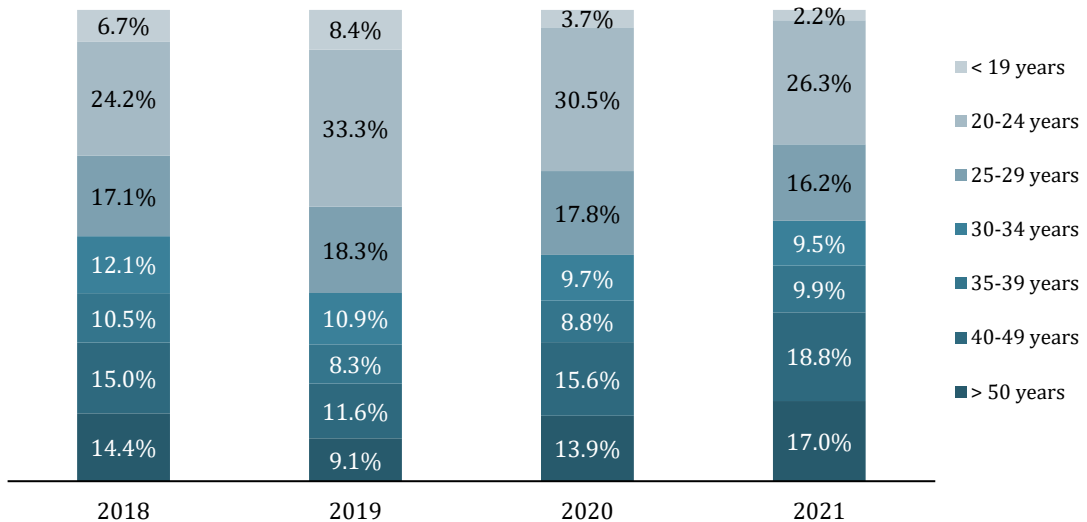
Research studies and administrative data from the NAES show a decrease in the number of registered unemployed jobseekers, as a result of the reform.⁸⁴ COVID-19 positively impacted this indicator, showing that individuals registered in NAES’s database had higher chances of obtaining benefits from support packages. Overall, more women than men have been registered in NAES. Low levels of secondary education is most common among unemployed registered jobseekers, only about 7.0 % have attained basic education and have a university degree. 2021 data shows 3% increase in unemployed job seekers education levels. The highest share of unemployed jobseekers registered in the NAES belong to those ages greater 50 years old. In 75.0% of cases, they were unemployed for more than 6 months, and in 50.0 % of cases they were unemployed for more than 1 year. At the start of the pandemic, there was a sharp increase in the number of women registered as unemployed in NAES. On a positive note, the number of women searching for a job increased over the last year. Yet, improving women’s capacities to obtain and maintain a job lacks the attention of policymakers. Instead, they implement gender neutral labor market policies. To combat this, tools which integrate gender perspectives should

⁸⁴ Ibid.

be introduced at the beginning of the policy formation process as well as in policy implementation.

Active labor market policies implementation – ALMPs provide important practices in support of labor market integration, which have potential for further expansion. However, the number of participants in these measures remain low compared to the total number of registered unemployed jobseekers.

Figure 8. ALMPs beneficiaries by age (2018-2021)



Source: NAES, 2022

Women were the largest beneficiaries in 2019 at a ratio of 3.24%. As of 2020 women's participation in ALMPs, has reached the Economic Reform Program target. Beneficiaries belonging to the population aged 35 years old have risen, whereas youth participants have decreased (in absolute numbers). The population who that completes upper secondary education benefit most from ALMPs. The share of beneficiaries with tertiary education, has increased.

NAES reported that most of these unemployed registered jobseekers with a tertiary education are women. Additional gender-based analysis should be carried out, as gender disaggregation data become available upon the completion of PES online system. Constant and further gender disaggregation of data is needed to assess the extent to which ALMPs have positively affected women.

Gender care gaps and unpaid care work – As noted earlier, more women than men do not participate in the labor market. This trend is linked to unpaid care work, mostly for women. In 2020, only 0.6 % of men declared homework as the reason behind their inactivity.⁸⁵ Studies show that every minute spent by a woman on unpaid work represents one minute less that could be spent on market-related activities or investing in her educational and vocational skills.⁸⁶

The Time Use Survey 2010-2011⁸⁷, demonstrates that the use of time in Albania is divided by gender, where women spend significantly more time than men in unpaid work. Men, on

⁸⁵ INSTAT, 2021, Women and Men in Albania 2020.

⁸⁶ Ferrant, G., Maria Pesando, L. and Nowacka, K. 2014. Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labor outcomes.

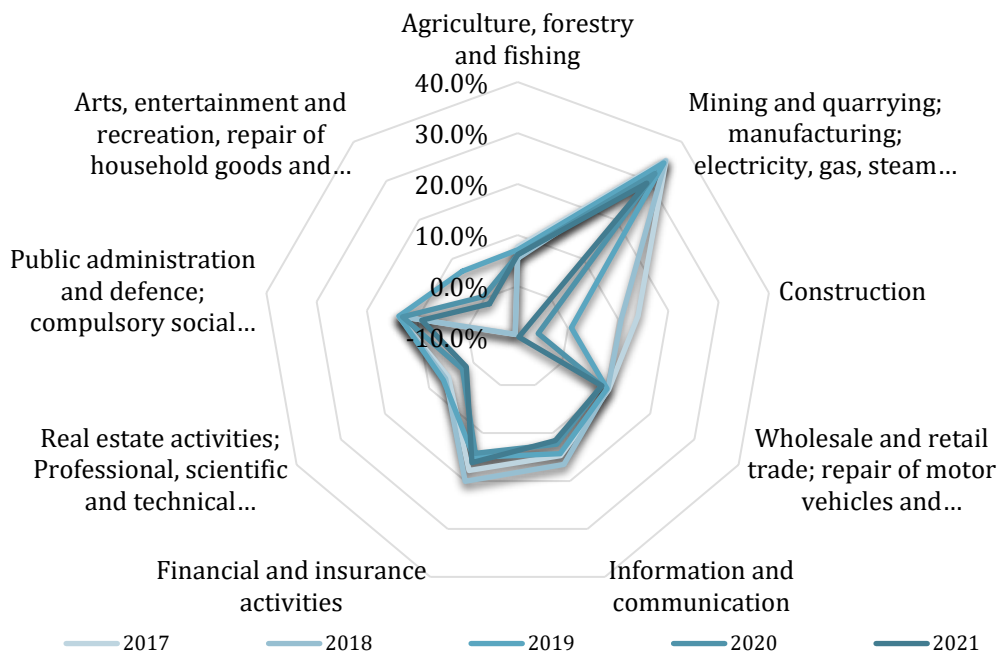
⁸⁷ Albania Time Use Survey, 2010-2011

average, spend more time in paid work, almost the same amount of time as women do in unpaid work. The largest share of free time is accounted for men at weekends and the smallest for women during weekdays. Such differences demonstrate that maintaining a healthy work-life balance overall is rather more difficult for women.

Having children in Albania significantly alters women's use of time. The average time spent on the care of small children under seven is 58 minutes for men and 8 hours and 25 minutes for women.⁸⁸ Such distribution of unpaid care work is discriminating against women even though it is a sanctioned social norm. It impacts their rights and access to economic opportunities, and thus their participation in the labor market. These gender gaps in unpaid work widen gender gaps in other labor market outcomes, and therefore are a key topic to be addressed in policies.

Gender pays gap dynamics – In Albania the average monthly gross wage in 2021 was 57,191 ALL (approx. 480 EUR) rising by 6.6% from 2020. In the last 8 years, wages in Albania have increased by 25 % on average. The average wage of the private sector remains higher in the public sector. Similarly, the gender wage gap in the private sector is larger than the public sector's wage gap. In the public sector, wages are subject to specific categories and regulations based on position, education, and experience, and are not gender biased. In 2014, the gender wage gap in the private sector was twice as high as the one in the public sector, but by 2020 this difference had almost disappeared. The sectors with the highest average wage levels in 2021 for women were in extra-territorial organizations, financial, and insurance activities.

Figure 9. Gender pay gap by economic activity (2016 – 2021)



Source: INSTAT, 2022

The gender pay gap is the highest in mining, quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, water supply, sewerage, as well as waste management and remediation activities. From 2017-2021 the average gender pay gap was 8.5 percentage points. Studies of gender pay gaps for occupational categories such as professionals, crafts and related,

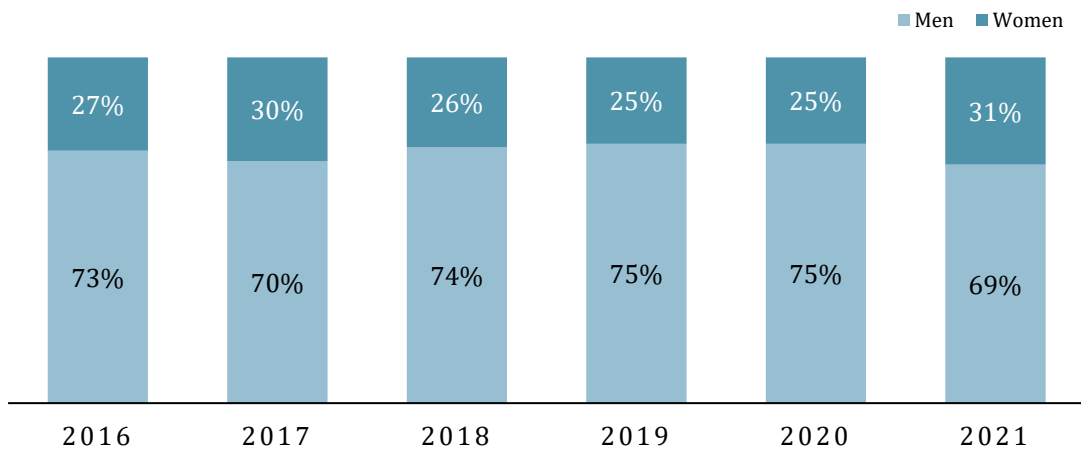
⁸⁸ INSTAT. 2013. Gender statistics in Albania: Better Data to Better Monitor the Status of Women

trade workers, services and sales workers, and plant and machine operators should be undertaken. The armed forces and clerical support workers have the lowest gender pay gaps. Gender pay gaps for skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers have also deteriorated in the last 5 years. Occupations such as managers and CEOs show the gender pay gap has shifted in favor of women, from 3.1 % in 2016 to -2.6 % in 2021.

Women Entrepreneurship – Women’s entrepreneurship is low on the policymaking agenda. Yet, data for female business owners and administrators shows a rise in the number of active enterprises owned or managed by women, surpassing the highest levels reached in previous years. Women own 31% of enterprises, providing hope of leaving behind the stagnation of recent years.

This momentum should be embraced and used by policymakers in order to address support measures for women in the private sector.

Figure 10. Ownership of active enterprises 2016-2021



Source: INSTAT, 2021

The highest share of enterprises with female ownership or management are micro and small enterprises, with up to 9 employees, accompanied by positive trends in medium to large businesses. Women are generally more involved in the services and trade economic activities, whereas men continue to dominate activities such as transport and storage and construction. There is untapped potential for women in goods production or agriculture, which are still highly dominated by men in 2021. Agriculture is an important sector for women’s employment, thus promotion of female entrepreneurship in agriculture would likely strengthen women’s overall economic empowerment. Furthermore, very few steps have been taken to support women in male dominated sectors, such as construction. The World Bank has worked on an action plan to support women in road construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance in Albania, but no progress report has been released as of yet.

Barriers to entry for women in Albania’s labor market remain high, but access to finance, financial education, and access to services and property will enable female entrepreneurship.⁸⁹ The economic empowerment of women must be addressed, particularly as the current Action Plan on Women Entrepreneurship is ending and will leave women without policy support.

⁸⁹ United Nations in Albania, 2020, Common Country Analysis 2020, United Nations Country Team, Albania. and Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, Economic benefits of gender equality and women empowerment in the Western Balkans six

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recent developments demonstrated the need for agile labor market policies, able to react and respond to challenges arising in the short and long term. To this end, and to ensure policy support for women in the labor market, institutions must be more gender-aware and implement gender-sensitive policies and practices. Data management systems should also be able to generate gender-disaggregated data, thereby serving as tools in support of informed policymaking. Despite the efforts made to integrate gender into monitoring and evaluation processes, there are limited available data or publications related to women.

This descriptive review of available data shows gender gaps are a concern for the development of the labor market. Further policy measures should be designed to support women with low and medium levels of education, as gender gaps are higher among those groups. This can be done through VET and additional opportunities for qualification, which encourage up-skilling or career-changes for adult women with challenges in employment.

Decent working conditions for women should be at the forefront of the agenda. Addressing decent wages and the gender pay gap will be important for women in the labor market to achieve their equal pay rights and their empowerment. There is a need for new data related to time use of women and men in the Albanian society, and the extent of unpaid care work within the family. Further, the unequal distribution of unpaid care work requires new innovative policy measures and larger intersection of social and employment policies. Recognizing and providing incentives in support of atypical employment could serve to bolster the inclusion of women in the labor market. Flexibility, teleworking and other forms of set-up could prove successful not only for reducing gender gaps, support women with children, but also for a healthy work-life balance.

There is still progress to be made in the horizontal and vertical inclusion of women in the labor market. Further drafts and gender-sensitive policy measures will allow for gender equity measurement of active labor market policies. Ultimately, women's employment in Albania must be addressed through new innovative policies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Albania Time Use Survey, 2010-2011
- Council of Ministers. 2019. DCM No. 554, dated 31.7.2019 "On the establishment, organization and functioning of the NAES
- European Commission. 2020. *The gender pays gap situation in the EU: Facts and figures*. Brussels. Belgium
- Economic Forum, 2021. *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*.
- European Commission. 2021. *Albania Progress Report*. Brussels. Belgium
- European Training Foundation. 2020. *Education, Training and Employment Developments 2020*.
- FAO. 2016. *Gender equality, agriculture and rural development in Albania: Gender equality assessment in the country*. Budapest
- Ferrant, G., Maria Pesando, L. and Nowacka, K. 2014. *Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes*.
- INSTAT, 2021, *Women and Men in Albania 2020*.
- INSTAT, *Labour Market 2021, 2022*. Tirana. Albania
- INSTAT. 2013. *Gender statistics in Albania: Better Data to Better Monitor the Status of Women*
- INSTAT. 2020. *Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania. The Gender Equality Index in Albania was developed with EIGE's support under the EU Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA), funded by the European Union*.
- INSTAT. 2021. *Women and Men 2021*. Tirana. Albania
- INSTAT. 2022, *Labor Market in 2021*, Tirana. Albania
- Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2021, *National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022*;
- Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2017. *Structure of the Ministry: Directorate for Employment and Vocational Training Policies*
- Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2018. *Annual Progress Report of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020*. Tirana, Albania
- Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2019. *National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022*. Tirana, Albania
- Ministry of Finance and Economy. 2021. *Gender Budgeting Indicators*. Tirana. Albania
- Ministry of Health and Social Protection. 2020 *National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030*, Tirana. Albania
- National Agency for Employment and Skills. 2021. *Annual Report 2020*. Tirana. Albania
- National Budgets 2016-2021 available at www.financa.gov.al
- OECD (2021), *Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcbc2ea9-en>.
- Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, *Economic benefits of gender equality and women empowerment in the Western Balkans six*.
- Regional Cooperation Council. 2021. *Performance of Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights; 2021 review on Albania*. Esmeralda Shehaj in collaboration with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.
- Skills Development for Employment Programme, UNDP, MoFE. 2020. *Technical Note Series: Employment and VET Policy Reform in Albania*.
- The United Nations has developed a tracking tool to assess the gender-sensitivity of policy measures in response to COVID-19 and Albania has recorded some of the key measures were targeting women's economic security.
- UN Women in Albania. 2020. *Stories: Take Five: "Stereotypes shape our interactions with others and with the world"*. February.
- UN Women. 2019. *2018 Public perceptions of gender equality and violence against women – Info sheet for Albania*
- UN Women. 2021. *Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in Albania - A position paper by UN in Albania*
- UNDP, UN Women, Embassy of Sweden. 2016. *A Pilot Study: Public Perceptions and Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Albania*. January.
- UNDP. 2019. *The United Nations Mid-Year Report for the Republic of Albania*. Tirana. Albania
- UNICEF Albania. INSTAT Centre for Social Rights. 2007. *Women and Children in Albania: Double Dividend of Gender Equality*
- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. 2016. *Gender equality, agriculture and rural development in Albania*, Budapest
- United Nations in Albania, 2020, *Common Country Analysis 2020*, United Nations Country Team, Albania. and Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, *Economic benefits of gender equality and women empowerment in the Western Balkans six*
- World Bank. 2019. *Albania to Enhance Gender Equality in Access to Economic Opportunities with World Bank Support*. Washington DC.
- World Bank. 2021. *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 20. Greening the Recovery. Fall 2021*. World Bank

NORTH MACEDONIA

INTRODUCTION

There is a nearly equal distribution of working age women and men in North Macedonia, but despite that balanced structure, there are significant gender gaps in the country's labor market. Gender gaps are prevalent in the activity rates, employment, and pay. Why there are continuous gender gaps in the labor market? The conditions and circumstances that are the root cause of those gaps have not been eliminated, and patriarchal social norms continue to solidify traditional gender roles.

This report on women's access to employment in North Macedonia aims to present an overview of the social norms, the indicators of the Macedonian labor market, and the possible limitations of the legal framework impacting the participation of women in the labor market. Based on the main conclusions and findings presented in this report, proper recommendations and measures are proposed. .

SOCIAL NORMS THAT AFFECT PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

North Macedonia has undertaken several policy commitments in pursuit of gender equality. The country adopted comprehensive legislation for gender equality and labor legislation in line with the fundamental conventions and generally accepted norms. Nonetheless, in North Macedonian culture, social norms undermine these efforts perpetuating gender inequality and discrimination in the labor market.

More than half (55.1%) of the working-age female population is inactive in the labor market.⁹⁰ There are several reasons for women's inactivity, but the main reason is related to the traditional gender roles, which still dominate society after marriage/partnership or after having children. Many women remain inactive as they accept the role of full-time housewives and compared to men, they spend three times more time in household activities.⁹¹ The State Statistical Office (SSO) reports that 44.1% of the inactive women are recorded in the statistical category *housewives*.⁹² The time spent by women on domestic activities significantly increases for the women aged 25 to 44 years, while it decreases for men of the same age.⁹³ This illustrates a clear picture of unequal gender roles within family structures where women take over care for children, elderly, or other family members. In such circumstances, unemployed women devote themselves to household obligations, reducing the time necessary for acquiring new skills or work experience needed to be competitive in the labor market. Additionally, women have far less time for cultural and leisure activities, sports, voluntary activities etc., than men. It is worth mentioning that some of the measures adopted as a response to the novel coronavirus *institutionalized* female gender roles as caretakers of the home/family and have entrenched the gender stereotype of men being the breadwinner.⁹⁴ For example, the closure of kindergartens two years ago was followed by a measure for one of the parents of children younger than ten years to be released from work to give care to the child. This measure resulted in every fifth parent that got released to be a father, forcing mothers to take over three-quarters

⁹⁰ State Statistical Office, 2021. Working age population.

⁹¹ State Statistical Office, 2015. Time use survey 2014/2015, Skopje: State Statistical Office.

⁹² State Statistical Office, 2015. Time use survey 2014/2015, Skopje: State Statistical Office.

⁹³ State Statistical Office, 2015. Time use survey 2014/2015, Skopje: State Statistical Office.

⁹⁴ Risteska, M., 2020. Gender and Diversity Analysis of the COVID-SARS-19 Impact, Skopje: OSCE

of the total burden of childcare.⁹⁵ The fact that fewer men used the right to be released from work may also be a result of the fact that they are often employed in more secure and better-paid jobs. In that regard, the Gender Equality Index for work identifies women as, on average, less likely to be employed full-time, work 12 years fewer, and have less flexibility with their working hours when compared to men.⁹⁶

The social norms of North Macedonian society significantly influence the choice of profession. Young girls are raised to seek a job in “feminine” occupations, usually in the health, social care, education, or public administration sector. This ideology is passed from generation to generation through the educational system and social interactions.⁹⁷ Girls in high school when compared to boys need more support and more help boosting their self-confidence. The “Girls in Technology” study found that even very young girls are aware of gender stereotypes that limit their opportunities to choose a career. Specifically, they will probably struggle on their path to become a car mechanic or to compete in another “male” occupation.⁹⁸ Other studies show that about one-third of women consider their primary role to be procreation and taking care of the home. Many women also believe that it would be very difficult for them to become managers, politicians, or achieve other top positions, as compared to men.⁹⁹

Socio-economic inequalities between men and women in North Macedonia can also be identified through vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labor market. Women are usually employed in lower-level jobs¹⁰⁰ and the higher, better-paid positions are filled by men. According to the Gender Statistic Database of the European Institute for Gender Equality in the Republic of North Macedonia, men make up 100% of the CEOs and 75 % of the executives in the largest companies.¹⁰¹ Women also have lower qualification compared to male counterparts because they do not develop their skills with the pace set by the labor market.¹⁰² The bulk of women work in low paying economic sectors (including textile industry among the other above-mentioned sectors) making minimum wage, which impacts the existing gender pay gap.¹⁰³

The inactivity of women in the workforce is also related to their reproductive role and the need to stay out of the labor market and to care for their children. Ultimately, this is driven by a lack of childcare facilities, especially kindergartens for care of preschool children (Interview, 2022). Previous research showed that there is shortage of vacancies in the kindergartens in 2022 for every Municipality.¹⁰⁴

“They don't accept my child in kindergarten because the condition is for both parents to be employed. I applied when I was still employed and they put us on a waiting list. I have to mention that until today (and now unemployed) my child is still on the waiting list. We had to send her to a private kindergarten which was a short-term solution due to financial reasons.”

105

⁹⁵ CRPM in 2020 sent requests for free access to information to 102 kindergartens and received response from 63 of the kindergartens. This conclusion is based on the received data.

⁹⁶ Bashevska, M., 2019. Gender Equality Index, Skopje: MLSP.

⁹⁷ Interview, 2022. Interview with expert from the field [Interview] 2022.

⁹⁸ Mickovska Raleva, A. & Trajkovski, K., 2017. Women engineers, programmers, IT scientists: How to overcome gender stereotypes for technical and IT professions?, Skopje: CRPM.

⁹⁹ Mojsovska-Blazevski, N., Petreski, M. & Ayhan, O., 2017. National research on low female labour market participation, Quantitative-based evidence from a new survey, s.l.: UN Women.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, 2022. Interview with expert from the field [Interview] 2022.

¹⁰¹ Equality, E. I. f. G., 2021. Gender Statistics Database. [Online]

¹⁰² Interview, 2022. Interview with expert from the field [Interview] 2022.

¹⁰³ Interview, 2022. Interview with expert from the field [Interview] 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, 2022. Interview with CSO's representative. [Interview] 2022

¹⁰⁵ FGD, 2022. Participant in the Focus group discussion [Interview] 2022.

In North Macedonia, most laws regarding the rights of owning and managing land or property are gender neutral. Yet, women own only 27.3% of registered property according to the data from the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre.¹⁰⁶ Even worse, in rural household less than 6% of women own a house or land.¹⁰⁷ A lack of access to capital makes it harder for women to start their own business since they do not have property in their name that can be used as collateral for a bank loan. The SSO data on the total number of employees by economic status and gender, show that in 2021 men make up 80.8% of employers and 77.4% of the self-employed¹⁰⁸, suggesting that women do not typically choose to start business as a means for a living. On the other hand, it is worth noting that women are 66.4% of the total number of unpaid family workers.¹⁰⁹

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

In 1994, North Macedonia ratified the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and in 1995, the country ratified the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. Furthermore, North Macedonia has also ratified all of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) fundamental conventions such as those on the freedom of association and protection of the rights to organize, collectively bargain, and receive equal remuneration, as well as the abolishment of forced labor, elimination of discrimination (employment and occupation), establishment of a minimum age.¹¹⁰ The fundamental human rights and freedoms recognized by international law influence the constitutional order of North Macedonia and recent legislation.¹¹¹ Although progress is noticeable, there is still significant gender inequality in the country because of strong social norms and lack of law enforcement. The World Economic Forum publishes the gender gap index each year, which assesses gaps between women and men through economic, political, education and health criteria. In 2022, North Macedonia ranked 69th out of 146 countries.¹¹²

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia defines the state system. Therefore, laws must be in accordance with the Constitution, and everyone is obliged to respect the Constitution and the laws.¹¹³ All citizens have equal rights and freedoms regardless of sex, race, the color of their skin, national or social origins, political or religious beliefs, or their material and societal position.¹¹⁴ The Constitution does not refer to women and men specifically, neither does it make specific reference to gender equality since it regulates the freedoms and rights of the citizen, serving as a good basis for detailed regulation of these issues in the laws.

The Constitution sets out a general framework for access to employment stating that:

¹⁰⁶ Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, 2019. Table with number and percentage of registered rights by gender and cadastral department, s.l.: Agency for Real Estate Cadastre of the Republic of North Macedonia.

¹⁰⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2018. Annual Report on the activities undertaken and the progress achieved for the establishment of equal opportunities for women and men in the Republic of Northern Macedonia for 2017.

¹⁰⁸ State Statistical Office, 2021. Employees by economic status and gender 2021.

¹⁰⁹ State Statistical Office, 2021. Employees by economic status and gender 2021.

¹¹⁰ ILO, 2022. Ratifications of fundamental Conventions by country, s.l.: International Labour Organization.

¹¹¹ Bashevskaa, M., 2019. Gender Equality Index, Skopje: MLSP.

¹¹² World Economic Forum, 2022. Global Gender Gap Report, s.l.: World Economic Forum.

¹¹³ Constitution of the RNM, Article 51, 1991

¹¹⁴ Constitution of the RNM, Article 9, 1991

“Everyone has the right to work, free choice of employment, protection at work and material security during temporary unemployment. To everyone, under equal conditions, every job is available. Every employee has the right to proper earnings. Every employee is entitled to paid daily, weekly, and annual leave (...)”.

115

In this quote, labor is valued equally and everyone has equal access to work, which in practice is often not the case considering that there are numerous gender gaps.

Law on Labor Relations

The legal framework for regulating the right to work is provided by the Constitution (core and basic values) and by the Law on Labor Relations. Certain, more specific, provisions are provided for by laws in the respective fields.¹¹⁶ In general, the legal framework has been inherited from the previous Yugoslav system, but after the country declared independence it was amended on several occasions to respond to socio-economic developments and to incorporate EU conventions.

The Law on Labor Relations establishes a legal regime governing both men and women. Therefore, women and men must be provided with equal opportunities and equal treatment concerning access to employment, promotion, expert and professional on-the-job training, work conditions, equal pay for work of equal value, professional social security schemes, sick leave, and cancellation of the employment contract.¹¹⁷ In this sense, the law denotes the prohibition of direct and/or indirect discrimination on the above-mentioned grounds.¹¹⁸ Harassment and sexual harassment are qualified as discrimination, and protection is provided in case of mobbing, as well as in case of discrimination against women based on pregnancy, birth, or motherhood.¹¹⁹

Although firms are legally prohibited from discriminating against their employees, in practice women are often marginalized. The employer often asks questions that are not appropriate or even personal - questions that do not relate to the job or the skills of the candidate:

“The biggest difficulty when I applied for a job was the fact that I have two little children. They immediately start to ask whether I have someone to take care of them – and I don’t think that they should ask me about that during the interview (...) of course, this affects their decision (read to choose me)”

120

The Law on labor Relations also regulates the procedure for the selection of candidates. Article 24 specifically prohibits the employer from announcing a new job position just for men or for women, except in situations when sex is a necessary condition for the job. Further, the law prohibits the job announcement to suggest what sex is preferred for the candidate.¹²¹

Regarding the cancellation of an employment contract, the law includes gender-specific provisions, that prohibit the cancellation of an employment contract during pregnancy,

¹¹⁵ Constitution of the RNM, Article 32, 1991

¹¹⁶ This refers to the Law on employment and insurance in case of unemployment, the Law on private employment agencies, the Law on minimum wage, the Law on safety and health at work, the Law on peaceful resolution of labor disputes, the Law on employment and insurance in case of unemployment and etc.

¹¹⁷ Law on Labour Relations, 2005, Article 6.

¹¹⁸ Law on Labour Relations, 2005, Article 7.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., Article 9 and 9b, 2005.

¹²⁰ FGD, 2022. Participant in the Focus group discussion [Interview] 2022.

¹²¹ Law on Labour Relations, 2005, Article 24.

childbirth, and parenthood; and include accommodation for a child after adoption, absence from work due to parenthood by the father or adoptive parent or decreased working hours for the care of a child with special needs or development problems.¹²² The Law also includes a gender-specific article that commits employers to pay equal pay for equal work regardless of the employee's sex.¹²³

Firms in North Macedonia use two types of employment contracts, open-ended and fixed-term. The fixed-term employment contract ceases to be valid with the lapse of a specified deadline, when the agreed type of work is completed, or in case of ceasing of the purposes for which the contract was concluded.¹²⁴ Workers encounter a variety of unpleasant situations. For instance, only one day before the expiration of a contract, the employee receives an annex to the contract which stipulates the period for which the employment contract has been extended. The law also prohibits the dismissal of pregnant women, but only if she has an open-ended contract because there are no special mechanisms in place to protect women on fixed-term employment contracts. An employee with a fixed-term contract would face a similar problem in case of injury or health issues because the employer can choose not to keep that worker or not to extend his/her contract. A significant problem with fixed-term contracts is the lack of legal certainty that the employment relationship will continue. In addition, just like maternity or parental leave, an employee does not enjoy the right to annual leave because the period for acquiring that right is longer than the duration of the employment.¹²⁵

“Often, women and young women are employed based on a fixed-term employment contract which is used so that it can be calculated to end their employment during pregnancy without violating the provisions of the Law on Labor Relations (...).”

126

Chapter XII of the Law on special protection, refers to the reproductive function of women and covers the working status of pregnant female workers. The law outlines that at the end of the parental leave, the employee has the right to return to the same workplace or, if this is not possible, to an appropriate workplace according to the terms of the employment contract.¹²⁷

While it regulates paid maternity leave and other protective rights, the Law also has provisions for female workers during the period of pregnancy or for a child that is less than one year old cannot perform additional working hours nor undertake night shift work.¹²⁸ A female worker that has a child between one and three years of age may be ordered to work overtime or to work a night shift, only with her prior written consent. The possibility to choose whether to work more or during night shifts is an option given to a *“single parent that has a child younger than seven years of age or a child that has physical disabilities.”*¹²⁹ Currently, this provision jeopardizes gender equality of male and female laborers as they do not have the opportunity to choose whether to work more (if the work permits it) or during night shifts – such regulations gave women the primary role of childcare within a family.¹³⁰ The Law, in this manner, allows further inequality to be created because employers might decide not to promote female workers as there will be limits on their availability compared to male workers.

¹²² Ibid., Article 101.

¹²³ Ibid., Article 108.

¹²⁴ Trajkovski, K., 2019. The adaptation of industrial relations towards new forms of work, Skopje: CRPM.

¹²⁵ Trajkovski, K., 2019. The adaptation of industrial relations towards new forms of work, Skopje: CRPM.

¹²⁶ FGD, 2022. Participant in the Focus group discussion [Interview] 2022.

¹²⁷ LLR, Chapter XII, 2005.

¹²⁸ Ibid. Article 164.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Stojanoska, D., 2008. Gender Equality and Human Development in Macedonia during Transition (1991-2006). PhD thesis

Leave from work due to pregnancy, childbirth or parenthood is regulated for the duration of 9 to 15 months. The concept of parental leave to some degree was reformed, as it allowed for the father to use the right to paid leave, but only if the mother does not use it – in event of death of the mother, if she abandons the child, or if she is not able to give care (based on the opinion of the relevant commission).¹³¹ The wording in the law suggests that the main child bearer is the mother. Only when, for whatever reason, she does not want to, or cannot take care of the child, the father can use the right of parental leave.

Law on Equal Opportunities

The Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men establishes equal opportunities for women and men in the political, economic, social, educational, cultural, health, civil, and any other area of the social life.¹³² The law prohibits discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment based on gender in the areas of employment and labor relations and stipulates that the citizens have equal access to employment regardless of their gender, marital status, skin colour, language, age, etc.¹³³ In 2021, a new Law on Gender Equality is being prepared.

Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination

The objective of the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination is designed to ensure the implementation of the principle of equality and to prevent and protect against discrimination in the exercise of the human rights and freedoms.¹³⁴ This Law does not regulate in detail the areas to which it refers as they are regulated in the specific laws. This legal solution enables prevention and equal access to mechanisms for protection against discrimination for all citizens.

LABOR MARKET INDICATORS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

The labor market in North Macedonia is characterized by a historically high unemployment rate that traces its roots back in the economic transition of the country in the 1990s¹³⁵ as well as high inactivity especially among women. According to the SSO data, in 2021, the labor force in the country totaled 943,004 people, of which 795,087 were employed leaving 147,917 unemployed. The activity rate in this period was 56%, the employment rate 47.2%, while the unemployment rate was 15.7%.¹³⁶

Table 4. Labor market indicators

Year	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	% Of inactive population as share of the total working age population	% Of inactive women as share of the total number of inactive persons
2019	57.2	47.3	17.3	42.8	62.3
2020	56.4	47.2	16.4	43.6	62.2
2021	56	47.2	15.7	43.9	62.7

Source: State Statistical Office. 2022.

The data presented in the table documents that the activity rate for the total working age population in North Macedonia is relatively stable, but is significantly low when compared to the countries such as Germany (79.5%), Switzerland (84.2%), Netherlands (74.7%), United

¹³¹ Law on Labor Relations, 2005, Article 164 and 167.

¹³² Law on Equal Opportunities, Article 2, 2014.

¹³³ Ibid. art. 3.

¹³⁴ Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, 2020, article 2.

¹³⁵ NBRM, 2017. Developments in major labour market indicators and active labour market measures in dealing with unemployment: Evidence from Macedonia, s.l.: National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia.

¹³⁶ State Statistical Office, 2021. Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the LFS 2021.

Kingdom (78.6%) and well below the EU average (74.3%).¹³⁷¹³⁸ Previous analysis of the labor force supply showed that there is insufficient supply of quality jobs which results in a low rate of activity of the workforce, low employment rate and high unemployment rate.¹³⁹ In other words, this means that the economy is not able to create enough jobs that will provide economic growth and development, employment of the population and a higher living standard.¹⁴⁰ This implies a need for structural reforms and policies that will activate the labor force.

Table 5. Activity rate by sex (15-64)

Year	Women	Men	Total
2019	54.8	77.3	57.2
2020	54	76.7	56.4
2021	53.4	77.1	56

State Statistical Office. 2022.

Despite the balanced structure in the total working age population, for decades there has been a large gender gap in the activity rates of women and men in the labor market. In the past three years, no specific changes could be observed, and in 2021, the activity rate of women is 53.4% compared to 77.1% of men who participated in the labor market. The gender gap in participation is present across all age groups and it increases among the highest age group.¹⁴¹

The employment rate is calculated as the percentage of employed people in the working age population. This indicator shows similar trends to the inactivity rate for the working age. In the last three years the employment rate is consistent, slightly over 47%, but still significant lagging behind the EU average (73.1%), especially among women.¹⁴² This implies issues regarding the functioning of the labor market. This indicator also points out a broad gender gap between the employment rate of women (45.5%) and men (64.3%).

Table 6. Employment rate by sex (15-64)

Year	Women	Men	Total
2019	44.7	64.4	47.3
2020	45.3	63.7	47.2
2021	45.5	64.3	47.2

State Statistical Office. 2022.

The unemployment rate significantly declined even during the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. This is partially due to a declining participation rate and increased inactivity in this period.¹⁴³ In 2021, the unemployment rate was 15.7% and it should be noted that there has been significant decrease (1.6%) of the unemployment rate compared to 2019 at 17.3% (see Table 1). Table 4 illustrates a significant difference between the number of unemployed women and unemployed man. Thus, most of the registered unemployed persons are men, or 62.8%, while 37.2% women. This is because most of the women are not active in the labor market.

Table 7. Unemployed persons (15-64)

Year	Unemployed women	Unemployed men	Total
2019	72,148 (43.4%)	94,186 (56.6%)	166,334
2020	61,335 (39.3%)	94,613 (60.7%)	155,949
2021	55,036 (37.2%)	92,787 (62.8%)	147,823

State Statistical Office. 2022.

¹³⁷Trading Economics, 2021. Labour Force Participation Rate Europe. [Online]

Available at: www.tradingeconomics.com

¹³⁸ The presented data is from the last collected data by the site. Usually, it refers to quarterly reports.

¹³⁹ Minoški, K., 2019. What are the biggest obstacles to labour market flexibility in Macedonia?, s.l.: Biznis regulativa

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ State Statistical Office, 2021. Activity rate by sex, s.l.: State Statistical Office.

¹⁴² EuroStat, 2022. EuroStat. Employment - annual statistics, s.l.: s.n.

¹⁴³ The World Bank, 2021. Western Balkans regular economic report, no. 20, Fall 2021, s.l.: The World Bank.

In Table 5, characteristics of the inactive population are briefly analysed based on available data from 2022. As stated, around 62.7% of the total inactive population are women. A large share of the inactive women, or 44.1% are registered in the SSO as housewives, which implies that they are not seeking job opportunities or a career, instead they undertake unpaid work in the household squandering their potential to contribute to the economy and obtain their own economic empowerment. Even a small hiatus from the labor market reduces an individual's human capital, losing skills they acquired in the process of formal education or through previous jobs. Thus, it is harder for them to find new job. Namely, the presented indicators suggest that the labor market is not functioning as it should, employment barriers are largely of a structural nature, creating 'discouraged workers' who are more passive and refuse to seek or accept new job opportunities.

Table 8. Inactive population in 2021 per statistical category

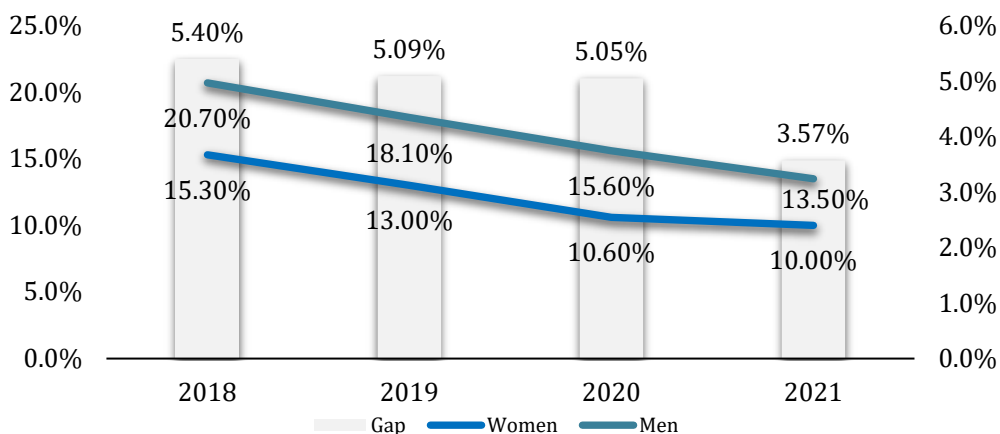
Statistical category	Total inactive population	Inactive women	% of women
Pupils, students	161,992	86,334	53.3
Housewives	204,632	204,632	100
Retirees	264,125	136,459	51.7
Other	109,047	36,373	33.3
Total inactive population	739,796	463,798	62.7

State Statistical Office. 2022.

Data from 2019–2021 presents encouraging signs, with the total percentage share of informal employment to total employment in decline, both for men and women. Compared to 2019, the share of informal employment decreased in 2021 by 3.9%, settling around 12.1% of total employment. In absolute terms, the total number of informally employed workers have fallen by 31,875 or 24.9%.¹⁴⁴

In North Macedonia, significantly more men than women are undeclared workers. Out of the total number of informally employed the share of men in 2021 is 66.6%.¹⁴⁵ As mentioned above, the number of informal workers is in decline, but if we look at the data presented in Figure 1, it will show that formalization is moving at a faster pace among men. Women's share of undeclared work has decreased by 3 percentage points, while men's by 4.6. The gender gap in this indicator has also slightly decreased from 5.09 in 2019 to 3.57 percentage points in 2021.

Figure 11. Gender Gap -



Source: Own calculation based on the data from the State Statistical Office. 2022.

¹⁴⁴ State Statistical Office, 2021. State Statistical Office. Formal and informal employment.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

North Macedonia continues to have broad gender gaps in its labor market, with particular concern for gender gaps in the labor force participation, employment, and pay gap.

Inactivity of the female working age population is a significant problem. There are several reasons for this trend, including the social norms set around traditional gender roles and the division of labor in North Macedonian society. Women are still expected to take care of the children and other family members, maintain the home, and cook, while men are expected to take care of finances. When there is no one to take care of the children and there is a lack of care facilities, women generally take responsibility, leaving her job or deciding not to work. This worrying trend was enhanced during the pandemic, where the burden of childcare fell mostly on women, especially employed women. Further, women in North Macedonia spent triple the time on household activities, neglecting their free time. Gender gaps in the labor market are related to the social-reproductive role of women and the need to stay out of the labor market, ultimately connected to the lack of facilities for childcare. Lack of social services is a problem for every municipality in the country. Additionally, the gender pay gap persists because women work low paying jobs.

Although some of the issues regulated by the national labor legislation institutionalize women as the primary care taker of the child within the family,, legislation generally falls in line with legislation from the European Union. There is possibility for improvements, for example, introducing an opportunity for shared use of parental leave according to the needs of the father and the mother; or flexible working hours that will enable a better balance between professional and private life. Yet, these are only ideas without proper implementation and enforcement of the Labor Law, for employers can still find a way to avoid the proper implementation of these legal provisions. The labor inspection bodies should also strengthen their role and control the implementation of the legal provisions in practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ~ Based on the analysis of the labor legislation it is recommended to regulate flexible working hours, working remotely, home-based work, and job sharing. Workers should be given the choice to organize their working time, especially in cases when they do not work on the premises of the employer. This will contribute to the creation of a better balance between private and professional life which is of paramount importance in particular for women who often bear the responsibilities maintaining of the household and caring for the children.
- ~ The Law on Labor Relations prohibits dismissal of pregnant women, but only if she has open-ended employment contract. There is no legal protection or mechanisms to protect women employed on fixed-term contracts when the contract expires. This weakens women's connection to the labor market and puts high risk on their career and future opportunities.
- ~ Introduce new models in the labor legislation for parental leave to be shared equally between men and women . When fathers take parental leave, the burden of caring by mothers is reduced to some extent, thus enabling women to return to the labor market and adapt more quickly. Accordingly, an assessment should be made of the need to introduce mandatory shared parental leave by the model 3-3-3 or 6-3 following the positive experiences from countries like Sweden, where the model dual earner dual carer is introduced. For example, the first model will enable 3 months leave for the mother, 3 for the father and 3 to be shared based on their needs, or the second model that provide 6 months leave for the mother and 3 for the father. The objective of the family policies in that regard is to encourage the employment of the parents and equal share of responsibilities in raising their child.
- ~ Successful family policies that encourage access to employment require commitment of the country to ensure that for every child there is vacancy in the childcare system. Therefore, the care infrastructure in the country needs to be improved if the objective is to use the full potential of the workforce for economic growth.
- ~ Straightening the capacities of the labor inspection bodies to improve the control of proper implementation of the labor legislation to foster gender equality in the labor market and to provide equal opportunities for women. The labor inspectors must be trained to be gender sensitive for easier identification of the hidden discrimination in the process of employment or at the workplace which is also a case.
- ~ Women need to be more encouraged to pursue jobs in high paying sectors, such as the IT industry, but also to pursue their own businesses, through building their skills.
- ~ The Employment Service Agency should introduce Active Labor Market Policies that will facilitate re-entering to the labor market for women who have had career breaks due to maternity leave.
- ~ Allocate fund for the Employment Service Agency to provide services that increase female participation in the labor market.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, 2019. Table with number and percentage of registered rights by gender and cadastral department, s.l.: Agency for Real Estate Cadastre of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- Bashevska, M., 2019. Gender Equality Index, Skopje: MLSP.
- Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Equality, E. I. f. G., 2021. Gender Statistics Database. [Online]
- EuroStat, 2022. EuroStat. Employment - annual statistics, s.l.: s.n.
- FGD, 2022. Participant in the Focus group discussion [Interview] 2022.
- ILO, 2022. Ratifications of fundamental Conventions by country, s.l.: International Labour Organization.
- Interview, 2022. Interview with CSO's representative. [Interview] 2022.
- Interview, 2022. Interview with expert from the field [Interview] 2022.
- Interview, 2022. Interview with public institution representative [Interview] 2022.
- Law on Equal Opportunities, 2014.
- Law on Labour Relations, 2005.
- Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, 2020.
- Mickovska Raleva, A. & Trajkovski, K., 2017. Women engineers, programmers, IT scientis: How to overcome gender stereotypes for technical and IT professions?, Skopje: CRPM.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2018. Annual Report on the activities undertaken and the progress achieved for the establishment of equal opportunities for women and men in the Republic of Northern Macedonia for 2017.
- Minoski, K., 2019. What are the biggest obstacles to labour market flexibility in Macedonia?, s.l.: Biznis regulativa.
- Mojsoska-Blazevski, N., Petreski, M. & Ayhan, O., 2017. National research on low female labour market participation, Quantitative-based evidence from a new survey, s.l.: UN Women.
- NBRM, 2017. Developments in major labour market indicators and active labour market measures in dealing with unemployment: Evidence from Macedonia, s.l.: National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia.
- Petreski, M. & Mojsoska Blazevski, N., 2017. Assessment of the economic impacts of the 2017 increase in the minimum wage in North Macedonia, Budapest: International Labour Organisation.
- Risteska, M., 2020. Gender and Diversity Analysis of the COVID-SARS-19 Impact, Skopje: OSCE.
- State Statistical Office, 2015. Time use survey 2014/2015, Skopje: State Statistical Office.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the LFS 2021.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Activity rate by sex, s.l.: State Statistical Office.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Employees by economic status and gender 2021.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. State Statistical Office. Formal and informal employment,
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Working age population.
- Stojanoska, D., 2008. Gender Equality and Human Development in Macedonia during Transition (1991-2006). PhD thesis
- The World Bank, 2021. Western Balkans regular economic report, no. 20, Fall 2021, s.l.: The World Bank.
- Trading Economics, 2021. Labour Force Participation Rate Europe. [Online]
Available at: www.tradingeconomics.com
- Trajkovski, K., 2019. The adaptation of industrial relations towards new forms of work, Skopje: CRPM.
- UN Women, 2022. North Macedonia, s.l.: UN Women.
- World Economic Forum, 2022. Global Gender Gap Report, s.l.: World Economic Forum.

MONTENEGRO

INTRODUCTION

Montenegro has a small yet relatively open economy, which prioritizes the service sector, tourism, and trade. That is why the COVID-19 significantly impacted the country's economic activity, which recorded a decrease of almost 16% in 2020.¹⁴⁶ In 2020, Montenegro's GDP was 4.186 million euros, or 6,737 euros per capita.¹⁴⁷ During 2021, the Montenegrin economy began to recover, and saw a GDP growth of 12.4%. The growth was largely thanks to increased tourist activity, but the economy also recorded positive trends in trade, transport, and industry. In the first quarter of 2022, real GDP grew by 7.2%.¹⁴⁸ However, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and its associated geopolitical developments have cast a shadow over Montenegro's growth in 2022. For example, the World Bank foreshadowed an estimated growth rate reduction to 3.6%, from the estimated 5.9% before the war.¹⁴⁹ It is expected that the war will continue to have a major impact on tourism, prompting a decrease in demand and employment.

Although traditional sectors are major contributors to the economic growth, in recent years new sectors such as financial services, IT services, and the creative services sector have made increasingly significant contributions to economic development. It is expected that those sectors will continue to increase their share in economic activity in the future.

Due to limited economic activity, employment has been stunted during the last few years in Montenegro. The total number of unemployed in 2021 was 42.2 thousand or 16.6% which is the highest level of unemployment since 2005. On the other hand, after a large decline during the first half of 2021, the number of employees grew during second half of the year spurring a minor economic upswing. Thus, at the end of 2021 the employment rate jumped to 51%.

LABOR MARKET TRENDS AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AT THE LABOR MARKET

According to the 2011 census, the latest available census, there are 620,029 inhabitants in Montenegro, 50.6% of them women. During 2011, of all live-born children in Montenegro, 52% were boys and 48% were girls (IPSOS, 2015b).

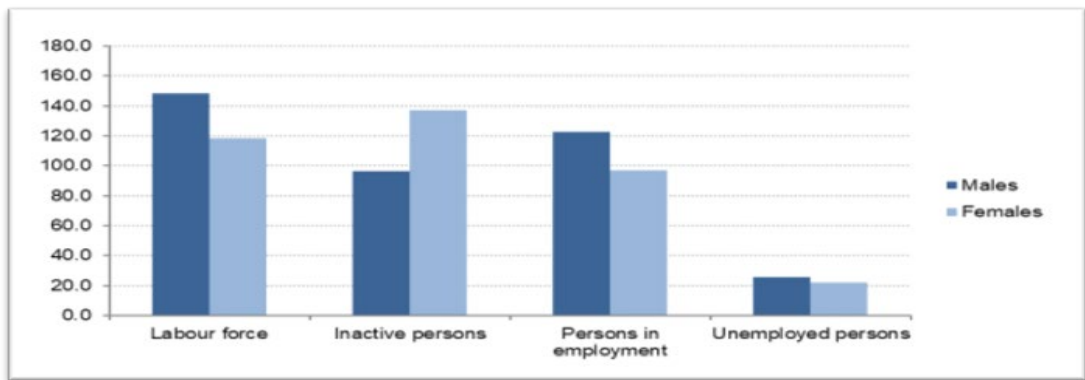
The activity rate for 2019 was 57.4%, the employment rate was 48.7%, the unemployment rate was 15.1%. Of the total number of active populations 44.4% are women, while out of inactive people 60.1% are women. Of the total number of employees, 44.1% are women, and of the total number of unemployed 46.0% are women.

¹⁴⁶ UNDP (2020). Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the business sector and growth prospects of the Montenegrin economy, available at <https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Procjena%20outicaja%20KOVID-19%20na%20poslovnim%20sektor%20i%20perspektive%20rasta%20ekonomije%20Crne%20Gore.pdf>

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹World Bank (2022). Global Economic Prospects: Europe and Central Asia, available at <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/18ad707266f7740bced755498ae0307a-0350012022/related/Global-Economic-Prospects-June-2022-Analysis-ECA.pdf>

Figure 12. Working age population by status in activity and sex (in thousand)

Source: MONSTAT, Labor Force Survey, 2020, available at http://monstat.org/uploads/files/ARS/2020/ARS%20saopstenje_2020_en.pdf

The activity rate for 2020 was 53.3%, the employment rate was 43.8%, the unemployment rate was 17.9%. Of the total active population, 44.4% are women, while the inactive are 58.6% women. Of the total number of employees, 44.1% are women, and of the total number of unemployed 45.6% are women.

In 2021, among ages 15 to 89 years, the activity rate was 51.0%, the employment rate was 42.6%, and the unemployment rate was 16.6%. The share of women in all categories is similar to previous years, and only 42.8% of the total number of unemployed were women.

According to the latest available data from the first quarter of 2022, the activity rate was 56.5%, the employment rate was 47.0% and the unemployment rate is 16.8%. The following table shows unemployed persons in Montenegro for 2019, 2020, 2021 and the first seven months of 2022.

Table 9. Unemployed persons 2019 - VII 2022

	Situation at the end of the period					In the middle of the period		
	Persons looking for job Total	Unemployed persons first time looking for job	Unqualified Unemployed persons	Persons receiving unemployment benefits	Unemployed women		Reported for employment	Records stopped to be kept
					Total	Unqualified		
2019	36 693	14 911	13 693	12 368	21 365	8 230	2 032	2 291
2020	41 612	16 351	14 782	12 623	24 326	8 985	2 809	1 747
2021	54 560	21 949	19 415	12 144	32 377	12 130	3 195	2 105
VII 2022	50 645	20 629	18 350	11 128	29 463	11 144	1 909	3 077

Source: MONSTAT, EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS, <https://monstat.org/uploads/files/Bilten/2022/08/3.pdf>

The table points out the number of unemployed women displays a growth trend in the observed years, i.e. in 2019, the number of unemployed women was 21,365, while in 2021, the number of unemployed women was 32,377. In the first seven months of 2022, the number of unemployed women is 29,463. The next table shows women over the age of 15, by activity for 2020.

Table 10. Women over age of 15, by activity, 2020

	Women (in thousands)
Total population	312,7
Labor force	118,6
Persons in employment	96,8
-working part time	(3,4)
Unemployed persons	21,8
-registered at the Employment Agency	20,8
-seeking first job	12,6
Inactive persons	137,0
Working age population	255,6
Persons less than 15 years	57,1
	%
Activity rate	46,4
Employment rate	37,9
Unemployment rate	18,4
Share of population under 15 in total population	18,3

Source: MONSTAT, Statistical Yearbook of Montenegro, 2021, available at <https://monstat.org/uploads/files/publikacije/godisnjak%202021/5.pdf>

It is estimated, despite making up slightly more than half of the population, that women contribute €2.038 billion to Montenegrin GDP, or 43.71% of GDP at the end of 2018. Women contribute most to the trade sector (€332,888,000), public administration and defense and compulsory social security sector (€142,776,000), and education sector (€132,164,000). GDP per capita in 2018 has also been calculated for the respective genders: it amounts to €6,496 for women and €8,571 for men.

The difference in earnings between men and women in Montenegro is 13.9%, which means that women earn only 86.1% of the average salary paid to men for the same work. Women own only 4% of homes, 8% of land, and 14% of holiday homes in Montenegro (Montenegrin Employers Federation, 2017). The unemployment rate among women in the north is seven times higher than in the south and three times greater than in the central region. In addition, women's entrepreneurship is low, as their firms make up for only 9.6% of the total number of registered entrepreneurial firms (according to the 2011 Census) and they make up only 26.5% of total self-employed for 2021.

Data on unpaid and care work for Montenegro do not exist. UNDP estimations are based on the data from the Rapid Gender Assessment Reports UNDP, 2021).¹⁵⁰ These reports show that 34% of women spend up to 1 hour per day engaged in unpaid care and domestic work; 27% spend up to 2 hours, and 14% up to 3 hours. Calculation of the monetary equivalent shows that women did 90 per cent more work in the domain of unpaid care and domestic work than men. Especially concerning is the fact that as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a sudden economic impoverishment of women and greater participation of women in pandemic-related activities (health, education, trade), ultimately contributing to greater participation in unpaid work. The table below shows the number of hours women spend engaged in care and unpaid domestic work; it has been prepared on the basis of the data from the Rapid Gender Assessment Report (IPSOS).

¹⁵⁰UNDP (2020). Women's contribution to the economy of Montenegro: Utilisation of care economy in the time of the COVID 19 pandemic, available at <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/me/undp-2020-mne-women-contribution-economy-report-eng.pdf>

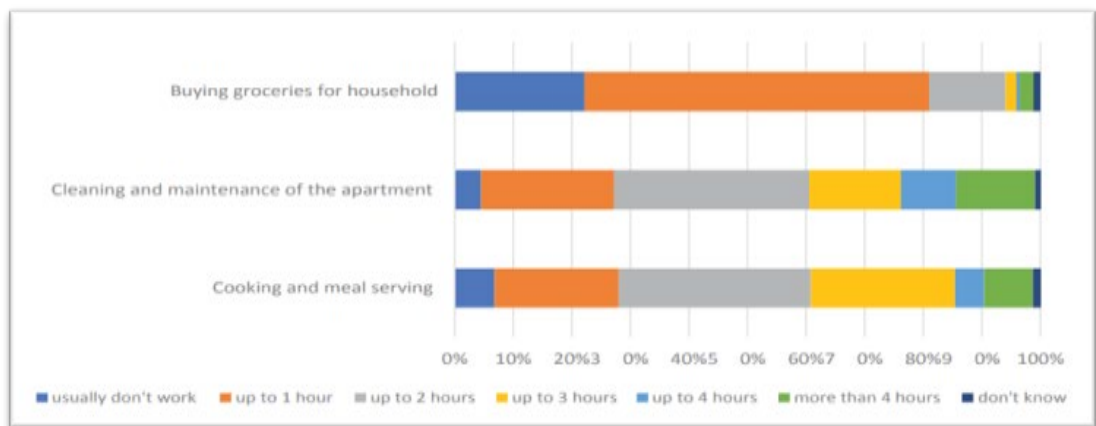
Table 11. Number of hours women spend in unpaid care and domestic work

Type of work	Number of hours						
	I am usually not involved	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Up to 4 hours	More than 4 hours	I do not know
Cooking and serving meals	6.8%	21.2%	32.8%	24.6%	5.0%	8.3%	1.4%
Cleaning and maintenance of own home and surroundings	4.5%	22.7%	33.3%	15.7%	9.4%	13.5%	1.0%
Shopping for the family and the household	22.2%	58.8%	13.1%	1.8%	0.6%	2.3%	1.2%
Average	11.0%	34.0%	26.0%	14.0%	5.0%	8.0%	1.0%

Source: UNDP (2020). *Women's contribution to the economy of Montenegro: Utilization of care economy in the time of the COVID 19 pandemic*

The table support the overall conclusions form IPSOS report:¹⁵¹

- ~ Women who spend up to one hour devote most time to shopping for the family and the household (58%);
- ~ Women who spend up to 2 hours devote most time to cleaning and maintenance of their own home and surroundings (33,30%);
- ~ Women who spend up to 3 hours devote most time to cooking and serving meals (24%);
- ~ Women who spend up to 4 hours devote most time to cleaning and maintenance of their own home and surroundings (9%); Women who spend more than 4 hours devote most time to caring for children (15%).

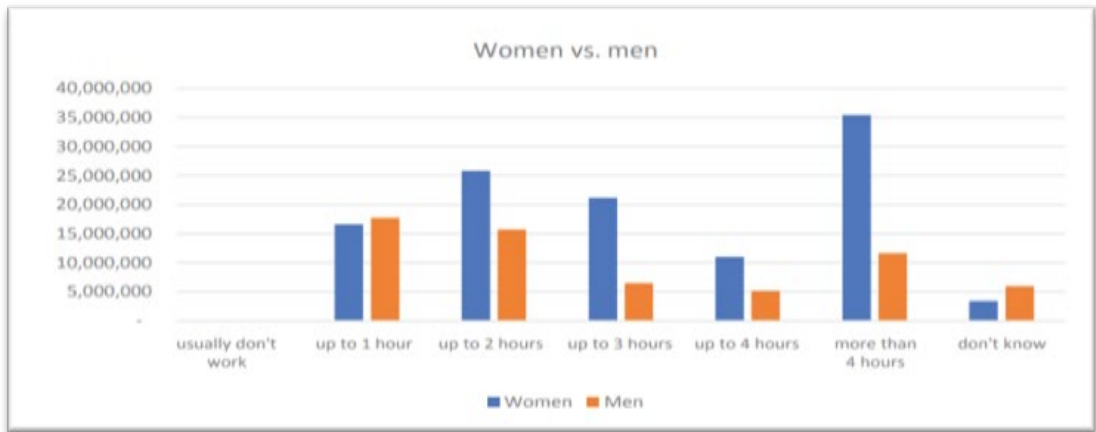
Figure 13. Number of hours of unpaid care and domestic work, by activity (women)

Source: UNDP (2020). *Women's contribution to the economy of Montenegro: Utilization of care economy in the time of the COVID 19 pandemic*

The same report, states that the estimated monetary amount of unpaid care and housework performed by women in Montenegro amounts to 122.3 million Euros, while the monetary equivalent of unpaid care and housework by men is 63.5 million euros. According to the report, women did 90% more work in unpaid care and housework than men.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

Figure 14. Unpaid care and domestic work done by women and men, respectively

Source: UNDP (2020). Women's contribution to the economy of Montenegro: Utilization of care economy in the time of the COVID 19 pandemic

The Gender Equality Index (MONSTAT, EIGE, UNDP, 2019) 153 was first time calculated for Montenegro in 2019 and it was at the level of 55, compared to 67.4 in the European Union. At a national level, women are faced with the greatest inequality in relation to power, followed time, knowledge, money, and work. Women are the most equal when it comes to health. It would appear that the greatest differences in gender equality between the European Union and Montenegro relate to Money (20.7) and to Power (16.8). The smallest differences are evident in the areas of Health (1.2) and Work (6.8).

LEGAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2017, Montenegro passed the National Strategy of Sustainable Development 2030 (NSSD) which translated the UN Sustainable Development Goals into a national context. The fifth Sustainable Development Goal – To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls is transposed to Goal 2 of the NSSD – To actively support the attitude of key players regarding sustainable development and to measure 2.1.2 – To eliminate gender discrimination. By 2030, Montenegro pledged to eliminate political, economic, and other gender-based discrimination, to achieve a minimum level of 40% representation of women at both national and local levels of the public sector, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in private and public spheres, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation, to achieve equal participation in unpaid work, to achieve equality in employment, and to strengthen national mechanisms for gender equality.

The legal framework on gender equality is further been strengthened by the Law on Gender Equality,¹⁵⁴ the Montenegrin Gender Equality Act, and the Plan of Activities for Achieving Gender Equality in Montenegro (2017-2021). The Law on Amendments to the Law on Gender Equality, adopted in 2015 by the Parliament of Montenegro, states that the issues of indirect and direct discrimination on grounds of sex (in addition to all forms of discrimination) are within the jurisdiction of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, and that the procedure

¹⁵³UNDP (2020).The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Montenegro, available at <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MNE.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 46/07, 73/10, 40/11, 35/15

for applications in cases of discrimination based on sex was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights to the Protector.

In continuation of the government's effort towards achieving gender equality, a new strategic document was created - *National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021 – 2025*. The strategy, aims at increasing the political and economic participation of women, marginalized and vulnerable groups, and persons of different gender and gender identities.

In Montenegro, institutional mechanisms for implementing the policy of gender equality are: the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, the Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro and institutions of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro, with contact persons from all relevant institutions obliged to perform tasks related to achieving gender equality at the national and local levels. The National Council for Gender Equality was established on the 24th of October 2016 and represents a new institutional mechanism for achieving gender equality. As an expert advisory body, it was formed to address the issue of implementing gender equality policy at both the national and local levels. The Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro (Ombudsman) is an independent and independent institution established in Montenegro by a special law passed by the Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro on 10 July 2003.

The current regulations in the field of labor rights are based on the new Labor Law that entered into force in January 2020, replacing the labor legislation that was based on the Labor Law from 2008. The new legislation provided for novelties related to the protection of women during pregnancy and maternity leave, as well as novelties concerning the exercise of the right to parental leave. Parents who have a child have the right to use paid maternity leave (mother) or parental leave (mother or father) for 365 days. The main changes that currently apply concern the fact that the new law defines that an employed woman use mandatory maternity leave of 98 days, of which 28 days before the day of expected birth and 70 days from the birth of the child. Also, maternity leave of 70 days from the birth of a child can be used by both parents at the same time if two or more children are born.

According to the new Labor Law, the employer cannot terminate the employment contract of an employed woman due to pregnancy (if the dismissal is the result of non-compliance with work obligations, the employer will be obliged to explain the reasons in detail).

An employed woman who is absent from work due to pregnancy, maternity or parental leave cannot be declared an employee whose work is no longer needed. If a woman is employed for a definite period of time, and her employment contract expires during pregnancy, maternity or parental leave, the employer will be obliged to extend the duration of the employment contract by an annex while exercising one of these rights.

An employed woman who starts working before the end of the leave has the right to use a two-hours break in addition to daily rest due to breastfeeding (previously, the break amounted to 90 minutes). This right lasts until the child reaches one year of age, regardless of whether the child's father uses some of the rights for the same child. The new legislation has equated father and mother in terms of exercising employment rights, especially due to the fact that father's employment contract (if temporary contract) will be extended for a certain period of time, while using parental leave, which has not been the case so far. However, the number of fathers using the parental leave is still very low. According to the records of the Institute for Social and Child Protection, during 2018 only 3% (203) of fathers were beneficiaries of salary compensation for maternity / parental leave (out of a total of 6,196 beneficiaries). In the first eleven months of 2019, more than 420 fathers exercised their right to maternity leave in Montenegro, according to the Tax Administration. That is more than twice compared to 2018.

A novelty of the new law is the right of an employee to one day of paid leave a month to perform prenatal examinations. Additionally, the law ensures the possibility of temporary reassignment to another job for pregnant employee or during breastfeeding, based on the findings and recommendations of a competent doctor. This right is related to woman who works in jobs that could endanger her life, health, or which may endanger the child's health. In this case, employed woman can retain the right to earnings in the same amount. The new law also envisages the so-called "non-transferable part of parental leave", which lasts for 30 days, and which right both parents must use in order to be able to transfer the remaining part to the other parent. During the exercise of this right, parents cannot be declared as persons whose work is no longer needed.

In addition, a new term was introduced called "foster leave." This means that for the first time the right to paid foster leave provided for an employed foster parent who took a child under the age of eight into foster care is envisaged. During the exercise of this right, this person cannot be declared a person whose work is no longer needed, and he/she has the right to return to the same or appropriate job with the same salary after the expiration of leave, as well as the possibility to change the working hours. In that sense, the employment status of these persons is protected, as well as for the adoptive parent of the child. However, the status of non-employed breadwinners remains open, signaling the need for further changes in legislation, primarily in social and child protection.

As before, the right to refunding the wages to the employer, for wages paid to an employee who is on parental leave, as well as the method of determining the amount of refunding (30% to 100% of wages, depending on how long the employee worked for that employer) is valid under the Law on Social and Child protection. Entrepreneurs are also entitled to a refund, as well as employers whose employees work part-time. Parents have the right to part time work only if the child needs special care (until the child is 3 years old) or the child has special needs (without limitations). However, some research shows the existence of gender-based discrimination reflected in the abuse of the right to paid leave (in the form of non-reimbursement of wages, termination of contracts or the placing women in a lower wage position).

Pre-school education is equally accessible to every child. It is important to note that despite too many children in some kindergartens, no child whose parents want to send him or her to kindergarten is rejected. As of 2019, there is also a recommendation from the Ministry of Education that all children should be enrolled in preschool institutions.

Pre-school education programs are free in public institutions, while parents pay monthly amount of around 40 EUR for the cost of meals in the all-day primary program. Parents from vulnerable families (users of social benefits) do not have to pay for food. Out of the total number of children in age group 0–6, 33.2% attend preschool institutions. However, coverage of children varies across municipalities, and the coverage is higher in the municipalities in the south that have higher levels of economic development. In addition, many of the kindergartens function above full capacity in the central and southern regions.

The extended stay was created in response to the needs of working parents who have no other options for caring for their children, since the school obligations of children are shorter than the working hours of parents. In 2013, the Bureau for Education Services developed the program "Morning Gathering and Extended Stay of Students". The program was introduced on the model of the one elementary school in Podgorica which has been implementing this program for the longest time, since 1961. However, certain institutions, such as the Education Resource Center "1. June", organize an extended stay for all pupils from Podgorica up to 15 years of age.

In 2018, 30 out of 163 organized the extended stay in primary schools in Montenegro. In 2019, several overcrowded schools in Podgorica did not have the ability to organize an extended stay for first grade pupils. If they needed an extended stay for their parent's work, parents were forced to enroll pupils in a private extended stay, which is more expensive.

SOCIAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT AND INTERFERE IN THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

Although there is a good institutional and legislative framework for the protection and promotion of human rights in place, data shows that women are still exposed to social marginalization and discrimination in Montenegro. Observed from the formal-legal aspect, women and men in Montenegro have equal rights when starting work, in achieving social security, in earnings, acquiring education. However, objective indicators show that the overall socio-economic status of women is significantly worse in relation to men and that there is a deep gap between the proclaimed principles and concrete practices in the implementation of policies. According to MONSTAT data, the full economic potential of women has yet to be reached in Montenegro. Less than 10% of companies are owned by women, women earn about 14% less than men for the same type of business and are lack presence in management positions in the public and private sectors. Compared to men, despite the evident progress and positive changes that have taken place in recent years, women still represent a minority in social, economic, and political life.

According to Gender Equality Report 2019 (UNDP, 2019),¹⁵⁵ stereotypes, a patriarchal perspective, and the lack of openness to diversity are very strong in Montenegro. Women still do not have equal opportunities to contribute to the political, economic, social, and cultural development, and consequently to benefit from these opportunities. Despite the fact that more and more women are highly educated, and their participation in the labor market is increasing, women are still largely outnumbered by men in positions of responsibility in politics and business, particularly at the highest level. According to the Statistical Office of Montenegro, in 2019 only 9.8% of employed women were self-employed, which is more than twice as low as men (24.5%). An overall lack of available jobs impacts women's ability to earn pensions.

In a 2005/2006 report by the Office for Gender Equality, gender experts believe that gender discrimination takes place in the education process itself by favoring "masculine qualities" and discounting "feminine" qualities, as the education process is tailored to men. Patriarchal relations that are still present and deeply rooted in Montenegro, strongly shape our society and are very pronounced, and the generators of such a state are men and women. The traditional view of men and women, in which men are favored in almost every respect, has a direct consequence on the position of women in the labor market. It leads to the horizontal segregation of occupations, such as the division into male and female occupations. The survey "Gender Differences in Personal Income and Income," conducted in December 2010 for the European Movement in Montenegro, shows that men and women, both the general population and employers perceive women as the weaker sex, which is often a factor which affects employability women in higher positions which are better paid.

The disparities between women and men are primarily determined by the perception of a woman's biological destiny to be a mother, and then by the social constructs related to the mother's role. The role of the mother is primary (often the only visible one) and through the prism of motherhood, all other roles of a woman, her possibilities and perspectives, but above

¹⁵⁵UNDP (2020).The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Montenegro, available at <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MNE.pdf>

all her obligations, are observed and analyzed. It is the discrepancy in the distribution of family and domestic responsibilities between men and women, such as father and mother, that largely causes all other differences between them: different opportunities in the labor market, different positions in society, differences in power distribution and reputation. One UNDP report entitled "Women's Contribution to the Economy of Montenegro" estimates that women's work in unpaid work and home care is 92% higher than men. The monetary value of such work and care is projected at 122 million euros during the three months of the Covid-19 pandemic from April to June 2020. While 11% of women stated that they do not usually do housework, the share of men who reported the same is 42%.

In the context of women's professional achievement and work activity, a successful career and a stable family are often viewed dichotomously, where one sex excludes the other. Therefore, most women do not see their gender as discriminated against but consider this position to be consciously chosen. Women get married earlier than men, and have children with men earlier, which in a significant number of cases represents a turning point in a woman's professional career, since in these situations they take on the traditional role of mother and a hiatus from their careers. By returning to work, they must catch up with the competition, which now had one or two years more to improve and advance.

On the other hand, men of the same age build a career, enter the labor market or have free time, "unencumbered" by household and family responsibilities performed on their behalf by either their wives or mothers (other women). The results of the Labor Force Survey conducted by Monstat in 2012 show that about 90% of all people who cite the care of children or neglected adults are women. The attitude is almost identical with those who cite other personal or family obligations as the reason. A study conducted by the European Movement in Montenegro shows that the strength of "private patriarchy", which is clearly visible in the same study, warns of the need for systematic and permanent action of all social actors in order to change prevailing stereotypes about gender roles. More precisely, it means that public policies must take into account the different positions of women and men in these spheres and create policies so as to encourage more equal participation of women and men in all spheres.

The research we conducted showed that the main barrier to employment for women in Montenegro is employers not assessing their abilities and qualifications of potential employees (women). Further, nepotism is present and includes the employment of relatives, employment through recommendations of neighbors, godparents, or in other words, as we say in Montenegro, employment "through connections." Respondents state that even if they applied for jobs for which they trained (for work in a boutique with higher education), they would not be accepted if they did not "have a connection". Respondents also stated that regardless of the fact that they had the support of their family during employment, they all answered that it was difficult for them to maintain a balance between family and work. A woman, no matter her job, is expected to continue to complete all house-related obligations, which often leads to "burnout."

As for the connection between the economic independence and decision-making power for women, the respondent stated that in fact greater economic independence in our cultural context does not give women greater decision-making power, because they believe women are always in certain way "subordinated". Others said that financial independence gives them more freedom and thus more decision-making power, so they can say 'no' more often. According to our respondents, some women never get involved in the labor market because they do not have support (they have "no one to leave their children with", the obligations at home are too great) from the family or from public institutions.

The main problems faced by organizations fighting for a strong civil society, such as trade unions, media, organizations, and institutions, while advocating for the economic empowerment of women, are traditionally patriarchal institutions. Statistics show that women do not have the same access to resources as men. Gender inequality in Montenegro is most evident in the labor market. Patriarchal patterns and traditions, such as that a woman's place is in the house and that she does the housework, while a man should work and earn money, are the primary examples of gender inequality. The Association of Parents states that the biggest obstacle for women is the competing responsibilities between parenthood and employment, precisely because of the stereotype that a woman should oversee the household and raising children.

Preliminary and basic research and analysis carried out by institutions in Montenegro have shown that stereotypes are the main cause of gender equality. Namely, in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights study, interviewees stated that there is a good legislative framework, but the problem is the implementation of laws and policies. Despite the existence of adequate legal norms, the system lacks sufficient development and is unable to provide effective protection against discrimination. Institutions that participated in the research state that there is no political will for solving the issue of gender inequality. The Association of Parents states that distrust in the institutions of the political system is the main obstacle for women to seek help if they face discrimination during employment or at the workplace, and thus this problem is deeply rooted in Montenegrin society.

Amongst key areas for intervention, is education, notwithstanding that work is needed in other areas. The civil sector does not have enough capacity, it does not have enough financial resources, and their human and technical resources are too small to deal with issues of gender equality individually. Raising awareness that prejudices are still present and changing the awareness of professionals, as well as the public, is of crucial importance in the fight against gender inequality.

According to the institutions that participated in the research, the mechanisms supporting women lack coordination. Therefore, cooperation should emphasize a multisectoral and multidimensional approach. Furthermore, we need to develop robust training programs. Although changes have been made in the past, it is necessary to continue to improve the Labor Law, focusing on parental leave and the Health Insurance Law.

Our research had two target groups: 1) "women simple citizens" and "women from institutions" with whom we interviewed to see the whole picture, or to put it metaphorically, "both sides of the affluency coin". When it comes to women from institutions, women from: NGO Association of Parents, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, as well as the Employment Office participated in the research. With the information we collected from both focus groups, we concluded that the problem of discrimination against women on the labor market in Montenegro is still quite pronounced. The primary reasons for this are the fact that traditional social roles and gender stereotypes in Montenegro persist not only in the family framework but also in the field of employment. A high percentage of poverty, unemployment, and lack of social protection at work are just some of the factors that influence women to remain on the margins of low-paid jobs and suffer various forms of discrimination. As the most common forms of discrimination against women, the interviewees stated that the employer will hire a man rather than a woman, and that a woman will progress more slowly in her career and that her salary will, as a rule, be lower than that of a man. In addition, age is more of a limiting factor for women than for men. Another devastating fact is that pregnant women are some of the most

economically vulnerable. Namely, they have no rights and no choice because it is "tacitly" understood that they have to choose between their work and their family.

In all the cases mentioned including the Labor Law, the Law on Gender Equality, and the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination are violated. However, as was concluded from the conversation with "women from institutions", discrimination against women is often difficult to recognize and even more difficult to sanction, so Montenegro has not yet had any cases prosecuted in this area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study of gender relations in Montenegro illustrates that despite improvements in women's social standing over the last decade, women are still crippled by stereotypes and traditional way of thinking about their role within society. Consequently, women still perform most unpaid and care work at home. But women are increasingly making up a significant part of the labor force. In some sectors, women are facing barriers to employment in the form of lower wages and different treatment than men. In addition, the political system neglects the involvement of women at the labor market. Furthermore, the school system still does not provide extended stays for school children and elderly care system is not developed. Although the Labor law provides the opportunity for parental leave, this leave is primarily used by women. There is a need for education about the role of fathers in parenting and care. All this suggests that to achieve equal treatment of women in the labor market would require a systematic multi stakeholder effort on different levels.

Some of the recommendations for further work are:

- ~ Continuous research on the position of women in the labor market especially issues such as gender pay gap, unpaid and care work, and other main obstacles for further integration of women at the labor market,
- ~ Continue improvement of labor as well as health legislation, for example Maternity leave benefit depends on the time of employment, which is also part of the legislation that could be subject to change in the coming period.
- ~ Systematically support enrolment of women at the labor market through increase of increasing trust in institutions,
- ~ Development of support institutions such as well-organized publicly provided extended stays for school children,
- ~ Development of other services such as promotive positive practices in the public such as stronger involvement of fathers in childcare.

SERBIA

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality exists in all societies today, including Serbia, and is rooted in the social structure and traditional division of labor. Solving gender inequality is inextricably linked to economic progress, social cohesion, and democratic advancement, demonstrating its importance and value. The Republic of Serbia has made progress in gender equality over the few last decades because of legislation, the incorporation of a gender perspective into other policies, and the development of specific measures for women's development. However, gender discrimination persists in many areas, particularly in the labor market.

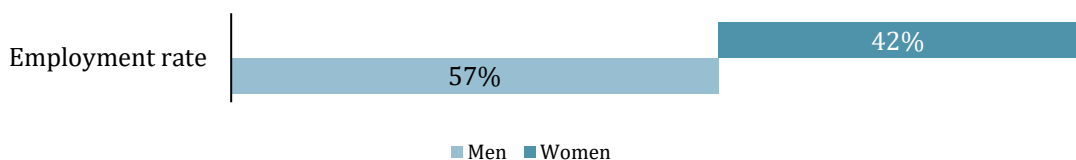
It manifests itself in women's disadvantaged position in the labor market. On the one hand, their labor-force participation is low. On the other hand, various forms of workplace discrimination, gender roles in the family, and difficulties balancing private and professional life have been specifically identified as barriers to labor market entry.

This report attempts to incorporate findings from the normative framework analysis, as well as findings from focus groups with the general population and relevant stakeholders, as well as in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders.

STATE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

According to the World Economic Forum's annual measurement of the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)¹⁵⁶ from 2022, Serbia ranks 23rd out of total 146 countries. This index is calculated as the sum of results from the following sub-indices: economic participation and opportunities, level of education, health and survival, and political empowerment. The report from the Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia from 2020¹⁵⁷ shows that 51% of total population in Serbia are women. Research from the National Employment Agency in 2021, verifies that out of the total employed population, women make up 56% in comparison to men employed, with officially 267,589 registered unemployed women, compared to 209,975 registered unemployed man.

Figure 15. Population of age 15+ in Serbia



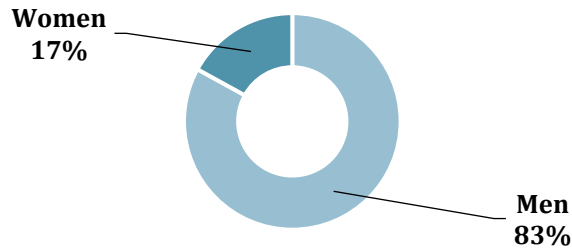
The employment rate of people aged 15 and over amounted to 49.3%, 57.1% among men and 42.0% among women. In the first quarter of 2022, compared to the first quarter of 2021, unemployment decreased by 58,000 people (14.5%), predominantly in the age category of the population aged 15-44, where the number of unemployed decreased by 40,500, and in the population with secondary and higher education where the number of unemployed decreased by 58,500 in one year.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ World Economic Forum (WEF), 2022, *Global Gender Gap Index*, 10 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf, Accessed on 13/07/2022, 11.11

¹⁵⁷ Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022 <http://devinfo.stat.gov.rs/SerbiaProfileLauncher/>, Accessed on 11/07/2022, 13.19

¹⁵⁸ Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022, *Labor force survey*

Control of household agriculture



In the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate for men aged 15 to 24 was 25.1%, while in the population of women of the same age, it was 34.7%. The **activity rate** of people aged 15 and over in the first quarter 2022 was 55.2% and the activity rates among men and women were 63.8% and 47.2%, respectively. The **unemployment rate** of people aged 15 and over amounted to 10.6%, specifically 10.5% for men and 10.8% for women.¹⁵⁹ Out of the total, 77,433 people are engaged in active employment policy measures for the 'hard-to-employ' persons category in National Employment Agency June 2022 report, of which 44,554 are women (58%).

Regarding the position of women within agriculture households, data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia from 2012¹⁶⁰ verifies that even though woman make majority (63%) of labor force in the family agriculture households, only 17% of women are official owners of family agricultural households. Referring to the average monthly salary for employed persons between 45-64, according to the study from 2018¹⁶¹, the average monthly salary was 36,021 RSD for women and 42,352 RSD for man. Concerning the number of people on the evidence of Center for Social Work from 2020¹⁶², 10% of the total population are social protection system beneficiaries, out of which 53% are women.

LEGAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

This section of the research focuses on how Serbia's legal framework affects the treatment of women in the job market.

The Republic of Serbia, as a member of the United Nations, accepted the obligation to respect and implement the obligations arising from the documents of these international organizations, as well as confirmed and published human rights treaties and generally accepted rules of international law. Some of the most important international documents that establish Serbia's legal obligations concerning women's labor rights are guaranteed by a series of international instruments such as - *the United Nations Convention on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women* and *Convention of the International Labor Organization no 100, 111, 156 and 183*. Other important documents that influence Serbia are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee, European charter on Gender Equality at the Local level,

<https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2022/PdfE/G20221136.pdf>, Accessed on 13/07/2022 11.51

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022,

<http://devinfo.stat.gov.rs/SerbiaProfileLauncher/>, Accessed on 11/07/2022, 13.19

¹⁶¹ Žene na prekretnici, 2019, *Položaj žena na tržištu rada*, 33

http://www.zenenaprekretnici.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Polozaj-zena-na-trzistu-rada_FINAL-1.pdf, Accessed on 11/07/2022, 16.38

¹⁶² Ibid

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Istanbul Convention.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Regulations of the national legislation of the Republic of Serbia, which determine the legal framework for women in the labor market are:

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia provides a general framework for the principles of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination. Article 15 guarantees gender equality and obliges the state to develop a “policy of equal possibilities”, while Article 21 sets the basis for the prohibition of discrimination. According to Article 60, everyone has access to all jobs under equal circumstances.¹⁶³

The Labor Law articulates that women’s rights are protected by provisions that forbid discrimination and provide protection for maternity, maternity leave, and childcare leave. This law prohibits direct and indirect discrimination against job seekers, as well as employees, with regard to gender, birth, language, race, skin color, age, pregnancy, marital status etc.¹⁶⁴

The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination under Article 16 does not directly regulate discrimination against women in the labor market, but it contains a broad prohibition of discrimination against all persons participating in the work process, regardless of the legal basis.¹⁶⁵

The Gender Equality Law prohibits employers from discriminating on the basis of sex or gender in relation to conditions for employment and selection of candidates for performing a certain job, working conditions and all rights from the employment relationship, professional training, and additional education, promotion at work, and termination of the employment contract.¹⁶⁶ What is especially important is that this law prohibits harassment, sexual harassment and sexual blackmail at work or in connection with work based on gender or gender, as well as the prohibition of gender inequality during leave due to pregnancy, maternity leave, leave due to child care and leave for special child care.¹⁶⁷

The Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance recognizes prohibition of discrimination, impartiality in employment and gender equality. However, this law did not directly deal with the position of women in the labor market in any provision.

The Law on Prevention of Violence at Work states that any form of abuse at work and in connection with work, as well as abuse of the right to protection against abuse, is prohibited.

The Law on Financial support for Families with Children failed to regulate the position of female entrepreneurs in order to compensate female entrepreneurs for their earnings with all contributions, as well as for women during pregnancy and after childbirth.

The Law on Agency Business regulates the rights and obligations of employees who conclude a work contract with a temporary employment agency for the purpose of assigning temporary work to the beneficiary employer.¹⁶⁸ However, this law somewhat undermines the progress of the position not only of women but of all workers, which was achieved through the Gender Equality Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. There have been cases where

¹⁶³ Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/ustav_republike_srbije.html

¹⁶⁴ Labor Law https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_radu.html

¹⁶⁵ The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, Article 16 https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zabranai_diskriminacije.html

¹⁶⁶ Gender Equality Law <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.html>

¹⁶⁷ Gender Equality Law <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.html>

¹⁶⁸ Law on Agency Business <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-agencijskom-zaposljavanju.html>

employees do not know who their employer is because they work through an agency, and thus do not know whom to turn to protect their rights.

STRATEGIES

In addition to the aforementioned regulations, strategic documents that in their individual segments are related to the position of women in the labor market are:

The Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for 2021-2026 includes a gender perspective by establishing information and communication technology as one possible area for women's job growth, female entrepreneurship, particularly for women with low qualifications who perform household/support staff jobs that are of limited duration (several days a month).

The Action plan for 2021-2023 for the implementation of the employment strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2026 recognizes the following measures to improve women's job search positions: the inclusion of women from vulnerable groups in social security measures, an analysis of the prerequisites for balancing work and family life, and the implementation of special measures to activate and encourage the employment of inactive women in undeveloped and devastated areas (information campaigns, employment caravans, etc.).¹⁶⁹

The National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2021-2030 singles out as a special goal: *Reduced gender gap in the economy, science, and education as a prerequisite and incentive for socio-economic development of society.*

The Action plan for the implementation of the strategy for gender equality for 2021-2030 has not been adopted yet. It is expected that the Action plan will be adopted in the first meeting of the new government.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Several important institutions that are working on promoting gender equality and bolstering women's participation in the Republic of Serbia's labor market are:

The Coordinating Body for Gender Equality was established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on October 30, 2014. An important contribution of this body is the initiation of the Gender Equality Index, which was introduced in 2016 in Serbia. In 2019, the work of the coordinating body concentrated on introducing a gender perspective into public policies, especially through gender-responsive budgeting and creating sectoral gender analyses and coordination of the preparation of the National Action Plan for achieving gender equality 2019-2020.¹⁷⁰

The Provincial Institute for Gender Equality focused its efforts in 2021 on three program activities: programming, incentives, and research. A competition for the distribution of grants to assist the growth and affirmation of female entrepreneurship was held as part of the incentive program.

¹⁶⁹ Action plan for the period from 2021 to 2023 for the implementation of the employment strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2026 https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Akcioni_plan_2021-2023_za_sprovođenje_Strategije_zaposljavanja_u_Republici_Srbiji_srpski.pdf

¹⁷⁰ Report on the work of the Coordinating Body for Gender equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for 2019 <https://www.rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2021-02/Izvestaj%20o%20radu%20KTRR%202019.pdf>

EQUALITY PROTECTION MECHANISM

If some rights of citizens on the labor market are threatened, whether it is a man or a woman, there are certain mechanisms that they can turn to in order to protect their rights.

The Protector of Citizens' report for 2021, despite the Protector of Citizens' suggestions, highlights the provisions of the Law on Financial Support for Families with Children that refer to the compensation of other income so that female entrepreneurs, farmers, agricultural insured persons, as well as women who perform temporary and occasional jobs, are in an equal legal position with employed women when exercising their rights during maternity have not been changed.¹⁷¹

The problem of employers violating the rights of pregnant women and mothers in labor remains, due in part, to the authorities only partially enacting the Protector of Citizens' recommendations. Employed women complained about threats to terminate their employment contracts if they did not end maternity leave early and return to work.¹⁷²

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality received 99 complaints based on gender as a personal characteristic.¹⁷³ Bearing in mind the fact that it is more difficult for women to be employed than men, the Commissioner sent initiatives to the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs and the National Employment Service to create special measures for an active employment policy targeting women who are difficult to employ. The Ministry informed the Commissioner that special activities regarding women's employment are written into the Action Plan for the implementation of the Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for 2021-2026.¹⁷⁴

The Commissioner for the Protection of Gender Equality singles out the following as recommendations for improving the position of women in the labor market: encouraging the employment of women and the development of female entrepreneurship, achieving equality of access to workplaces, equal wages, and conditions for advancement, continue intensive inspection supervision in the work, and an employment procedure with regard to the violation of equal opportunities to establish an employment relationship or to enjoy under equal conditions all rights in the field of work.

SOCIAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET

Most of the data indicates that women in Serbia have greater barriers to entering the labor market or re-entering the labor market in comparison to men. Some of the main causes of unemployment among women in Serbia are discrimination, education, gender blind/neutral policies, mismatch between education and labor market demands, and the balance of private and professional life.

In-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, institutions, experts, CSOs that work with women, labor markets, or on the economic empowerment of women. The focus group also gathered representatives of institutions, experts, CSO representatives, trade unions, media representatives. Representatives come from the Ministry for Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Commissioner for Protection of Equality, National Employment Service, Serbian Association

¹⁷¹ Regular annual report of the Ombudsman for 2021, p. 12 <https://www.ombudsman.org.rs/>

¹⁷² Ibid. 112

¹⁷³ Regular annual report of the Commissioner for the protection of equality for 2021, p. 158 <http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/rs/izvestaji/>

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 171

of Employers, Association Coalition for Solidarity Economy Development, Women's Leadership Academy, United Branch Trade Unions "Independence", Standing Conference of Cities and Towns, Association Women at the Crossroads, National Youth Council of Serbia, Association Femplatz, and Center for Democracy Foundation.

Based on the analyses of the data the key findings are:

Normative framework needs to be harmonized with all laws and policies in all levels.

Several laws and regulations have been enacted to facilitate and aid the problem of female labor-force positions. However, laws and regulations are often unrelated and, in some ways, contradict each other. All laws and strategies must recognize gender as an important component in order to facilitate and advance women's labor-force participation. The set of laws that need to be changed are mostly related to the Labor Law, but there are other sets of laws as well, such as the Law on Agency Business, Law on Labor Practice, the Law on the Financial Support to Families, etc. Intersectional cooperation and communication channels between different ministries that deal with or cover the topic of women's employment are also required. Normative framework is complex, and there is a mismatch between some laws that are important for the improvement of the position of women.

"Multi-sector collaboration is critical to achieving results. Social dialogue is essential."

Laws and women's working rights violations must be better implemented and sanctioned.

The monitoring of violations of workers' rights remains at a low level. One of the main issues is that there are no penalties for breaking any laws or regulations. People who can provide ongoing monitoring of violations of workers' rights have a limited availability, which is especially important for foreign firms operating in Serbia. There are numerous violations of basic working rules and rights that are rarely publicized. Sanctions are also not used to fulfill the normative framework's obligations.

"Even if you want to report a violation of basic working rights, you never know if the Labor Inspectorate will respond or if the employer will pay any penalties for breaking the law. Enough of that, you're not reporting any violations."

"The policies may be good, but those who advocate for them do not stick to them. It is critical that institutional actions reflect this."

Also, there good examples that should set positive examples as stated:

"Employers follow the Maternity Act - we had the fewest complaints there because the fines and penalties are severe."

Traditional gender stereotypes continue to have a significant impact on women's employment, leading to discrimination.

Gender stereotypes persist in Serbia. The most common is the belief that men and women should play different but pre-determined roles in society. Such assumptions restrict individual choice, resulting in squandered talent and untapped potential, skill gaps, and lower pay for jobs perceived to be "women's work." Stereotyping influences what women do at home and how they are treated, which influences the subjects they choose in school, limiting their future job and career options, and contributing to stereotyped views in the home. Furthermore, there is a disconnect between what young people believe are appropriate jobs for men and women and the choices they make for themselves, which frequently adhere to traditional stereotypes.

Stereotyping leads to gender discrimination and when discrimination is mentioned, various types of discrimination were recognized by participants.

Discrimination in the job search – the majority of job advertisements are discriminatory (advertisements that directly or indirectly favor men). Despite the fact that the National Employment Service has a standard for job advertisements, there are a number of job advertisements that are biased against women. Another important point raised during the focus group was the fact that men and women continue to be treated unequally in job interviews. Typically, job-related questions are not asked equally to men and women, particularly questions about private and family status, family planning plans, commenting on the physical appearance are directed toward women.

Discrimination in the workplace – the inadequacy of workplace regulations, supporting rooms, and equipment to biological and physiological characteristics of women has an impact on performing tasks that are not part of the job description.

Discrimination based on pregnancy and maternity – the most common form of discrimination identified by participants is the refusal to hire a woman who is pregnant and/or has children. Still, we have cases where employers ask for a blank dismissal in the event of pregnancy while working or signing an annex to their employment contract committing that a woman will not give birth to children for a certain period, even if it is prohibited by law. Also, there are a number of cases where women have been fired for remaining pregnant or returning from maternity leave; most of these cases go unreported due to a lack of knowledge about how to do so and, more importantly, a fear of retaliation. Instead of supporting women after they return from maternity leave, employers often punish them by transferring them to a lower-paying positions. In this way, women's professional development is stifled, and they are prevented from advancing in their positions.

Discrimination in earnings and other benefits and privileges – women still have unequal income, bonuses, incentives, etc., as well as inequality of privileges like using a company car, mobile phone, receiving per diems, etc. in comparison to men. These distinctions vary depending among European companies and between private and public enterprises.

"Typically, men receive all benefits and privileges, which are somehow reserved for men. When it comes to women, they must demonstrate their commitment and earn each privilege through years of hard work and trust."

Some positive cases from a German employer were mentioned:

"Women were treated equally, and there were no differences between men and women; they received the same salary for work of equal value, which means work on the same or similar jobs in terms of job complexity and degree of responsibility, in the same or similar working conditions, and with the same professional qualification."

"As for equal pay for the same job, while this may be true in the public sector, there is no difference between men and women in the private sector because results are valued there, and women may earn more because they achieve better results."

During the discussion, **other forms of discrimination** were mentioned, particularly those related to the possibility of promotion, and the conditions for promotion not being equal or transparent. Professional development opportunities are also unequal, with men more frequently being offered different programs or to participate in different courses. Sexual harassment, sexual violence, and sexual blackmail are also frequently mentioned as forms of discrimination, as are sexual comments, insults, jokes, and insinuations by colleagues, disturbing questions or comments regarding private life, appearance, and clothing, as well as requests or comments regarding sexual expectations as a condition of employment, transfer to another job, promotion, and salary increase.

The main challenges that women face when entering or re-entering the labor force are diverse.

The participants agreed that the challenges for women entering the labor force differ from those for women reentering the labor force.

Women entering the labor market for the first time face a lack of relevant experience, over-education for the job they applied for - forcing them to accept jobs that are below their education qualifications, a lack of recognition of their working rights, and discrimination, particularly when it comes to family planning. Unfortunately, gender components are not recognized or mentioned in the majority of programs aimed at improving youth employability, nor is the gender gap in the labor market acknowledged.

Women who are re-entering the labor force face challenges such as a lack of education, skills, and knowledge. Most low-skilled women (those with no education or who have only completed primary school) are unemployed due to a lack of job opportunities in the labor market. This is perpetuated by a lack of day-care centers, which creates a very specific situation, particularly for low-skilled single mothers and women who help household members. These women usually lose their position in the labor market if they are inactive for an extended period.

It is even more difficult for marginalized groups of women such as Roma women, women from rural areas, and women with disabilities.

Self-employment and female entrepreneurship have a positive impact on the position of women on the labor market, but there is no overall strategy to address potential challenges.

Participants have observed that, even though the situation is better for women's self-employment, women are less likely to engage in entrepreneurship or self-employment than men. We still don't have a clear picture of the total number of female entrepreneurs because some of them are only paper owners.

Women are typically the owners of small businesses or agencies, and they face a variety of challenges at work. Further, there is also no systematic approach to solving problems that women encounter. There is also a misunderstanding of what social entrepreneurship and economic empowerment of women entail, especially since many social entrepreneurs are women.

Women require a specific set of information that alerts them to the necessary requirements for starting a business and setting up finances. Almost one-third of businesses fail within the first year, and the goal is to avoid this.

There is a number of problems that female entrepreneurs are facing, for example:

“After giving birth, self-employed women receive financial compensation often lower than their salary, through which they are obliged to pay contributions in order not to interrupt the flow of their years of service. And they are on their own and have no rights”

From the standpoint of female entrepreneurs, we have a tax system that is not conducive to development, difficulties in balancing business and personal life, a lack of financial resources, little influence on changes in the business environment, and no power to influence decision makers.

Women's empowerment is essential.

To change the position of women in the labor market, it is necessary to educate women about their rights and the opportunities available to those who are entering or re-entering the labor market.

As a result of discussion between different actors participating in this research, it is necessary to work on the activation of hidden resources. This means empowerment in various areas such as self-confidence, raising awareness of all available means, building networks and contacts, reactivating women's potential and experience, achieving new skills and specific knowledge, continuing education, and/or work on prequalification, as well as developing and marketing new businesses to meet the specific needs of various types of women.

In order to address the issue of women's labor-force participation, institutions and various actors must work together.

The issue of women's position in the labor market is not limited to one institution; it must be addressed on a broader scale by different actors. Viable solutions will also require joint action between different CSOs dealing with this topic and an active approach of media and raising awareness on existing problems in the economy.

Human Rights are akin to Working Rights because people spend close to 50% of their life in work.

The Labor Law is obligatory for everyone.

“Workers can fend for themselves, but labor rights are limited in this country. Disputes typically last 5 to 8 years. Labor rights must be respected.”

It was stressed during the discussion that decent work is a condition for a dignified life.

"It is vital to have work dignity. We must not avoid the subject of dignity; it is essential that we do so."

In order to get an overall picture of women in the labor market, additional focus group with women coming from the general population were organized with women from all over Serbia. Seven of them came from urban areas and five from rural areas. Four women were aged 18-25, five women aged 30-45, and three women aged 45+. As far as education, four women had only completed high school, six women were faculty members, and two women had a master's degree. Six of them are employed, three unemployed, one inactive and one on the Labor Biro for over ten years. Among those who are employed – one is self-employed, three are employed in the public sector and two are employed in the private sector.

The main issues women face when they enter and apply for jobs are the amount of experience required and their age. All participants stated that they began applying for jobs by signing up with the National Employment Service. However, none of them found work through the National Employment Service. Instead finding work through recommendations or by sending their resumes to different addresses.

All of them were discriminated against, primarily because of their age and the lack experience they have despite not recognizing it.

However, these women recognized discrimination in their surroundings, particularly for women returning to the labor market after maternity leave. Many of the examples were based on women being demoted from their previous positions, suffering punishments, mostly such as a salary reduction when they use sick leave due to children. Several them recognized some kind of discrimination at the working place and with their employer. Most of the examples involve bad conditions in the workplace, irregular payment or half on the bill, and half in the "envelope," returning half of the salary (minimal salary) to the employer, work in the black market, asking personal question in the interview, or even signing a contract stating that they will not stay pregnant, etc.

"My friend worked for a local company for a short time before becoming pregnant and being fired. The issue is that it was normal for her, she explained, and she knew it would be like that. People in small towns have come to terms with this reality."

"At work, I'm occasionally mobbed. Who should I report him to if he has a degree higher than mine? To a party that I am not a member of and that has the ability to take me down overnight. And it's literally being lived, no matter what, and there's nothing I can do about it."

"I was subjected to emotional blackmail during a job interview with a pharmaceutical company: "We are a family here, we don't have working hours, we stay outside of working hours." And no one says anything about it being paid. You are a slacker who does not want to advance and will never

They all recognized the influence of traditional gender roles in society. Eight of them have full support from their families to educate themselves and to work. However, four of them are faced with insufficient support when they decide to enter the labor market because it was expected of them to stay at home and take care of children or other family members.

"My first husband forbade me from working and forced me to quit, so I ended up in a safe house."

"For a long time, my aunt was harassed by her husband; she worked, and he took every penny."

All participants agreed that it is increasingly difficult for women to balance their personal and professional lives. They also agreed that if the partners are not equal in the relationship, women work more and take on more responsibilities on their male partner.

"It's all about balance, in my opinion. There are no jobs for men and women; everything is one. It is carried out by whoever arrives first or how we agree."

"My father helps out around the house just as much as my mother, and I'm from a village. Much is determined by one's upbringing and environment in which grows up. And. The crucial is how do we bring up our sons"

Furthermore, they all acknowledged that women choose not to enter the labor force because they have more than one child or older family members to care for. Four of them are surrounded by women who have decided to be housewives.

They recognized women in their surroundings who resigned from professional life due to the pressure they face as women in higher positions. Some of them experienced burnout and decided to quit their jobs and become housewives, while others were simply tired of being called derogatory names simply because they are proactive and want to make a difference in their communities.

"When women want to work in certain fields, such as sports journalism, security, or politics, they face condemnation, discrimination, and fear".

On the other hand, they provided a number of examples of how families assisted women in finding work by mobilizing family resources to care for children or elderly members of the family in order for them to remain active and work.

"You have to find others, and I had the help of my mother-in-law when she retired. Now I help with my grandchildren."

"It's easiest if you have a support group in your surroundings"

In response to the question – have you or women you know experienced situations in which yours or their rights were violated, and institutions failed to provide the assistance required by law? They all stated that no one wants to report violations of their rights because they are all aware that no one will do anything to solve the problem. Showcasing a lack of trust in institutions responsible for their protection in the labor market.

"Institutions betray us, and neither individual nor collective responsibility exists."

Furthermore, only three of them are aware of the institution of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and that they can report violations of their rights, particularly when it comes to labor market discrimination by employers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations derived from the normative framework analysis and qualitative research are focused on the key points identified during the research.

It is undeniable that significant progress has been made in legislation relating to gender equality and labor relations in accordance with the recommendations and standards contained in relevant international documents. Despite this, certain flaws in legal regulations and inconsistent application of legal provisions have had a significant impact on women's protection and participation in the labor-market, as well as punitive measures if the law is broken. The findings of the qualitative study simply confirmed these flaws.

- ~ The first steps for improving the legal framework must aim to harmonize legal compatibility in the field of labor legislation with gender equality legislation. To enable effective and efficient protection of women in the labor market and to ensure a coordinated response between competent institutions, steps must be taken to amend existing laws on agency business as well as a set of labor laws.
- ~ Improving the system of employment protection and preventing discrimination, which disproportionately affects women, is a necessary condition for the full realization of guaranteed human rights and a woman's right to equality and freedom from discrimination. Thus, constant monitoring and harmonization of the legal framework with international standards is required.
- ~ According to the existing legal framework, special attention must be paid to the fight against discrimination not only during employment, but also when returning to the labor market, particularly after maternity leave. These are the most common areas of discrimination, and there are already a few examples of positive solutions to these cases in favor of women who have fought for their rights.
- ~ Since an insufficient percentage of workplace discrimination cases are still resolved in court, other barriers must be removed in order to efficiently and uniformly apply existing legal provisions, improve coordinated cooperation of competent institutions, create a system of free legal aid, and establish a system of long-term support for women who have reported discrimination with the goal of economic empowerment.
- ~ Women's work in the home, as well as formal employment, must be included and valued because women typically care for children, the elderly, and the sick in the family. As a result of these obligations, women frequently leave their jobs, leaving them economically disenfranchised and without a subsistence income.
- ~ Child protection and elderly care institutions should be organized in such a way that a woman can balance family and work life because they do not have appropriate working hours that are aligned with the needs of the mother. Otherwise, women find themselves in a position of dependence on their husbands who earns money outside the home.
- ~ Comprehensive programs and support measures for the employment of women – available programs should identify all vulnerable categories of women – inactive young women, women who are not on the records of employment services, etc.
- ~ Sensitizing the public and raising public awareness through media campaigns should help to recognize and sanction workplace discrimination, and journalist education could help to improve the situation. Civic education in high school could serve as a starting point for education and sensitization. To sensitize the public, it is critical to encourage the publication of newsletters and other important information useful for understanding labor rights and the practice of suppressing discrimination in the labor market for women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agency for Real Estate Cadaster, 2019. Table with number and percentage of registered rights by gender and cadastral department, s.l.: Agency for Real Estate Cadaster of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- Bashevska, M., 2019. Gender Equality Index, Skopje: MLSP.
- Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Equality, E. I. f. G., 2021. Gender Statistics Database. [Online]
- EuroStat, 2022. EuroStat. Employment - annual statistics, s.l.: s.n.
- FGD, 2022. Participant in the Focus group discussion [Interview] 2022.
- ILO, 2022. Ratifications of fundamental Conventions by country, s.l.: International Labor Organization.
- Interview, 2022. Interview with CSO's representative. [Interview] 2022.
- Interview, 2022. Interview with expert from the field [Interview] 2022.
- Interview, 2022. Interview with public institution representative [Interview] 2022.
- Law on Equal Opportunities, 2014.
- Law on Labor Relations, 2005.
- Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, 2020.
- Mickovska Raleva, A. & Trajkovski, K., 2017. Women engineers, programmers, IT scientis: How to overcome gender stereotypes for technical and IT professions?, Skopje: CRPM.
- Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2018. Annual Report on the activities undertaken and the progress achieved for the establishment of equal opportunities for women and men in the Republic of Northern Macedonia for 2017.
- Minoski, K., 2019. What are the biggest obstacles to labor market flexibility in Macedonia?, s.l.: Biznis regulativa.
- Mojsovska-Blazevski, N., Petreski, M. & Ayhan, O., 2017. National research on low female labor market participation, Quantitative-based evidence from a new survey, s.l.: UN Women.
- NBRM, 2017. Developments in major labor market indicators and active labor market measures in dealing with unemployment: Evidence from Macedonia, s.l.: National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia.
- Petreski, M. & Mojsoska Blazeovski, N., 2017. Assessment of the economic impacts of the 2017 increase in the minimum wage in North Macedonia, Budapest: International Labor Organisation.
- Risteska, M., 2020. Gender and Diversity Analysis of the COVID-SARS-19 Impact, Skopje: OSCE.
- State Statistical Office, 2015. Time use survey 2014/2015, Skopje: State Statistical Office.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the LFS 2021.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Activity rate by sex, s.l.: State Statistical Office.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Employees by economic status and gender 2021.
- State Statistical Office, 2021. State Statistical Office. Formal and informal employment,
- State Statistical Office, 2021. Working age population.
- Stojanoska, D., 2008. Gender Equality and Human Development in Macedonia during Transition (1991-2006). PhD thesis
- The World Bank, 2021. Western Balkans regular economic report, no. 20, Fall 2021, s.l.: The World Bank.
- Trading Economics, 2021. Labor Force Participation Rate Europe. [Online]
Available at: www.tradingeconomics.com
- Trajkovski, K., 2019. The adaptation of industrial relations towards new forms of work, Skopje: CRPM.
- UN Women, 2022. North Macedonia, s.l.: UN Women.

PUBLICATION LIST

Public Interest

- #1 Sejdiu, Dardan and Kastriot Jahaj. January 2013. [The Hidden Tax: Why do Kosovars Pay More?](#)
- #2 Gashi, Drilon and Shoghi Emerson. May 2013. [A Class of Its Own: Patronage and its impact on Social Mobility in Kosovo](#)
- #3 Sutaj, Visar and Leon Malazogu. January 2013. [Let the Real Civil Society Please Stand Up! The Role of Membership Associations in Shaping Decision-Making to Serve the Public Interest](#)
- #4 Miftari, Naser. September 2013. [The Consolidation Challenge: Strengthening the independence of media institutions in Kosovo](#). Miftari, Naser. 2013. [Starting from Scratch: The Role of Media Assistance in the Establishment of Independent Media Institutions in Kosovo](#). Working Paper 4, published by Analitika – Center for Social Research & D4D.
- #5 Ardiana Gashi and Artane Rizvanolli; With contributions by Natalya Wallin, Rezarta Delibashzade and Ngadhnmim Halilaj. 25 February 2015. [The Cost of Patriarchy](#).
- #6 Rezarta Delibashzade, Laura Flemming, Ramadan Klisurica, Agon Maliqi and Rina Abazi [The Role of Interest Groups: Best Practices, Case Studies, and Lessons Learned](#)
- #7 Dukagjin Pupovci & Gersi Gashi. November, 2015 [Reforming the University of Prishtina - Mission Possible?](#)
- #8 [Leon Malazogu and Bernard Nikaj; with contribution by Gulliver Brady. November 2016. Incentives for Accountability and Performance in Higher Education](#)
- #9 [Jehona Serhati; with editing contribution by Abby Riley. January 2017. Incentives4Reform: Increasing opportunities for VET students and graduates in the labour market](#)
- #10 [Isuf Zejna. July 2017. Development of Tourism Through Effective Policies and Legislations](#).
- #11 Visar Sutaj, October 2017. [How Independent are Regulatory Authorities in Kosovo?](#)
- #12 Linda Abazi Morina and Rezarta Delibashzade. With contribution by Ajete Kërqeli dhe Valëza Zogjani. November 2017. [Women's inactivity in the labor market](#).
- #13 Ajete Kërqeli. With contribution by Ardiana Gashi. December 2017. [Shifting paradigms – Equity through parental leave](#).
- #14 Vjollca Krasniqi. Mars 2018. [State of volunteering in Kosovo: Challenges and Perspectives](#)
- #15 Xhavit Rexhaj. With contribution by Rasim Alija. April 2018. [Funksionimi i Këshillit Drejtues të Universitetit të Prishtinës: Analizë e punës dhe vendimeve. \(Albanian only\)](#)
- #16 [Krenar Gashi and Gersi Gashi. Reviewed by Dr. Besnik Pula. November 2018. Inception plus ten: Reviewing the first decade of Kosovo's statehood](#).
- #17 Aliriza Arenliu and Gersi Gashi. With contributions by: Elmedina Bajgora. March 2019. [Measuring and evaluating reintegration policies: Evidence-based policies to ensure sustainable reintegration](#).
- #18 Alba Boshnjaku and David JJ Ryan. June 2019. [Parental Rights in Kosovo: Legal analysis regarding the proposed amendments to maternity and parental leave](#).
- #19 Kaltrina Temaj. Reviewed by: Valëza Zogjani. September 2019. [Inclusion of Women in decision-making and local governance in Kosovo](#).
- #20 Albert Krasniqi. December 2020. [An analysis on the activity of the Assembly of Kosovo in the period 2019-2020](#).
- #21 Judita Krasniqi. January 2021. [Who pays the highest price? The impact of COVID-19 on women's employment in Kosovo](#).
- #22 D4D Institute. October 2021. Municipality of South Mitrovica Administration: Reform as a developing mechanism. *(Albanian only)*
- #23 D4D Institute. November 2021. [Social Security Fund: Financial Coverage of Parental Leave](#).
- #24 D4D Institute. March 2022. [Provision of digital services at the local level in Kosovo: Municipality of Podujeva, Lipjan and Drenas](#).

Katalogimi në botim (CIP)

Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës - Pjetër Bogdani

331.5:3-055.2(467)

Hajdari, Judita Krasniqi

Power (lessness) of women in the labor market in Western Ballkans / Judita Krasniqi Hajdari ... [et.al.]. - Prishtinë : D4D, 2022. - 86 f. ; 24 cm.

Tregu i punës -- Gratë -- Ballkani perëndimor

ISBN 978-9951-823-42-5

Aleph [000105004]

The Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute was established in April 2010 by a group of analysts who were increasingly worried that the state-building exercise had neglected democracy. D4D's vision is to promote an active and educated citizenry that participates fully in the public space and utilizes the public arena of representation and decision-making to deliberate and build consensus over resource allocation that is efficient, smart, long-term, and that brings about equitable development. D4D influences specific policy, promotes a cross-sectorial approach to problem solving, and tackles the institutional routine of decision making by recommending incremental improvements and operates with maximum effectiveness in order to fully promote Kosovo's stabilization and democratic development.

For more information about D4D's activities please visit our website: www.d4d-ks.org

Supported by:



Norwegian Embassy



ISBN 978-9951-823-42-5



9 789951 823425