



GENDER DIMENSION OF LABOUR MARKET TRANSITIONS

Implications for activation and skills development
policies of the EU neighbouring countries

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PREFACE

This study focuses on the gender dimension of labour market transitions and its implications for policy-making in the areas of active labour market policies, career guidance, and skills development. The European Training Foundation (ETF) initiated this research to map how activation and skills development policies are gaining importance in the neighbouring countries of the European Union as key components of post-COVID-19 recovery, in green and digital transitions and strategies to address emerging socio-economic risks and uncertainties, and significant security threats worldwide.

The report provides an overview of the key trends in labour market participation among women, education outcomes, and gender-responsive policies and programmes. It sheds light on exemplary policies, national initiatives or donor programmes to enhance gender equality in labour market transitions and to address root causes of inequalities.

The ETF contributes to the development of human capital by providing advice and support to its partner countries and to the EU institutions on the reform of education, training and employment policies and systems. This contributes to the social well-being, stability and prosperity in the countries surrounding the European Union.

We hope this report will provide a good basis for decision-making to promote gender equality in the EU neighbouring countries (hereinafter ETF Partner Countries), inspire reforms and gender-sensitive programmes, as well as to inform EU external support activities.

In order to meet the objectives, the research team implemented a multidisciplinary methodological framework that combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. The analysis was conducted primarily via desk research and was supported by a survey among several ETF Partner Countries to identify good practices.

This thematic report was drafted by Nicola Duell with the contribution of Martina Lubyova, Marius Haulica and Armen Cekic, as part of the ETF project 'Active labour market policies and skills development studies in the ETF partner countries'. ETF's Donatella Di Vozzo, Iwona Ganko, Eva Jansova, Outi Kärkkäinen and Cristina Mereuta contributed to the definition of the research methodology, information collection, and reviewed the report. Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager Gender Equality from the Social and Civil Affairs Division of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, peer reviewed the report and provided valuable suggestions.

The ETF shared the preliminary findings and conclusions with the representatives of the EU neighbouring countries as well as regional, European and international organisations during the policy learning event on gender and inclusive Active Labour Market Policies, held in Barcelona, Spain (November 2023). The ETF experts and research team would like to thank all the stakeholders in the countries covered by this study and other European or international researchers who shared information and reflections.

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Executive Summary

Objective of the report

In this report there is a review of the gender dimension in labour market transitions, an overview of main causes for gender inequalities in ETF Partner Countries (PCs), and an examination of what strategies, policies and activities ETF partner countries have been undertaking mainly in the area of active labour market policies, including upskilling, reskilling and career guidance. Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) and skills development policies are gaining importance in Europe and beyond as key components of post-COVID-19 recovery, green and digital transitions and emerging socio-economic risks and uncertainties in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This report looks at the gender sensitiveness, gender-responsiveness and the gender-transformative approaches¹ of ALMPs and career guidance, national initiatives and donor programmes to enhance gender equality in labour market transitions and to address the root causes of the inequalities. The report focuses on the participation of women in the labour markets and characteristics of female employment, and it is based on reviewing available literature and data. The work was underpinned by a survey of active labour market programmes, the monitoring and evaluation practices as well as initiatives to make the access and delivery of (re)training measures more flexible, involving mainly Public Employment Services of several ETF PCs².

Gender dimension of labour market transition in ETF Partner Countries

In most ETF PCs, the activity rate and employment rate of men is higher than those of women. The activity gap is highest in most Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, as well as in Türkiye and Kosovo*. Activity gaps are comparatively low (and below EU-27 average) in Israel, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The female activity rates have been decreasing in some of the countries and increasing in others.

Those countries with very high gender employment gaps are also characterised by very low employment rates of women (mainly in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries). This points to a double challenge for policymakers; namely to increase employment rates while reducing the gender employment gap. Conversely, those countries with the smallest employment gender gaps are also those with the highest female employment rate (mainly Central Asian countries, a few Eastern Partnership countries and Israel). In some countries, employment rates are low for both men and women. Several Western Balkan countries and Eastern Partnership countries fall into this category.

In addition to the level of activity, the quality of female employment and thus their working conditions and pay are highly relevant. Women are at higher risk than men to be in vulnerable employment. In particular, contributing family members, who are not receiving an own income and social protection, are typically women. Their share of the total employment is significant in a number of countries. In contrast to helping family members, own-account workers are more often men than women in all ETF PCs. Nevertheless, the share of female own account workers among all female employed is sizeable in several ETF PCs. In Central Asia, the agricultural sector is the main employer in rural areas, and women make up more than half of this workforce.

In addition, informal employment renders women particularly vulnerable. Women are poorly represented among entrepreneurs and as owners/leaders/managers of medium-sized and large companies.

¹ See Glossary of gender equality terms at the end of the report.

² Countries include: for Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan; for Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine; for Western Balkans and Türkiye: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Türkiye; for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The gender pay gap is generally high. One reason in all ETF PCs is that women tend to be more often employed in occupations and sectors where pay is relatively lower for a given level of education and skills. Another reason is that they are not well represented in managerial positions.

In most ETF PCs, the enrolment rate of women in secondary and tertiary education is well above that of men. In all ETF PCs, there are issues of gender segregation in the graduation levels according to fields of studies. One exception is the ICT sector, where the differences are less visible, in particular in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region. This is in contrast to the EU, where gender disparities among ICT graduates are much larger.

Another general issue across ETF PCs is the significantly lower participation of girls in technical study fields within vocational education and training as compared to boys, and in particular in the technical study fields (as in EU countries). Gender segregation in vocational education and training (VET) tends to be higher than for tertiary education.

In most ETF PCs, women have greater difficulties than men in accessing the labour market, despite the fact that they are often better educated. That said, having a high education level in general increases the probability of women finding employment. The reason for the difficulties is that women continue to face discrimination in the labour market, in addition to skills mismatch issues. The gender unemployment gap tends to be larger in those countries where unemployment rates are at a high level for both men and women. The high unemployment rates for women may discourage some women to search for a job. In contrast, in Central Asian countries and some Eastern Partnership countries, and Israel, the unemployment rate of women is comparatively low, ranging between 2% and 10%, and is close to or even below that of men.

Young people not in employment, education and training (NEET) represent a major challenge in many ETF PCs. A closer look at the NEET shows that young men tend to be more often unemployed, while young women are more often inactive (and thus not looking for work and / or not being available for work). Gender stereotypes and caring duties can explain this pattern.

Migration affects the labour market position of women. Often female migrants have lower participation rates, due to the different motivations for migration of women (even more so in the past e.g. for family reunification), or due to gender stereotypes and social norms. Another issue is overqualification, difficulties in getting qualifications recognised and certified, which applies to both male and female migrants. For women, overqualification is also more often a problem within their home country labour markets.

Female refugees are particularly vulnerable. Evidence indicates that women refugees encounter significant obstacles if they wish to enter the host country labour market (for example, female refugees from Syria in Egypt and Jordan). The integration of female refugees from Ukraine in EU countries (e.g. Germany) shows better results, but lacks behind the integration rates of male refugees in the long run. Another issue related to migration is the potentially lower activity rates of women whose men have migrated.

Women have tended to be more adversely affected by recent multifaceted crises, such as the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, they are at risk of benefitting less, compared to men, from employment opportunities created by the digital and green transitions.

Challenges for women to access the labour market and root causes of gender inequalities

A critical driving force for gender inequalities are gender stereotypes and social norms. They have a great impact on the female labour market participation rate, the guidance and choice of VET and tertiary education study fields, gender distribution of unpaid care work.

They also influence men's beliefs and attitudes. Social norms also influence employers' behaviours in their recruitment choices, they generate and foster prejudices on women's abilities and competences, and influence employers' human resource management approaches to career progression. There are large differences in the strictness of social norms, the patriarchal models and breadwinner perceptions

between urban and rural areas, with rural areas having stricter social patriarchal norms. The perceptions also depend on education levels, with more conservative views on female and male roles among the lower educated. Perceptions differ between regions and between countries within a given region, as progress in politics and the legal and institutional frameworks happens at a different pace. For example, access to affordable and quality childcare plays a significant role in women's participation in the labour market and there are major differences between PCs in that regard. A lack of affordable and quality childcare arrangements are important reasons for women for not being active in the labour market or for not being able to fully exploit employment options and to progress in careers.

An associated obstacle that women face to fully participate in the labour market and in the economy via entrepreneurial activities is the more limited access to resources compared to men, mainly consisting of: limited access to land and to financial capital, weaker empowerment of women to make loan decisions and less well-developed financial literacy, and limited access to informal networks.

Priorities for employment policies to improve the labour market transition for women

Overall, PCs' policies prioritise reducing gender inequalities. Several ETF PCs developed comprehensive strategies to promote gender equality and have introduced employment services targeted at women or at specific groups of women. Comprehensive approaches include also the needs profiling of both unemployed and inactive women and reaching out to inactive women, and targeting services and ALMPs accordingly. One limitation however is that budgets for ALMPs as a percentage of GDP in PCs are relatively low (e.g. as compared to the EU MS). Getting support from international donors therefore plays an important role in a number of PCs, which allows for developing and testing new approaches, but may also adversely affect long-term sustainability of the adopted measures and activities.

In most PCs for which data are available, more women than men tend to be registered with the PES and more women than men tend to participate in ALMPs in many cases. A number of PCs have ALMPs and job-search services to assist women with specific employment barriers, in addition to ALMPs that are equally available to men and women.

Active labour market policies to improve the labour market transition of women and to reduce gender inequalities

In most PCs for which data are available, women tend to participate in ALMPs and use job search services. However, there are significant differences in the share of female participants in different types of ALMPs.

The main target groups among women in mainstream ALMPs or in female-dedicated ALMPs are women with caring responsibilities (in particular for employment incentives), single parents, women returning to the labour market after a child-rearing break, and women in rural areas (with a focus on job search services and start-up incentives). Female university graduates are among the target groups; however, the focus remains on the other groups.

In a number of PCs, employment incentive programmes include women or specific groups of women among target groups. There is some evidence from other countries that mainstream employment incentive programmes may have a higher employment impact on women as compared to men. However, this would need to be confirmed by evidence from a greater number of countries in order to draw definite conclusions. Nearly half of the countries that responded to the ETF survey paid specific attention to women in start-up programmes which include dedicated programmes, mainly for women in rural areas and for single mothers.

Despite the progress made, women may still be far less represented among participants in entrepreneurship measures. In addition to ALMPs organised by PES, a variety of other actors are implementing programmes to promote female entrepreneurship. Measures involve a wide range of activities: increasing the share of women with bank accounts, entrepreneurship training and

mentoring, as well as granting financial support or supporting cooperatives. Evaluation evidence on the impact of entrepreneurship support is scarce and the little available evidence points to the existence of multiple barriers for women to become entrepreneurs and to grow their businesses. Social norms and behaviour add to other, institutional or structural barriers.

Given the multiple employment barriers women face in rural areas, several PCs have targeted programmes to promote labour market activity and improve the quality of employment in rural areas. While that is highly relevant, little evidence has been documented on whether the adopted approaches have been effective so far. Given the persisting large differences in female employment rates and job quality between urban areas and rural/remote areas, there may be a need to scale up initiatives and measures that show good results. Comprehensive strategies that also consider issues such as childcare availability, transportation, access to training opportunities, local economic development and mitigating gender stereotypes are essential to address gender inequalities, particularly in rural areas, and requires close cooperation among various actors on the ground.

Among the policies to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market, the expansion of childcare facilities in quantity, increase in quality, the implementation of voucher systems, and awareness-raising activities have played a role in the PCs. There are only a few cases where the impact of these activities was assessed. However, the link between the availability of childcare and employment for women varies significantly across countries, as underlying social norms play a significant role. In addition to the link between the availability of childcare and take up of employment or provision of employment, the quality of childcare and transforming social norms and gender stereotypes are decisive. As a result, gender-responsive strategies need to be supplemented by gender-transforming approaches. Therefore, activities to increase fathers' involvement in childcare through changing laws and conditions for taking paternal leave have started to be implemented in an increasing number of countries.

Programmes for female migrants, in particular refugees (including women displaced from Ukraine and Syria) have been implemented in EU countries, Türkiye, Jordan and Egypt. Important approaches have included training in language skills, which are important for both men and women. Approaches in all countries have included gender-responsive activities related to childcare. In addition, in Türkiye, female Syrian refugees have received gender-responsive protection support, as well as training in digital and financial skills.

Most PCs have implemented gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Nevertheless, women may have benefited less from support to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, given that they have often been in a more fragile situation, with precarious employment conditions, stressful working conditions and greater difficulties in combining work and family lives.

The research shows that the effects of measures and initiatives are enhanced when a variety of actors are involved, including several Ministries and agencies, NGOs and the private sector. Implementing comprehensive strategies is challenging, but it is likely to increase impact in the long-term.

However, the strictness of social norms and entrenched gender stereotypes limit the success of ALMPs, in particular those directed at more conservative target groups in rural areas. Experience across countries shows that increasing female participation in the labour force rates takes decades. Inequalities are being reduced in many countries over time, and the implementation of ALMPs, the improved availability of childcare, have certainly contributed. However, inequalities and gender segregation persist. Awareness-raising activities and gender-transformative measures are needed to change social norms.

It is essential that the activities of PES are closely monitored using sex-disaggregated data and by mirroring them with the findings on gender inequalities observed in the labour market. To achieve greater effectiveness of ALMPs to increase gender equality in the labour market, PES should review their approaches accordingly and raise awareness among counsellors, target measures and/or introduce affirmative actions, as necessary. There is also a need to assess the effect of specific

ALMPs on women, to avoid policies and activities that are gender-blind and gender discrimination when accessing ALMPs.

Career guidance, upskilling and reskilling measures to reduce gender inequalities

Several PCs have implemented gender-transformative measures in vocational career guidance. Some countries have implemented measures to encourage women to take up training in male-dominated professions. Examples from several ETF partner countries include initiatives in particular to break gender stereotypes early on. The initiatives are transformative in the sense that they seek to raise and strengthen the interest of girls and young women in STEM, in particular in technology, engineering and ICT. Strategies and initiatives encompass gender-responsive elements so that they do not only target girls and young women but also their social environment and parents, teachers and school curricula.

Specific programmes have been targeted at women with caring responsibilities. This approach is gender-responsive and gender sensitive in addressing barriers for women to access training and in targeting support towards women with caring responsibilities. Examples also show the interest in implementing packages of measures, including counselling, mentoring, internships in addition to the training measures.

Support for the development of digital skills of girls and women is key for their employability. Therefore, examples from PCs show that it is relevant to enhance digital skills, such as in the area of e-commerce, artificial intelligence and smart technologies to strengthen women's potential to be more successful in their economic activities. This is particularly relevant for women in rural and remote areas as digital technologies also help to overcome challenges related to remoteness. In addition, examples from ETF partner countries show the relevance of including other actors, such as IT parks and large employers, in training and hiring women as IT professionals.

Some PCs have been successful in enhancing the participation of women in training measures. Examples suggest that the actions of positive discrimination and other gender-transformative measures, such as dedicated scholarships, have the potential to be successful in attracting women towards study fields traditionally not associated with women. Successful training measures benefit from activities that support the education to work transition through internship programmes, dialogue with employers and awareness-raising activities.

Evaluations conducted around the world show the positive impact of training measures on women. Looking at the EU experience, an evaluation that has been carried out for the Austrian programme to support women to take up VET training in technical occupations, shows positive results. Escudora et al. (2017) have conducted metadata analysis of the evaluation results of active labour market programmes in Latin American countries. They find that training programmes are (slightly) more effective than other types of ALMPs, in particular relative to direct job creation programmes. In terms of targeting, they find that ALMPs in the region seem to work better for women than for men and also for youth compared to prime-age workers. In particular, the impact of training programmes appears overall higher among women than men.

We can also conclude that overcoming gender stereotypes and changing social norms is essential to pursue gender sensitive and gender-transformative measures. This needs to start at a young age and needs to be pursued during the whole education system. Measures include, for example, gender-sensitive revisions of textbooks. Moreover, comprehensive approaches need to be taken with a view to reducing the levels of leaving school early and reducing the number of young NEETs, as underlying reasons for inequalities are strongly linked to traditions and norms.

To move forward

Several areas still require public employment services' and other employment and training stakeholders' attention, such as the following:

1. improving the information base by including a gender dimension in the reporting and monitoring of PES activities, stocktaking of activities of other stakeholders, conducting studies and evaluations;

2. designing comprehensive approaches by considering the multitude of employment barriers women face, including access to affordable quality childcare, taking actions to change male attitudes and perceptions, conducting awareness raising activities, linking training measures to workplace activities, internship and placement;
3. working in partnership, to address multiple facets of gender inequalities and consolidate cooperation among public, private and civil society organisations to address stereotypes in education, access to employment, insufficient gender sensitivity of social protection measures or business practices;
4. balancing gender-mainstreaming, namely integrating the gender perspective into the policy cycle (from design to evaluation), and dedicated gender-sensitive and gender transformative approaches in programming and policy development. It is recommendable to implement a gender-mainstreaming approach for PES activities, including funding, monitoring and evaluation of services and programmes. But it is also important to address deep inequalities and employment gaps through, for example, gender-sensitive career guidance and introducing transformative measures to attract women to male-dominated professions and men to female-dominated professions;
5. investing in removing barriers to women's economic empowerment by leveraging effective measures and thus increasing budgets for PES services and ALMPs.
6. Gender-responsive budgeting: integrating gender perspectives into performance-based and programme-based budgeting; tracking financial allocations to promote women's rights and gender equality; applying standard gender budgeting tools such as gender aware policy and budget appraisal, gender disaggregated public expenditure and revenue incidence analysis, and gender responsive beneficiary needs assessments.

1. Introduction

Reducing gender inequalities and promoting the economic empowerment of women raises social justice questions. It corresponds to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'³ and SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Development. Other SDGs are relevant when it comes to eliminating discrimination in institutional frameworks, wages policies and social protection (Kring, 2017). Drawing on the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020 - 2025, which calls for a gender-equal Europe, the new EU Gender Action Plan for 2021–2025 (GAP III) has been adopted⁴. It aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls and to safeguard gains made on gender equality since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration⁵. For many ETF PCs, of importance is also the Ministerial Declaration of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM) in Charge of Employment and Labour, adopted in 2022⁶ as well as the one on Strengthening the role of Women in Society⁷. It contains a variety of policies and strategies to support the economic empowerment of women.

Reducing gender inequalities, promoting female employment and improving labour market transition benefits women, societies and the economy. The economic gain of reducing gender inequalities in the EU was assessed by EIGE (EIGE 2017). The econometric model used showed that by encouraging more women to participate in the labour market and increasing their attainment in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) would increase the GDP per capita and employment of women. In a scenario where all gender equality measures were implemented and fertility rates increased, the GDP would increase by up to nearly 10% by 2050 with an additional 10.5 million jobs in the EU. Comparable data for ETF PCs is only available for the Western Balkans. Using the same methodology (Sura et al. 2021), a study conducted for the Regional Cooperation Council has shown that reducing gender inequalities could lead to an increase in GDP per capita by 1.5% by 2035, if Western Balkan PCs undertake rapid and intensified action, compared to the continuation of the current situation, to reduce the gender gap in participation rates. The study also suggested that implementing measures that only lead to closing the gender pay gap would raise the GDP per capita by 0.04%-0.13% by 2035 compared to the absence of such measures. Using a different methodology, a study conducted for UN Women showed the positive economic impact of reducing gender inequalities in Morocco (Bargain and LO BUE 2021; DEFP et al. 2022).

The present report provides a review of the gender dimension in labour market transitions. The report focuses on the women dimension, and looks in particular at labour market barriers, inequalities, causes of inequalities and policy responses from a women's perspective. The report also looks into the implications for policy-making in the area of activation, upskilling, reskilling and career guidance. Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) aim to improve the employability of specific target groups, such as the unemployed, young graduates, laid-off workers or people with obsolete skills, through the provision of different services and measures (for example training, employment and entrepreneurship incentives or subsidised employment). Such interventions can further contribute to better matching skills supply to the demand. Activation and skills development policies are gaining importance in Europe and beyond as key components of post-COVID-19 recovery, green and digital transitions and emerging socio-economic risks and uncertainties in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

This report looks at the gender sensitiveness and the gender-transformative approaches⁸ of ALMPs and career guidance, national initiatives and donor programmes to enhance gender equality in

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/gender-action-plan-iii-towards-gender-equal-world_en

⁵ The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action was adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing by 189 countries. It is an agenda for women's empowerment and is considered the key global policy document on gender equality.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3087

⁷ https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/5th_UfM_Declaration_StrengtheningRoleWomenSociety_Final_EN.pdf

⁸ See Glossary of gender equality terms at the end of the report

labour market transitions and the assumptions behind them. It reflects on the effectiveness of selected measures. It identifies innovative good practices in re/activation, up/reskilling and career guidance and counselling for enhancing gender equality in the labour market in general and for the green and digital transitions in particular.

This report is based on reviewing the available literature and data. Work on this report was underpinned by a survey on active labour market programmes conducted (mainly) among Public Employment Services in ETF Partner Countries. The survey is referenced as “ETF Survey” throughout the report. The results of the survey are used in chapters 4 and 5 of this report.

Criteria for selecting good practices presented in the report included the adoption by PCs of the measures to increase women employment and reduce gender inequalities. Examples have been collected from 18 ETF PCs (Table 3) and show the high divergence in labour participation and employment rates between and within each of these regions, and show distinct features in other issues of quality of employment and skills. Also, the selection encompasses a varying type of economic context (with some countries still characterised by a large share of employment in the agricultural sector). Whenever available, the report discusses practices that had been evaluated; however, comprehensive evaluations of ALMPs and similar programmes are rare. Therefore, also practices which provide a potential for reducing gender inequalities have been selected. The presented practices also include evidence on innovative approaches. In addition, whenever evidence is available, the limitations of the success or the absence of concrete activities is discussed. However, an in-depth assessment of the gender-sensitivity and gender-transformative potential of policies was not possible within the scope of this report.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 show the main trends and patterns in the gender inequalities in the labour market, labour market transitions and skills development. The chapter provides also specific insights on the employment of women in the field of ICT and into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and female employment. Chapter 3 outlines the roots and causes of gender inequalities and identifies key challenges for women for a smooth labour market transition. Chapter 4 reviews key activation policies to promote female employment in selected PCs. Chapter 5 provides an overview of career guidance, upskilling and reskilling measures to improve women’s employability and reduce gender inequalities in selected ETF partner countries. Lessons from the implementation of employment services, ALMPs, career guidance and skilling measures for women from EU countries and other parts of the world (in particular middle-income economies as this is relevant for the ETF PCs) are included. Chapter 6 draws general conclusions and presents recommendations for further policy actions.

2. Main trends in the gender dimension of labour market transitions in ETF countries

2.1 Main labour market features and trends by gender

Women have in general lower activity rates⁹ and employment rates as compared to men. The activity (and employment) gap measures the difference in percentage points between the male activity rate (and employment rate) and the female activity rate (Figure 1). Activity gaps are range between 36.4 and 51.7 percentage points in SEMED countries (except Israel), Türkiye and Kosovo. Activity gaps are comparatively low (and below EU 27 average) in Israel, Moldova, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. The reversed employment gap in Uzbekistan (with more women being employed than men, is difficult to explain, and may be related to statistical issues and the high emigration of men). The same patterns can be observed for the gender employment gap (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Activity and employment gaps in 2021, in percentage points



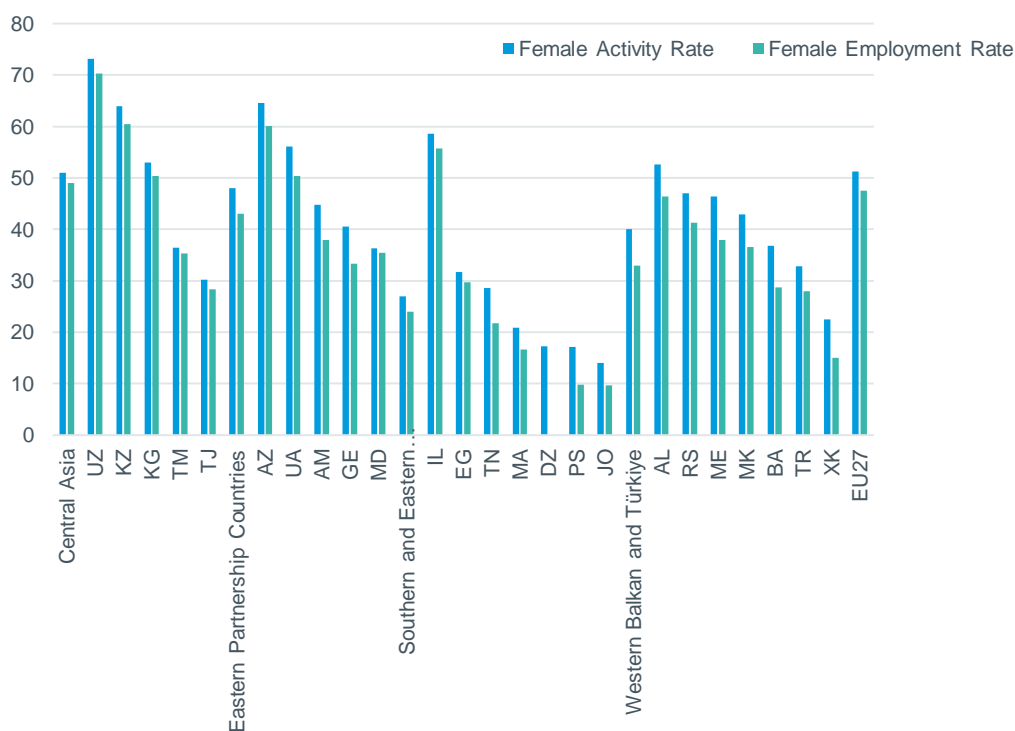
Source: ETF collected datasets / KIESE, Eurostat for EU 27

Note: for DZ 2019, EG 2020, KG 2020, ME 2020, UZ 2020, no female employment rate data available for Algeria
Gaps are calculated at the difference between male and female rates

The levels of female activity rate in 2021 vary greatly across the regions, as well as within regions (see Figure 2). On average, activity rates and employment rates of women aged 15+ in each of the four ETF regions are below the EU 27 average, although single countries in each of the regions show female activity rates and employment rates above the EU-27 average. There are large differences in activity and employment rates also among countries within a region. The disparities between in the level of female activity rates are highest in the SEMED region, as female activity rates are comparatively high in Israel, while they are fairly low in the remaining countries.

⁹ Female activity rate or labour force participation rates is the share of women aged 15+ being in employment or being unemployed (and thus being searching and available for employment), according to the ILO definition.

Figure 2: Activity rate of women and employment rate of women (15+) in 2021



Source: ETF collected datasets / KIESE, Eurostat for EU 27

Note: for DZ 2019, EG 2020, KG 2020, ME 2020, UZ 2020, no female employment rate data available for Algeria

The female activity rates have been decreasing in some of the countries (for the overview of trends, see Annex 1 Figure A1 Panel A-D, using ILOSTAT estimates data). Over the past decade, the activity rates of women have been significantly falling (although with some variations) among Central Asian countries in Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, among Eastern Partnership countries in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, while they have been increasing in other countries in this region. The activity rates of women have remained comparatively stable in most SEMED countries, except in Egypt, where there is a decline and in Israel and Lebanon, where a sizeable rise can be observed. The activity rates of women have been on the rise in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye.

The development of female employment rates has shown the following regional patterns¹⁰:

- Over the period of 2015 and 2021 (except in 2020 during the pandemic), the employment rate of women has been increasing in the Western Balkans¹¹.
- Female employment rates have been rather stable (with only small increases or decreases) in many of the some of the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine), Türkiye, as well as Southern and Eastern (SEMED) countries (Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza).
- Over the same period the female employment rate has been declining in Moldova, the Kyrgyz Republic, Egypt and Morocco.

Countries with very high gender employment gaps also show very low employment rates of women (Figure 3, based on ILOSTAT estimates). This finding applies to a number of SEMED countries. This points to a double challenge for policymakers that are to increase employment rates and to reduce gender employment gap. Conversely, those countries with the smallest employment gender

¹⁰ World Bank Database, ILO Modelled Estimates and Projections database (ILOEST)

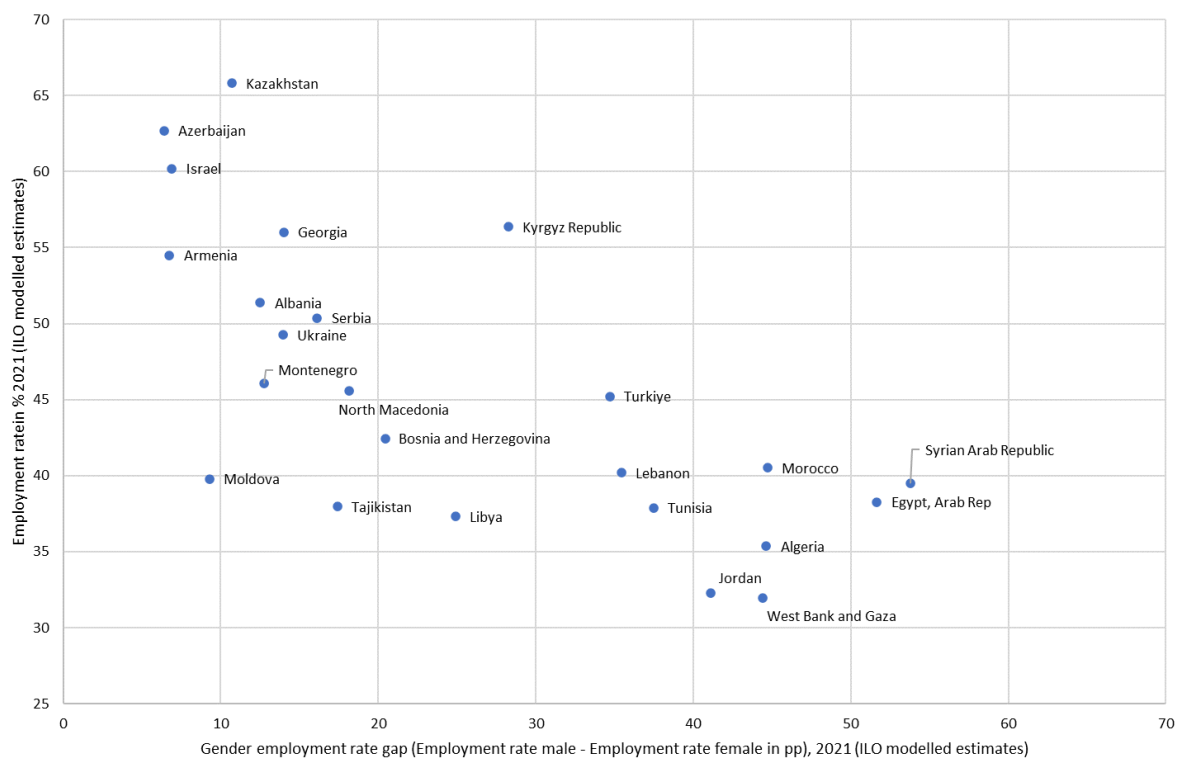
¹¹ Excluding Kosovo for which comparable ILO estimates are not available.

employment gaps are also those with the highest female employment rate (mainly Central Asian countries and a few Eastern Partnership countries and Israel).

In a number of countries, the employment rates of women (aged 15+) are below 45% and gender gaps are around 20 percentage points or below. This points to general low employment rates of both men and women. Several Western Balkan countries and Eastern Partnership countries fall into this category.

In general, there is a big divide between female employment rates in urban and rural areas.

Figure 3: Female employment rate (15+) and employment gender gaps in ETF countries in 2021



Source: Author's compilation from World Bank databases using wbopendata Stata module (Joao Pedro Azevedo, 2011. "WBOPENDATA: Stata module to access World Bank databases," Statistical Software Components S457234, Boston College Department of Economics, revised 02 Jul 2020).

Note: ILO modelled estimates, without Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

To compare, in the EU, in 2021, 48% of women aged 15+ were employed (and 63.4% of women aged 15-64¹²). The gender employment gap was 10.8 percentage points (pp), which had only slightly decreased in the last 10 years (-1.9 percentage points)¹³.

2.2 The position of women in the labour market

Part-time employment

As in other regions of the world, including the EU, on average in ETF PCs women typically work more often part-time, compared to men. Part-time employment is associated with positive and negative effects for women's employment and career progression. The main reasons for women working part-time are related to care responsibilities which they still take on far more often than men (see section 3). In addition to work-life balance aspects, a higher share of part-time work can also be associated

¹² Eurostat, LFSI_EMP_A__custom_6714591 last update: 20/06/2023.

¹³ In 2021, the gender employment gap was highest in Romania (20 percentage points) and lowest in Lithuania (near 2 percentage points). https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/women-labour-market-work-life-balance/womens-situation-labour-market_en

with more difficult access to quality jobs. A major concern of part-time employment is that it usually offers less good career perspectives and social protection rights, such as unemployment benefits and a pension. Full-time employment is generally regarded as empowering women economically (Suta et al. 2021).

The incidence of part-time employment is high in many SEMED countries (with the highest share in Morocco among all ETF countries with 46.3% of employed women working part-time in 2021 and Israel (46.2% in 2020), Algeria (36.2%) and Tunisia (28.6%). It is also comparatively high in some Central Asian countries (Kyrgyz Republic with 41.9%) and Tajikistan (37.5%)¹⁴.

The Western Balkan economies take a middle-field position. Women are on average less likely to work part-time than in the EU, but remain more likely than their male counterparts in the region (Suta et al. 2021). The incidence of part-time employment is lowest in Montenegro (8.5%), Moldova (10.1%), Egypt (11.1%), Kazakhstan (11.9%) and Jordan (15.2%) (see Figure A2 in Annex 1), as well as in Kosovo¹⁵ (Suta et al. 2021).

Quality of employment

The quality of female employment is significant. Remuneration and career progression are important aspects of the quality of employment, labour market security and social protection, and working conditions (the OECD quality of job indicator, for example, is built on earnings quality, labour market security, and the quality of the working environment)¹⁶.

Vulnerable employment and informal employment

Vulnerable employment is made up of contributing family members and own-account workers¹⁷. Contributing family members do not receive their own remuneration and they have generally no independent social protection scheme. This type of employment is regarded as vulnerable employment (Kring 2017). The share of contributing family members is linked to the economic structure, productivity and the economic model of a country. Women are more likely than men to be contributing family members. Globally, 14.9 per cent of women are contributing family workers compared to 5.5 per cent of men (ILO, 2017). In 2019, in the ETF PCs, two contrasting realities were present (see Figure A3 in Annex 1):

- The share of women employed as contributing family workers as well as the gender gap were very large in Azerbaijan, where 42.5% of women worked as contributing family members as compared to 24.0% of men (gender gap of 18.5 percentage points) and Morocco (34.8% and a gap of 25.9 pp). The share of employed women working as contributing family members ranged between 20% and 30% in Albania, Georgia, Türkiye, Egypt and Tajikistan. In Türkiye and Egypt, the gender gaps are very large, as only few men are contributing family workers.
- The share of women working as contributing family members was below 5% in Moldova, Turkmenistan, Montenegro, Tunisia, Algeria, Armenia, Lebanon, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Israel (in descending order).

In contrast to helping family members, own-account workers are more often men than women in all ETF PCs (see Figure A4 in Annex 1). The share of employed women working as own account workers can be regarded as comparatively high, ranging between 20 and 42% across Central Asia, Eastern Partnership countries and a few SEMED countries (Tajikistan, Armenia, Algeria, Kazakhstan, Libya, Georgia and Azerbaijan in descending order). In Central Asia, the agricultural sector is the main employer in rural areas. Female share of agricultural employment is above 50% in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

¹⁴ Note that there are no data for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

¹⁵ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

¹⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/statistics/job-quality.htm>

¹⁷ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/paid-employment-vs-vulnerable-employment/>

In addition, informal employment may lead to vulnerability¹⁸. Informal employment is generally more widespread among men than women. In Central and Eastern Europe, 28.1% of men and 23% of employed women are working informally¹⁹. Specific issues are linked to certain groups of vulnerable women, in particular coming from ethnic minorities and in rural areas. This is the case for example in the Western Balkans (Suta et al. 2021). Informal employment is more widespread in some countries of Central Asia. For example, in Uzbekistan, 60% of the employed work informally. About 61% of women and 73% of men in the private sector lack social security coverage²⁰. Globally, lower shares of women in informal employment are often found in countries with lower participation rates of women in the labour market. In the SEMED region, a large share of employed women work in the public sector, which is more likely to offer formal employment contracts and better access to social protection (see occupational and sectoral segregation above). Informal employment among women is more widespread in countries with a large rural economy, such as in Egypt and Morocco (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). The analysis of regional data shows that, outside the agricultural sector, most women in informal employment in the SEMED region work in the personal service sector and hospitality, while men occupy informal jobs in construction (UfM, 2022).

Gender pay gap

Globally, women earned from labour income on average about 52% of what men earn in 2019 (ILO 2023). The gender wage gap was larger in Central Asia than the global average: working women earn about 60% of what men earn in Tajikistan, 61% in Uzbekistan, 75% in the Kyrgyz Republic, and 78% in Kazakhstan²¹. In Tajikistan, it is estimated that earned income for women is 4.5 times lower than the estimated male earned income (World Bank 2021). This gap in earnings results from gaps in the employment rate, average hours worked as well as wages per hour.

For the Western Balkan countries, the average pay gap is 16% on average (Suta et al. 2021)²². Similarly, in the SEMED countries, men earn on average 16% higher wages than women (UfM, 2022²³). These gender pay gaps are above the EU average, as women's gross hourly earnings were on average 12.7% below those of men in the EU²⁴. The ILO has also aggregated the data on the median gender wage gap (hourly wages) for some of the Eastern Partnership countries: the median gender wage gap was 23.5% in Armenia and 20.8% in Ukraine, while for comparison on average of high-income countries examined by the ILO report, the wage gap was 15.7% (ILO 2018).

Differences in hourly earnings can be explained by (i) differences in the average characteristics of male and female employees (such as the segregation of employment by sector and occupation, qualification level, part-time employment and job roles) and (ii) differences in the financial returns for the same characteristics, which would result from gender-based wage discrimination.

Women tend to be more often employed in occupations and sectors that pay less well for a given level of education and skills. Occupational segregation and segregation across sectors is an issue in all ETF partner countries. This has been shown for example for SEMED region by the OECD (2020) and for the Western Balkan by Suta et al. (2021). Another reason is that women are less often taking up leadership and management roles (vertical segregation)²⁵. The OECD report found that three-quarters of the gender wage gap between similarly skilled women and men reflects pay differences within firms, including disparities in tasks and responsibilities. One-quarter of the gap reflects the concentration of

¹⁸ There may be overlaps with the definition of vulnerable employment.

¹⁹ https://www.ilo.org/budapest/WCMS_628487/lang--en/index.htm

²⁰ https://www.ilo.org/moscow/projects/WCMS_826842/lang--en/index.htm

²¹ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/faster-growth-central-asia-must-confront-biased-perceptions-about-value-womens>

²² Suta et al. (2021), use mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and occupation from ILO data and compute the percentage difference between male and female earnings by occupation

²³ Referring to ILO data

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics

²⁵ OECD defines horizontal segregation as 'the concentration of women and men in different labour market sectors and occupations. Women tend to be overrepresented in relatively low-wage fields.' And vertical segregation as 'the concentration of men and women in different job levels. Men tend to be overrepresented in management and leadership roles.' <https://www.oecd.org/stories/gender/gender-equality-and-work>

women in low-wage industries (sectoral segregation) (OECD 2021b). A comparable analysis by ETF PCs regions is not available, but there is evidence of occupational and sectoral segregation as well as of vertical segregation in the PCs (see more on women in management positions below)

Entrepreneurship

Self-employment – which includes both own-account workers²⁶ as well as micro-enterprises when self-employed are employing a small number of workers, or cooperatives – may be an important option for men and women to become employed. This is the case in several countries across the different regions covered by ETF engagement:

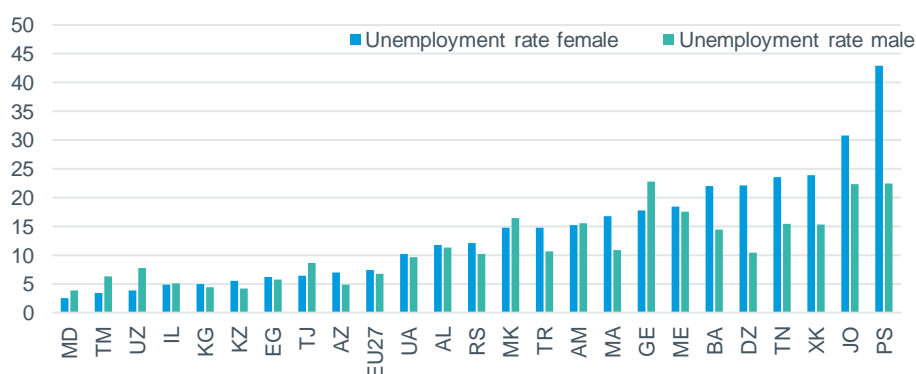
- In 2019, self-employment is the dominant form of employment for women and/or men in Azerbaijan (72.8% of female employment and 63.2% for male employment), Morocco (57.1% and 45.9%), Albania (52.1 and 56.8%), and Georgia (46.3% and 52.5%) (ILOSTAT, retrieved from World Bank Database).
- In contrast, in other PCs, only between 1% and 16% of women are self-employed (Lebanon, Tunisia, Montenegro, Ukraine, Israel, Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Kosovo, West Bank and Gaza in descending order). In these countries, the share of self-employed men is considerably higher than that of women. Moreover, women may encounter more often barriers to becoming self-employed.

One way of indicating gender inequalities in leadership is to look at the share of firms with female top managers. Only a minority of firms has women in top management, with the highest shares in the Kyrgyz Republic (33%) and Kazakhstan (26%). When looking at other Central Asian countries, it is striking that despite the high female employment rate in Uzbekistan, only 12% of companies state that they have women as a top manager. Moreover, in most Western Balkan countries and Eastern Partnership countries, the share of firms with a female top manager ranges between 10 and 15%. In SEMED countries, the share of firms with female top managers is below 10% (Figure A5 in Annex 1).

Unemployment and labour market transition

In most ETF PCs, women have greater difficulties than men to access the labour market. The gender unemployment gap tends to be larger in those countries where unemployment rates are at a high level for both men and women (with the exception of Georgia and North Macedonia). In the SEMED region, women face very high barriers to access the labour market. The high unemployment rates for women may discourage some women to even search for a job. High inactivity rates and high unemployment rates of women taken together explain the low employment rate and the high gender employment gap (Figure 4 based on data collected by ETF and Figure A6 in Annex 1 for the ILO estimates).

Figure 4: Unemployment rates by gender, 2021



Source: ETF collected datasets / KIESE, Eurostat for EU 27

Note: for DZ 2019, EG 2020, KG 2020, ME 2020, UZ 2020, no female employment rate data available for Algeria

²⁶ Here there is an overlap with vulnerable employment

A much more difficult labour market transition for women, as compared with men, is visible for women with both intermediate and with advanced education (Figures A8 and A9 in Annex 1). Moreover, the school-to-work transition for young girls is significantly more difficult in this region (and in part of the Western Balkan region), as indicated by high youth unemployment rates among females and the large unemployment gender gap (Figure A6).

Gender gaps in unemployment are also present in many Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan economies. (Figure 4). Strikingly in some of the Western Balkan countries, the unemployment rate of women with basic education is high (ranging between 16% and 41%) (Figure A7 in Annex 1). In Albania, the data show that more than half of unemployed female and male jobseekers have completed only primary or lower secondary education. The number of unemployed women jobseekers increases with age, while the data show the opposite for men (Suta et al. 2021). Evidence for Western Balkan economies shows that Roma women have a higher unemployment risk than Roma men (Suta et al. 2021). Multiple employment barriers increase the risk of Roma women being unemployed. In addition to ethnicity, factors such as being older or living in rural areas add to labour discrimination against women, e.g. in the Western Balkans (Suta et al. 2021, OECD 2021). In contrast, in the Central Asian countries and a few Eastern Partnership countries and Israel, the unemployment rate of women is comparably low, ranging between 2% and 10% and is near the rate for men, or even below.

Migration

There are gender patterns in labour force participation and access to the labour market of migrants. Often women have lower participation rates, due to the different motivations for migration of women (even more so in the past, e.g. in the context of family reunification), or due to gender stereotypes and social norms. When comparing the difference between employment rates between non-EU citizens and nationals by gender in the EU in 2022, it appears that the gap is much larger for women than for men, indicating a significantly lower presence of non-EU migrant women in the labour market as compared to male migrants²⁷.

Another issue is overqualification, difficulties in 'getting qualifications recognised and certified, which applies to both men and women. For women, overqualification is also a problem in their home country labour markets. Migration patterns are highly complex, as underlying motivations for migration vary. In the following sections, a few aspects of migration are highlighted (although not all aspects are covered).

Spotlight on women displaced from Ukraine

Since February 2022, due to the war of Russian aggression against Ukraine, there was a large influx of persons displaced from Ukraine, consisting mainly of women and children. Until 4 April 2023, 5 million refugees from Ukraine had registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe²⁸, of whom 1.6 million registered in Poland and nearly 1 million in Germany. The vast majority of the refugees are women and children. The EU PES Network carried out surveys among PES about registration, employment and ALMPs for displaced Ukrainian citizens and residents. The results of the fourth survey carried out in February 2023 show on an aggregated level that the number of persons registered in PES amounts to more than 353 000 registrations in the 28 PES that answered this question in the survey. More than 50% of these registrations were reported from Germany. The data reported by 25 PES indicate that more than 1 300 000 people displaced from Ukraine were in employment in these countries in February 2023. Jobs are found mostly in sectors

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Figure_10_migrant_integration_labour_market_indicators.png

²⁸ [Ukraine Refugee Situation \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/); The figure on 'Refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe' may include multiple registrations of the same individual in two or more EU+ countries; registrations that remain incomplete for various reasons; or registrations of refugees who have moved onward, including beyond Europe.

with labour shortages and these vary across countries. Sectors such as construction, hospitality, and the wholesale and retail trade are mentioned²⁹.

The German research institute IAB carried out a survey among registered displaced persons from Ukraine in Germany in Autumn 2022³⁰. The results show that six months after immigration, the employment rate for men (24%) is significantly higher than for women (16%). For women, it is also significant whether small children have access to childcare services.

Spotlight on female refugees in the area of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean

Women and girls account for almost half of the refugees globally (UNHCR, 2019). Recent increases in refugee flows have been driven by conflicts in and around the SEMED region, including in Syria.

The refugee crisis of people migrating from Syria to the EU (in particular to Germany) has been largely dominated by men. Women have been more often fleeing to neighbouring countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that Lebanon continues to host the largest number of refugees relative to its national population, followed by Jordan and Türkiye. Egypt also hosts a large number of refugees, coming mostly from Syria and South Sudan. The evidence indicates that women refugees encounter many obstacles when trying to enter the host country labour market. For example, in Jordan women have obtained only 4% of the work permits issued to Syrian refugees, and many women are working informally (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR 2022). Obstacles to work are linked to social norms, childcare responsibilities and the lack of transportation.

Spotlight on female migrants leaving the Western Balkans

Emigration from the Western Balkan (and from Türkiye) towards EU countries, mainly Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and other countries has been high for decades. However, the profile of migrants, and in particular of female migrants, has changed over time. Recently, young people and young adults who are looking for employment or enrolling in higher education have been emigrating increasingly.

For all Western Balkan countries, the share of women in the stock of migrants in OECD countries is about the same as that of men, with a slightly lower share for Kosovo. The OECD data of 2015/16 show a gender-specific pattern common to migrants from most Western Balkan countries (except Albania): men are more likely to have middle-level education while women are more likely to either be low- or highly educated (OECD 2022). In Albania, the emigration of high-skilled persons was a key feature of migration patterns in the late 1990s and 2000s.

Overqualification is a common issue for migrants. In 2015/16, the over-qualification rate for female migrants was lower than that of men, but still high for female migrants from North Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. Over-qualification rates for migrants from Western Balkans are high compared to the overall foreign-born population in OECD countries (OECD 2022).

A few studies have looked at the impact of emigration on the situation of women in the Western Balkans. Key findings of the literature review by Atoyan et al. (2016 and 2017) show that remittances affect negatively on employment and participation rates of those receiving the remittances, in particular among women. Reasons for this may be higher reservation wages as well increased difficulties to combine work and family lives.

Spotlight on Central Asia: effects of migration on women in Tajikistan

One in four Tajik households have migrant members, mainly residing in the Russian Federation. Migration has become an important choice for men to get employment. The number of female migrants has been increasing since the 2008–2009, but their share among migrants remains low.

²⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10526>

³⁰ Presseinformation des IAB, des BiB, des BAMF und des SOEP vom 15.12.2022, <https://iab.de/presseinfo/ukrainische-gefluechtete-bringen-gute-voraussetzungen-fuer-die-teilhabe-in-deutschland-mit/>

Gender stereotypes play a role for this migration pattern because ‘maintenance of the family is almost exclusively the responsibility of males. Hence, households prefer to send men abroad to seek paid employment’ (World Bank 2021a). Migrant women also have a bad reputation and face stigmatisation, as they face criticism about leaving their families behind. The high gender disparity of migrant workers in Tajikistan is in contrast to its neighbouring country Kyrgyzstan, a country in which leaving the country for working abroad has been an important feature as well. Here, the share of women among migrants is considerably higher than in Tajikistan. It is evaluated that roughly half of migrants from Kyrgyzstan are women (IMO 2021 and ILO³¹).

The wives of migrant workers often encounter the additional burden of household responsibilities typically assumed by their husbands (such as financial management, household maintenance, and farm labour). Kan (2018) uncovers some evidence that the emigration of men leads to greater unpaid family work. In Tajikistan, around a quarter of the women left behind are not in contact with their husbands and are dependent on other family members.

Wives of migrant workers may have less time for income generating activities outside the home (World Bank 2021a). Low activity rates of women may also be linked to remittances as an income source. The negative effect of the emigration of men and labour force participation of women have also been found in other parts of the world (e.g. El Salvador, Nepal) (Kan, 2018).

2.3 Gender aspects in skills development and skills mismatch

Participation in education

Women tend to be better educated than men in many countries. In 9 out of 14 ETF partner countries for which data on net enrolment rates in secondary education is available, the enrolment rates of girls are slightly higher than those for boys, as is the case for the EU (Figure A10 in Annex 1). The rate of enrolment varies quite significantly across PCs. Among the 14 examined countries, the female and male net enrolment rates were lowest in Jordan and highest in Uzbekistan (and slightly below the EU average, see Figure A10 in Annex 1). For young people and young adults, it can be seen that girls tend to stay longer at school than boys (including primary, secondary and tertiary education) in the majority of PCs for which data from the World Bank Data base are available, and this holds also true for most of the SEMED countries (Algeria, Libya, Jordan, Tunisia, West bank and Gaza)³². In most ETF PCs, the gross enrolment rate of women in tertiary education is well above that of men³³. For example in Tunisia, the share of female graduates is 66%, even higher than in some OECD countries (OECD 2020).

In all ETF PCs, there are issues of gender segregation in the graduation levels by field of studies (Table A2 in Annex 1). Women in general pursue more often tertiary studies in social sciences, humanities, health and welfare, while they are significantly absent from engineering. In the area of ICT, the differences are less marked, and there is a more balanced composition of students, in particular in the SEMED region (see also below section digital skills). Women are over-represented among tertiary graduates in natural sciences in most countries worldwide, including in the ETF PCs (Table A2, Annex 1).

It is worth noting that girls in Jordan outperform their national and regional counterparts in terms of mathematical, reading and scientific literacy. In addition, girls in Morocco perform better than boys in science tests (OECD 2020). Also, in the area of engineering, gender segregation is less marked in some countries and regions than in others. With 34% to 57% of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates in MENA countries are women, the region outperforms the OECD average (31%). For example, in 2023, more than 57% of Tunisian engineer are women. In the Western Balkans, young women account for a larger share of students and graduates in higher education institutions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects than in

³¹ https://www.ilo.org/moscow/projects/WCMS_750545/lang--en/index.htm

³² World Bank Database (latest available year, mostly 2018 and 2019) (SE.SCH.LIFE.FE, SE.SCH.LIFE.MA)

³³ World Bank Database (SE.TER.ENRR.FE, SE.TER.ENRR.MA)

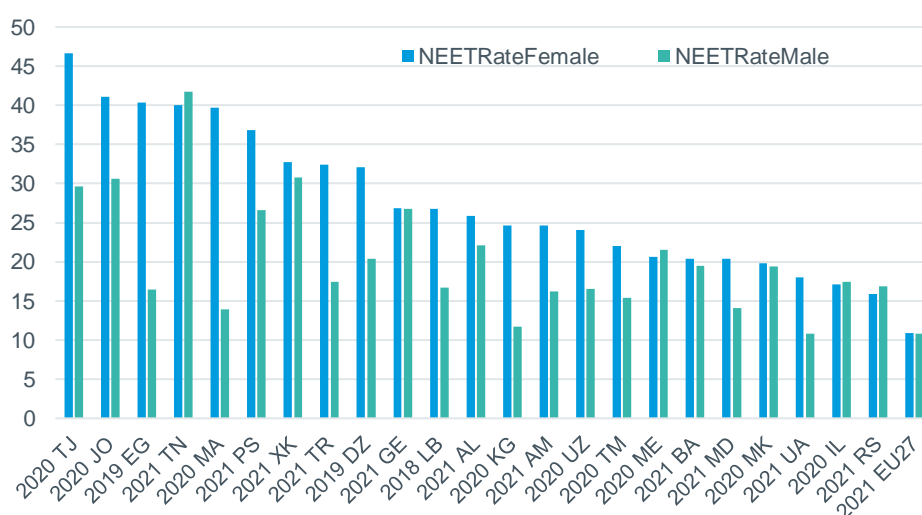
many EU economies (including in engineering and computer sciences). Nevertheless, computer sciences and engineering remain more typical choices for young men (RCC 2020).

Another general issue across ETF PCs is the much lower participation of girls in technical vocational education and training (TVET) as compared to boys. Gender segregation in vocational education and training (VET) tends to be higher than for tertiary education. A particularly high gender segregation by study field within the VET system is likely to be an issue in many ETF PCs, as is the case for example in the area of the South and Eastern Mediterranean (UNICEF, 2020; ADB 2019), as well as in the EU (for example, in Germany).

NEETs and early school leavers

Despite a tendency for young women to be better educated than young men, young women are at a higher risk of being early school leavers and not in employment, education and training (NEETs) (Figure 5). A closer look at the NEETs shows that young men tend to be more often in unemployment, while young women are more often inactive.

Figure 5: NEET rate by gender (15-24 years old), 2021 or earliest available year



Source: Data collected by ETF – KIESE, compilation by the author

Gender stereotypes and caring duties can explain this gender pattern (see also Chapter 3 below). ETF data show that a high rate of NEETs is often related to lower educational attainment, gender, and lower employability as a result of skill gaps and socioeconomic background (ETF 2022). Specific issues exist also for some groups of girls in some countries, such as those coming from disadvantaged ethnic minorities (e.g. the Roma population in the Western Balkans, (Suta et al. 2021, Powell et al. 2021).

School-to-work transition and youth joblessness

The transition from school to work is often a lengthy and difficult pathway for young people, with many unemployment periods and phases of employment in jobs for which they are overqualified and / or which are precarious. In addition, some young people do not search for work. One indicator for joblessness is the NEET rate. Young people not in employment, education or training can be inactive (and not in education) or unemployed. The NEET rates for both men and women are higher in all ETF PCs for which data are available as compared to the EU (11%). Another finding is that on average in the EU, there is no difference in the NEET rate between men and women. There is a significantly higher share of women NEETs than men in most ETF partner countries (except for Tunisia, Serbia and Montenegro). The female NEET rate was highest in Tajikistan (47%), followed by Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco (around 40% each). High inactivity rates of young women are linked to gender

stereotypes and gender roles. Young women will choose more than young men to be inactive after leaving education.

The youth unemployment rate is generally higher than the unemployment rate of adults. High youth unemployment has been a major concern in ETF partner countries, in particular in SEMED and in the Western Balkans (Figure A14 in Annex 1). Youth unemployment rates for women are significantly higher for young women than for young men in a range of SEMED, including in Egypt, Jordan and Syria. In Tunisia, youth unemployment rates are very high for both men and women at 36.1% and 39.9% respectively in 2021 and Morocco (26.3% and 24.5%, respectively).

High youth unemployment rates for women, above 20%, are also recorded in several Western Balkan economies and Türkiye, and Eastern partnership countries (Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine), and comparatively low in Central Asia.

Labour force participation by educational attainment

Labour force participation of women varies largely by educational attainment and the gender gap is large in particular for those with basic education. According to data from the World Bank database, there is a significantly larger share of men of working age with basic education participating in the labour market compared to women. The largest gender gap in the labour force of working age population with basic education, is in the SEMED region (ranging between 55 and 64pp, except for Israel where the gap is significantly smaller) (see Figure A11 in Annex 1). The gender gap is large also in some countries in other regions, as in Türkiye (39.4 pp) and North Macedonia (33.2 pp). This indicates that lowly-educated women in these countries are mostly inactive.

Women of working age with intermediate education participate more often in the labour market as compared to women with basic education. Gender gaps however remain significant in many countries (see Figure A12 in Annex 1).

Gender gaps are less marked among the labour force with advanced education (Figure A13 in Annex 1). Thus, in a range of countries, women of working age with advanced education participate nearly as much as men or even slightly more in the labour force in a several of countries, mainly in the Western Balkan region (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Israel), and the gap was relatively small, ranging between 10 and 20 pp in several countries mainly of Eastern Partnership countries and Türkiye and Western Balkan region (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Kosovo, Tunisia, Türkiye). The gender gap was comparatively high in Central Asian countries and highest in the SEMED countries in a context of a very high gender gap in labour force participation (except in Tunisia). But even in the SEMED region, women with advanced education participate significantly more often in the labour market than those low- and intermediate-educated.

Nevertheless, underutilisation of human capital remains a major concern and labour market transition of well-educated women is a major challenge. The higher enrolment rate of women in tertiary education, as compared to men, and increasing educational level of women is in strong contrast with the comparatively low and stagnant labour force participation of women in SEMED (Assaad et al., 2018).

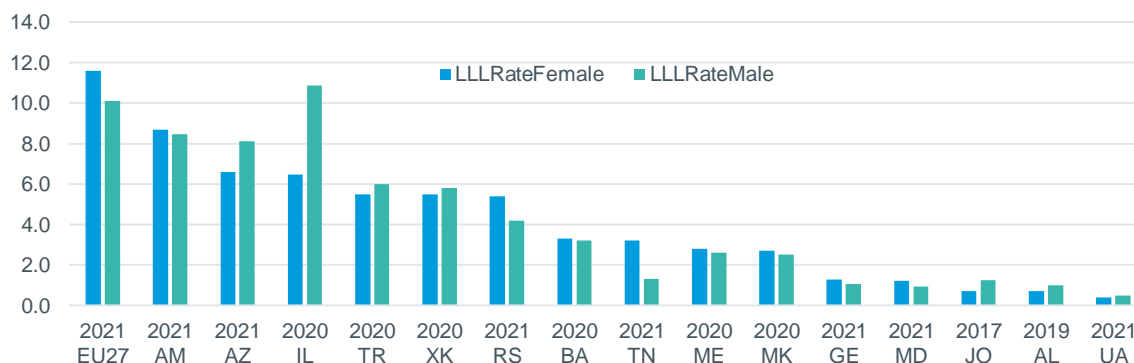
Participation in adult training

Lifelong learning is crucial to maintain and increase employability of workers and make them fit for organisational and technological changes. Unfortunately, only few comparable data for the participation in adult training are available.

A joint Eurofound-ETF survey in 2022 conducted in EU countries and among 10 ETF PCs on Living, Working and COVID-19 sheds light on countries' capacities to offer training possibilities to adults. In ETF PCs, 33% of women and 24% of men had access to education and training opportunities over the previous 12 months, as compared to 65% and 64% of women and men in the EU-27. On average, women in the 10 ETF partner countries participated more often than men in job-related and non-job-related training (with non-job-related training showing the highest gender gap in favour of women) (Eurofound-ETF 2022).

Available data for 15 ETF partner countries show that participation in lifelong learning lags behind the EU average (with the exception of Israel where the share of men participating in lifelong learning is larger than on average in the EU) (Figure 6). On average in the EU-27, as well as in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tunisia, more women than men participate in lifelong learning, while the reverse is true for the remaining 7 countries.

Figure 6: Participation in lifelong learning (LLL), by gender



Source: ETF collected datasets / KIESE, Eurostat for EU 27, compilation by the author

Digital skills

Digital skills at different proficiency levels are necessary to succeed professionally across various sectors. Thus, the economic empowerment of women increasingly depends on their digital skills.

One indicator of the digital gender divide is access to the internet. The use of the internet is important for accessing online education, as well as for e-banking, e-commerce and other economic activities. This is in particular relevant for remote rural areas. In addition to the internet access, it is crucial that women have the necessary skills to use the internet for learning and business purposes. According to the International Telecommunication Union ITU, of the estimated 2.7 billion people who are currently unconnected worldwide, the majority are women and girls. Globally, in 2022, 62% of men are using the Internet, compared with 57% of women. Between 2013 and 2019, the internet gender gap was shrinking in the CIS³⁴ countries and Europe. However, in the Arab States, the gender gap was growing because most new internet users since 2013 were men³⁵. Not only are the digital infrastructure and access to devices factors that contribute to the digital gender divide, but they also contribute skills to use the internet and devices in a professional way.

Digital skills are becoming more important to perform an increasing number of jobs. This requires digital skills at different proficiency levels, ranging from basic digital skills to high skills proficiency levels needed by IT professionals. Systematic and comparable information on the digital skills gap between men and women is not available for all ETF PCs, with the exception of Western Balkans countries³⁶. Some studies provide insights into specific countries and regions. For example, the ETF studies on new forms of employment and platform work in Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans countries shed light on employment patterns and digital skills use at workplace³⁷. In the whole SEMED and other Arab States, the digital divide is larger for the low-educated and those living in rural areas. One explanation is that ICT is often accessed outside home, where safety concerns and social norms act as barriers for women's and girls' access to these technologies (UNICEF 2020).

³⁴ Commonwealth of Independent States

³⁵ <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/bridging-the-gender-divide.aspx>

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC_SK_DSKL_I21_custom_2753855/default/table?lang=en

³⁷ [The future of work – New forms of employment in the Eastern Partnership countries: Platform work | ETF \(europa.eu\); Embracing the digital age | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

A study in Uzbekistan by UNDO (2022) shows that women's digital skills lag behind those of their male counterparts by nearly 24%; with a basic digital skills gap of – 23%, standard digital skills gap of – 21%, advanced digital skills gap of 26%).

The gender gap was even greater for programming skills: only about 20% of men and 10% of women indicated programming experience. To compare, at the EU and OECD level, there is evidence that young women (aged 16-24) have less well-developed programming skills than young men. In 2021, in the EU, 8.5% of young women indicated that they wrote code in a programming language as compared to 17.6% young men. In Türkiye, 3.1% of young women and 7.5% of young men had programming experience (data for other ETF partner countries are not shown) (OECD Going Digital Toolkit)³⁸.

A persistent gender divide in graduation from studies in information and technology can also be observed. ICT professions are well paid and have a potential to reduce gender wage gap and to bring women into a growing occupation. On average of 19 ETF PCs – for which data on the share of women among graduates of tertiary education are available – data shows that they are underrepresented among ICT graduates as their share was 37.6% in 2018. This share was however larger than the average share of female graduates in engineering (31,9%) (see Table A2). There were large differences between countries, the share of female ICT graduates ranging from 17.5% in Ukraine and 17.8% in Uzbekistan to 55.6% in Tunisia and 57.3% in Syria. From a regional perspective, the share of female ICT graduates is highest in the SEMED region, followed by the Western Balkans and Türkiye region, Central Asia and Eastern Partnership countries.

To compare with the EU, a higher share of women in the ETF PCs are graduating from tertiary level ICT studies. In the EU, according to a study by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the share of women among ICT professionals (highly qualified specialists, technicians, ICT service professions) in the European Union was only 17% in 2016. In addition, the share of women was even lower in ICT professions than in the engineering and science sector as a whole (25%) (EIGE 2018). Stoet and Geary (2018) show that in many countries, girls outperform boys in their numeracy and reading-writing skills. On the other hand, boys are relatively better in math and science, so boys and girls would make their choice based on their comparative advantage in skills. Gender differences in skills and vocational choices are also likely to be the result of stereotypes in education. Also, the role of stereotypes and traditional family models in Europe should not be underestimated, as women are moving towards jobs that are often less well paid.

2.4 Effects of COVID-19, recovery and multiple crises on the employment of women

Globally, the employment of women has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in several ways. First, the pandemic has affected the quality of employment in the health care sector, a sector with a predominance of females in the workforce. Working conditions deteriorated, stress increased and the risk of infections was higher for these workers (WHO and ILO 2022). Globally, COVID-19 disproportionately affected workers at the low end of the pay scale in the health care sector and thus affected women (WHO and ILO 2022). Also in the ETF PCs, the health care sector is feminised.

Second, in a number of countries women were more likely than men to lose their employment, because they worked in less well protected jobs. In the absence of job protection schemes in many ETF partner countries, female employment rates have been declining in 2020. The World Bank Database³⁹ indicates the sharpest decrease in female employment rates in 2020 was in most Western Balkan economies, Türkiye and SEMED countries. The decline in female employment rates was

³⁸ <https://goingdigital.oecd.org/indicator/54>

³⁹ ILO modelled estimates; population 15+. Note that ETF is updating its own database at the time of writing.

smaller in Central Asia. Employment rates did not fall in Eastern Partnership countries (except in Ukraine).

In 2021, the female employment rate increased in most countries in which employment rates were falling between 2019 and 2020, except in Morocco; Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine (where they continued to fall). Despite catching up, in most countries, the employment rates of women remained below their level in 2019. A survey conducted in Jordan showed that only 56.3% of women experiencing unemployment in Jordan in the spring of 2020 had managed to be re-integrated to the labour market by February 2020 (Karbala et al. 2022).

Third, informal employment presented a high risk for the employment situation of women⁴⁰. Within this group, women informal workers experienced more difficulties than men in maintaining employment and gaining a new job (UfM, 2022). Globally, women's and men's self-employment activities have also been negatively affected by containment measures. Female informal workers experienced sharper declines and slower recovery in working days and earnings than their male counterparts. Negative effects were more pronounced for women who had to increase unpaid care work (UN Women and UNDP, 2022).

Fourth, women left more often the labour force than men because of the high burden of childcare and home schooling imposed by containment measures. Thus, for example, in the Western Balkans, between the second quarter 2019 and the second quarter 2020 a continued narrowing of gender employment gaps has been recorded (as a catching-up process of women employment). The fact that employment rates for women fell less than for men is not a positive outcome as such, as more women are leaving the labour force and become inactive. Negative employment impacts were also observed from the second quarter 2020 to the first 2021 (Suta et al. 2021). Also in the SEMED region, women were disproportionately affected as they had been encouraged to take leave from paid jobs in order to assume care-work within their households (UfM, 2022, Karbala et al 2022). The effects of COVID-19 on increased unpaid care work for women are also presumed in Central Asian countries (for example in Tajikistan, World Bank 2021).

Women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic also in EU countries. In particular, the pandemic is likely to have aggravated gender inequalities in the labour market through the unequal division of exceptional unpaid care work between men and women due to the closure of schools and care services, reinforcing traditional gender roles (European Commission 2022).

Recovery has been impacted by the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis and inflation. The newest projections of the IMF issued in April 2023 (including projections for some ETF PCs) indicate a slowing down of GDP growth in 2023 as compared to 2022 (in Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye (IMF, 2023). It is too early to state how this will affect the employment of women and men, but there is a risk that inflationary pressure on food, and energy crisis will further weaken women's position in society and in the labour market. Reduced GDP growth also may affect budgets for Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) from which women may benefit.

2.5 Employment opportunities for women in the twin transition

Digital transition and employment in the field of ICT

As discussed in the previous section, digitalisation of the economy requires digital skills at different proficiency levels across occupations and women are at risk of lagging behind in acquiring relevant skills. This affects their employment opportunities. Digitalisation leads to both job creation and job destruction (depending on how automatable jobs are). For the OECD, the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) gives some insights on the use of ICT and digital tools at the workplace. One finding is that

⁴⁰ <https://data.unwomen.org/features/three-ways-contain-covid-19s-impact-informal-women-workers#:~:text=To%20prevent%20COVID%2D19%20measures.and%20supporting%20informal%20workers%E2%80%99%20organizations>

no difference emerges between men and women in the use of ICTs for low-skilled groups of occupations.

However, women often work in some elementary occupations or craft and trade ones, they perform relatively more routine tasks than men, and thus are more exposed to risks of automatization (OECD 2018a). Differences in ICT intensity of occupational groups show that ICT intensity is higher for men than for women for service and sales workers, and for professionals. In the EU, the data show that women at work used computers and portable devices, exchanged emails and enter information in databases slightly more often than men. Men used more often occupation-specific software and computerised equipment in production and transport and more than twice as often as women developed and maintained IT systems or software⁴¹.

At the level of professionals, ICT intensity is likely to increase for many professions and the need for interdisciplinarity increases (e.g. medical IT). It is a challenge to collect data on the employment of women in different ICT intensive occupations across sectors. This also holds true when comparing the position of women in ICT professions. Details are not easily accessible and data collection is restricted by data availability (ILO 2019). Nevertheless, some insights to the employment situation of ICT specialists in ETF partner countries can be given:

- Evidence from the Western Balkans shows that only 29% of Montenegrin and 22% of Serbian ICT specialists were female in 2019 (Suta et al. 2021).
- Despite the comparatively high share of female graduates in STEM tertiary education (see section 2.2 above), women from SEMED struggle to enter the labour market. This situation is explained firstly by the perception that women's abilities are unsuited for scientific work, and secondly, by the lack of recognition for their expertise and working conditions that do not take into account women's needs (Assaad, et al., 2018). Nevertheless, transition to the labour market appears easier for female STEM graduates than for those who specialise in education and/or humanities (Dimova, Elder and Stephan, 2016).

Box 1: Labour market barriers for women to enter the IT sector in Tunisia

An experimental study conducted in Tunisia on discrimination in the recruitment process (by sending fictional CVs of male and female candidates with the same levels of qualifications and experience) indicates that discrimination exists, and recruitment practices follow gender stereotypes (Alaref et al. 2020). The results of this study show for the IT sector—where there is gender parity in enrolment at the higher education level—that women are 15 percentage points (43%) less likely to receive a callback from an employer. This finding may explain in part why the unemployment rate of female graduates is 36 percentage points higher than that of their male peers in the Tunisian IT sector. On the other hand, no discrimination was found against women in male-dominated engineering occupations, even as the actual unemployment gap in this field reached a staggering 48 percentage points in 2014.

For the EU, it is argued that work-life balance measures are key to attracting and retaining women in ICT jobs. Some ICT companies have demonstrated their interest in setting up and implementing work-life policies⁴². Evidence for Germany, for example, shows that it may be challenging to retain ICT specialists in ICT occupations, as male-dominated working environments and working hours that render reconciliation of work and family life difficult, render ICT jobs often unattractive for women (ILO 2020).

Digital transition facilitates new opportunities within online and remote work, often facilitated by digital platforms. However, while at a first glance those types of work could positively impact gender equality bringing more flexibility in terms of works schedules and location and offset labour market entry barriers for women, recent studies confirm strong inequalities in the EU (EIGE, 2020⁴³) and in EU

⁴¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/toolkits-guides/gender-equality-index-2020-report/job-automation-use-new-technologies-and-transformation-labour-market>, accessed 1 July 2023

⁴² https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/toolkits-guides/work-life-balance/work-life-balance-in-ict?language_content_entity=en

⁴³ [Artificial intelligence, platform work and gender equality | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eige.europa.eu/artificial-intelligence-platform-work-and-gender-equality)

neighbouring countries (ETF, 2022⁴⁴; ETF 2023⁴⁵). The gender gap is very pronounced, both in terms of participation and wages. Women are underrepresented in the digital labour market in the occupations related to IT professional services, which tend to be well paid. At the same time the share of women providing translation or clerical services is higher (ETF, 2022).

Employment in the green economy

The greening of the economy affects labour markets in different ways: in some sectors and regions (e.g. coal-mining regions, regions with energy-intensive productions), employment losses have already been observed in the past and expected in the future. Employment is expected to grow in some other sectors as a result of the green transition (for example in the circular economy and in the construction sector). The agricultural and energy sectors may be among the most affected, with diverging employment effects. An electro-mobility scenario would engender losses of conventional blue-collar mechanical jobs in the automotive industry, and other sectors will be affected as well (e.g. chemical industry, and textiles⁴⁶). For the EU, small net employment effects are predicted in scenarios that promotes the greening of the economy. The largest effects are expected in changing jobs and tasks, while shifts across sectors and occupations will be sizeable (see European Commission 2019, and for an overview of different studies Duell et al. 2021). The employment effects (job losses, employment gains, and the need for skills adaptation and the volume of job transitions) of the green transition in ETF PCs will depend on the economic structure of each country, including the energy-intensity of production and resource consumption in agricultural production, the role of fossil energy extraction, the direct effects of climate change e.g. on agriculture (drought, flooding) and the capacity of the countries to promote new sectors (e.g. renewable energies, waste management, ecological agriculture, eco-tourism). The employment effects for men and women depend on their share of employment in the respective industries and their shares in 'green jobs'. Looking to the future, it is important that both women and men are equipped with skills needed for green jobs.

As for the digital transition, women are at the risk of being left behind for employment opportunities in the green transition, as relevant occupations are often technical, and often require good digital skills. Across the OECD countries and regions, 72% of green jobs⁴⁷ are held by men (OECD 2023). For example, data from France shows that women were largely underrepresented among workers holding 'green' or 'greening jobs'. Women were largely overrepresented among greening occupations in tourism, and only slightly below the national average in the area of greening public research occupations and the green occupational group of environmental engineers and professionals (Duell et al 2021). Similar occupational patterns can also be found in other EU countries and may also shape the green economy in ETF PCs (more research would be needed to confirm this hypothesis). Employment potential for women in several ETF PCs may exist in the context of sustainable agriculture and agri-food production). The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA, 2019) found that the share of women in employment (32%) is higher in the renewable energy sector than in conventional energy. Job losses in coal mining have typically affected more men than women, in the EU and a number of ETF countries. Employment effects in the textile industry⁴⁸ typically affects more women than men, therefore more women than men will be affected by restructuring this sector.

It has been advocated that in order to increase the share of women in green jobs, PES can provide vocational guidance, and can support women to take up related STEM fields and jobs. A study prepared for the European Network of Public Employment Services recommended that PES provide vocational guidance to girls and young women in such a way as to motivate them to enrol more in

⁴⁴ <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/future-work-new-forms-employment-eastern-partnership>

⁴⁵ <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/embracing-digital-age-0>

⁴⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_22_2015

⁴⁷ There is no common definition of 'green jobs' used across countries. There are also a variety of ways to measure 'green jobs' with different methodology. The OECD uses a task-based approaches. Broadly speaking, tasks identified as green contribute to environmental objectives such as preserving the environment and reducing emission. The classification of the greenness of tasks is made on the basis of the US classification of occupations O*Net. The OECD basis its estimates of green jobs on the EU LFS.

⁴⁸ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Samantha-BO3_ILO.pdf

STEM study fields, possibly with a specialisation in green skills (such as climate, energy and environmental engineering) (Duell et al., 2021).

2.6 Conclusions

In most ETF PCs, gender activity and employment are high and above EU average. Gender gaps in labour force participation and gender employment gaps have narrowed in a number of ETF PCs over the past decade (and earlier). However, in some countries, progress has been slow, or has even been reversed. Those countries with very high gender employment gaps are also characterised with very low employment rates of women (mainly in SEMED countries). This points to a double challenge for policymakers; namely to increase employment rates while reducing gender employment gaps.

The quality of female employment and thus employment and working conditions and pay matters. Women are at a higher risk than men to be in vulnerable employment. Women are poorly represented among entrepreneurs and as owners/leaders/managers of medium-sized and large companies. The gender pay gap is generally high. One reason in all ETF PCs is that women tend to be more often employed in occupations and sectors where wages are relatively lower for a given level of education and skills. Another reason is that they are not well represented in managerial positions.

In most ETF PCs, the enrolment rate of women in secondary and tertiary education is well above that of men. In all ETF PCs, there are issues of gender segregation in graduations by field of studies. One exception is the ICT sector, where differences are less visible, in particular in the SEMED region. This is in contrast with the EU, where gender disparities among ICT graduates are much larger. Another general issue across ETF PCs is the significantly lower participation of girls in technical study fields within vocational education and training as compared to boys, and in particular in the technical study fields (such as in EU countries). Gender segregation in vocational education and training (VET) tends to be higher than for tertiary education.

In most ETF PCs, women have greater difficulties than men to access the labour market, despite the fact that they are often better educated; although having a high education level in general increases the probability for women to find an employment. The reason is that women continue to face discrimination in the labour market, in addition to skills mismatch issues. The gender unemployment gap tends to be larger in those countries where unemployment rates are at a high level for both men and women. Young people not in employment, education and training (NEETs) represent a major challenge in many ETF PCs. Women seem to be more vulnerable than men in times of crisis. This has been evident during the pandemic.

Migration is affecting the labour market position of women. Often female migrants have lower participation rates, due to different motivations for migration of women, even more so in the past (family reunification), gender stereotypes and social norms. Another issue is overqualification. Women are also particularly vulnerable in times of conflicts and wars. The data indicate that women refugees encounter a high level of obstacles when they wish to enter the host country labour market.

3. Challenges for women to access the labour market and root causes of gender inequalities

3.1 Gender stereotypes and social norms

Gender stereotypes and social norms have a big impact on the female labour market participation rate, the guidance and choice of VET and tertiary education study fields, and gender distribution of unpaid care work. They also influence men's beliefs and attitudes and pressure on women's activities related to employment and vocational choices. Social norms also influence employers' behaviour in recruitment, they generate and foster prejudices about women's and men's abilities and competences, and influence their human resource approaches to career progression.

Gender stereotypes affect career choices and lead to occupational segregation and sector segregation. This explains large parts of the gender wage gap, as women tend to be employed in occupations and sectors with lower wages than men. Social norms and obstacles to reconciling work and family lives, in particular the scarcity childcare options, lead to a higher uptake of part-time employment, which in turn has negative effects on career progression and on pensions.

In ETF PCs, as in other countries around the world, gender stereotypes and social norms are the roots of gender inequality. However, there are large differences in the strictness of social norms, the patriarchal models and breadwinner models between urban and rural areas (with rural areas having stricter social patriarchal norms), between education levels, with more conservative views on women's and men's roles in lowly educated groups. There are also large differences between regions and between countries within a region, as progress in politics and the legal and institutional frameworks happens at a different pace. For example, worldwide, 57 countries have legal provisions in place that subordinate women to their husband's authority. This includes for example Egypt and Jordan, where the family law prescribes that wives should obey their husbands. However, even when the legal framework prohibits gender discrimination and unequal treatment, the weak implementation of laws, gender stereotypes, social norms and unbalanced power relationships between men and women still lead to behaviour and attitudes that cause gender inequalities in the labour market. The perceived role of women and the power relationship may change as soon as women are in the workplace outside their home.

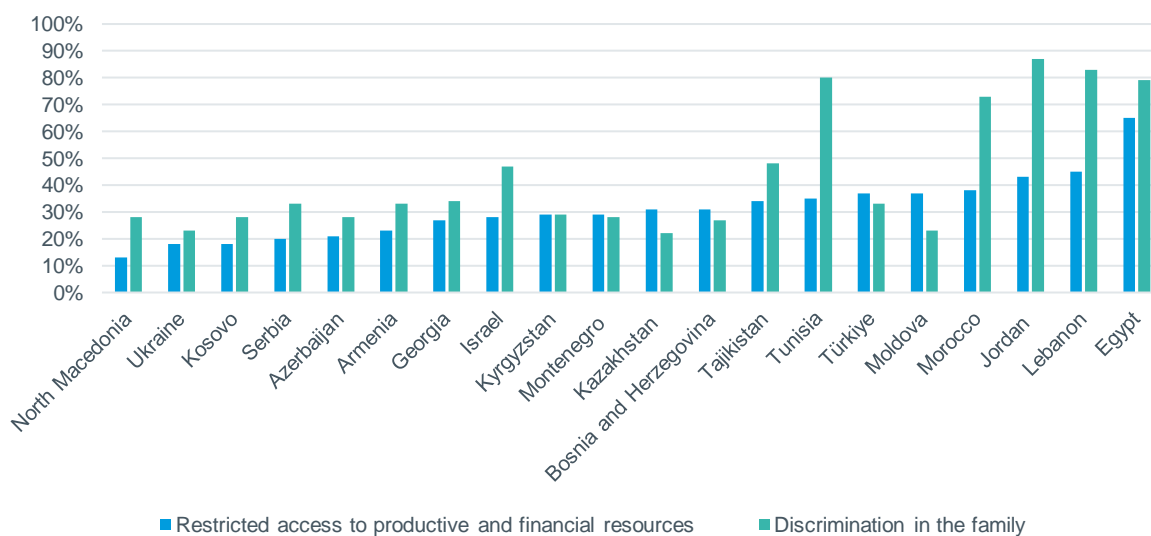
The OECD has elaborated Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) containing four dimensions: discrimination in the family, physical integrity, access to productive and financial assets, and civil liberties. The SIGI 2019 results indicate that the global level of discrimination in social institutions is lowest in Switzerland and highest in Yemen (OECD 2019). Figure 7 gives an overview of the ranking of ETF partner countries for which data are available on the sub-index on 'restricted access to productive and financial resources' and the sub-index 'discrimination in the family'. This sub-index comprises 'restricted access to productive and financial resources': (i) secure access to land assets, (ii) secure access to non-land assets, (iii) secure access to formal financial services, and (iv) 'workplace rights' captures the share of women managers and the social acceptance of working mothers (OECD 2019)⁴⁹. A higher SIGI values indicate higher inequality.

⁴⁹ Details in the indicators: (i) 'secure access to land assets' captures the share of women land titleholders and the level of legal protection, i.e. whether women and men have equal and secure access to land, taking into account non-statutory (societal) discrimination against women in traditional, religious and customary laws and practices; (ii) 'secure access to non-land assets' captures the share of women house owners and the level of their legal protection, i.e. whether women and men have equal and secure access to non-land assets, taking into account non-statutory (societal) discrimination against women in traditional, religious and customary laws and practices; (iii) 'secure access to formal financial services' captures the share of women holding a bank account and the level of their legal protection, i.e. whether women and men have equal access to formal financial services, taking into account non-statutory (societal) discrimination against women in traditional, religious and customary laws and practices; (iv) 'workplace rights' captures the share of women managers and the social acceptance of working mothers as well as its legal acceptance, i.e. whether women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities in the workplace. This includes issues related to employment protection during pregnancy, maternity/parental leave, equal remuneration for work of equal value and

The discrimination in the family sub-index contains the following indicators:

1. 'child marriage';
7. 'household responsibilities', which captures expectations towards men and women's roles in the family, the prevalence of gender differences in the distribution of domestic duties, and legal acceptance of such differences, i.e. whether women and men enjoy the same legal rights and decision-making abilities and responsibilities within the household, taking into account non-statutory (societal) discrimination against women in traditional, religious and customary laws and practices;
8. 'divorce',
9. 'inheritance' that captures whether surviving spouses and siblings enjoy equal rights to inheritance of real estate and personal property irrespective of their sex.

Figure 7: Level of inequality in access to productive and financial resources and scores on discrimination in the family



Source: OECD 2019, own compilation

Note Higher SIGI values indicate higher inequality: the SIGI ranges from 0% for no discrimination to 100% for absolute discrimination.

The 2019 SIGI report shows that restrictions in access to productive and financial resources for women as well as discrimination in the family are highest in some SEMED countries (Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt) as compared to other ETF regions (Figure 7). It is also striking that all the SEMED countries covered in the report show a higher score for discrimination in the family than for access to productive and financial resources. This finding also holds true, although the differences in the score of the 2 sub-indices are smaller, for the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Türkiye and Moldova. The scores for Central Asia show a mixed picture. The findings suggest a strong link between frameworks and norms leading to discrimination in the family and restricted access to productive and financial resources.

It can also be concluded that inequalities in economic empowerment can be lower than discrimination in the families, calling for increased efforts for improving both access for women to productive and financial resources and activities to reduce discrimination in the family.

A few examples of findings on the perception of women's and men's role in relation to earning income and the type of jobs that women should perform are given in the following:

equal access to professions, taking into account non-statutory (societal) discrimination against women in traditional, religious and customary laws and practices.

- In Central Asia, more than half of men and more than a third of women believe that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. Close to a third or more of men and women believe that women should earn less than the men in the same household, and close to half or more of men and women believe that men make better business executives. Notably, women tend to hold fewer conservative views than men (Khitarishvili, 2016). Likewise, the World Bank's Listening to Central Asia household survey 2022 shows that 51% of respondents in Tajikistan, 42% in Kyrgyzstan, 34% in Uzbekistan and 20% in Kazakhstan think that women should earn less than men to sustain peace in the family⁵⁰.
- The majority of the gender pay gap in Central Asian countries is unexplained and is thus not caused by gender segregation, arguably due to unaccounted factors and discrimination in the labour markets (Khitarishvili, 2016). In Uzbekistan, the World Bank conducted an experiment on hiring practices, by sending job applications of fictional men and women with equal profiles regarding qualifications and work experience to open vacancies. An analysis of the results shows that for a woman to get a call back for a job as a driver she would have to submit 180% more applications than a man with identical qualifications. Women were less often called back for IT professions and jobs as welders. For a man to get an interview as an accountant, he would have to send 79% more applications than a woman candidate, and for an office manager job, as many as 685% more applications. This reveals gendered hiring practices (Muradova and Seitz, 2021).
- A survey conducted in Kyrgyzstan found that women preferred jobs that would allow them to spend less time on public transportation to better combining work and family duties. In contrast, men more than women aim at career growth, interest and prestige of work (UN Women et al. 2016).
- For Türkiye, Tuğçe Tatoğlu (2022) shows that unpaid care work explains the low female labour force participation rate. The study computes a Conservatism Index for 11 regions and 3 big cities in Türkiye. The Conservatism Index confirms that areas with higher conservatism have lower female labour force participation rates.
- For some Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, the findings of the Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) show that three-quarters of men and women surveyed in Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Egypt support the priority of men's employment over that of women. Given the high unemployment rates of men in these countries, this explains why women encounter such high barriers to access the labour market (World Bank, 2018]. However, research also finds that values and beliefs change according to educational levels and family backgrounds. In many countries in the SEMED region, wealthier and well-educated men and women living in urban areas tend to have more equitable perceptions of women's economic empowerment (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).
- As mentioned in Chapter 2, an occupational gender segregation can be observed. In addition, women tend to aspire to public sector jobs in the SEMED countries, as it is considered more socially acceptable. These jobs are associated with a safer work environment, higher pay and fit better with family duties (Union for the Mediterranean 2022). Assaad et al. (2018) show that the decline in the probability of public sector employment for women with higher education is associated with either an increase in unemployment or a decline in female labour force participation in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.
- A survey on gender roles conducted in the SEMED shows that respondents to a large extent approve of married women working, but the approval was significantly lower when it came to the working environment and working conditions (Mottaghi et al. 2021). Working in mixed-gender environments brought down support for working women from 77% to 43%. While 63 % approve of working women leaving their children at a nursery to go to work, returning home from work after 5 PM further lowered this acceptance of women working to 37%. There is also a perception that working women may have a negative effect on the husband's reputation as it would indicate that

⁵⁰ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/faster-growth-central-asia-must-confront-biased-perceptions-about-value-womens>

men do not earn enough to provide for their families. Overall, men's views have been found to be more conservative than women's views (Mottaghi et al., 2021). Nazier (2019) confirms that among MENA societies there are strong social and cultural norms obliging women to stay at home and care for their families, and that these norms also dictate which type of work is appropriate for women. In Egypt, for instance, the gender difference in the acceptance of women carrying out paid jobs outside their house was one of the largest worldwide (World Bank 2018).

3.2 Inequalities in access to training, finance and capital

The OECD SIGI Index 2019 shows inequalities in the access to productive and financial resources, as shown above (Figure 7). The main obstacles women face to fully participate in the labour market and the economy with entrepreneurial activities lie in more limited access to resources compared to men, mainly as follows:

- Limited access to land: In Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, the general inheritance rule prescribes that men inherit twice as much as women. Evidence (e.g. from Egypt) shows that even when laws are changing social norms, family pressure and disinformation of women render implementation of legislative reforms towards granting equality difficult (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). For example, in Central Asia, laws generally do not discriminate against women, nevertheless, women rarely hold land titles (Khitarišvil, 2016).
- Limited access to financial capital: women often lack access to finance and entrepreneurship support in all ETF PCs regions (Suta et al. 2021, OECD/ILO/CAWTAR 2002, Khitarishvil 2016, Suta et al. 2021, OECD/European Union 2017, Union for Mediterranean 2022, Centrul report⁵¹ for the case of Moldova). Prejudices and mistrust against women entrepreneurs make bank staff more reluctant to grant women loans (Nazier, 2018). Women mostly have less access to starting capital and securities. Fewer women are found to have their own bank account than men (in particular in the SEMED region).
- Weaker empowerment of women to make loan decisions: for example, in Kyrgyzstan, 35% of urban women and only 16% of rural women were independent in making loan decisions (UNFPA et al, 2016). In general, women are found to be more risk-averse than men and also less self-confident (Union for the Mediterranean, 2022).
- Financial literacy is found to be less developed among women (OECD/European Union 2017, Republic of Türkiye 2021).
- Women have limited access to informal networks and less powerful networks for making companies grow (Greguletz et al. 2018).
- The importance of parents role-models, means that girls only rarely have mothers who are entrepreneurs and who would encourage their daughters to take this path.

3.3 Care responsibilities

Across all countries, care responsibilities are holding women back from the labour market or are limiting the time women are working. Globally, women continue to bear 75% of the burden of unpaid care and domestic work (OECD 2019). Those ETF partner countries with low employment rates of women and high employment gender gaps typically show high gender gaps in taking over care responsibilities.

The gender gap in time spent on unpaid domestic and care work is high among ETF partner countries. Very high gender gaps and high amounts of hours spent by women on unpaid domestic and care work are visible in particular in the SEMED countries and in some of the Eastern Partnership countries. For

⁵¹ https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CPD_IEG-2023.pdf

the remaining ETF PCs, gaps are smaller but still significant (Figure A15 in Annex 1). A Eurofound-ETF survey on the effects of COVID-19 indicates that women in the EU-27 spent more time on childcare than women in the 10 ETF PCs surveyed (68 hours as compared to 45 hours). Although men are less involved in childcare, they spend more hours on childcare tasks in the EU-27 than in the PCs (32 hours and 20 hours, respectively). Large gender differences exist also with respect to the time spent on household work, and these differences were greater in ETF PCS than in to the EU-27 (Eurofound-ETF, 2022).

These inequalities are linked to both social norms and gender stereotypes as well as the availability of quality childcare options. Some of the main findings from the ETF PCs are the following:

- For Central Asia, the World Bank Listening to Central Asia household survey 2022 shows that 80% of respondents in Tajikistan believe women should spend less time working to dedicate their time to home tasks. This view was shared by respondents in Uzbekistan (77%), Kazakhstan (74%), and Kyrgyzstan (73%)⁵².
- In the Ukraine, there is a reported lack of childcare for children aged 0-3 years, thus representing a barrier for women to access the labour market. The system of early childhood and preschool institutions is not sufficiently developed - kindergartens are mostly considered for children over 3 years old. Moreover, public kindergartens are crowded and it is a challenge to secure a place for a child. Kindergartens for younger children (from 0 to 3) are mostly private and too expensive for many women to use this opportunity (response received to the ETF survey). The lack of quality childcare is an issue also in other Eastern partnership countries.
- In Türkiye, women state that the main reason for not working was household duties (55.7% of women not active in 2019) (Republic of Türkiye 2021). In the Western Balkan economies, the lack of childcare facilities in particular in rural areas represents an employment barrier for women (Suta et al. 2021).
- In SEMED countries, the share of women stating they were not working because of childcare and household duties was very high, while men only rarely indicated that care responsibilities was the reason for them not to work (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). The lack of childcare has been recorded, for example, in Jordan In a study presented by the Women's Empowerment Program in the Levant of the World Bank, on assessing the supply and demand for childcare services in Jordan, it showed that 1.45 million children in Jordan did not have access to care services in 2021. Jordan would need 44 000 nurseries to meet the potential demand for child care services. The study showed that the Amman governorate alone needs about 16 000 nurseries to meet the potential demand, and to provide care services for about 540 000 children. The study also showed that low-income families are the least likely to access childcare services in terms of price, location, and potential discrimination against them. With regard to employers, the study indicated that employers in general are not fully aware of the family-friendly policies included in the legislation, and a large part of employers do not comply with the mandatory legislative requirements for childcare and do not plan to do so⁵³. A survey-based pilot study carried out in Egypt by the World Bank showed that for women in Egypt who worked prior to marriage and left work, the second most common reason for leaving work was 'to take care of children' (the most common reason was the husband's objection to work). Seventy-seven percent of mothers interviewed do not use any help to care for their children. When asked about their willingness to send their children to childcare should the option become available to them, almost 96 percent of the mothers expressed interest. Maternal grandmothers and parental grandmothers are the primary sources of childcare support, which is

⁵² <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/faster-growth-central-asia-must-confront-biased-perceptions-about-value-womens>

⁵³

<http://ammannet.net/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC-44-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9>

consistent with the outputs of the nationally-representative Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey. When asked for more details on the interest of sending children to childcare facilities, the price and in particular the distance from home were key parameters. The lack of information on childcare facilities as well as distrust of the quality of care (e.g. regarding the safety of the child) were factors making women reluctant to use child care (Mottaghi et al., 2021).

In the EU, labour market barriers for women are mainly linked to caring responsibilities (which are still typically taken on by women) and to the related career breaks (Sansone and Davern 2020). Not only the availability of childcare in quantitative terms, but also the quality of care is essential for the wellbeing of children and the trust of parents to use childcare services. Eurofound (2013) showed that better childcare access was positively associated with individuals' perceived quality of services as well as women's employment. Access to childcare was assessed by taking into account the cost of services, their availability, access (distance or opening hours) and the quality of care, as perceived among service users. Key criteria for the quality of care include children to staff ratios, pedagogical concepts, health and safety regulations, and proximity.

3.4 Conclusions

A critical driving force for gender inequalities are gender stereotypes and social norms. They have a big impact on the female labour market participation rate, the guidance and choice of VET and tertiary education study fields, and on the gender distribution of unpaid care work. They also influence men's beliefs and attitudes. Social norms influence employers' behaviour in their recruitment choices, generate and foster prejudices on women's abilities and competences, and influence employers' human resources management approaches to career progression. There are impactful differences with respect to the strictness of social norms, the patriarchal models and breadwinner perceptions between urban and rural areas, in so far as rural areas having stricter social patriarchal norms. The perceptions also depend on education levels, with more conservative views on female and male role among lowly educated groups.

Perceptions differ between countries, between regions, and between regions in the same country as progress in politics and the legal and institutional frameworks move forward at a different pace. For example, access to affordable and quality childcare plays a significant role in women's participation in the labour market and there are major differences between PCs in that regard. The lack of affordable and quality childcare arrangements is one key reason for women not being active in the labour market, or not being able to fully exploit employment options, or to progress in their careers.

Therefore, it is not just labour market policies that have an impact on women's employment; there is a need for coordinated action between employment, social, education and economic policies, and the policies need to be accompanied by legislative reforms to guarantee equality and effectively prohibit discrimination in the different policy areas.

A related obstacle that women face when trying to fully participate in the labour market and in the economy via entrepreneurial activities is their more limited access to resources, compared to men. These obstacles consist mainly of: limited access to land and to financial capital, the weaker empowerment of women to make loan decisions, less well-developed financial literacy among women, and women's limited access to informal networks.

4. Active labour market policies to promote the employment of women

The focus of this chapter is on active labour market programmes (ALMPs), mainly implemented by PES although some measures are implemented by other government agencies, private actors or NGOs. Projects with financial support from international donors are also included.

Responses to the ETF Survey were received from 16 countries. These countries cover different labour market challenges in their countries, in terms of employment rates and employment gender gaps, unemployment rates and other labour market patterns (see Chapter 2). They also cover differences in the strictness of social norms (see Chapter 3).

Table 1. Countries for which answers to ETF Survey on active labour market programmes were received and/or additional sources consulted

Central Asia	Eastern Partnership	Western Balkans and Türkiye	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan Uzbekistan	Armenia Georgia Moldova Ukraine	Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Kosovo Montenegro Serbia Türkiye	Jordan Tunisia Egypt Morocco

Source: Author's compilation

Furthermore, lessons from selected other middle-income economies around the world and from the EU countries are shown in section 4.9., to support conclusions on the conditions for successful implementation.

In addition to the answers provided by the survey, examples of measures in some of these countries have been investigated from other sources. The choice of countries and measures was driven by the aim of showing a variety of measures responding to various and contrasted gendered labour market patterns within each region.

4.1 Overview of priorities and strategies – gender mainstreaming and targeted activities

Policy priority

In the context of this study, an ETF survey was conducted during January and April 2023 which contained a question on the priority given to women's employment in their countries. This was contrasted with two other questions on whether respondents think current labour market measures and training measures properly support women's employment and social inclusion. Public Employment Services and/or Labour Ministries of ETF countries that answered the ETF questionnaires state that promoting women's employment is a very high or high priority in nearly all respondent countries. The majority of respondents to the same survey state that current labour market measures properly support women's employment and social inclusion. Both policy areas are not categorised as high policy priorities, indicating that more needs to be done. Some respondents strongly agreed that current labour market measures and training measures properly support women's employment (e.g. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Figure A16 in Annex 1), although women face major barriers in accessing quality jobs and have much more limited chances than men. Therefore, there might be an issue of awareness about the need for greater efforts to promote female employment.

Another explanation for this assessment would be that employment promotion and skills development measures are perceived designed for their purpose, but that other policy measures, in particular those tackling social norms, are not in place. In Tunisia, for example, Tunisia's Committee for Individual Freedoms and Equality (COLIBE) drafted a report that proposed aligning national legislation with the constitutional provisions, including in the area of gender equality (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

The political commitment to reducing gender inequalities is often reflected at government level by developing gender strategies and creating gender units or gender departments focused on gender equality issues. Examples of the development of gender strategies, and coordination between Ministries can be found in some SEMED countries. Not all SEMED countries have, however, developed gender strategies or coordinating policies (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). In fact, SEMED is a region with the lowest activity rates of women and largest gender gaps. Examples of gender strategies can be found in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. One example was found in the Eastern Partnership PCs and one from Central Asia. Other countries in the region may make progress in the development of gender strategies, e.g. with the support of international organisations⁵⁴.

Examples of gender strategies at national level

In Egypt, in 2017, the National Council for Women (NCW) launched the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, and one of its pillars is economic empowerment⁵⁵. Actions foreseen under this pillar include: expanding support services for working women, eliminating discrimination in the labour market, reducing unemployment and promoting the employment of women, as well as promoting female entrepreneurship. Target values have been fixed for most of the objectives. However, female employment rates are still low, and unemployment and gender inequalities remain high. The Egyptian Ministry of Manpower (MoM) has established a Gender and Non-discrimination Unit.

The Jordanian Ministry of Labour has established a Directorate for Women's Work to address gender issues and contribute to policies promoting women's inclusion in the labour market.

In Türkiye's women's section of its 11th Development Plan 2019-2023, policymakers adopted numerical targets to increase female labour force participation and employment rates as well the share of female entrepreneurs. Foreseen activities include: entrepreneurship advice and training, the development of digital skills and use of digital tools for business development, introducing support mechanisms for female entrepreneurship in rural areas, continuing practices such as training, internships and on the job training, and developing approaches to attract more women into STEM (Republic of Türkiye, 2021).

In Albania, the National Strategy for Gender Equality and its Action Plan has been adopted and revised several times, and the new National Strategy for Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2021 – 2030 has been developed (Suta et al. 2021). In addition, the gender dimension is included in other strategic documents, such as the Action Plan for Supporting Entrepreneurial Women 2014-2020, the National Strategy for Employment and Skills, and Albania's Economic Reform Programme. The National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030 also aims at identifying and profiling inactive women through cooperation with social services. The priority is to integrate inactive women in the labour market through promoting gender-sensitive training, flexible employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship in particular in rural areas, and through the social economy.

Serbia has a comprehensive gender policy framework, consisting of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 and the Implementation Action Plan (2016-2018), as well as the Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and Implementation Action Plan (2014-2018).

The evaluation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2018, supported by UN Women, stresses the uneven implementation of different policy areas, and the success was assessed as

⁵⁴ See for example the World Bank 2021 and UNDP Gender Strategy in Tajikistan

<https://www.undp.org/tajikistan/gender-strategy>

⁵⁵ <http://ncw.gov.eg/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/final-version-national-strategy-for-the-empowerment-of-egyptian-women-2030.pdf>

limited in 2018. The lack of financial resources, fragmented, small-scale interventions, and a lack of coordinated action are among the key factors that inhibit more effective implementation in some areas of the Action Plan⁵⁶. A Coordination Body for Gender Equality has been established by the government with a mandate to coordinate, monitor and support the development of a national strategy and support its implementation (Suta et al. 2021).

In the case of Kosovo, the Agency for Gender Equality, located in the Office of the Prime Minister, prepared the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality 2020-2024⁵⁷. The three strategic pillars are (i) economic empowerment and social welfare, which includes the objective of increasing the employment rate among women from 12.3% in 2017-18 to 17% by 2021-22 and 20% by 2024; (ii) human development, roles and gender relations; and (iii) women's rights, access to justice and security (Suta et al. 2021).

In Ukraine, the National Strategy of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women until 2030 and the Strategy of Gender Equality in Education until 2030 were adopted in December 2022. In addition, it has introduced the process of gender audits in the Ministry of Education and Science and educational institutions (answers provided by Ukraine to the ETF Survey). The ILO had developed a gender mainstreaming guide for the Public Employment Service in 2011⁵⁸.

In Uzbekistan, the Senate approved in 2021 a strategy for achieving gender equality by 2030⁵⁹. Under this strategy, the Commission on Gender Equality of the Republic of Uzbekistan was set up, and the Committee on Women and Gender Equality was established in the Senate. In the strategy, clear targets are set out and a budget is allocated for supporting the education of vulnerable girls and women, and entrepreneurship among women, amongst other measures. In the area of employment, the strategy also aims at expanding childcare, taking into account the needs of women in remote areas, understanding issues and providing support to vulnerable migrant women and vulnerable return migrant women. Starting from 2022, the outcomes will be monitored and inter-agency cooperation on collecting gender statistics will be improved.

Approaches for promoting gender equality

Strategies developed by key actors for implementing active labour market policies (ALMPs), including the Public Employment Services (PES) and labour ministries and other relevant actors, such as NGOs and international organisations and international donors, can in principle be gender-neutral, gender-sensitive, gender-responsive or gender transformative. Gender-neutral policies and activities are assumed to affect women and men equally. This however assumes that there are no gender differences. As long as gender gaps exist they tend to foster disadvantages. Gender-sensitive and gender-responsive activities (as for example gender-responsive budgeting) take the specific needs of women into consideration and seek to reduce or even overcome gender inequalities in the labour market. Gender-responsive policies and activities address gender-based barriers and enable structures, systems and methodologies to be sensitive to gender. They aim at closing gender gaps and eradicate gender-based discrimination. Gender sensitiveness is to 'understand and give consideration to socio-cultural norms and discriminations in order to acknowledge the different rights, roles and responsibilities of women and men in the community and the relationships between them. Gender sensitive policy, program, administrative and financial activities, and organizational procedures will: differentiate between the capacities, needs and priorities of women and men; ensure that the views and ideas of both women and men are taken seriously; consider the implications of decisions on the situation of women relative to men; and take actions to address inequalities or

⁵⁶ https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2019/evaluation%20nap%20for%20ge/evaluation%20nap%20for%20ge%202016-2018_compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=2559

⁵⁷ <https://abgj.rks-gov.net/assets/cms/uploads/files/Programi%20i%20Kosov%C3%ABs%20p%C3%ABr%20Barazi%20Gjinore%202020-2024%20-%20ANGLISHT.pdf>

⁵⁸ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-budapest/documents/publication/wcms_181626.pdf

⁵⁹ <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/114128/143281/F-1296270958/UZB-114128.pdf>

imbalance between women and men' (definition provided by WEDO)⁶⁰. Gender mainstreaming refers to a strategy that involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination⁶¹.

To properly implement gender equality in policymaking, the European Commission advocates gender sensitiveness: this implies analysing the issue from a gender perspective and then taking appropriate measures to counteract existing gender inequalities. In its EU Gender Action Plan III, the European Commission seeks to support gender-responsive budgeting via programmes to support public finance management. Another policy area is the building of stronger gender responsive education systems to promote gender equality and deliver more equitable education results for girls and boys. This requires gender responsiveness in recruitment and training of teachers, elaborating training material and work with parents and communities (European Commission 2020).

Gender-transformative measures go a step further and seek to change social norms and gender stereotypes, that are at the roots of gender inequalities. Gender-transformative measures may include for example the support of women to train and take up jobs in male-dominated occupations and for men to orient themselves more towards women-dominated occupations. Other examples would include measures targeted at men to take over more domestic and care responsibilities.

Public Employment Services and their main target groups – an overview

Public Employment Services (PES) are key actors for implementing Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs). The establishment, development and institutional capacities of PES as well as the availability of ALMPs and the size of allocated budgets vary significantly among the ETF partner countries. According to the EU and OECD classification, active labour market programmes are grouped into the following categories: employment services (including job-search measures and labour intermediation); training measures; employment incentives; supported employment and vocational rehabilitation (for people with disabilities); direct job creation programmes; and start-up incentives. Evidence for countries for which data are available shows that budgets for ALMPs as a percentage of the GDP in the ETF partner countries are relatively low when compared to the EU Member States (MS) (see e.g. Suta et al. 2021 for the Western Balkan countries).

In the following section, a few insights into the development of PES and ALMPs and their target populations are given.

Central Asia

Kazakhstan has built up PES capacities and has developed ALMPs for more than a decade. It has focused activities on vulnerable groups. Kyrgyzstan started in 2013 a programme that provides a number of ALMPs with training on public works to combat unemployment and address the high level of emigration. Overall, 58% of those attending the training found employment because of the training and it has been linked to the fall in Kyrgyzstan's unemployment rate since 2010. Uzbekistan has implemented a job creation programme since 2009. In 2015, about 60% of the created jobs were in rural areas. Uzbekistan has also implemented entrepreneurship programmes (ETF 2022).

Eastern Partnership countries

In the Eastern Partnership countries, consisting mainly of upper-middle-income economies (apart from Moldova), the countries have greater fiscal ability to run extensive ALMPs, such as search and assistance. Many countries in this region have significant PES legacies. For example, Armenia founded its State Employment Agency in 1991 on its independence and has since developed integrated social services. Policy priorities have shifted from granting unemployment benefits to ALMPs. In 2016, spending on ALMPs amounted to almost 0.05% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Measures encompass training and employment incentives for young people, people with

⁶⁰ <https://www.un-redd.org/glossary/gender-sensitive>

⁶¹ <https://eiqe.europa.eu/it/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming?lang=el>

disabilities, seasonal employment, and some measures targeted at women. The success of ALMPs is limited as only 5% of the registered unemployed participate in an ALMP and only 10% of unemployed requested assistance from the PES (Robertson and Melkumyan, 2021). Ukraine is another country in the region with a history of ALMPs, starting with the transition to a market economy. In 2001, the Ukrainian PES became one of the first state institutions to incorporate the principles of equal treatment of men and women in its work. In Azerbaijan, job fairs represent the largest employment services with large numbers reached by the PES through this method. On the other extreme, Georgia only established its own PES in 2019, with a small number of offices (ETF 2022). In Moldova, less women than men were employed through a job subsidy programme (ETF 2020) and participants were mainly older workers.

Western Balkans and Türkiye

In the Western Balkans, the institutional capacity of PES has been increased over the past decade, and ALMPs have been implemented. PES' staff capacity in the Western Balkan economies has improved. PES' staff are in general receiving training on implementing new work methods, ALMPs and dealing with specific target groups, as well as on modern tools to profile jobseekers, activation strategies. However, the OECD finds that high caseloads (high number of registered unemployed per PES' counsellor) may hinder them from effectively implementing counselling and job placement services. The PES in the region have a high number of long-term unemployed and other hard-to-place jobseekers on their registers and have been focusing their programmes on disadvantaged groups, but the most vulnerable groups are still under-served. Expenditure on ALMPs as a percentage of GDP have been low. Targeted measures to promote female employment have been in the area of ALMPs, although they are mostly small in scale. Progress has been made in training employment office staff on gender equality issues in Albania (OECD 2021a). This could be a relevant practice for other countries also in the region.

Türkiye, a country with medium to high institutional capacity and resources, is running diverse ALMP programmes (ETF 2022). A first labour intermediation institution was created in 1946, and the Unemployment Insurance Fund was established in 1999. In 2003, the institution was transformed to the current PES İŞKUR⁶². From 2015 and 2018 İŞKUR and ILO implemented 'Women to Get More and Better Jobs: Women's Empowerment for Decent Work in Türkiye Project'. The target audience of the project was unemployed women registered with İŞKUR. Within the scope of the project, a Women's Employment Action Plan was prepared by the National Technical Team consisting of public institutions, employee-employer representatives and NGOs under the leadership of İŞKUR. Gender equality representatives were determined in İŞKUR Provincial Directorates in 81 provinces and training was given to these representatives (Republic of Türkiye, 2021).

Southern and Eastern Mediterranean

SEMED countries have established PES and activities have been undertaken to increase their capacities; however, the institutional capacities remain restricted. One of the more advanced PES is the Tunisian one, which also spent more of its budget on ALMPs than in Morocco, for example, in the mid-2000s (Banque Africaine de Développement, 2011). The Tunisian PES Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant ANETI was created in 1993 and is under the supervision of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment⁶³. Over the past decade the target groups have comprised unemployed people, and in particular young people, the Tunisian workforce abroad, workers who have been laid off for economic and technical reasons, low-skilled people and populations with specific needs. The staff case load, i.e. the number of jobseekers per PES counsellor, is high (ETF 2014). Given the high levels of youth unemployment and unemployment among graduates of higher education institutions, the Tunisian PES ANETTI has paid specific attention to these groups and implemented dedicated programmes.

⁶² <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/>; Presentation at Mutual Learning event organised by ETF on 8 and 9 March 2023 in Rome

⁶³ <https://www.emploi.nat.tn/fo/Fr/global.php?menu1=75&libre=1132>

Active labour market programmes and gender – an overview

This section includes an overview of Active labour market programmes (excluding training measures and career guidance services, which are discussed in Chapter 5). Examples of single measures, including those implemented by other actors than PES, are given in sections 4.3 to 4.7.

Table 2 shows the PES and Labour Ministries in ETF PCs that have responded to the ETF Survey and implement specific programmes for women in place or include women or specific groups of women among their target groups. A few countries pay specific attention to women's needs when implementing ALMPs. Those countries that have programmes specifically targeted at women focus these programmes mainly on women with caring responsibilities, some on women returning to the labour market and on single parents. These approaches are gender-sensitive and tackle one of the main labour market barriers for women, which is combining work and caring responsibilities (see sections 3.1 and 3.4). To respond to the specific challenges linked to female labour force participation and employment patterns in rural areas (see section 2.1), a few countries have put specific measures for women in rural areas in place. Female university graduates are seldom targeted, even though they face major challenges to enter the labour market in a number of ETF partner countries (see section 2.2).

Table 2: Active labour market programmes (excluding training measures) for men and women

Type of Labour Market Policy	For women only / or with a particular attention or focus on women	For both men and women	For women with young children or other caring responsibilities	Single parents	Women returning to the labour market after a child rearing break	Women in rural areas	Female university graduates
Job search services	BA (attn), RS (attn), TJ (attn)	AL, AM, GE, JO, KZ, XK, KG, MD, RS, TJ, TN, TR, UA	AL, ZU	AL, KG, RS, ZU	AL, KG, TJ	AL, JO, KG, MD, RS, TJ, UZ,	AL, KG
Employment incentives	AL, BA (attn), XK, RS (attn), TN	AL, AM, GE, JO, KZ, XK, ME, MD, RS, TN, TR	AL, GE, XK, ME, TR, UZ,	AL, RS, UZ,	AL, AM	AL, RS, UZ,	AL, TR
Supported employment and vocational rehabilitation	RS (attn), TJ (attn), UZ,	AL, GE, JO, KZ, XK, KG, MD, RS, TJ, TN, TR, UA, UZ,	AL, AM, UZ,	AL, RS, TJ, UZ,	AL, TJ, UZ,	AL, RS, UZ,	AL
Direct job creation programmes	RS (attn), TJ (attn)	AL, AM, GE, JO, KZ, KG, ME, MD, RS, TJ, TN, TR	AL, UZ,	AL, KG, RS, TJ, UZ	AL, KG, TJ	AL, KG, RS, UZ,	KG
Start-up incentives	BA (attn), JO, RS (attn), TJ (attn)	AL, AM, GE, JO, KZ, KG, ME, MD, RS, TJ, TN, TR, UA	AL, UZ,	AL, RS, TJ, UZ,	AL	AL, KG, RS, TR, UZ,	AL, UZ,

Source: Responses of PES and/or Labour Ministries to ETF Survey, Jan-March 2023

Registration at PES and participation in ALMPs

In addition to women-targeted ALMPs, ALMPs that are not specifically targeted at men and women may benefit women in practice more, either because women are referred more often to these programmes in practice, or because these programmes are more effective for women.

There is some evidence that unemployed women tend to register more often than men with PES. This may be linked to the fact that they have less good informal networks for job-searching or have specific employment barriers.

Comparable quantitative information is not available for all countries yet. Some examples are given below for the different regions.

Central Asia

In the case of Kazakhstan, the number of applicants for labour market intermediation services was 339 409 men and 341 901 women⁶⁴. At the end of 2022, the share of women employed in permanent jobs was 47% (Kazakhstan answers to the ETF Survey). Comparable information for other Central Asian countries is not available.

Eastern Partnership countries

In Armenia, women with children under 3 years have been one of the target groups of 12 major employment programs implemented since 2015 by the State Employment Agency (ADB 2019). Comparable information for other Eastern partnership countries is not available.

Western Balkans and Türkiye

In Albania, more unemployed females have registered with the PES than males⁶⁵. This is explained by lower skill levels of unemployed women, the number of older unemployed females, and less well-developed professional networks. Overall, women participate more often in active labour market policies (ALMPs) than men. The National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2022 sets the objective of carrying out gender-sensitive profiling and counselling of unemployed jobseekers (Suta et al. 2021).

In Serbia, unemployed women tend to register more often with the Public Employment Service than their male counterparts. In 2019, women represented 54.2% of the registered unemployed with PES, while women represented 47.5% of the unemployed according to the Labour Force Survey. One strategic area of the National Employment Strategy 2016-2020 is dedicated to the promotion of economic participation of women from vulnerable groups, including rural women, Roma women, women over 60 years of age, young women, pregnant women, women with dependent children, women of minority sexual orientation, victims of violence, women with disabilities, single mothers, women from ethnic minority groups, unemployed and unskilled women. (Suta et al. 2021). According to responses to the ETF Survey, more women than men participated in job-search activities, career guidance activities as well as in the different active labour market measures shown in Table 2. Women were more likely to participate in job-search clubs (60%). Women have also been more likely to participate in traineeships for the unemployed with a high school education (National report of the Serbian PES of 2022).

Likewise, in Kosovo, women are overrepresented among the unemployed according to the Labour Force Survey data. However, women remain underrepresented among the registered unemployed and the Employment Agency's participants in active labour market policies: women represent around 45% of all registered jobseekers and they only represent 34% of participants in ALMPs and 27% of trainees in Vocational Training Centres (in 2016). The Strategy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (2018-2022)⁶⁶ identifies women as a target group. Target groups for ALMPs are women from rural areas (Suta et al. 2021).

⁶⁴ <https://gender.stat.gov.kz/en/category/7>

⁶⁵ The share of women among registered jobseekers was 53.2% in 2019 (Instat Albania, 2020).

⁶⁶ <https://mpms.rks-gov.net/en/wpdm-package/strategjia-sektoriale-2018-2022/>

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, more women than men participate in job-search activities, training measures and employment incentives and start-up incentives. The Bosnian PES also stated in the ETF-survey that it is implementing specific ALMP measures targeted at women.

In Türkiye, women participate more often than men in some ALMPs. For example, within the scope of the Community Benefit Program (TYP) run by the Turkish PES İŞKUR, the number of women who participated in 2019 was 182 306 and the share of women in the total number of participants was 58.9% (Republic of Türkiye 2021).

Southern and Eastern Mediterranean

In Jordan, there are no specific activities targeting women (ETF 2021). In Tunisia, the main ALMPs include internships and employment incentives, primarily for young people, as well as programmes to support self-employment. In Tunisia, more women than men participated in programmes targeted at young university graduates, which corresponds to the highest share of graduates (ETF 2014). In 2019 and 2020, more projects have been funded by the Tunisian PES for women than for men (Aneti 2020). In Egypt, Barsoum (2017) found that only a small share of ALMP interventions (9%) had explicitly targeted female youth. These interventions work at the two ends of the socio-economic spectrum, either targeting low-income women for training in traditional needlework or more privileged women through campus-based job placement programmes for university students. One-third of the interventions stated that they targeted educated youth in urban areas, while the rest did not specify education as a targeting criterion. Interview data, however, reflected that a closer focus was put on educated groups.

More research on the participation of women in ALMPs implemented by the PES is necessary. In the next section, some programmes targeted at women are included, e.g. in rural areas or programmes to support childcare.

Conclusions

Several ETF partner countries have developed comprehensive strategies to promote gender equality and have introduced targeted employment services at women or at a specific group of women. Comprehensive approaches include also the identification and needs profiling of both unemployed and inactive women, and to target services and ALMPs accordingly.

In most ETF PCs for which data are available, more women than men tend to be registered with the PES and more women than men tend to participate in ALMPs and in job-search services. However, there are significant differences in the male/female shares among participants in different types of ALMPs. A number of countries have targeted ALMPs and job-search services at women with specific employment barriers, in addition to ALMPs that are equally available to men and women. The main target groups among women in mainstream ALMPs, or for dedicated ALMPs, are women with caring responsibilities (in particular for employment incentives), single parents, women returning to the labour market after a child-rearing break, and women in rural areas (with a focus on job search services and start-up incentives). Female university graduates are targeted in fewer countries than the other referenced groups of women.

4.2 Employment incentives and direct job creation programmes

Overview of rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF partner countries

Employment incentives and job creation programmes (sometimes also called Public Works) are a frequently found types of ALMPs. Employment incentives are mainly provided in the form of hiring subsidies and reductions of social security contributions and are mainly used to compensate for initial lower productivity (or assumed lower productivity). It is expected that the productivity of subsidised workers will increase; and therefore, that this disadvantage will disappear over time. The incentives are generally provided for disadvantaged groups (Brown and Koettl 2015). Other programmes include also tax reduction schemes. Employment incentives are often used to bring young people with

different education levels into employment. The objective of job creation measures is to create additional jobs for disadvantaged groups who face particular challenges to enter the labour market. In addition, they may be used to test their willingness to work and to improve employability. Direct job creation schemes can be based on employment contracts and wage subsidy schemes, or they can function as in-work benefit schemes without an employment contract. They have in common that the work should be 'additional' and not a substitute for regular employment.

Several ETF PCs are running specific employment incentive programmes for women or pay specific attention to women when implementing employment incentive programmes, including in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Tunisia. In six out of sixteen ETF PCs, specific target groups include women with caring responsibilities and, in three countries, single parents (Table 2). Only two countries had employment incentives targeted at women returning to the labour market after a career break (Albania and Armenia), although career breaks linked to child-rearing are significantly lowering the employability of women. Women in rural areas were targeted with specific employment incentive programmes in three countries (see also below).

In the following examples, ALMPs and specific activities are mentioned that cover groups of women facing different types of employment barriers in different economic contexts, as an illustration of the types of activities available (ranging from addressing employment barriers of vulnerable groups, high-skilled, women with caring responsibilities, to women affected by economic crisis).

In Albania, various employment incentive programmes target women and women in vulnerable groups, such as the programme to encourage the employment of unemployed jobseekers in difficult situations, and the programme to encourage the employment of unemployed female jobseekers from special groups. The latter programme is designed to integrate into the labour market marginalised women such as: Roma women, former trafficked women, older women, single mothers, women suffering from disabilities, and women victims of violence (MoHP, Expertise France and World Bank 2020 and OECD 2021a).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Employment Service runs an Employment for Women measures with the aim to facilitate integration in the labour market for unemployed women and prevent long-term unemployment and contribute to increasing the employment rate of women. As part of the implementation of this measure, by the end of 2021, 326 contracts were concluded with employers for the purpose of employing 517 women (response to the ETF Survey). In addition, there are measures targeted at women aged 40 and older in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (OECD 2021a). Older women face significant employment barriers.

In Kosovo, measures for women with three or more children and other hard-to-place women are available (OECD 2021a).

In Morocco, the Idmaj programme to promote youth employment offers wage subsidies to (young) graduates has been one of the major ALMPs that has been in place for many years. An earlier evaluation of this Idmaj programme showed overall good results, as nearly two-thirds of participants have found formal employment subject to social security contributions after completing the programme. Labour market integration outcomes were better for the highly educated as compared to those with VET training. The labour market integration outcome was slightly lower for women (61%) than for men (65%) (ETF 2015). However, recent evaluation, using a propensity score matching method, shows mixed results as the programme had a positive effect on reducing unemployment and a negative effect on wages in 2010. Both effects were only observed for women and not for men. Women could increase their probability of finding employment by 11 percentage points by participating in the programme. The programme also showed a positive employment impact for young people below the age of 25. The programme had overall negative effects for the long-term unemployed, participants with a high education level, and participants aged 25 and above. For those groups, a negative effect on employment conditions and wages largely overshadowed possible higher probabilities of finding employment (Chatri et al. 2023).

In Jordan, the NOW (New work opportunities for women) programme was a pilot project supported by the World Bank that was specifically tailored to help young female community college graduates in

finding work. It was designed following extensive consultations with local counterparts and stakeholders that included private sector employers, students, and community college graduates⁶⁷. It was found to be successfully implemented in order to facilitate female graduate labour market entry (ETF 2022).

The German agency for international cooperation GIZ has implemented the Employment Promotion Programme in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of Labour consisting of employment initiatives in four selected governorates, aimed at increasing the supply of jobs and improving the employability of jobseekers. In sectors with particular potential to boost women's employment, the project implements additional targeted labour market measures. An evaluation of this programme was conducted, based on a triangulation of different methods. Employment impacts of the surveyed beneficiaries vary among different occupational areas/sectors, region and educational level but not by gender. The highest employment quotas of the sampled beneficiaries were identified in the occupational areas/sectors of Health (Nursing/Hospitality services at hospitals, Medical Laboratory Technicians, Pharmaceutical Technicians) and ICT, while the lowest employment quotas were found in the Beauty, Gas Stations/Fuel, and Hospitality/Restaurant sectors. (GIZ and the Ministry of Labour 2019)

Conclusions

Evidence shows that at least some ETF countries have been setting up employment support programmes for specific groups of women. There is also some evidence, that mainstream employment incentive programmes may have a higher employment impact on women than on men. However, this would need to be confirmed by the evaluation of evidence from more countries in order to draw firm conclusions.

4.3 Programmes to promote female entrepreneurs

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF Partner Countries

Supporting women to become self-employed and to create their own businesses is an important policy field to increase the employment of women and to reduce the large gender gap in entrepreneurship. Another key activity is to support women to grow their businesses, however, these activities usually fall outside the programmes offered by PES. Programmes implemented by PES and Labour Ministries can be found in most of the ETF partner countries that have responded to the survey and evidence is available for other countries. Start-up incentives for jobseekers are provided by PES and relevant actors. Nearly half of the countries that responded to the ETF survey paid specific attention to women in their start-up measures are run dedicated programmes, mainly for women in rural areas and single parents (Table 2 above). Entrepreneurship programmes implemented by the PES have been found to be small-scaled (e.g. in the case of Albania, OECD 2021a). In addition to the ALMPs implemented by PES, a variety of other actors implement programmes to promote female entrepreneurship. However, often, women participate less in start-up incentive measures and entrepreneurship measures than men⁶⁸. Across the PCs, it appears that more effort needs to be put into promoting female entrepreneurship.

Some ETF partner countries have developed comprehensive strategies, as the following examples illustrates.

⁶⁷ http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01300/WEB/0_CO-89.HTM

⁶⁸ For example, in 2017, women received 17% of the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency's (KIESA) grants for their enterprises, while men received 83% of these grants.

Box 2: Strategy to promote female entrepreneurs in Armenia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia

In Armenia, the National Agency for the Promotion of Small and Medium-sized Entrepreneurs undertook several research and assessment projects to identify the most critical gender-based obstacles to entrepreneurship that women were facing. It adopted a new strategy on women's entrepreneurship and implemented the Women's Entrepreneurship Support Sector Development Program for female entrepreneurs of microenterprises and SMEs. Specific activities include (i) providing start-up support training programs in which half of the participants are women, (ii) sensitizing and training key staff of financial institutions about the specifics of women's entrepreneurship to help remove barriers faced in accessing credit, (iii) initiating a new scheme for gender-responsive loan guarantees, (iv) launching a mentorship and networking program between women entrepreneurs, (v) promoting public awareness campaigns and success stories about female entrepreneurs, and (vi) introducing capacity-building programs to develop and maintain a sex-disaggregated database and reporting system and design nonfinancial products in support of female entrepreneurs (ADB 2019).

In 2017, Jordan launched its National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2018-2020 with support from the German Development Agency (GIZ). Its focus was on reducing the gender gap in finance (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). However, cooperation between the various actors involving different ministries and agencies, NGOs and the private sector is essential, but this is often not well implemented. Jordan and Egypt implemented national public-private collaboration platforms – Gender Parity Accelerators – to close gender gaps in labour for participation, wages and leadership. The initiatives looked at potential of future of work to boost women's employment in high growth sectors⁶⁹.

Morocco created the national Integrated Program for Women and Girls' Economic Empowerment by 2030, 'Morocco-Attamkine', deployed locally (Union for the Mediterranean, 2022). While Tunisia launched in 2022 a new National Programme for Women Entrepreneurship (Raidet) with the aim to support over the next five years female entrepreneurs through allocation of credits and specific support measures (www.raidet.tn).

Specific measures to promote access to finance are implemented by a variety of actors and often targeted at specific groups of women. The measures involve a wide range of activities, from increasing the share of women with bank accounts, granting micro-credits and other financial support, and supporting cooperatives (see some examples below).

There have been also changes in laws and regulations. A few examples of the different approaches in different countries are shown below:

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, by the end of 2021, 272 women were included in the Entrepreneurship for Women 2021 programme implemented by the Federal Employment Service, and received financial support to become self-employed (response to ETF Survey).
- Microcredit programmes grant access to finance to economically vulnerable women (e.g. in Egypt, Türkiye, Kosovo, Serbia for non-agricultural activities in rural areas). In some countries, microcredit programmes have been expanded to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 (e.g. in Egypt) (Union for the Mediterranean 2022, Suta et al 2021).
- In Uzbekistan, an expansion of microcredit entrepreneurship programmes occurred, with just below EUR 1 billion committed to such programmes, helping 200 000 women to work from home through their own businesses (ETF 2022).
- In Türkiye, a programme strengthening women's cooperatives was set up in 2018. Women's Cooperatives Working Groups were established in provinces across the country, annual business plans were prepared, various activities and meetings were organised. 27 111 people have participated in 642 workshops, training and information meetings held so far, 223 women's cooperatives have been visited, and 129 new women's cooperatives have been established (Republic of Türkiye 2021).
- In Tajikistan, a new Rural Economy Development Project will help create jobs and income in agri-processing and community-based tourism sectors. The target groups are the most vulnerable

⁶⁹ <https://initiatives.weforum.org/accelerators-network/gender-parity>

persons, including female heads of households, returning migrants and NEETs, most of whom are female (World Bank 2021, Tajikistan).

- Kyrgyzstan has tested an innovative way of funding entrepreneurship programmes for women. One of the differences between social bonds and classic bonds is that the former are target bonds, the attracted funds will be used for social projects. The country issued its first-ever gender bonds in 2022. Gender bonds are loans at a reduced interest rate that are designed to grow women entrepreneurs' businesses. The aim of the bonds is also to improve the welfare and livelihoods of women, by contributing to gender equality, and to women's rights and economic empowerment⁷⁰. The initiative was the result of a partnership between UN Women Kyrgyzstan, the Bank of Asia, the Institute for Economic Policy Research of the Kyrgyz Republic, Astana International Financial Centre's Green Finance Centre (AIFC GFC), the Kyrgyz Stock Exchange, and the financial company 'Senti'. 82 000 gender bonds worth KGS 1 000 each were put up for public auction. The period of their circulation is three years, and the total value of bonds is KGS 82 000 000.
- In Jordan, a number of banks are implementing programmes to enhance women's financial inclusion and their economic empowerment. For example, Bank EI Etihad joined the Global Banking Alliance for Women in 2017 and started a gender-sensitive approach within the bank. The bank has special programmes for its female clients. Its Shorouq Programme offers an array of services focusing on female clients, such as special savings accounts, collateral-free loans and start-up loans for women entrepreneurs. Female clients also have the opportunity to benefit from mentoring and networking services. The bank also offers the option for women on maternity leave to pause loan repayments. The bank's 'Comeback programme' supports women who took a career break to focus on their families to get back into the labour force through training, coaching, networking and practical work experience opportunities (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).
- In 2020, Egypt offered financial reductions for women-friendly banks. A strategy of collaboration with the financial sector has been developed by Morocco since 2020 through the Intelaka Program (Union for the Mediterranean, 2022).

Self-employed women are often in a vulnerable situation (for example when they are own-account workers) (see Chapter 2). Another issue is informality. Therefore, the formalisation of businesses is another area of intervention tackling the large share of informal employment (for example, formalisation of home-based businesses in Jordan, and small businesses in Morocco and Tunisia; OECD/ILO/CAWTAR 2020).

In addition to improving access to financial resources, and property, women need to possess entrepreneurship skills. For example, entrepreneurship training and mentoring for new entrepreneurs are being implemented Türkiye. Half of the participants so far have been women (Union for the Mediterranean, 2022). Financial Literacy trainings and seminars were organised in 2019 (Republic of Türkiye, 2021). Serbia integrates entrepreneurship across its educational programmes. Entrepreneurial studies in Serbia are gradually moving to the cross-curricula integrated key competence approach. Entrepreneurship key competences are included in the curricula at several education levels. These policies are not gender-specific (Suta et al., 2021). However, women may particularly benefit from this approach.

Conclusion

There is evidence that a few ETF PCs have developed national strategies to support female entrepreneurship. In general, a number of actors have implemented a series of smaller or larger programmes and activities to improve women's access to open bank accounts and to access credits. They also provide training on financial inclusion and entrepreneurship training. Some of these programmes are targeted at specific vulnerable groups of women or promote activities in specific sectors (e.g. agriculture, tourism). Most of the recorded activities can be regarded as being gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. There is less evidence of transformative measures (e.g. the

⁷⁰ <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/press-release/2022/11/first-gender-bonds-issued-in-kyrgyzstan>

promotion of women's entrepreneurship in high-profit sectors). Given the high gender disparities in entrepreneurship and the big obstacles faced by women to establish and grow their businesses (see Chapter 2), these programmes and activities are crucial but gender equality is still far from being achieved. Comprehensive approaches, including activities to reduce gender-based discrimination across a wide range of actors (e.g. such as financial institutions) are important.

4.4 Programmes that target women in rural areas

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF partner countries

Women in rural areas have been identified as being particularly vulnerable and face a number of socio-economic issues (including for example issues related to the emigration of men, limited access to property and financial resources, poor local economic dynamism, a lack of access to transportation, and the prevalence of marked gender stereotypes). Therefore, a number of ETF PCs have set up programmes to support women in rural areas.

Responses to the ETF Survey show that several countries offer specific job search services for women in rural areas, including in Albania, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (see Table 2). Specific employment incentive schemes, including wage subsidies for example, are available for women in rural areas in Albania, Serbia and Uzbekistan, according to the same ETF Survey. These three countries also provide supported employment programmes and vocational rehabilitation measures for women with disabilities in rural areas. These three countries, as well as Kyrgyzstan, also implement direct job creation programmes for women in rural areas. Start-up incentives measures are targeting women in rural areas in these last mentioned four countries, and in Türkiye.

Several programmes and strategies of different Ministries in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia have included activities to improve the economic empowerment of women in rural areas (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). These strategies are also embedded in strategies to support sustainable agriculture (see section 4.7). In Egypt, the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 includes a number of references to rural women. Tunisia is considered to have the most comprehensive approach among SEMED countries (see box 3).

Box 3: Empowering women in rural areas in Tunisia

Tunisia has a specific strategy and action plan for rural women: the National Strategy for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls 2017-2020, which is led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Family, Children and Seniors. The strategy consists of the following five pillars and includes an action plan for its implementation: (i) Economic empowerment: school-to-work transitions and skills mismatches, improved access to resources (including land) and markets, formalisation of the informal sector and promotion of the social and solidarity economy; (ii) Social empowerment: reduce school dropout, improve access to decent work (pay equity, social protection, better working conditions); (iii) Participation in public life and local governance; (iv) Improved quality of life; (v) Production of data and statistics: data disaggregated by sex and location (rural/urban) for use in the design and evaluation of development plans. Concrete actions that have been implemented include, for example, extending the social protection system to different categories of rural women, and promoting and improving conditions of the social and solidarity economy. The OECD concluded that the Rural Women Strategy is comprehensive, but that it is too early to assess its impacts. Gender equality activists in Tunisia look forward to the adoption of the social and solidarity economy draft law, so that rural women's organisations can benefit from a legal framework and additional support services (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

In addition to specific support programmes and counselling, legislative changes with regard to property rights and inheritance are important. Implementation of such initiatives may however be difficult in practice (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). The Union for the Mediterranean plans to launch in 2024 a regional Agenda on Gender and Food security targeting women working in the agri-food value chains, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.

Conclusions

Given the multiple employment barriers that women face in rural areas, targeted programmes to promote labour market activity and improve the quality of employment for women in rural areas are highly relevant. Several ETF partner countries have implemented ALMPs that target women in rural areas. However, little evidence has been produced on whether the approaches have been effective so far. Given the continuing large differences in the female employment rates and job quality between rural – and in particular remote – areas and urban areas, there may be a need to scale up initiatives and measures to achieve good results. Comprehensive strategies that also consider issues such as childcare availability, transportation, access to training opportunities, local economic development and gender stereotypes are essential to address gender inequalities in rural areas and require the close cooperation of various actors on the ground.

4.5 Measures to support the green transition

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF partner countries The green transition of the economy is associated with job destruction in specific sectors, job creation in others, and the need to adapt and enhance skills across occupations across the economy and the labour market. As has been shown in the section 2.5 above, women are at risk of not participating equally in new job opportunities in technical, mainly VET-trained occupations, which are often male-dominated. Reducing gender inequalities in equipping the workforce with relevant skills for these green jobs will be important. Employment opportunities may emerge in other sectors that are more accessible by women.

PES and relevant agencies and ministries have been putting in place programmes to mitigate the socio-economic effects of downsizing industries (in particular in coal mining areas, and downsizing of energy-intensive industries). These industries have been traditionally male-dominated and the local economy is dependent on these industries, and the effects of transition are being experienced not only by workers but often by the whole socio-economic environment. This would call for programmes that take the indirect economic and employment impact on women into account. Bridging the gender divide would require additional measures based on local opportunities, and this has rarely been addressed (World Bank 2021). These considerations would be relevant for those ETF partner countries affected by downsizing energy-intensive and polluting industries in some of their regions.

Measures for skills adaptation and upskilling to equip workers with skills needed for green jobs will be an important area for PES activities in the future. PES may be involved to support skills adaptation at regional and sectoral levels, in coordination with a variety of actors.

PES and relevant ministries and agencies have been setting up programmes to promote job creation in the 'green' economy. A few countries have started to include a women's dimension. Jordan's National Green Growth Plan includes a dimension on social development which focuses on the benefits of green growth for women (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

Strategies to support sustainable agriculture have been put in place in a number of countries. As many women are employed in the agricultural sector, these strategies affect their employment. Two examples of approaches that include a gender dimension in greening the agricultural sector implemented in ETF PCs are given in the box below.

Box 4: Programmes supporting sustainable agriculture and women in Morocco and Egypt

In Morocco, the Plan Maroc Vert⁷¹ (Plan Green Morocco) is led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Rural Development. It also addresses the situation of rural women. One pillar of the plan is solidarity agriculture, meaning the creation and support of agricultural co-operatives and income-generating activities mostly benefiting rural women (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

Egypt's Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy includes the goal of strengthening the role of women in agricultural development. A gender team was part of the strategy design team which ensured the mainstreaming of gender throughout the strategy. This strategy is currently being updated (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). Smaller initiatives have been implemented for many years. One example of a private sector-sector initiative in Egypt to improve the lives of rural women is the SEKEM initiative⁷². SEKEM was founded in 1977 and consists of a group of companies producing high-quality and ecological agricultural products, which are sold within Egypt and exported. It consists of several sectors, such as a biodynamic farm; trading companies for foods, herbal teas and beauty products, medical herbs and medicines; and organic cotton products. SEKEM provides employment for around 2 000 people (20% of them are women). Besides its economic and ecological dimension, SEKEM also influences social and cultural life as it has a medical centre and an education system including nurseries, schools and a university. The SEKEM Group of companies receives financial assistance e.g. from the European Commission, the Ford Foundation and USAID, the Acumen Fund and the German development finance organisation. In 2015, SEKEM developed a Gender Strategy for a Balanced Society in co-operation with the GIZ, with a focus on women's economic empowerment. For example, working mothers are guaranteed a place in SEKEM's nursery for their babies when they resume work. Egyptian legislation does not offer paternity leave, but SEKEM grants fathers the right to unpaid paternity leave for a period of one month. SEKEM is also offering diverse work arrangements for women, such as flexible working hours to encourage them to stay in the labour force while enabling them to meet family responsibilities. SEKEM is working towards reaching a 50% female employment rate in all its sectors. (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

Conclusions

The green transition is expected to affect employment destruction and creation, with significant differences arising between regions and sectors. The share of women's employment in declining and growing sectors varies according to the sector. Documented evidence on policies and activities shows that only a few approaches among ETF PCs include a gender dimension in strategies on greening the economy and labour markets. Identified policies and activities relate mainly to sustainable development in the agricultural and tourism sectors. It will be crucial to widen the sectoral perspective, and to identify opportunities and obstacles for women's employment across all sectors and to consider the direct and indirect employment effects of regional and local economic restructuring processes. It will also be important for ETF PCs to identify activities that equip women with relevant technical skills in addition to soft skills (see also Chapter 5).

4.6 Childcare support to promote the employment of women

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF partner countries

The participation in early childhood care services has generally a positive impact on female labour force participation. For the OECD countries, it has been shown that the increase of female participation in the labour force over the past 30 years was associated with the increase in early childhood education and care. Countries in which a higher share of children are enrolled in early childhood education and care are also displaying higher female labour force participation rates (OECD, 2018). Also, for ETF PCs, the lack of available quality childcare has been identified as a main barrier to female labour force participation (see section 3.4).

⁷¹ <https://www.agriculture.gov.ma/fr/data-agri/plan-maroc-vert>

⁷² <https://sekem.com/en/index/>

Examples of activities to link the promotion of employment for women and support for childcare are highlighted below, and include the quantitative expansion of childcare facilities, increase in quality, the implementation of voucher systems, and awareness-raising activities.

An example of the development of a strategy to improve the availability of childcare in rural areas is shown in the following box. Improving access to childcare in rural areas is critical to increase female activity rates. In rural areas, the availability of childcare options is usually lower than in urban areas.

Box 5: Objective to improve access to childcare in rural areas in Albania

In Albania, the National Strategy on Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2016-2020 foresees the provision of nurseries and kindergartens to enhance economic empowerment of women in rural areas (MoHSP, Expertise France and World Bank, 2020). The 'Local Governance Mapping in Albania 2020' report prepared for the Ministry of Interior⁷³ shows that men and women are generally satisfied with the administration of kindergartens in their municipalities.

In addition, the Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021 prepared by the Government of Albania improved the quality of early childhood education by increasing the number of nurses and pedagogical staff and reducing the number of children per staff⁷⁴ (OECD 2021a).

Some ETF partner countries have developed strategies and measures to better connect access to childcare and employment. This includes supporting childcare to allow women with childcare responsibilities to access jobs (see Box 6). There is some evidence that measures to support childcare opportunities at company level sustain the employment of women with care responsibilities (see Box 7).

Box 6: Combining childcare support and employment services in Montenegro

In order to include young women with children of pre-school age in the labour market in Montenegro, the Employment Agency in cooperation with the ILO is implementing the Pilot Project 'Activating Women', starting in 2021. The project is targeted at inactive women with childcare responsibilities and women who have lost their jobs because of COVID-19 pandemic⁷⁵. The project includes the provision of job-search services for women, comprising individual and group information, counselling, career guidance and training activities to make them fit for a job match with private employers. The women involved in the project benefit from the activation fee, childcare and transportation fee, and the employers receive on-the-job training subsidies.

Box 7: Childcare provision for employed women in Türkiye and Jordan

In Türkiye, the 3-year project 'Promoting Registered Employment of Women through Corporate Child Care Services' is carried out by the Social Security Institution, funded by Türkiye and the EU, starting in 2019. The objective of the programme is to ensure that women with young children between 0-60 months who are at risk of dismissing from employment due to their childcare responsibilities can participate in registered employment, return or remain in the employment market through supported corporate childcare. Within the scope of the project, it is aimed to pay an average of 10 250 mothers a monthly grant for 24 months until their children are 72 months old. The project also supports the employment of educated caregivers (Republic of Türkiye, 2021). The results of this programme are not yet known.

In Jordan, a programme to expand childcare facilities at the place of work has been implemented by the NGO SADAQA with support from different international organisations such as the ILO and UN Women. As a result of SADAQA's work, the number of workplace day-care centres has risen from 20 in 2011 to 124 in 2018, according to the Ministry of Social Development. To achieve this result, SADAQA has been working directly with the companies to explore tailored childcare options. SADAQA has approached hundreds of companies to raise awareness on the benefits of offering childcare on the premises (e.g.

⁷³ https://www.ilo.org/budapest/what-we-do/projects/WCMS_802226/lang--en/index.htm

⁷⁴ Government of Albania, Economic Reform Plan 2019-2021

⁷⁵ https://www.ilo.org/budapest/what-we-do/projects/WCMS_802226/lang--en/index.htm

increased productivity and decreased turnover and absenteeism) and it has provided guidance. To achieve better results, employers should get financial support, e.g. through tax incentives (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

Experiences show that the effectiveness of the measures vary. A number of reasons explain the varying effectiveness, but point mainly to the importance of the quality of childcare and to the strictness of social norms. In Egypt, as part of the government economic reform program, the Ministry of Social Solidarity started the National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP) as part of the economic reform programme launched in 2016. The NECDP has dual goals: to increase female labour force participation and to equip children with cognitive and socio-emotional skills.

Through the NECDP, the ministry aims to establish new nurseries, to improve the quality of existing nurseries and to promote the importance of nurseries for children and especially working mothers. A study has been carried out on the impact of taking up employment services and childcare services. An experiment test was conducted by Carria et al (2022), to examine whether a combination of employment services and childcare subsidies has important complementarities. Women with children aged one-to-five in low-income areas of Greater Cairo were cross-randomized to receive childcare subsidies (voucher) or employment services. Vouchers were given for 25% or 75% of the median nursery costs. The study focused on mothers who lived near the participating nurseries. The research examines the impact of job-search outcomes for women three-to-four months after the baseline survey and allocation of the support to approximately half the planned sample.

The authors also discuss the take-up of the two interventions and contextualize the take-up and outcomes with information on norms about women's work and childcare. The results of the study suggest that deeply enshrined social norms and values hinder the effectiveness of the programme. The reasons for not using the childcare services offered included long distances to the nursery, the young age of children, too high fees, and concerns about the safety and quality of nursery care. Men were found to be more doubtful and less predisposed to accepting childcare than women. Another finding was that women did not take up employment services or did not apply for job offers because: husband opposition (in 25% of the cases), women did not want to work (19%), the workplace was too far (18%), preferences for job characteristics were not matched (17%), or no child care was available (14%). The conclusions drawn by the authors of the study were that policies to promote women's employment in Egypt need a larger package of interventions to tackle also gender norms, childcare quality, employer discrimination and the fundamentals of labour demand (Zeitoun 2022⁷⁶).

Measures to involve fathers more in childcare responsibilities have been found to be important to reduce gender inequalities. One key measure is to introduce leave for fathers. For example, in Montenegro a positive effect of taking up parental leave for fathers can be the improved balance between work and the private life of parents, and a more even distribution of unpaid work. (Responses to ETF Survey). Comparable evidence from other ETF countries has not been reported. This would benefit from being investigated in more detail across countries.

Conclusion

To conclude, the link between the availability of childcare and employment for women varies significantly across countries, as underlying social norms play a significant role. In addition to better linking the availability of childcare and the take up of employment or maintaining employment, the quality of child care and tackling social norms and gender stereotypes are impactful. Thus, gender-responsive strategies need to be supplemented by gender-transforming approaches. For example, actions to increase fathers' involvement in childcare through changing laws and conditions for taking father's leave have started to be implemented in a number of countries. Awareness-raising activities,

⁷⁶ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/do-childcare-subsidies-and-employment-services-increase-womens-employment-egypt>

for example implemented by international organisations in the SEMED region, have been organised to redefine gender roles, masculinity and fatherhood (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR 2020).

4.7 ALMPs to mitigate the labour market effects of COVID-19

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF partner countries

COVID-19 has had detrimental effects on women's employment (see Chapter 2). To cope with the impact of COVID-19, a number of countries have implemented job retention schemes. However, as women are more often in precarious working conditions, they may be less well covered by these programmes. Moreover, social protection measures often cover women less effectively.

Programmes to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 implemented in ETF partner countries were generally low in scale, although activation programmes were endowed with a bigger budget than during the global economic crisis in 2008/09. There is no evidence for a specific gender-responsive approach in ALMPs during COVID-19 (ETF 2022).

Examples of labour market policies in the context of COVID-19 from the Western Balkan economies include reinforced activation programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina that focused on the recently unemployed. In Albania, a wage subsidy scheme has been implemented through a loan to businesses, which covers employee salaries for a three-month period. In Kosovo, wage subsidies have been implemented for workers in pandemic-affected industries. A wage subsidy has also been made available for businesses hiring new staff.

In Türkiye, a wage subsidy programme allows employers to claim three hours' staff wages per staff per day. As in the EU, in the Western Balkans and Türkiye PES in the region have taken steps towards a digital delivery of services while managing an increased inflow of jobseekers (ETF 2022).

In the Eastern Partnership countries, mainly income-protection measures and a small number of new ALMPs have been put in place. In Armenia, the government has subsidised wages equal to the minimum wage and encouraged more flexible working hours. Georgia has removed income tax from salaries up to EUR 218. In Moldova, the guaranteed minimum income level was increased. In Ukraine, the PES moved key services online, such as outreach to and registration of newly unemployed cohorts, job search assistance, counselling, case management of vulnerable jobseekers, training, skilling and reskilling activities (ETF 2022).

The main ALMP responses in the Central Asia and South and East Mediterranean regions have been in the area of skills development, including shifting to online delivery of training (e.g. Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan). Kazakhstan has developed a number of upskilling and reskilling initiatives alongside the development of the digital Skills Bank of the Electronic Labour Exchange (Enbek.kz), which includes a focus on standards for several professions and free online training accessible through the platform (ILO, 2020b).

A common measure in many countries, particularly during the peak of the first wave of the pandemic, was to introduce or expand leave for parents (e.g. in Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Uzbekistan), extension of sick-child leave (Uzbekistan), leave for care responsibilities for other family members (Türkiye), and protection against the dismissal of parents who are absent for care responsibilities (Türkiye) in order to help reduce the extra burden of unpaid care work during lockdowns and school and day-care closings (UNECE 2020). As shown in section 2, women were mainly affected by additional caring activities during the pandemic. While these measures help women to maintain their employment, they also tend to cement gender roles.

A report by UN Women found that in 22 countries in the Arab States region, 225 social protection and labour market measures in response to COVID-19 were adopted. However, only 24% of these measures in 19 countries was found to be gender-sensitive in that they strengthen women's economic security or address unpaid care. Egypt is among those countries in the region that did relatively more

in that respect (UN Women 2021⁷⁷). Globally, two-thirds of gender-sensitive responses taken addressed gender-based violence, 22% addressed women's economic security, and 14% unpaid care work. Examples of measures in the area of childcare in the Arab States region focused on responses to women's economic security and respect for women, while policymakers in Europe, North America Australia and New Zealand focused more on unpaid care work.

Conclusions

ETF partner countries have implemented gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Nevertheless, women may have benefited less from support to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, given that they have been in more fragile situations, such as higher inactivity rates and that the bulk of support measures targeted support for companies and workers.

4.8 Programmes for vulnerable female migrants

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF Partner Countries

Migrants often encounter barriers and discrimination when trying to access adequate employment. Refugees and asylum seekers are a highly vulnerable group among migrants. More refugee flows in the recent past have been associated with the war in Ukraine and Syria. Women refugees are particularly vulnerable. In the following section, approaches for supporting labour market integration for women displaced from Ukraine and Syria are discussed.

Programmes for persons displaced from Ukraine

Nearly three quarters of refugees from Ukraine of working age are women. The European Temporary Protection Directive⁷⁸ of 20 July 2001 was rapidly adopted after February 2022. This Directive gives beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine the right to access the labour market as employees or self-employed, 'subject to rules applicable to [a given] profession'. The EU and ETF have set up an information hub on education-, training- and employment-related information for facilitating integration for displaced persons (e.g. qualification recognition, Labour market service information, etc.)⁷⁹.

Many EU MS have set up specific activities to facilitate the labour access of people displaced from Ukraine, which has often not been the case during previous refugee crises. PES are one of the main actors that integrate persons with this profile into the labour market. They implement placement activities and use ALMPs. For example, the French PES Pôle Emploi's programme 'Les Entreprises S'engagent' (meaning 'Companies get involved') offers now an interface where firms can fill in a form to be contacted by Pôle Emploi about procedures for hiring people displaced from Ukraine.

The assessments of skills and recognition of qualifications is another high priority. Professional recognition, however, is reportedly often a lengthy process. To speed up this process, some countries, for example Poland and Latvia, have waived some standard qualification requirements in areas such as teaching and healthcare for displaced people from Ukraine. Spain is putting in place fast-track assessment for medical qualifications⁸⁰. Many PES are offering language training programmes, as language is a barrier to accessing the labour market. In Germany, nearly half of the refugees staying in Germany for six months had done German language training. 60% of children got a place in a childcare centre.

⁷⁷ UN Women, Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. Factsheet Arab States Region. 22 March 2021, <https://data.undp.org/gendetracker/>

⁷⁸ Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32001L0055>.

⁷⁹ <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/education-and-work-information-ukrainians-and-eu-countries>

⁸⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10526>

As shown in Chapter 2, a comparatively high share of these refugees is in employment⁸¹. Earlier evaluation shows the positive impact of ALMPs on the uptake of employment by refugees and their participation in training proved to be the most effective factor (Kasrin and Tübbicke 2021).

Programmes for female refugees from Syria

Specific programmes for female refugees from Syria have been implemented in Türkiye, Jordan and Egypt (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR 2020). A project supported by Norway in Türkiye⁸² includes training for a minimum of 1 000 targeted Syrian women and girls in digital/computer skills, financial skills, and Turkish language skills in order to increase their employability. In addition, they receive gender-responsive protection support (referrals, psycho-social support, legal assistance, emergency cash assistance, etc.).

Conclusions

EU countries, Türkiye, Jordan and Egypt have implemented employment services and measures for refugees from Ukraine and Syria. An important element – for both men and women – has been the training of language skills. Approaches in all countries have also included gender-responsive activities related to childcare. In addition, in Türkiye, female Syrian refugees have received gender-responsive protection support, and digital and financial skills training.

4.9 Conditions for successful implementation

Lessons from ETF Partner Countries

There is little information available about the outcomes and impacts of ALMPs for men and women in ETF PCs. Evaluations of ALMPs – measuring the net effects of measures on employment, enrolment in training, and income, using counterfactual impact evaluations and/or qualitative methods – are conducted rarely. As shown by the results of the survey among ETF PCs, the lack of institutional analytical capacity was identified as a top problem for the evaluation and impact assessment of ALMPs, followed by limited data availability, and weak use of evaluation findings in policy formulation (see Figure A3.1 in Annex 3).

Evaluations of ALMPs targeted at women or assessing the impact of ALMPs from a gender perspective are even more rare. Available evaluation results have been presented in this Chapter. Nevertheless, the collected evidence allows some preliminary conclusions to be drawn on the conditions of successful implementation of ALMPs through a gender lens.

First of all, strict social norms and deeply-held gender stereotypes are limiting the success of ALMPs, in particular those directed at more conservative target groups in rural areas. Experience across countries shows that increasing the rates of female labour force participation takes decades. Inequalities are being reduced in many countries over time, and the implementation of ALMPs together with the improved availability of childcare have certainly contributed to the progress. However, inequalities and gender segregation persist. Awareness-raising activities and gender-transformative measures are needed to change social norms.

Evaluation evidence on the impact of entrepreneurship support is scarce and highlights the complexity of multiple barriers faced by women wishing to become entrepreneurs and to grow their businesses. Social norms and behaviour are adding to other barriers (see Box 8).

⁸¹ <https://iab.de/presseinfo/ukrainische-gefluechtete-bringen-gute-voraussetzungen-fuer-die-teilhabe-in-deutschland-mit/>

⁸² [06.11.2021-ENG-Norwegian project brief \(unwomen.org\)](https://iab.de/presseinfo/ukrainische-gefluechtete-bringen-gute-voraussetzungen-fuer-die-teilhabe-in-deutschland-mit/06.11.2021-ENG-Norwegian-project-brief-(unwomen.org))

Box 8: Evaluating an unconditional cash grant on income-generating activities in Tunisia

An experiment conducted in Tunisia demonstrates the complexity of employment barriers for women. A randomised control trial of a multi-faceted programme was conducted. The programme aimed to address women's financial and human capital constraints as well as the gender-specific constraints. About 1 000 women received an unconditional cash grant worth USD 768 in PPP terms (TND 634), corresponding to four times the median monthly income of the respondents at baseline. These women also received one-day of financial training, which covered themes such as money management, credits and investments. Women were encouraged to invest the money in an income-generating activity or in skills development. For some of the participants, women's partners were included in the training programme, in order to encourage gender dialogue. The results show the positive impact of the cash grant and training programme on women's likelihood of having an income-generating activity, and on their income; however, this was the case only if they participated without their partners. When partners were involved, women were less likely to have income-generating activities and they earned less. Positive impacts on income-generating activities could also be found on other household's members. The authors conclude that traditions interfere with programmes aimed at stimulating women's employment.

It can be presumed that some of the ALMPs have the potential to be effective under the given conditions; however, the scale of the measures may be too small to make a significant difference. Many programmes and initiatives are donor-financed, or co-financed and this may represent a threat to the long-term sustainability of the measures.

The success of measures and initiatives is increased when a variety of actors are involved, including several ministries and agencies, NGOs and the private sector. Implementing comprehensive strategies is challenging, but it is likely to increase impact in the long-term.

Lessons from the EU MS on gender strategies implemented by PES

Processes and activities of the PES in the EU are often gender-neutral, despite the recommendation of the European Commission to be gender-sensitive. This is to avoid discriminatory action – whether it be negative or positive discrimination. Only a sixth of European PES stated in a questionnaire for an EU PES Network study that they implemented specific procedures or actions for women⁸³. Specific procedures for women accessing PES are less common, as only 16% of PES respondents declare that their institutions had adopted such procedures (Sansonetti and Davern, 2021). In the EU, often PES opting for a gender-neutral approach do so to comply with their philosophy of offering tailored services, responding to individual needs. It is not always easy to disentangle whether a PES follows a strategy of gender-neutral processes and activities, or whether PES do not have a dedicated gender strategy. Gender mainstreaming principles may mask specific activities implemented for women. Nevertheless, most PES and other institutions in the respective countries closely monitor gender inequalities of the labour market and are thus aware of the situation.

In the EU, a few PES have included a gender dimension when managing economic crises and restructuring. Across the EU, significant funds had been spent on mitigating the labour market impact of COVID-19. The major policy instrument were job retention schemes, paid in general to compensate workers or employers for income lost caused by a reduced number of hours (or no work at all, depending on the country). The objective has been to retain people in employment. These schemes have been heavily used in some countries and have overall succeeded in containing the rise in unemployment (Duell et al. 2021). Online and hybrid training formats have been put in place. In addition, countries have adopted measures to improve access to social protection for non-standard workers, but coverage of temporary workers and self-employed remained uneven across EU countries.

A study of the European PES Network shows that in a context of individualised and often gender-neutral strategies pursued by PES, only limited changes in ALMPs had been made to address the

⁸³ Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta and Poland.

impacts of COVID-19 on women. In the EU, only nine EU MS⁸⁴ gave priority to keeping childcare facilities open or to reopen them after lockdowns. More leave measures have also been granted to caregivers in EU countries. For the EU, evidence shows that more women than men took extra carers' leave, suggesting a gender imbalance in the division of household tasks (European Commission, 2022). Nevertheless, a few PES have implemented new measures for women. For example, in Greece, this mainly concerned vulnerable groups of women. In Italy, the PES has focused on raising the level of women's participation in the labour market. Italy has introduced a 'National gender equality certification system', based on the definition of standards for the certification of gender equality and related incentives for companies that successfully conclude the certification process (Duell, 2023).

With regard to the EU structural funds, investment implemented by PES (ESF, but also ERDDF social investment) prioritise gender-sensitive measures. The evaluation of those measures is obligatory, such as for example the assessment of concrete contributions to the promotion of gender equality⁸⁵.

In the EU, there are few examples of specific gender-sensitive or gender-responsive approaches to mitigate negative employment impacts and promote the employment of women in new job opportunities linked to the green transition. Programmes to mitigate the employment effects of large-scale restructuring in coal mining and energy-intensive industries have been found to rarely take the direct and indirect effects of women's employment into account and are considered to be gender-blind⁸⁶. One of the few examples was a gender-responsive approach taken in Romania. This involved a Small Grants Scheme supported by the World Bank focused on several areas of particular concern to mothers, including child protection, access to childcare to allow mothers to work, and facilities for kindergartens (World Bank, 2021).

Lessons from EU countries also show examples of counselling, coaching and mentoring for specific groups of women. For example, several local projects exist in Germany to provide counselling and coaching as well as information on getting qualification recognised in Germany.

Experiences from the EU shows that it may be necessary to implement gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and transformative and affirmative actions to close gender gaps and increase gender equality.

Lessons from middle-income economies around the world

Earlier studies, such as for example by the ILO (King, 2017), have collected examples of specific PES activities and ALMPs targeted at women, including gender-sensitive ALMP, that have been implemented since the 1990s. Lessons from this study show that a range of middle-income economies have set up targeted ALMPs for women that have been shown to be effective (see examples in the section below). However, the literature review identifies also gender-blind approaches, such as for example in the area of direct job creation (public work programmes), or for programmes targeting heads of households in a number of African countries. The literature review includes examples of Employment-Intensive Investment Programmes that over time have become more gender-sensitive. Gender-responsive activities include for example the promotion of childcare to allow women to work. From the examples given, it can be tentatively concluded that gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches are being implemented in middle-income economies. However, extensive evidence on encompassing approaches, applied to all ALMPs and employment services, is missing.

Conclusion

It is essential that the activities of PES are closely monitored using sex-disaggregated data and mirrored with findings on gender inequalities observed in the labour market. To achieve greater effectiveness of ALMPs in order to increase gender equality in the labour market, PES should review their approaches accordingly and raise awareness among counsellors, target measures and/or

⁸⁴ Austria, Finland, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia (remained open), Romania, Sweden (remained open)

⁸⁵ Fondazione G. Brodolini, Metis GmbH, Applica, Ockham IPS (2020) Study for the evaluation of support to Employment and Labour Mobility, for the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

⁸⁶ See Glossary of gender equality terms at the end of the report.

introduce affirmative actions, as needed. There is also a need to assess the effect of specific ALMPs on women, to avoid policies and activities that are gender-blind and to prevent gender discrimination in accessing ALMPs.

Lessons on the effectiveness of employment incentives and job creation programmes from the EU and other parts of the world

Lessons from the EU and OECD countries

Employment incentive programmes were found to be effective in general if they are well targeted and implemented in a comprehensive way, considering the whole PES service delivery chain (Card, Kluve, Weber 2010, see for an overview for example Duell et al 2016). Evaluations often find a greater impact of employment incentives on female than on male employment (see for a literature review Chatri et al. 2023). In particular, programmes which offer a package of services, including counselling, training, job search assistance, and workplace subsidies have had success, especially when addressing sectoral needs. A few employment incentive programmes focused on women and implemented by PES have targeted vulnerable groups of women. One example is a programme implemented in Croatia in 2016 to integrate women with a lower level of education in rural areas and from vulnerable groups (among them, women with disabilities, women victims of human trafficking, women victims of domestic violence, asylum seekers, young women drug addicts, Roma women, and homeless women). However, here is no evidence on the impact of this programme (Sansonettil, Davern 2020).

In the EU, PES and relevant ministries have been implementing employment incentive programmes to promote the green transition, although still at a low scale. Examples include employment incentives in the blue and green economy (e.g. in Spain, Slovenia), direct job creation programmes in environmental projects. PES are also increasingly working with other partners in the local areas, in particular in the field of upskilling and retraining. Only a few initiatives have a specific gender dimension (Duell et al. 2021). There is no evaluation evidence available on how effective ALMPs have been in promoting the green economy and whether approaches have increasingly taken gender aspects into account.

Lessons from middle-income economies around the world

Programmes targeted at women have been delivered in Argentina (Proyecto Joven), Chile (Chile Joven), Colombia (Jóvenes en Acción), the Dominican Republic (Juventud y Empleo), Panama (ProCaJoven), and Peru (ProJoven). All such programmes have had positive employment effects to differing degrees, with the largest beneficiaries being women (ETF 2022, referring to a study by Almeida et al., 2012⁸⁷). A further positive effect found in Eastern and Central EU countries as well Eastern European transition economies may consist in reducing informality (Kuddo, 2009). Some programmes were found to work better for women than for men, but overall few evaluations have looked at the gender dimension of these initiatives.

Evaluation results for direct job creation programmes are mixed. Evaluation evidence on job creation programs in a range of countries shows uneven or even a negative impact, in particular with regard to large-scale job creation measures. A serious problem of stigmatisation can be triggered. Moreover, employers reported that productivity was low and additional investments in monitoring and firm-level supervision were necessary. On the positive side, evaluations indicate that public works can help more disadvantaged groups as a poverty or safety net programme (Kuddo, 2009). Furthermore, job creation programmes might have a positive impact on the motivation of participants. Despite the contradicting evaluation results, a few issues emerge which are likely to increase the effectiveness of job creation measures (Meager and Evans, 1998):

- a working environment close to that of the regular labour market;

⁸⁷ Almeida, R., Behrman, J. and Robalino, D. (eds), *The right skills for the job? Rethinking training policies for workers*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2012.

- combinations of job creation schemes with periods of training for the participants; integrated approaches dealing with the other social and family problems that the jobseeker might face;
- smaller scale schemes tend to be more effective with regard to the quality of the job offered and displacement effects.

More generally, integrating training elements within direct job creation programmes and youth internships can be seen as good practices.

Lessons on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship programmes from the EU and other parts of the world

Lessons from the EU and the OECD

A review of the impact evaluation of entrepreneurship programmes in the OECD show mixed evidence on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship support for women. Evidence tends to suggest that entrepreneurship training has a positive impact on female participants in terms of the likelihood of starting up a business. Evaluations from the United Kingdom found that men were more likely than women to hire employees as a result of entrepreneurship training. A survey of women scientists in Poland suggests that more intensive individual support is beneficial for women (OECD/European Union, 2017). Impact evaluations of cash grants and training programmes aimed at stimulating entrepreneurship tend to find little effect on income and business outcomes of female recipients, but sizeable positive effects on male counterparts (literature review by Gazeaud et al. 2022). This is linked to the numerous constraints that women face (see section 3.2).

There is little evidence on specific start-up programmes implemented by European PES. Sansonetti and Davern (2021) do not report on entrepreneurship measures in their report on gender equality measures of European PES). Also, evidence on the effectiveness of start-up support for women is scarce (European Commission 2017).

Research points to the importance of role models. There is clear evidence that maternal role models are positive influences on their daughter's self-employment propensity (Greene et al. 2011⁸⁸). Several OECD countries have implemented women ambassador and mentoring programmes (OECD/European Union, 2017). According to the OECD, there is evidence that a variety of access-to-financing programmes for women entrepreneurs are effective, although more evaluation is needed (OECD/European Union 2017).

Lessons from other middle-income economies

A review of the evaluation studies on the impact of ALMPs show that start-up incentives comprise in general small programmes implemented by the PES. Other agencies and Ministries run in general larger entrepreneurship programmes. Start-up incentives are found to be particularly effective in low- and middle-income countries when partnered with training, mentoring or coaching. They lead to particular success for women in low-income countries (ETF 2022).

⁸⁸ Greene, F., H. Liang and S. Marlow (2011), 'Like Mother, Like Daughter? Analyzing Maternal Influences Upon Women's Entrepreneurial Propensity', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 37(4), pp. 687–711

5. Career guidance, upskilling and reskilling

5.1 Overview

Although women are generally better educated than men in the ETF PCs, their employment situation is affected by a skills mismatch linked to the field of studies. Moreover, women are underrepresented in technical vocational education and training. Inequalities in employment and occupational gender segregation are a result of vocational choices that girls and young women make early on. Therefore, gender-sensitive career guidance is essential to widen women’s occupational choices. Career guidance can be gender transformative if it succeeds to attract more women to male-dominated occupations and more men to female-dominated occupations.

Women are also often found to be overqualified in their jobs, and this is not only due to the field of study but also owing to prejudices and discrimination by employers. As women have more often unstable working biographies than men, because they significantly take career breaks more often, it is important that they take part in upskilling and reskilling measures.

Nearly all PES and Labour Ministries that responded to the ETF Survey have in place (re)training measures for both men and women. Three countries (Albania, Armenia and Uzbekistan) indicated that they had specific measures in place for women with caring responsibilities and in total six countries were implementing measures for single parents (including, in addition to those already mentioned, also in Kirgizstan, Serbia and Tajikistan). Three countries adopted measures targeted at women returning to the labour market (Albania, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan). Evidence shows that specific attention paid to women when implementing training measures is given in some of the Western Balkan economies and in Tunisia. Five countries out of 16 indicated that they developed targeted measures for women in rural areas. Female university graduates as a specific target group were mentioned only by two countries. Career counselling and guidance is provided by 13 out of 16 respondents (Table 3). Specific target groups among women were less often mentioned in the area of career guidance than for training measures. However, as will be shown in section 5.2, some more countries implement specific activities for attracting girls into certain male-dominated professions.

Table 3: Career guidance and training measures for men and women

Type of labour market policy	For women only / or with a particular attention or focus on women	For both men and women	For women with young children or other caring responsibilities	Single parents	Women returning to the labour market after a child rearing break	Women in rural areas	Female university graduates	Others
Career counselling and guidance	RS (attn)	AL, AM, GE, JO, KZ, XK, KG, MD, RS, TN, TR, UA, UZ		KG, RS	AL	RS, TN, UZ	AL, KG	GE
(Re)training measures (all forms including skills assessment and validation)	BA (attn), RS (attn), TN	AL, AM, GE, JO, KZ, XK, KG, ME, RS, TJ, TR, UA	AL, AM, UZ	AL, AM, KG, RS, TJ, UZ	AL, AM, KG	AL, AM, KG, RS, TJ, TN, UZ	AL, KG	

Source: Responses of PES and/or Labour Ministries to ETF Survey, Jan-March 2023

5.2 Examples of gender-sensitive and gender-transformative career guidance

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF Partner Countries

In this section, some examples of gender-sensitive and in particular of gender-transformative career guidance are given (although no examples of vocational guidance for guiding boys into female dominated occupations could be identified). Systematic approaches to gender-sensitive guidance are presumably rare (more research would be needed to confirm this hypothesis). Nevertheless, examples of relevant activities conducted in ETF PCs can be mentioned.

The International Girls in ICT Day led by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a flagship global effort to raise awareness, empower and encourage girls and young women to consider studies and careers in STEM. Since its launch in 2011, more than 377 000 girls and young women have taken part in over 11 400 celebrations in 171 countries worldwide⁸⁹. These days have been implemented by relevant agencies in the countries, also in several ETF PCs (for example in Uzbekistan⁹⁰, Ukraine⁹¹, Georgia⁹², Türkiye, Albania, Tunisia⁹³, Egypt). As was discussed in Chapter 2, young women represent nearly half of students in ICT in SEMED countries, while other regions lag behind.

Box 9: International Girls Days in Türkiye

In Türkiye, 'International Girls in Information and Communications Technology Day' have been organised, along activities for the "International Day of Women and Girls in Science" (Republic of Türkiye, 2021). In the context of the Engineers Girls for Türkiye project, awareness and information activities regarding engineering fields was implemented for students and for their teachers and school administrators. In the 2019-2020 academic year; 2 500 students were reached via these activities in 75 high schools in 20 provinces. The total number of students, parents and teachers reached totalled at 25 000 (Republic of Türkiye, 2021).

Some Western Balkan economies have some made progress in providing gender-sensitive vocational guidance. For example, in 2018, Albania implemented awareness raising on VET and an outreach programme for girls and women in rural areas. However, a corresponding gender-sensitive strategy at pre-primary, primary and tertiary level of the education system was missing (Suta et al., 2021). The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) has launched a campaign 'Choose STEM future' to encourage young women and girls to pursue careers in STEM, by bringing forth inspiring role models of successful women in STEM professions⁹⁴.

Box 10: Kosovo Girls' Day

Vocational education and training (VET) is regulated by specific legislation, i.e., the Law No. 04/L-138 on VET, which explicitly refers to CEG. Under the Law on VET, career guidance and counselling is mandatory for VET institutions. Article 6, paragraph 3.3 of the Law on VET provides that career guidance and counselling should be an integral part of all programs provided by institutions of vocational education and training. Whereas the 'Administrative Instruction (MEST) No. 01/2014', which is now applicable to the organisation and planning of the educational process in VET, obliges VET institutions to send pupils on internships, organise 'open door' days for pupils in the ninth grade (age 15), and organise the 'Girls Day', whereby, for one day girls get to experience an occupation which is considered to be a man's occupation through a 'trial day'.

Source: MEST, Kosovo

⁸⁹ <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/bridging-the-gender-divide.aspx>

⁹⁰ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/CIS/Pages/EVENTS/2022/GirlsinICT.aspx>

⁹¹ <https://dcomfra.vdu.lt/knukim-international-girls-day-in-ict/>

⁹² <https://btu.edu.ge/en/saqarthveloshi-international-girls-in-ict-day-akhali-initsiativebith-aghinishneba/>

⁹³ <http://www.crns.nrnt.tn/event/international-girls-in-ict-day>

⁹⁴ <https://www.balkaninnovation.com/choose-stem-future-campaign-launched/>

Gender stereotypes influencing the vocational choices of girls and boys are laid down throughout the educational cycle. Therefore, some countries are pursuing policies to revise textbooks in a gender-sensitive manner. For example, North Macedonia has made progress in the gender-sensitive revision of schoolbooks (OECD 2021a). In Albania, the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2014-2020 sets the objective to assess whether the VET curricula are gender-sensitive (Suta et al 2021). In Serbia, National Action Plan for Gender Equality set the objective to increase gender-sensitive curricula content in primary and secondary education (Powell et al. 2018).

Conclusions

Examples from several ETF partner countries show initiatives aimed at breaking gender stereotypes early on in the educational process. The initiatives are transformative in the sense that they seek to raise the interest of girls and young women in STEM, and encourage them to study in particular technology, engineering, and ICT. Strategies and initiatives are encompassing and contain gender-responsive elements in the sense that they do not target only girls and young women but also their social environment and parents, teachers and school curricula.

5.3 Participation in training measures

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF Partner Countries

To close gender gaps, including gender pay gaps and gaps in the quality of employment, it is essential to reduce differences in the skills-sets of men and women. Women may encounter barriers – such as access to childcare – to accessing training measures that would increase their-probabilities of finding (better) employment. Training measures to increase employability of workers and to close skills mismatches are implemented by various actors, including PES. Training measures are an important ALMP. The implementation of training measures may be done in cooperation with various training institutions and other actors. Some PES are directly involved in providing training measures, while others either issue voucher or refer jobseekers to training institutions.

In some ETF PCs, attention has been paid to including more women than men in training measures. One example is Türkiye where vocational training courses are organized by İŞKUR for those who do not have a profession or who want to improve their professional skills or change their profession. In 2020, 87 372 people attended vocational training courses and 68.8 percent of the participants were women. On-the-job Training Programmes are organised by İŞKUR in order to reinforce the theoretical knowledge through work practice in the workplace, to facilitate entry into the labour market and to train qualified workforce with employers. In 2009, the number of men participating in this Vocational Training exceeded the number of women. Since then, increasingly more women have been participating than men (in 2021, 72 928 women and 28 573 men)⁹⁵.

This may be relevant for other ETF PCs as well. Specific challenges may exist and it may take longer to achieve parity in training enrolment. For example, in Kosovo, the Employment Agency has been successful in including women in Active Labour Market Policies provided by the Agency as more than 50% of all beneficiaries of ALMPs have been women. However, the Agency has been less successful in including women in Vocational Training provided by the Vocational Training Centres managed by the Agency, where women consist of only 30% of the total participants. This is related to the fact that training for mainly male-dominated professions are offered by these centres. Nonetheless, there is an objective to increase the share of women in VET training. Kosovo is an example of a country with more gender-sensitive guidance and increasing incentives for women to enrol in these courses, and where widening the training offered would be advisable (Suta et al. 2021).

Some gender-transformative programmes to train more girls and young women in STEM-related occupations have been implemented in a few ETF PCs. Examples are shown below in the boxes:

⁹⁵ Deniz Dost, Active Labour Market Policies, presented on 8-9 March 2023 (Rome, Italy) during the ETF policy learning event on the impact of flexible learning and working patterns on the design and delivery of ALMPs.

Box 11: Combining training and other support measures for strengthening access of women to STEM and ICT jobs in Türkiye

The purpose of the project 'Development of Professional Skills of Women' is to facilitate the participation of women in the labour market and increase their employment in IT and manufacturing sectors, through training measures and care support (response to the ETF Survey). The 'Engineer Girls of Türkiye Project (2016-2020)' was carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Limak Holding and had several components. Along with the scholarship opportunities for the students, also internship and employment opportunities, English language training, 'Social Engineering' certificate programme training and mentoring support are provided. In this context, 560 female students have benefited from the scholarship program (Republic of Türkiye, 2021).

Box 12: Promoting enrolment of girls in vocational education and training in Tajikistan

In Tajikistan, a programme to promote enrolment of girls in TVET has been implemented. As shown in Chapter 2, girls participate much less often in TVET than boys and the gender segregation on the choice of study fields is high. In response to these challenges, in 2016, the Asian Development Bank introduced a project aimed at strengthening TVET by supporting the Government of Tajikistan in developing a project to improve the overall system, promoting inclusivity, and removing barriers to young women. Activities include modernising the curriculum and introducing standards, while also developing gender-sensitive learning materials; upgrading the housing facilities for students and making them accessible to girls; developing teacher competencies (with targets for training female teachers); providing students with opportunities to gain practical skills through internships; and using social marketing campaigns to increase female enrolment in non-traditional areas. The project also provides benefits for women, such as the provision of stipends for girls from poor families, internship placements with private firms, and priority placement in dormitories. It is estimated that more than 2 000 women and girls will benefit from this project (ADB 2019)⁹⁶.

ETF partner countries have been implementing specific training measures that target women with caring responsibilities (see box below).

Box 13: Training measures targeted at women includes in Türkiye

In Türkiye, in 2020, 158 443 women participants gained experience through on-the-job training programme, as part of the training programme to obtain a new occupation. With the 'Mother at Work Project' implemented in cooperation with İŞKUR, women are supported to gain professional qualifications and work experience. On the project, women are provided with intensive consultancy services in Job Clubs, and then they are directed to vocational training courses or on-the-job training programmes with 50% employment guarantee. In 2020, 20 247 women benefited from the project. Moreover, childcare support is provided in addition to the payments made to mothers with children between the ages of two-to-five who attend vocational training courses organised in occupations in the industrial sector and on-the-job training programmes in professions relevant for the manufacturing sector

Conclusions

Examples of measures implemented in ETF PCs show that there are gender-responsive and gender-sensitive initiatives for addressing barriers for women to access training and in targeting support at women with caring responsibilities. Therefore, specific programmes have been targeted at women with caring responsibilities. Examples also show transformative measures aimed at attracting more

⁹⁶ Referring to ADB. 2013. Strengthening Private Sector Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) – Initial Poverty and Social Analysis. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/80010/46535-001-ipsa.pdf>. b ADB. 2016c. Project Brief: Tajikistan Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training. <https://www.adb.org/publications/taj-strengthening-tvet-project-brief> (ADB 2019)

women into STEM training fields. Examples also show the interest of implementing packages of measures, including counselling, mentoring, internships in addition to the training measures.

5.4 Upskilling and reskilling measures for developing digital skills

Overview of the rationale, policies and selected practices in ETF Partner Countries

As shown in Chapter 2, women study IT significantly less often than men in most ETF PCs. Most importantly, the digital gender divide across all proficiency levels represents a major challenge, and some countries have taken action to enhance the digital skills of women. However, there is a lack of systematic evaluation of these approaches. Nevertheless, some examples are shown below, with a specific focus on promoting IT and digital skills development in rural areas.

In Morocco, the PES (ANAPEC), with the support of the German international cooperation agency GIZ, has been implementing measures to support youth employment in rural areas (Promotion de l'emploi des jeunes en milieu rural). Within this activity, a new project with the financial support of GIZ seeks to offer young women aged 15-35 who are self-employed, training in e-commerce. The objective is to support women to sell their handicrafts and agri-food products⁹⁷.

In Jordan, the organisation Diamond Hands created more than 2 000 jobs in 2018 and 2019 by supporting women in developing the skills needed to start their projects from home and creating a special platform for advertising their products (ETF 2021).

Several ETF partner countries have implemented training measures at a higher digital proficiency level and support for the transition of women to ICT jobs, as they face higher employment barriers than men (see section 2.3). For example, the Kosovo Digital Economy Project trains rural women in programming and web design to become online freelancers, and shows how digital skills training can create pathways to economic prosperity⁹⁸. More examples are shown below.

Uzbekistan has a number of digital literacy and skills programmes targeting women. Programmes have been mainly donor founded (UNDP 2022). Many of the programmes are implemented in cooperation with IT Park Uzbekistan, a governmental organisation functioning under the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications (MITC). One example is GAP, a 'women's club' newly formed by the MITC in partnership with IT Park Uzbekistan. This project includes a number of key tasks: to support women in IT, to increase their digital skills and to provide them an opportunity to study and work in the IT industry. Another project is TechBika co-organised by IT Park Uzbekistan, the Ministry of ITC, and Horezm khokimiyat (regional authority). Its goal was to train 1 000 girls and women of Khorezm, including those from low income families, in ICT technologies and programming. One Million Uzbek Coders is a project co-organised by the Uzbek Government and the Government of the United Arab Emirates to implement the distance learning methodology of the Udacity platform in schools. It had four pathways: data analysis, Android development, front-end development, and full stack development. The total number of students enrolled in the 'One Million Uzbek Coders' program exceeded 2.5 million. Karakalpakstan is a programme launched by USAID in May 2022. The programme targets rural women and girls in the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

It aims to provide training in crucial ICT skills that will empower women to access a broad range of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. As of September 2022, 60 women and girls had completed their training, and a number of them had found related employment.

In Jordan, the percentage of females enrolled in universities in ICT majors for the 2017 academic year was 37.3%. To improve education to work transition, 47% of the girls who are graduates of ICT participated in the Training and Employment initiative, and 90% of the ICT female graduates participated in Activating Post Offices Initiative for the provision of e-government services (during 2009-2018 programme). The percentage of female employees in the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology reached 44.5% and in the National Information Technology Center reached

⁹⁷ <https://aujourd'hui.ma/actualite/promotion-de-lemploi-la-giz-forme-de-jeunes-femmes-rurales-en-e-commerce>

⁹⁸ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2023/03/the-gender-digital-divide>

45.5% and in the government sector the percentage of female employees in the ICT sector reached 50.4%. However, the percentage of female workers in private companies in the ICT sector reached 29% in 2016 (Union for the Mediterranean). This example shows the difficulties to augment the share of women as ICT specialists in the private sector, while it is easier in the public sector (and as discussed above, the public sector is seen as a preferred employer by women in many SEMED countries). This points to the need for awareness-raising activities and dialogue with the private sector on working conditions which may hold women back.

Conclusions

Support for the development of digital skills of girls and women is key for their employability. Therefore, examples from ETF PCs show that it is relevant to train digital skills such as in the area of e-commerce to strengthen women's potential to be more successful in their economic activities. This is particularly important for women in rural and remote areas as digital technologies help to overcome challenges related to remoteness. In addition, examples from ETF PCs show the relevance of including other actors, such as IT parks and large employers in training and hiring women as IT professionals.

5.5 Conditions for successful implementation of training measures

Conclusions from ETF Partner Countries

There is little evaluation evidence on the success of training measures to promote skills development of women, in line with labour market demand, implemented in ETF PCs. There is also little evaluation about gender-transformative training programmes.

Some countries have implemented measures to enhance participation of women in training, including in activities supporting the development of digital skills at all proficiency levels. Examples suggest that actions of positive discrimination and other gender-transformative measures such as dedicated scholarships have the potential to be successful in attracting women towards non-traditional study fields. Successful training measures benefit from activities that support the education-to-work transition through internship programmes, dialogue with employers and awareness-raising activities.

It can also be concluded that PES activities and programmes of other actors in the area of upskilling and reskilling are limited in their potential impact. To overcome gender stereotypes and change social norms, it is essential to pursue gender-sensitive and gender-transformative measures at a young age and reinforce the change throughout the whole education system. Measures for example include gender-sensitive revisions of textbooks. Moreover, comprehensive approaches need to be taken to reduce early school leaving and the number of young NEETs, as the underlying reasons for inequalities are closely linked to traditions and norms.

Lessons on the effectiveness of training measures for women from other parts of the world

Lessons from the EU MS

Looking at the EU MS' experience, the evaluation that has been carried for the Austrian programme to support women to take up VET training in technical occupations showed positive results. In Austria, the Women in Craft and Technics (FiT) programme has been implemented by the PES since in 2006 and has been among the good practices for reducing gender stereotypes and occupational segregation⁹⁹. It offers women vocational guidance and financial support for enrolling in a technical vocational training. These are typically male-dominated sectors and training programmes in Austria.

⁹⁹ As shown by an evaluation carried out in 2014: https://www.forba.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/FIT-FIA_Endbericht.pdf

Austria is a country with a high occupational gender segregation in the European context. An evaluation of this programme for the period 2015-2020 found it to be successful in bringing women into male-dominated occupations (Bergmann et al. 2022). Another example from Austria, relates to the Re-entry for the Future, a national initiative implemented by the Austrian PES through the women's counselling centres. It provides compensation to women after parental leave who wish to re-enter the labour market (e.g. to do an apprenticeship) (Sansonettil and Davern, 2020).

Lessons from middle-income economies

Escudora et al. (2017) have conducted metadata analysis of evaluation results of active labour market programmes in Latin American countries. They found that training programmes are (slightly) more effective than other types of ALMPs, in particular relative to direct job creation programmes. In terms of targeting, we find that ALMPs in the region seem to work better for women than for men and for youth compared to prime-age workers. In particular, the impact of training programmes appears overall higher among women than men. While some studies find that the impact on earnings and/or employment is significant only for women (referring to studies by Aedo and Núñez 2004¹⁰⁰; Attanasio et al. 2011¹⁰¹), others find a positive impact for both groups, but longer lasting impacts for women (referring to a study by Delajara et al. 2006¹⁰²). Interestingly, impact evaluations of Peru's ProJoven programme suggest that this intervention helped to provide avenues by which women could be drawn into male-dominated industries, and thus reduced occupational segregation (referring to a study by Ñopo et al. 2007¹⁰³). Training measures have also been found to have success in increasing the probability of an unemployed person finding formal employment (Escudero et al. 2017). This is of particular importance also for women, who often work informally, especially in ETF PCs that have a less developed economy.

Training can be slightly more effective in middle- and low-income countries, with the highest level of effectiveness appearing for women-centred training programmes in low-income countries (McKenzie 2017). Training programmes focused on young people in low- to middle-income countries seem less effective than all-age programmes. However, training targeted at women is shown to be effective (ETF 2022 referring to a study by Malo 2018¹⁰⁴).

¹⁰⁰ Aedo, C.; Pizarro, M. 2004. Rentabilidad económica del programa de capacitación laboral de jóvenes "Chile Joven". (Santiago de Chile, INACAP and Mideplan).

¹⁰¹ Attanasio, O.; Kugler, A.; Meghir, C. 2011. "Subsidizing vocational training for disadvantaged youth in Colombia: Evidence from a randomized trial", in American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, Vol. 3, pp. 188-220

¹⁰² Delajara, M.; Freije, S.; Soloaga, I. 2006. An evaluation of training for the unemployed in Mexico, Office of Evaluation and Oversight Working Paper 09/06 (Washington, DC, Inter-American Development Bank).

¹⁰³ Ñopo, H.; Robles, M.; Saavedra, J. 2007. Occupational training to reduce gender segregation: The impacts of ProJoven, Research Department Working Paper No. 623 (Washington, DC, InterAmerican Development Bank).

¹⁰⁴ Malo, M.A., Finding proactive features in labour market policies: A reflection based on the evidence, Research Paper, No 8, International Labour Organisation, 2018.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Issues and challenges

Low and unstable employment rates

Gender gaps in labour force participation and gender employment gaps have narrowed in a number of ETF Partner Countries over the past decade (and earlier). However, in some countries, progress has been slow, or have even been reversed. It can be observed that several countries struggle with low and very low employment rates of women. This concerns in particular SEMED countries and to a lesser extent Türkiye. Conversely, countries with the smallest gender employment gaps are Central Asian countries, some Eastern Partnership countries and Israel. The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women's employment for different reasons: working conditions in the highly feminised health sector worsened, discriminatory firing practices were observed, some jobs were less protected, and childcare activities due to kindergarten and school closures. Current and future challenges are related to the digital and green transitions, as women may be less well equipped with relevant skills, and as women may face higher barriers than men in accessing STEM-related jobs and retaining their employment in these jobs.

Poor quality of jobs

Often, higher employment rates mask concerns related to the poor quality of jobs, in particular in Central Asian countries, where the share of contributing family members and own-account workers among employed women is high. Poor employment conditions are linked to a high proportion of women working in the agricultural sector in these countries. The emigration of men render the employment of women more difficult, particularly in rural regions in Central Asia. A high share of women in such vulnerable employment conditions and in informal employment is also a concern in a number of countries across the other regions.

Pay gender gaps and segregation

In ETF partner countries, occupational and sectoral gender segregation in employment is reflected. Women tend to be more often employed in occupations and sectors that pay less well for a given level of education and skills. Women are less represented among technical occupations, in particular in the area of VET-trained occupations. In most countries, young women are better educated than men and their enrolment in tertiary education often exceeds that of their male counterparts. However, gender segregation in study fields is high. In contrast to the other regions, in Southern and Eastern European countries women represent nearly half of students in ICT study fields. However, difficult pathways from education to employment for young women in these countries show that they are less well represented among ICT specialists than men. Nevertheless, it has been shown that high education level and technical and IT study fields do increase employment prospects for women, including in the SEMED region. Likewise, there is a risk that women are less well prepared for the green transition employment opportunities, as these often require technological skills and digital skills.

Significant barriers

Despite higher levels of education of women, they encounter more barriers in accessing the labour market than men. Youth unemployment of women is higher than among men in many countries, in particular in SEMED countries (in the context of very high youth unemployment). Additionally, the rate of girl NEETs is higher, as they are more often taking on caring responsibilities. Some groups of women accumulate a variety of employment barriers and are particularly vulnerable. Several factors render labour market transition for women more difficult than for men, including: caring responsibilities, limited access to quality childcare, deeply enshrined gender stereotypes and social norms, and discrimination in recruitment practices.

Some groups of women face severe and multiple employment barriers, including for example women belonging to ethnic minorities. Women entrepreneurs are significantly fewer than men across the ETF PCs. The main barriers for women include: limited access to land, limited access to financial capital, weaker empowerment of women to making loan decisions, women's lower level of financial literacy, limited access to informal networks, and women's lower levels of self-confidence.

Cultural prevailing obstacles

Overall, gender stereotypes and social norms are key drivers of gender inequalities in all ETF PCs. However, there are large differences with respect to the strictness of social norms, the different patriarchal models and breadwinner models between urban and rural areas (with rural areas having stricter social patriarchal norms), between education levels (with more conservative views on women's and men's role among the lower educated groups), between the EU neighbouring countries. Progress in policies and reforms of the legal and institutional frameworks to eradicate discrimination have been taking place at a different pace. There is evidence that more restricted access to productive and financial resources for women and discrimination in the family are highest in some SEMED countries, as shown by the OECD. It is also striking that all SEMED countries covered in the report show a higher score for discrimination in the family than for access to productive and financial resources. Other studies indicate the prevalence of traditional norms and a high level of discrimination of women in labour market transition in Central Asia, and other countries.

Limited evidence

Evaluations of ALMPs conducted with a gender lens and evaluation of programmes targeted at specific groups of women are rare. Measures and activities that have been implemented to support women employment and reviewed in this report are mostly relevant. A limitation of this report is that an in-depth review of the relevance and effectiveness of ALMPs and career guidance for specific countries has not been carried out. Moreover, comparable data on ALMP spending and ALMP participants are missing.

6.2 Enabling Factors

PES capacity

ETF PCs have made progress in developing PES capacities and ALMPs, although capacities still need to be enhanced and ALMP budgets increased. Responses to the ETF Survey conducted for this study have shown that a number of PES and Labour Ministries in ETF partner countries developed specific programmes for or include specific groups of women in the mainstream ALMPs. Such targeted programmes focus especially on women with caring responsibilities, some are targeted at women returning to the labour market and at single parents. These approaches are gender-sensitive and tackle one of the main labour market barriers for women, which is combining work and caring responsibilities. On the other hand, these approaches are far from being gender-transformative, as they tend to reinforce the gender stereotypes and the care-giving role of women rather than tackle the root causes of gender inequality, such as the uneven division of care responsibilities between men and women.

Targeted programmes

In some cases, the measures implemented during the COVID-19 were gender-blind and fostered gender stereotypes. There is still a need in some countries to mitigate the negative employment impact of the pandemic on women. Current crises situations (linked to the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis, for example) with impacts on the post-pandemic recovery, may affect women disproportionately. There is evidence from some countries that women participate over-proportionally in job-search guidance and employment incentive measures. This is relevant because they usually face higher employment barriers.

Several ETF PCs implement specific employment incentive programmes for women. Many PES from ETF PCs have paid specific attention to women in their measures targeting start-ups and entrepreneurship, implementing dedicated programmes, mainly for women in rural areas and single parents. However, entrepreneurship programmes implemented by the PES were found to be small-scaled. More efforts need to be put into the promotion of female entrepreneurship across the ETF PCs. Several ETF PCs have developed programmes to promote the employment of women in rural areas, as they are perceived as being vulnerable groups. This is relevant given the higher employment barriers faced by women in these areas.

In several countries, specific programmes have been developed to improve the availability of childcare for working women and women. Examples include the expansion of childcare facilities in quantity, increasing their quality, the implementation of voucher systems, and awareness-raising activities. Only in a few cases were the impacts of these activities assessed, and the results show that the effectiveness of the measures vary. Among the factors for determining different outcomes are the quality of childcare and strictness of social norms.

Findings on female participation in training measures are mixed, and are linked to unsuitable training offers and to a lack of guidance to encourage women to take up training in male-dominated occupations. Evidence shows that there is support for most vulnerable groups of women (such as ethnic minorities, refugees).

Career guidance

Career guidance frameworks seem to adopt a gender sensitive approach only in a minority of ETF PCs. Nevertheless, specific activities to attract women into training for male-dominated occupations are implemented in many countries. These activities can be considered to be gender transformative but on the other hand, there are very few activities both in the EU and the ETF PCs to attract men to female-dominated occupations. In addition, a few countries have adopted incentives to promote the employment of women in male-dominated occupations. There is no evidence of specific programmes implemented by PES to promote the employment of men in female-dominated occupations and sectors (such as in the care economy).

Key issues for consideration

- Low level of ALMPs budgets, affecting their capacity to make a significant difference, and the potentially low sustainability of a range of projects, in particular when they are donor-funded.
- Difficulties in coordinating various actors, developing and implementing strategies.
- Very few activities are targeted at men's perceptions and private sector employers.
- ALMPs cannot address a variety of reasons leading to gender inequalities, as they are not affecting the overall legal and institutional framework or early childhood and school education, during which gender stereotypes may be established.
- Overcoming gender stereotypes and changing social norms represent major challenges and limitations for rapid success and therefore a comprehensive cross-sectoral transformative approach would be needed.

6.2 The way ahead

It is important to ensure that women can equally benefit from job opportunities linked to the post-Covid recovery and digital and green transitions. This will require efforts on upskilling and reskilling, vocational guidance and support for labour market transition into relevant professions. Based on the findings of the report and taking into account the challenging context and overlapping crises and labour market disruptions, several key policy actions can be identified as the most suitable and feasible for addressing gender inequalities in the labour market:

Improving the information base

- (Continue to) conduct studies on gender patterns in employment and labour market transitions.
- Include a gender dimension on reporting/monitoring, and evaluating PES activities.
- Review activities of PES and other relevant actors and identify whether they effectively implement gender mainstreaming.
- Systematic stocktaking of all activities implemented by different actors to promote women's economic empowerment in the country (national and regional/local agencies, private sector, social partners, NGOs, international donors).
- Conduct evaluations on the effectiveness of measures targeting women; evaluation effectiveness of non-targeted ALMPs through a gender lens.

Designing comprehensive approaches

- Take the multitude of employment barriers women face into account when designing measures to promote economic empowerment of women.
- Consider taking actions to change men's attitudes and perceptions.
- Conduct awareness-raising activities targeted at different actors: women, men, training institutions, PES staff, financial institutions, other government institutions, NGOs, and employers.
- Design measures in a comprehensive way and link training measures to workplace activities, internships and placement. Link placement in training and jobs to access to childcare services and to the quality of childcare activities.
- Consider the importance of the quality of childcare as a basis for women's decisions to actively participate in the labour market.

Working in partnerships

- Form strategic partnerships to promote the economic empowerment of women, include other state agencies, the private sector and NGOs.
- Reinforce inter-agency cooperation for promoting women's economic empowerment.

Balancing gender mainstreaming and dedicated gender-sensitive and gender transformative approaches

- Implement a gender mainstreaming approach in PES activities.
- Ensure PES staff are trained in gender sensitivity/responsiveness.
- Introduce gender-sensitive approaches in career guidance, by providing men and women with full information on career prospects and salaries in occupations, as well as by overcoming gender stereotypes.
- At the same time, design specific activities and measures to support women, for instance, through positive discrimination, financial support, actively attracting women to male-dominated professions and men to female-dominated professions.

Investing in removing barriers to women's economic empowerment

- Leverage investments in specific measures targeted at women or a specific group of women, in particular through job-search support, targeted employment incentives, entrepreneurship support, training activities to close the digital gender divide and to promote training in non-traditional fields, as well as assess their effectiveness.
- Continue measures and activities co-financed by international donors, to render successful or promising activities sustainable.

Annex: Additional statistics and information

Table A1: List of surveyed countries by region

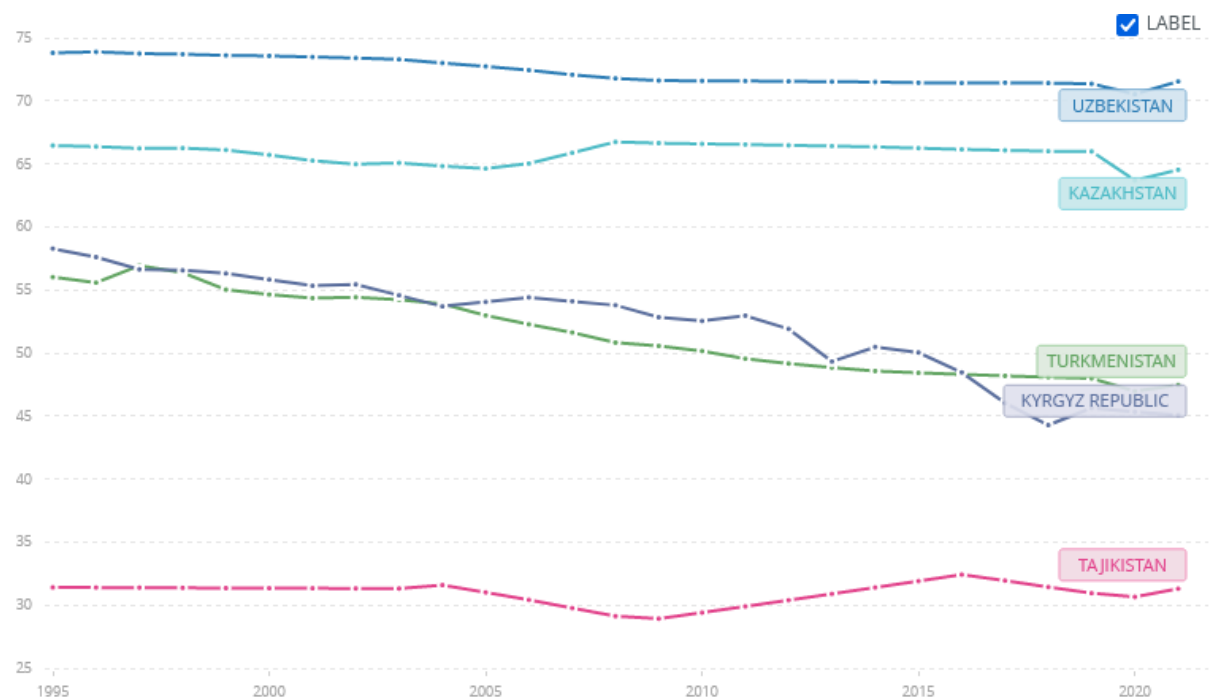
Central Asia	Eastern Partnership	Western Balkans and Türkiye	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan Uzbekistan	Armenia Georgia Moldova Ukraine	Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Kosovo Montenegro Serbia Türkiye	Jordan Tunisia

Source: own elaboration

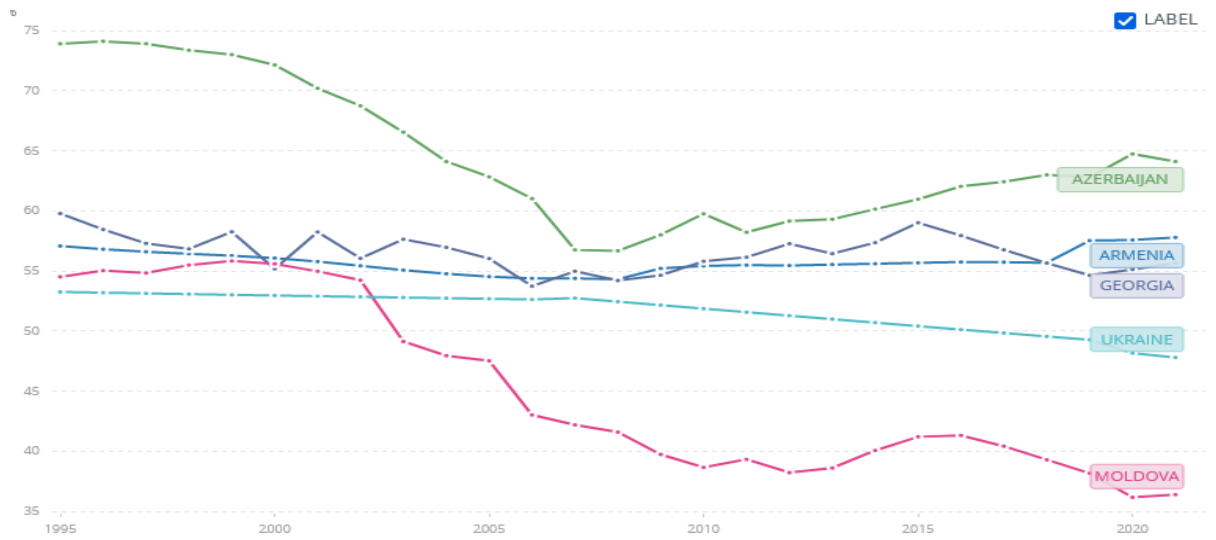
Note: responses received to the Survey on ALMPs sent to most ETF Partner Countries

Figure A1: Development of female labour force participation rate (15+), 1995-2021

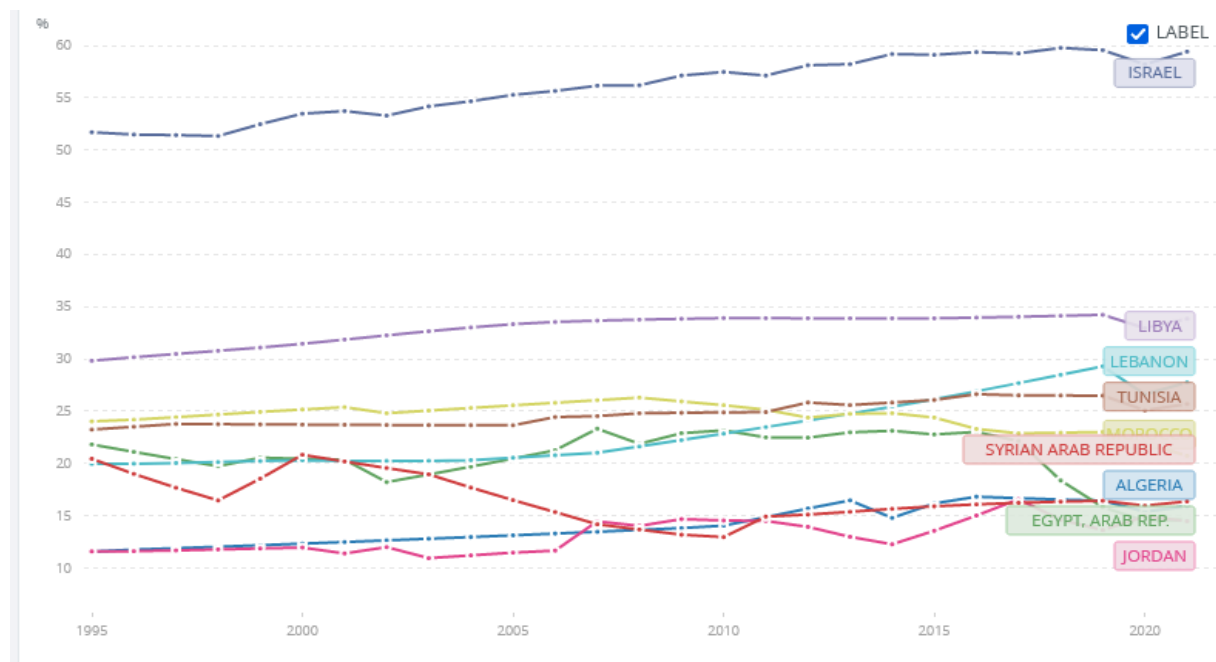
A1 – Panel A Female labour force participation rate, aged 15+, in Central Asia in %, 1995-2021



A1 – Panel B Female labour force participation rate in Eastern partnership countries, in %, 1995-2021

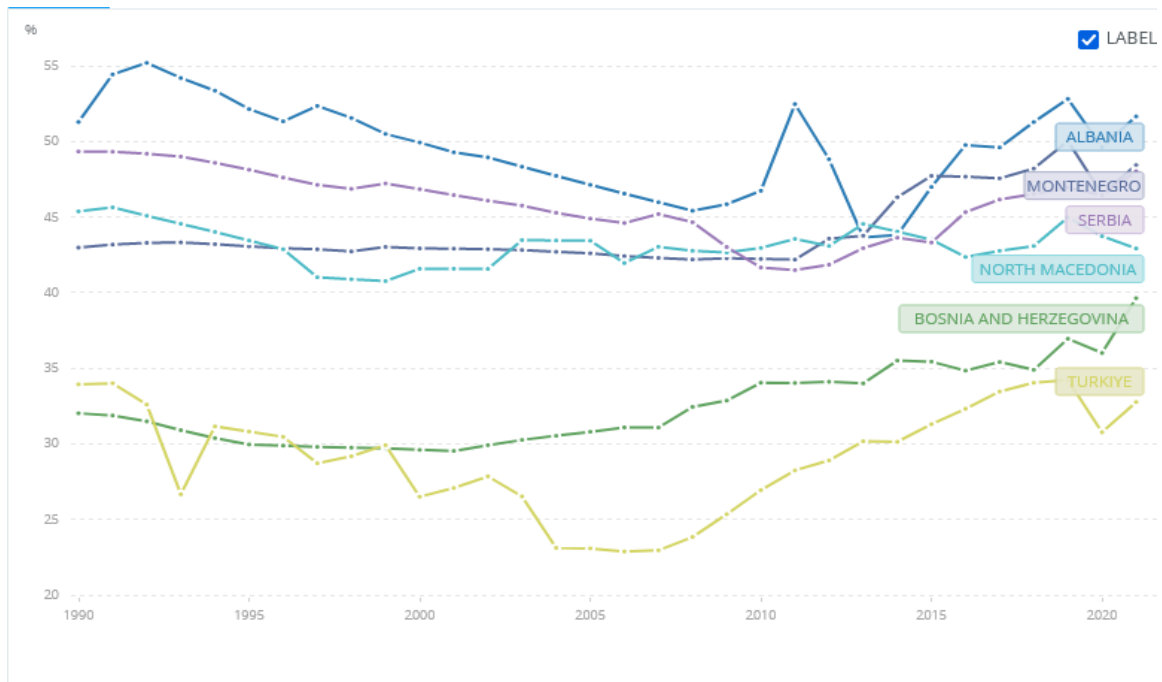


A1 – Panel C Female labour force participation rate (15+), in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED), in %, 1995-2021



Note: no comparable data for Palestine*

A1 – Panel D Female labour force participation rate (15+) in the Western Balkan and Türkiye, in %, 1995-2021



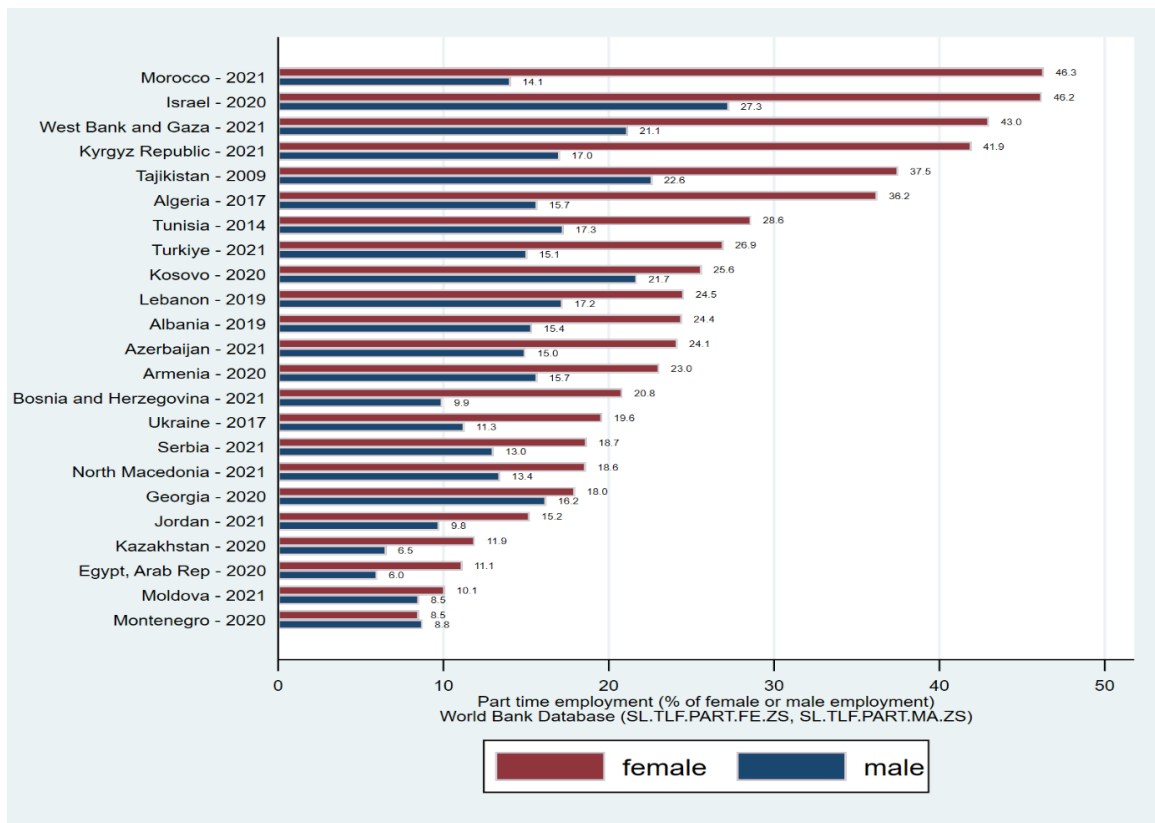
Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.MA.ZS?locations=UZ-TM>

No comparable data for Kosovo

Note: International Labour Organization. 'ILO Modelled Estimates and Projections database (ILOEST)' ILOSTAT. Accessed 21 February 2023. ilostat.ilo.org/data.

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Figure A2: Part-time employment by gender



Source: World Bank Database, own compilation

Figure A3: Contributing family workers by gender

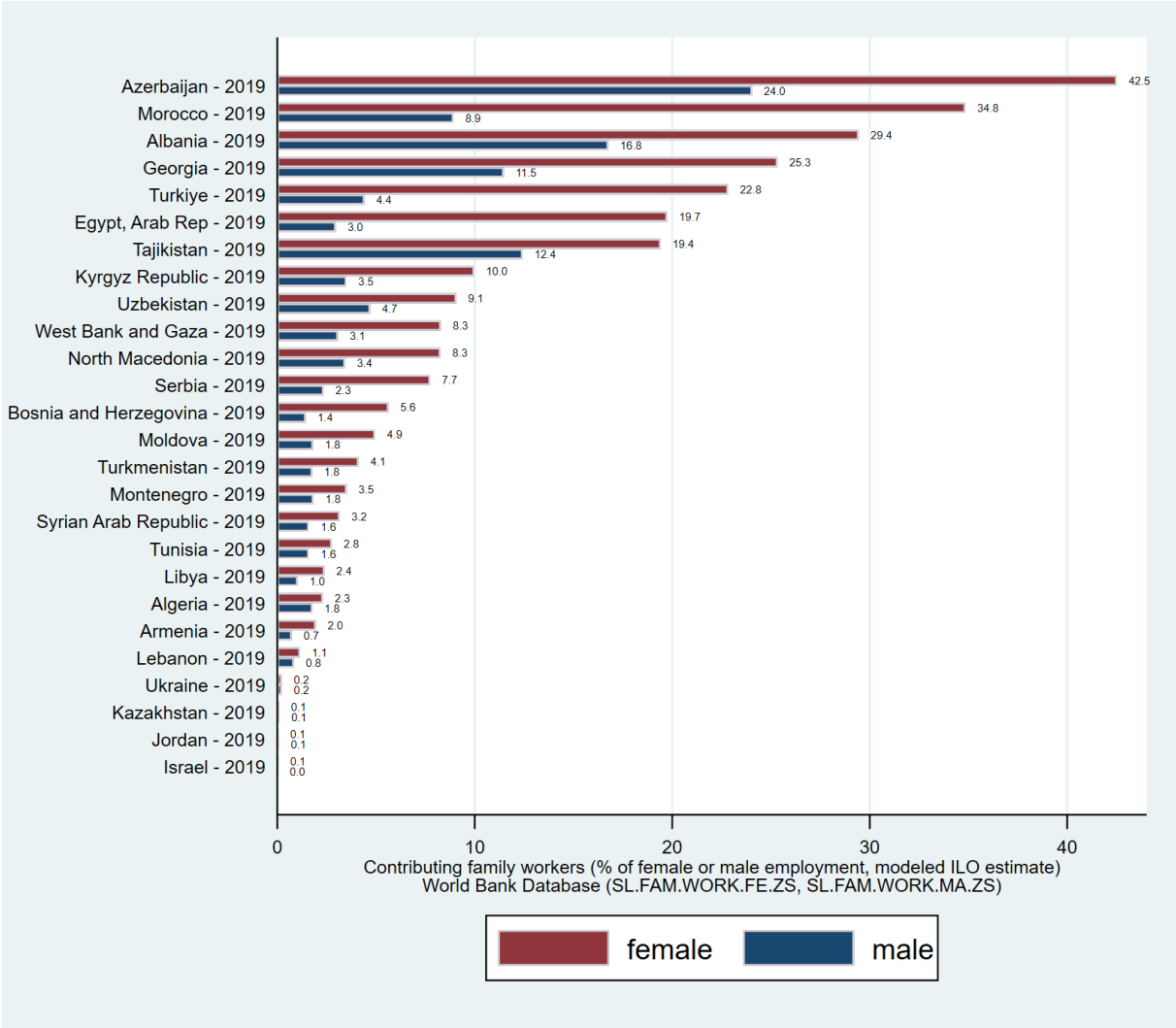


Figure A4: Own-account workers by gender

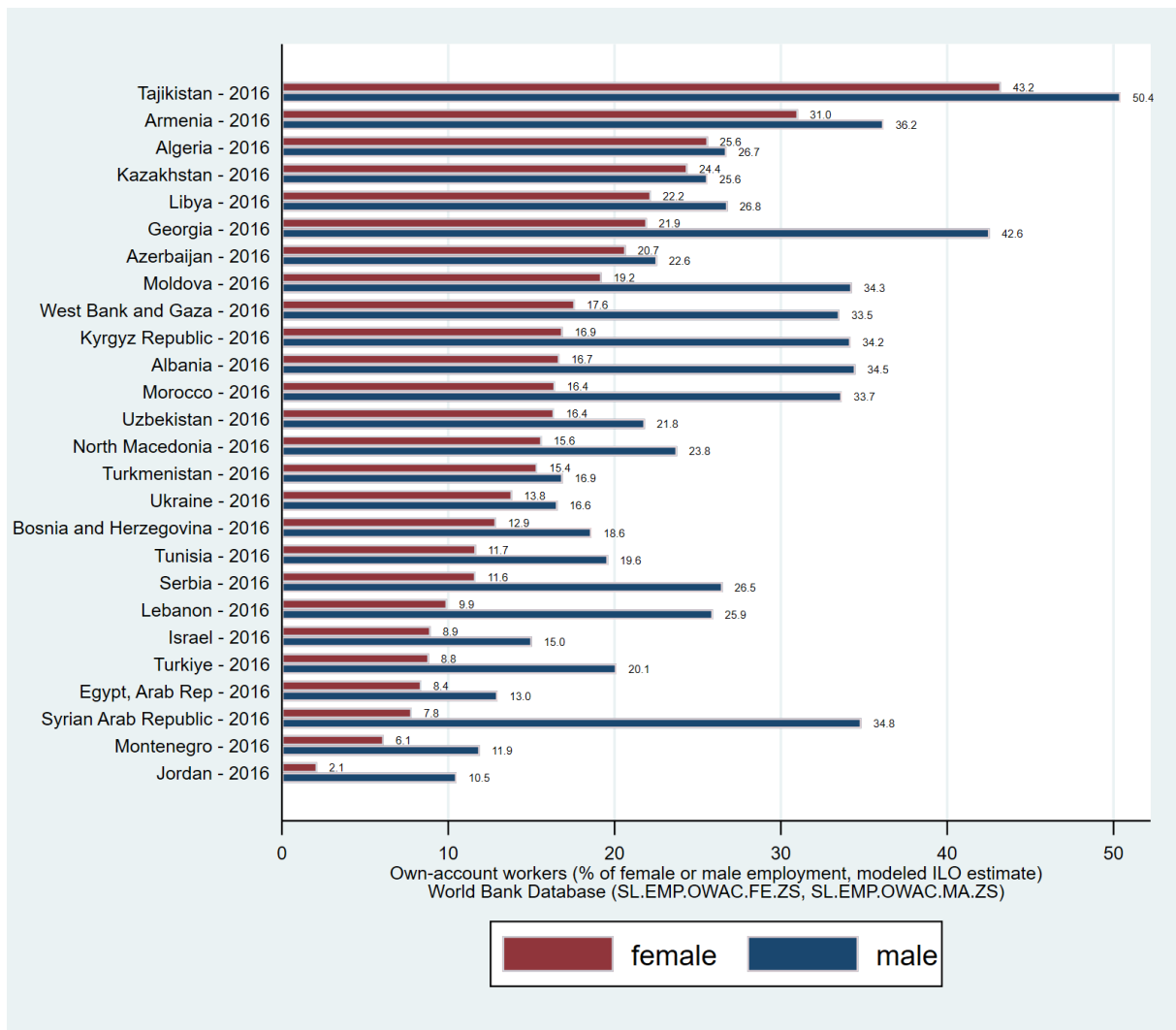


Figure A5: Firms with female top manager

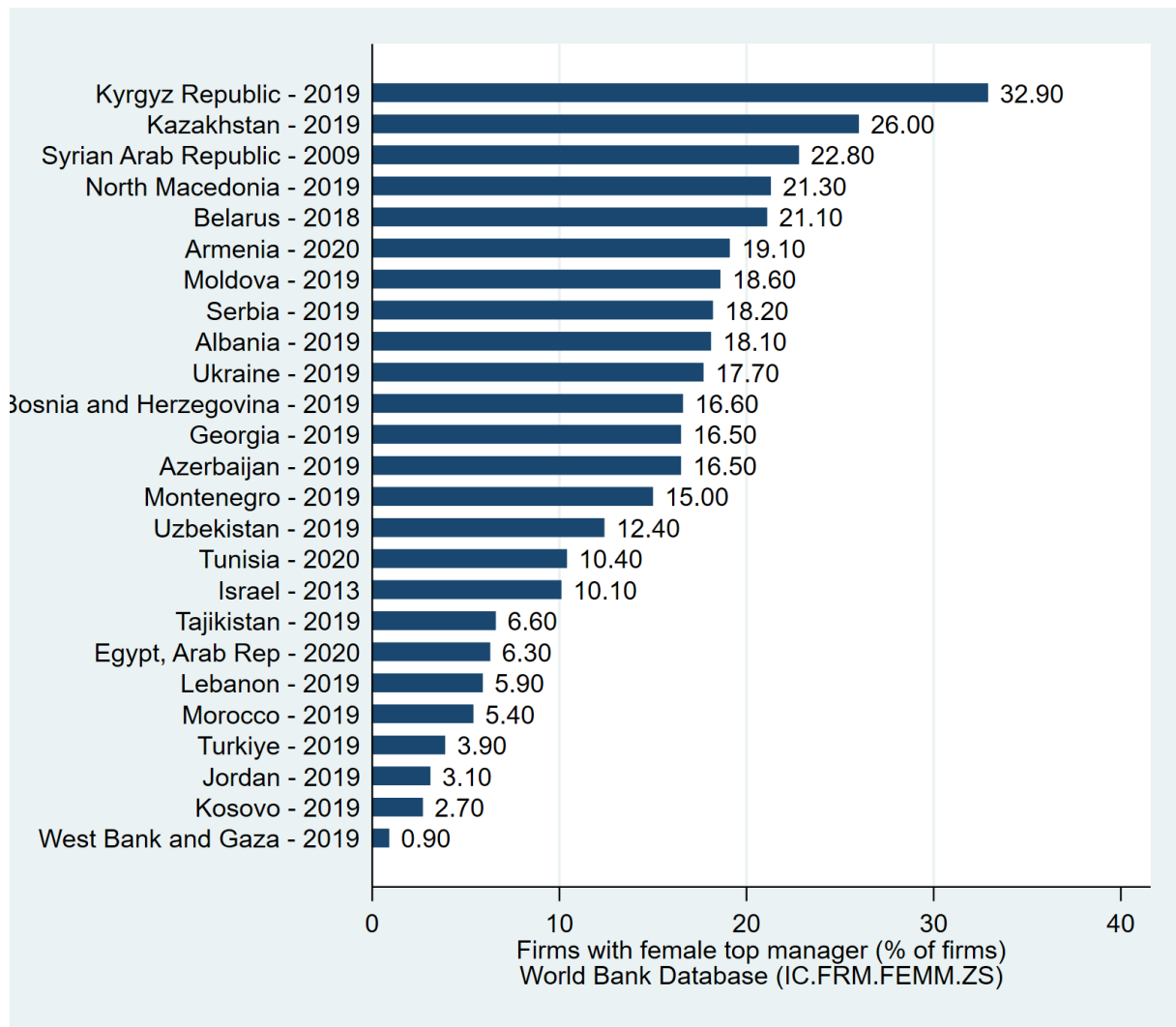


Figure A6: Unemployment rate by gender

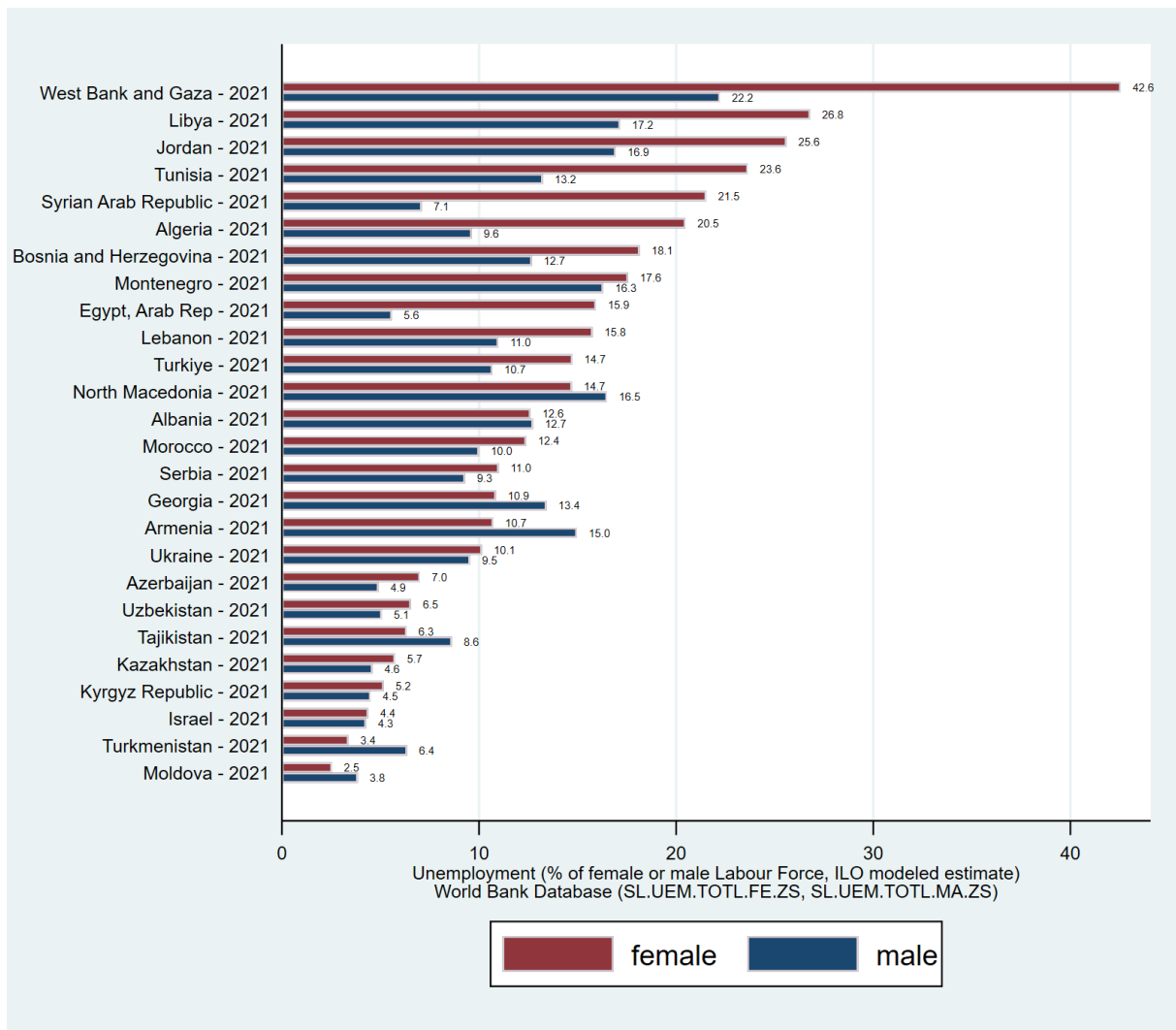
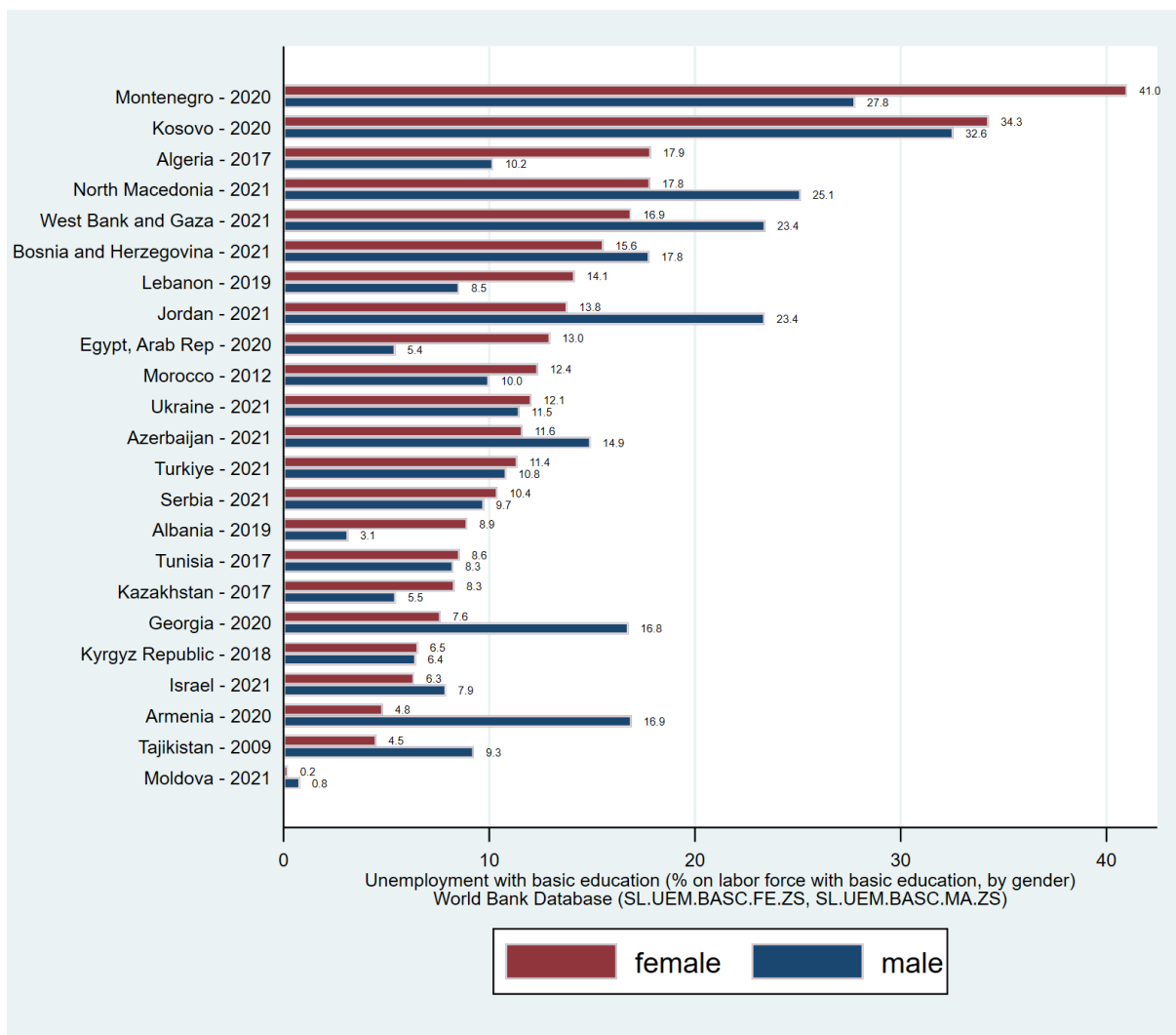
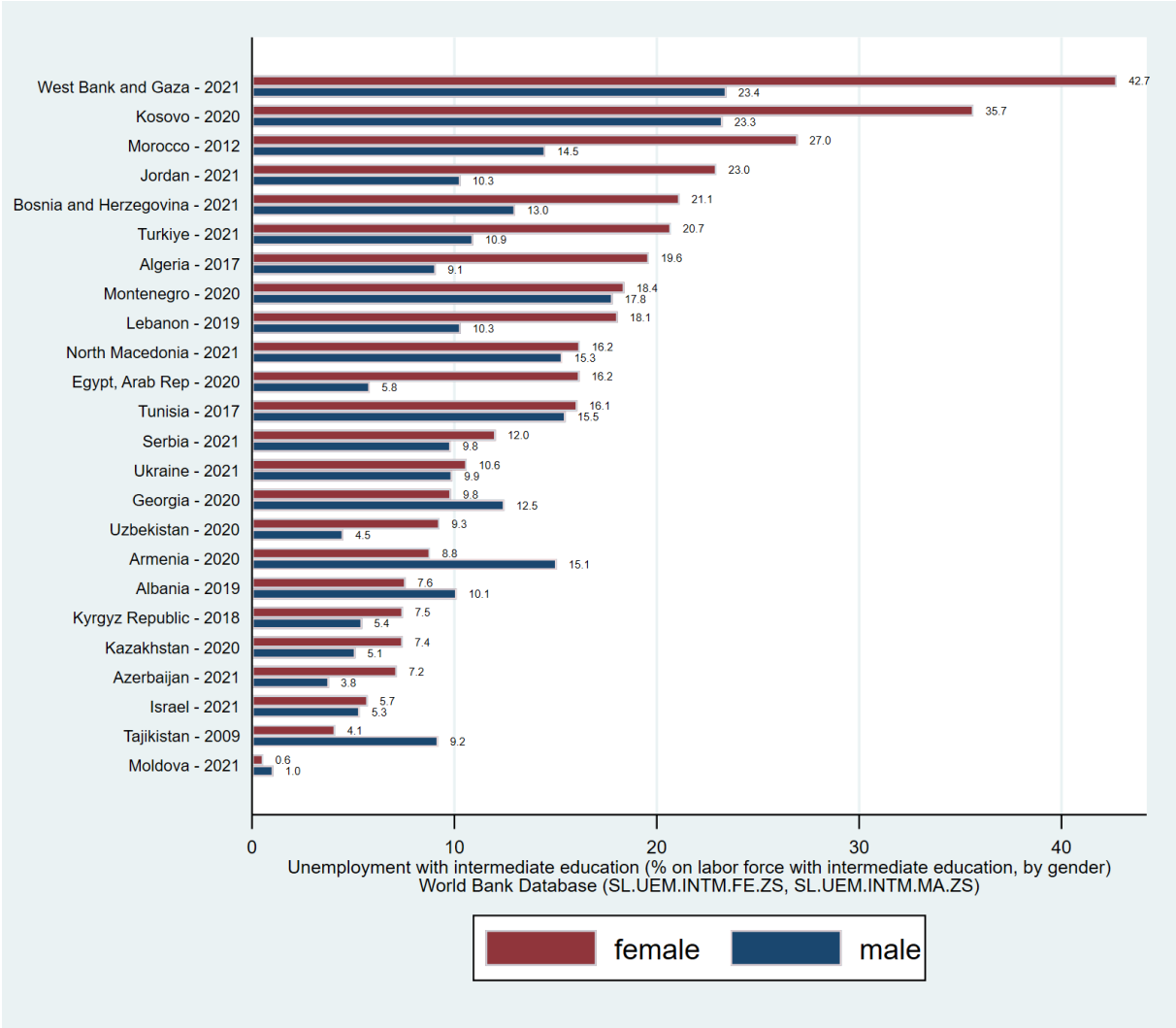


Figure A7: Unemployment rate of labour force with basic education



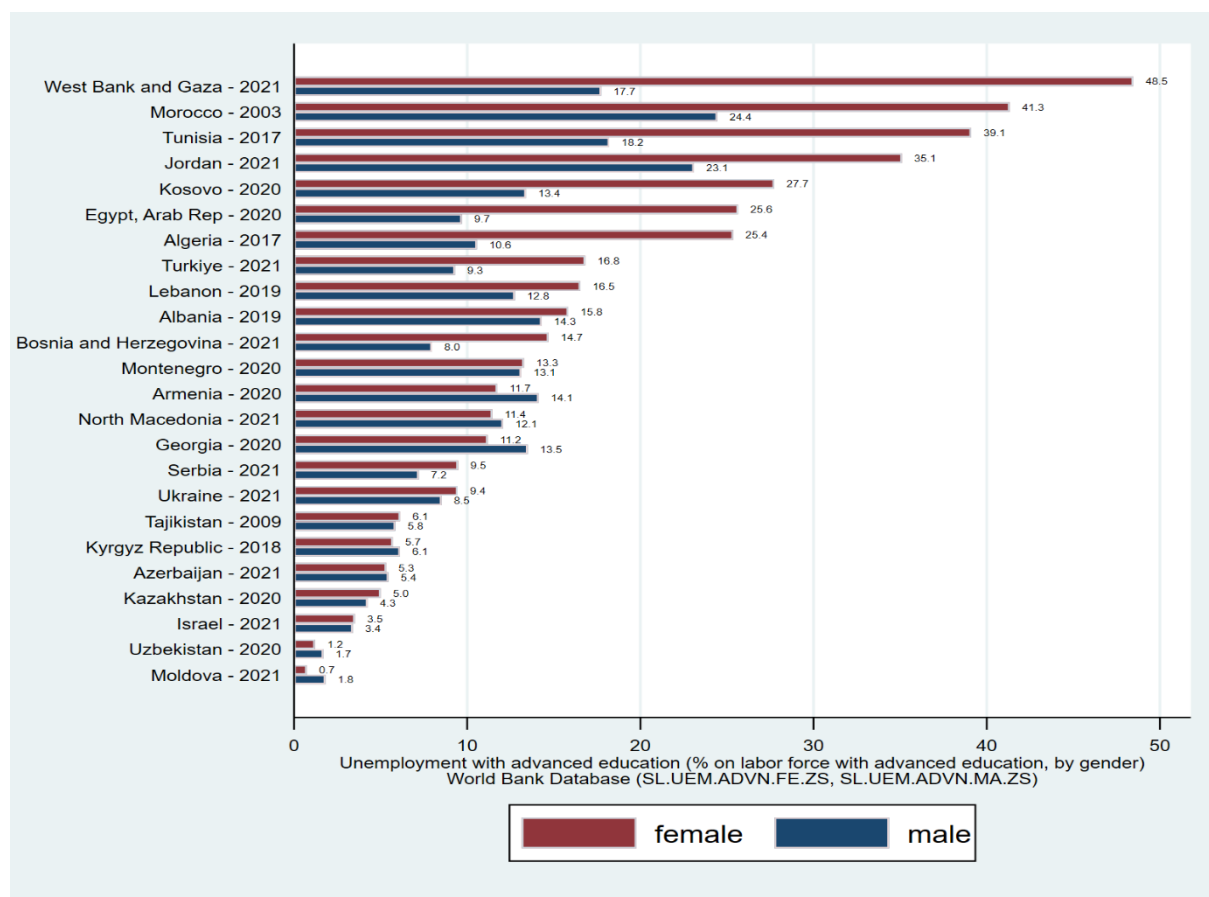
Note: Basic education: ISCED level 0-2

Figure A8: Unemployment rate labour force with intermediate education by gender



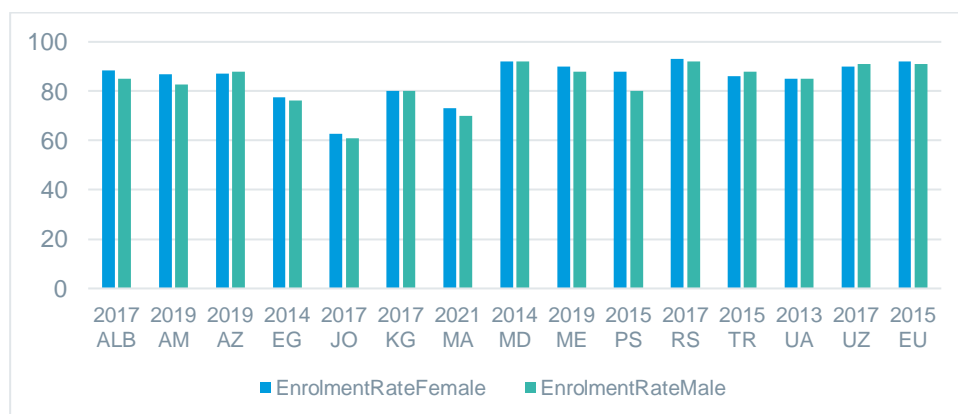
Note: ISCED level 3-4

Figure A9: Unemployment rate of labour force with advanced education



Note: ISCED level 5-8

Figure A10: Net enrolment rates by sex, most recent year available



Source: Data collected by ETF, EU: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.NENR.FE?locations=EU>

Figure A11: Labour force with basic education as a % of working age population with basic education

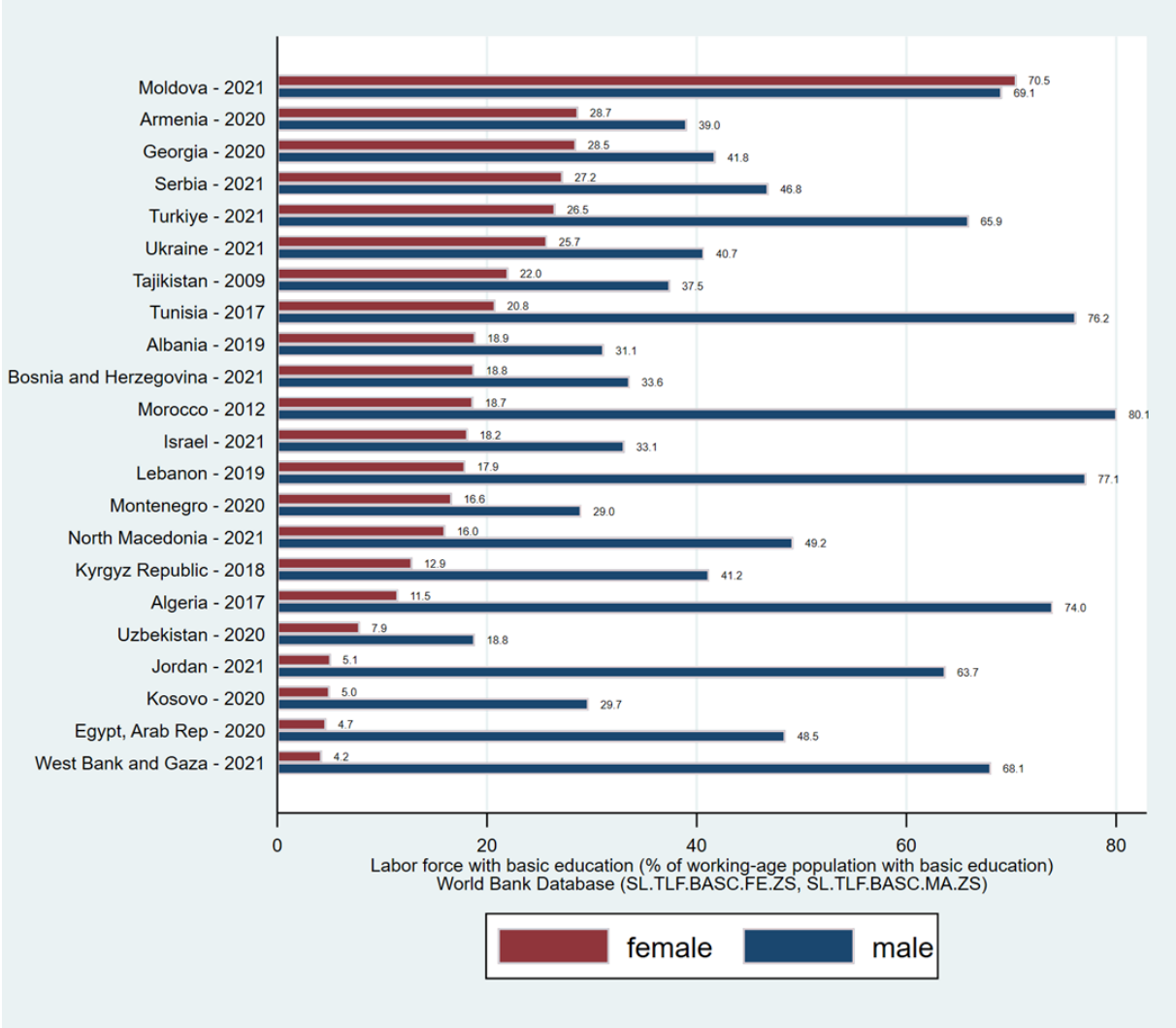


Figure A12: Labour force with intermediate education as a % of working age population with intermediate education

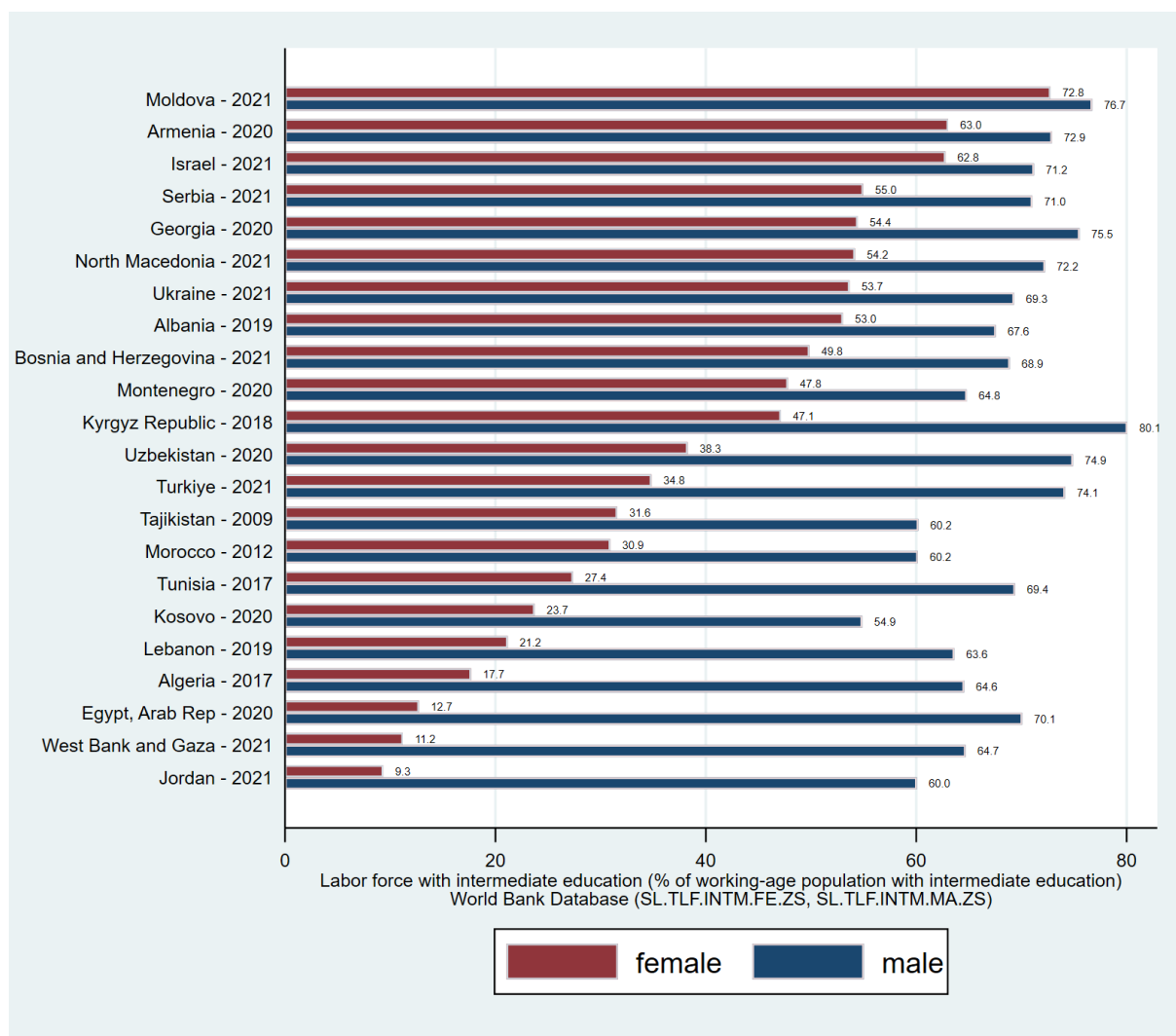


Figure A13: Labour force with advanced education as a % of working age population with advanced education

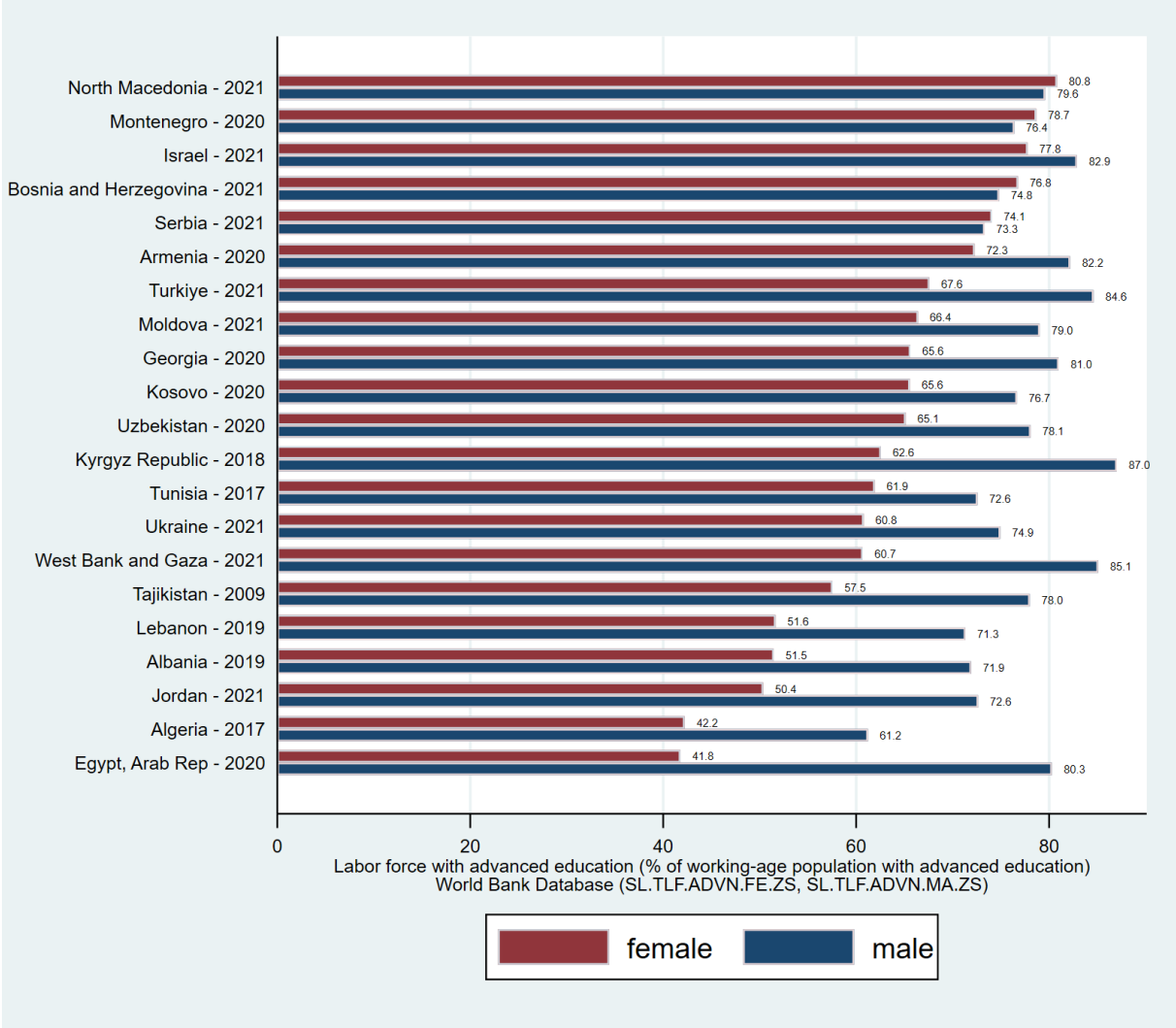


Figure A14: Youth unemployment rate by gender

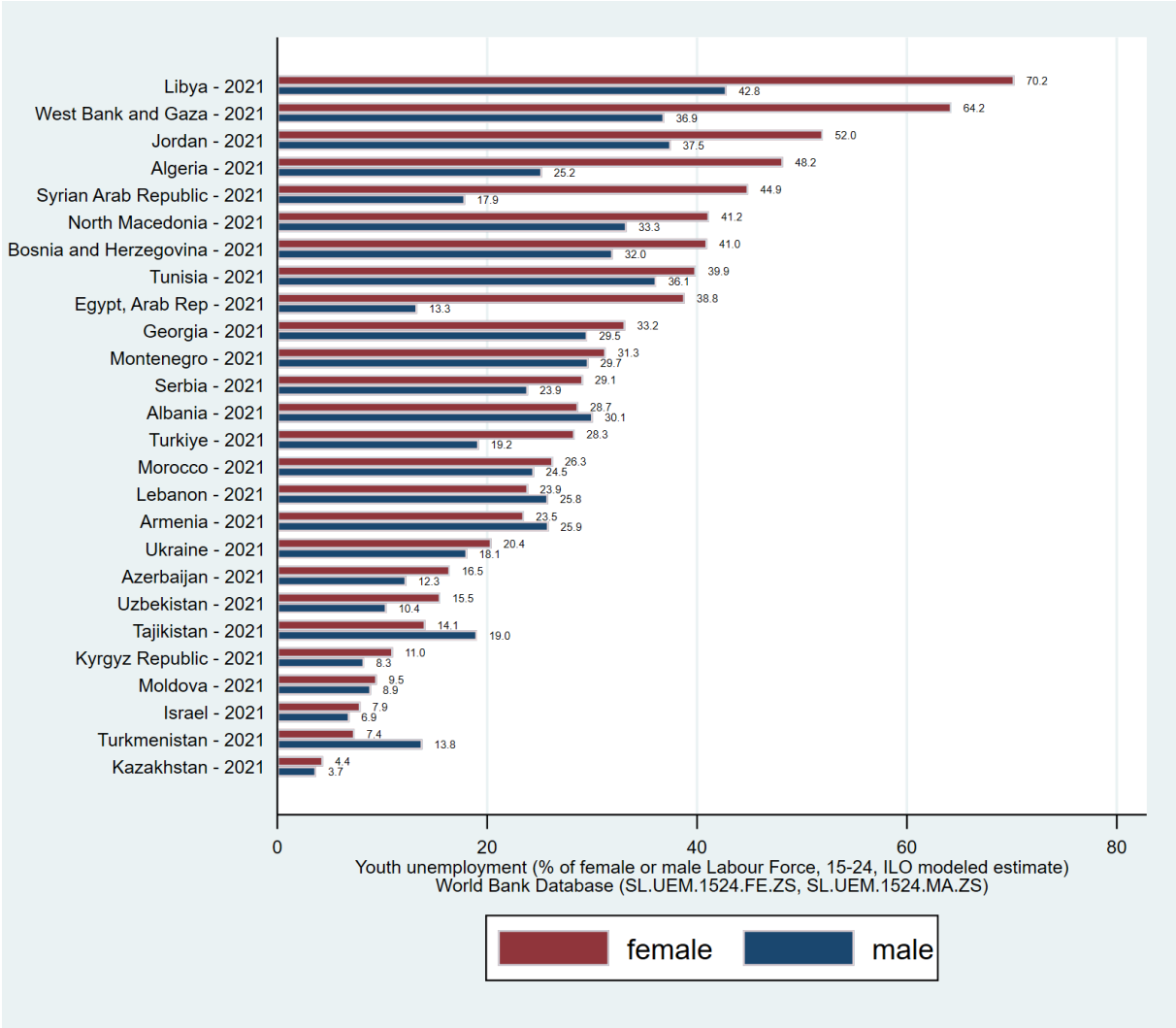


Figure A15: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work

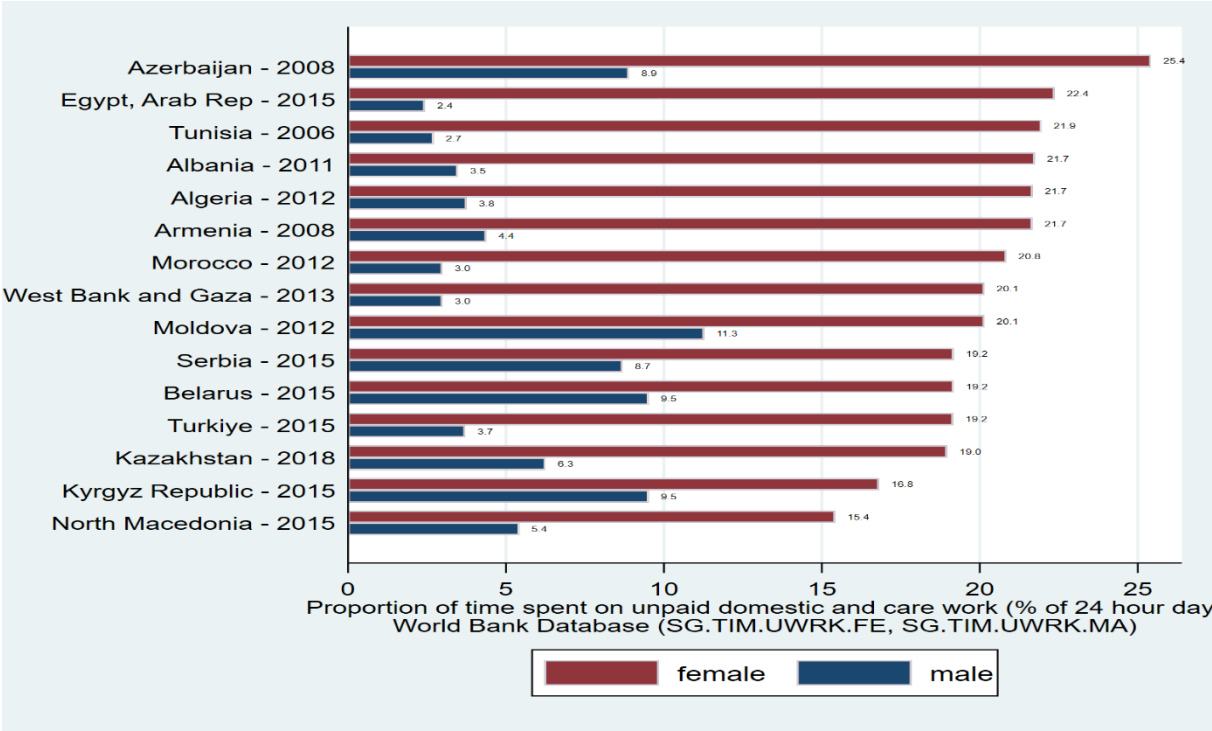
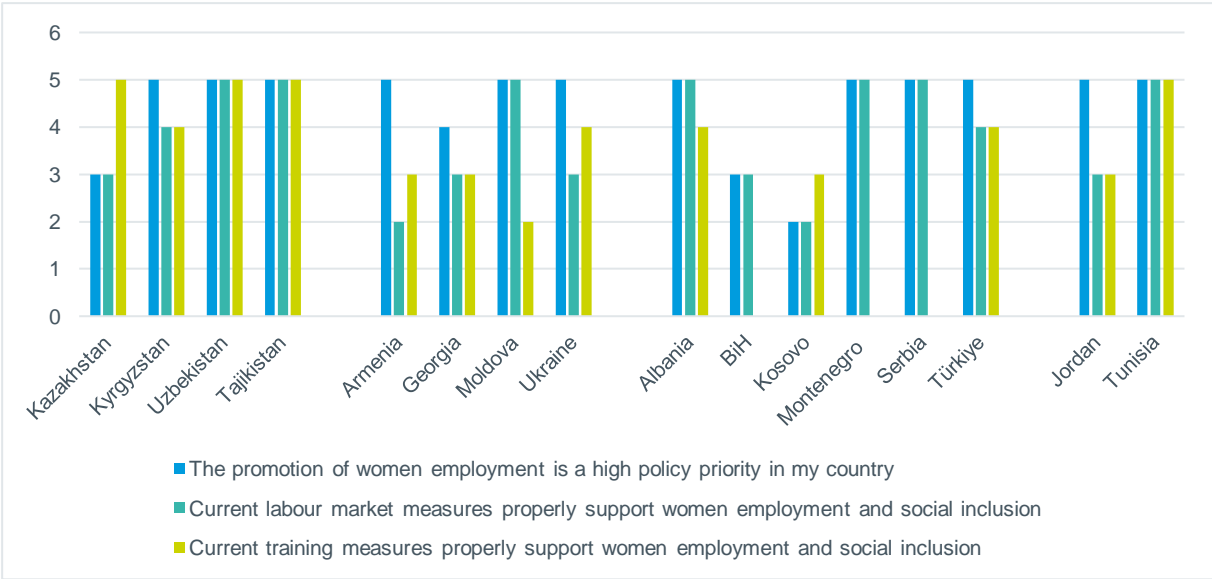


Figure A16: Self-assessment of policy priority and adequacy of policy measures to promote female employment and social inclusion



Source: ETF Survey
 Note: rated statements: 1 fully disagree; 5 I fully agree.

Table A2: Share of female tertiary graduates by field of study, 2018 (%)

	ICT	Engineering	Natural Sciences	Health and Welfare	Business admin and law	Arts and Humanities	Agriculture
Central Asia							
Kazakhstan	30.4	28.5	67	72.3	50.7	67.4	37.5
Kyrgyzstan	47.4	18.4	72.9	74.0	52.6	83.4	25.9
Uzbekistan	17.8	17.7	52.3	41.6	23.1	60.7	26.7
Eastern Partnership Countries							
Armenia	38.5	22.4	60.5	72.5	49.8	75	24.5
Azerbaijan	46.0	26.6	65.3	78.3	39.6	75.6	52.0
Georgia	20.6	15.7	68.1	71.0	58.5	71.1	43.4
Moldova	22.9	29.7	54.8	68.8	60.7	76.5	22.8
Ukraine	17.5	25.2	58.3	77.7	59.2	60.8	32.9
Western Balkan and Türkiye							
Albania	43.7	38.3	69.9	78.9	61.1	70.3	46.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28.2	39.4	71.9	73.4	57.2	64.3	57.0
North Macedonia	35.1	47.8	69.5	74.1	55.4	62.1	39.5
Serbia	28.6	38.5	71.2	74.9	60.0	67.9	48.9
Türkiye	34.5	27.1	58	67.0	47.0	59.2	43.6
Southern and Eastern Mediterranean							
Algeria	48.9	48.5	83.1	70.3	57.7	80.2	76.8
Egypt	36.8	20.9	64.2	56	35.9	67.8	49.4
Morocco	41.3	42.2	48.7	72.3	48.7	47.9	44.2
Palestine	45.6	32.9	78.1	65.6	50.4	76.5	35.6
Syria	57.3	43.9	60.5	54.9	47.4	73.5	50.2
Tunisia	55.6	44.2	77.2	75.3	71.3	74.4	73.9
EU							
Sweden	30.2	32.8	52	80.8	64.4	73	66
France	16.5	26.1	49	74	59	67.9	43.2

Source: Bello et al, 2021 based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics data

Note: Data for Morocco refer to 2017, data for Syria to 2016

Glossary of gender equality terms

Affirmative (positive) action	Involves special temporary measures to redress the effects of past or continuing discrimination with a view to establishing equality of opportunity and treatment in practice.
Gender	Refers to the social differences and relations between men and women that are learned, vary widely within and between cultures, and change over time.
Gender blind	Describes measures and actions that neither recognize nor ignore possible differences between the position, needs, constraints, opportunities and interests of women and men.
Gender equality	Refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women of all ages in all spheres of life and work.
Gender equity	This is about equality of outcomes and results. It is a means to ensure that women and men have an equal chance not only at the starting point but also when reaching the finish line.
Gender gap	This is the difference in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access to resources, rights, power and influence, remuneration and benefits.
Gender mainstreaming	A means of integrating equality concerns across the board into all policy objectives and all activities in order to promote equality of all workers, irrespective of sex
Gender neutral	Gender-neutral policies and approaches are not aimed specifically at women or men and are assumed to affect women and men equally. However, because they operate from an assumption that there is no distinction between the sexes, gender-neutral approaches incorporate biases in favour of existing gender relations and so tend to disadvantage women.
Gender-responsive	Gender-responsive means addressing the different situations, roles, needs, and interests of women, men, girls, and boys in the design and implementation of activities, policies, and programs. It means addressing gender-based barriers, respects gender differences, enables structures, systems, and methodologies to be sensitive to gender, ensures gender parity is a wider strategy to advance gender equality, and evolves to close gaps and eradicate gender-based discrimination.
Gender-sensitive	Refers to measures and actions that address the different situations, roles, needs and interests of women and men.
Gender stereotypes	The ideas that people have on what men and women are capable of doing, for example that women are better housekeepers and men are better leaders
Gender values and norms	The ideas that people have on what men and women should be like, for example the beliefs that women should be good housewives and men should be leaders of their family and community.
Occupational segregation	Occurs when women and men are concentrated in different types and at different levels of activity and employment. Women tend to be confined to a different range of occupations than men (horizontal segregation) and to lower job grades (vertical segregation).
Transformative change interventions	They seek to target the structural causes, as well as the symptoms of gender inequality, leading to lasting changes in the power and choices women (and men) have over their own lives, rather than just a temporary increase in opportunities.

Source: ILO (2011), *Gender Mainstreaming in the Public Employment Services in the Public Employment Service in Ukraine*. User's guide. Written by Valli Corbanese; Kiev.; and INEE (2019), *INEE Guidance Note on Gender*, https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE_GN_Gender_2019_0.pdf and <https://policytoolbox.iiep.unesco.org/glossary/gender-responsive/>

ACRONYMS

AL	Albania
ALMPs	Active Labour Market Policies/Programs
AM	Armenia
AZ	Azerbaijan
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEDFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DZ	Algeria
EG	Egypt
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EU	European Union
EU MS	EU Member States
EUROFOUND	EU Agency for the improvement of living and working conditions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Georgia
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IL	Israel
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
IT	Information Technology
JO	Jordan
KG	Kyrgyzstan
KZ	Kazakhstan
LB	Lebanon
MA	Morocco
MD	Moldova
ME	Montenegro

MK	North Macedonia
NEETs	Not in Employment, Education or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCs	ETF Partner Countries
PES	Public Employment Services
PS	Palestine
RS	Serbia
SEMED	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TJ	Tajikistan
TM	Turkmenistan
TN	Tunisia
TR	Türkiye
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UA	Ukraine
UZ	Uzbekistan
VET	Vocational Education and Training
XK	Kosovo

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