VIRAGE
industrial relations & gender equality

CEPS

# Comparative report: An analysis of Industrial Relations and Gender Equality at European and National level

## Deliverable 4.1

Alexandre Ounnas (CEPS)

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## List of Acronyms

**ALMPs** Active labour market policies

**CA** collective agreements

**CB** collective bargaining

**CEE** central eastern European

**EC** European Commission

**EESC** European Economic and Social Committee

**EIGE** European Institute for Gender Equality

**EO** employers' organisations

**EPSR** European Pillar of Social Rights

**ETUC** European Trade Union Confederation

**ETUI** European Trade Union Institute

**EU** European Union

**EWCS** European Working Conditions Survey

**FA** framework agreement

**GE** gender equality

**GEI** Gender Equality Index

**GPG** gender pay gap

**IR** Industrial relations

**LP** liberal pluralist

**OC** organised corporatism

**OSH** occupational safety and health

**SC** state-centred

**SES** Structure of Earnings Survey

**SP** social partnership

**TU** trade unions

**WC** work councils

**WCE** western continental European

# 1. Introduction

Gender equality (GE) is considered a fundamental value and right promoted by the European Union (EU) since its origins and the 1957 Treaty of Rome, under the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Significant progress has been made since then and the increased labour market participation of women probably constitutes one of the main social and societal improvement of the past 50 years. However, evidence from academic and grey literature highlights that, despite longstanding attention at European and national levels, there appears to be a certain persistence in gender inequalities. For example, despite equal pay legislation in the EU having existed for more than 30 years, the earnings gap between men and women has remained more or less stable across many Member States.

Besides the fairness and inclusiveness aspects, GE can also contribute significantly to the success of the EU economy and society. It is widely acknowledged that increasing women's participation in the labour force is paramount to achieving the Europe 2020 target of 75 % employment rate and that the gender pay gap (GPG) is responsible for up to 10 % gross domestic product per capita losses in Europe (Cuberes & Teigner, 2016). GE can also help economies face structural trends, related to ageing for instance. The recent economic developments and labour shortages that followed the Covid-19 pandemic highlight the benefits that higher labour market participation of women could bring to the economy. Moreover, economic downturns are conducive to increased wage gaps and discriminations (Zacchia et al., 2022). Hence, close attention should be given to the post-Covid-19 workplace, particularly in relation to changes brought by digitalisation, such as telework and the right to disconnect.

In this period, characterised by important evolutions and challenges, social partners can play an important role in helping to adapt and absorb the shocks originating from these structural changes in the labour market. Social partners are the main actors of industrial relations (IR), which organise and frame the employment relationship. IR is central to understanding the functioning of EU labour markets as they shape the work environment, making them potentially important instruments for achieving GE in the labour market (ILO, 2012). The main processes of IR involve social dialogue and collective bargaining (CB) between workers or trade unions (TU) and employers' organisations (EO). Furthermore, social dialogue does not only happen at national level, and the EU level of discussion has proved to be a fertile ground in promoting GE improvements.

The prominence of GE and social dialogue has recently been reaffirmed in principles 2 and 8 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). Principle 2 is explicitly devoted to GE and focuses on participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. Several mechanisms have been put in place to monitor progress and track the development of trends, such as the Gender Equality Index (GEI), developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), specific indicators in the Social Scoreboard connected to the EPSR and a specific thematic factsheet of the European Semester.

Calls for more involvement from social partners to help promote GE in the labour market are not new. In this vein, the European Commission (EC) has advocated for the engagement of social partners in eliminating GPGs and the European Parliament has called for social dialogue, including collective agreements (CA), as means of achieving GE (in its several dimensions) at national level. However, the links between IR and GE have not been fully characterised, as most

of the available evidence tend to narrow both (complex) concepts to specific dimensions (e.g. wage bargaining and the GPG).

The VIRAGE project aims to fill this gap by providing comparative and cross-country knowledge on the role played by IR structures and actors in addressing GE in European labour markets, and by identifying factors related to social dialogue that can help achieve GE for more inclusive and fair societies.

The main conclusions drawn from the analyses confirm the importance of IR for the promotion of GE, and can be seen as aligned with the recent initiative to strengthen social dialogue as part of the EPSR action plan. The findings strongly support the idea that more social dialogue is beneficial for GE and as such, reinforcing social dialogue should contribute to the closing of gender gaps in the labour market. In so doing, this would help address principle 2 of the EPSR concomitantly.

The objective of this report is threefold:

1. To present an analytical framework that recognises the multidimensional nature of GE, and which can be used to conceptualise how IR can affect GE. This analytical framework is presented in Section 2 and is based primarily on a comprehensive literature review.
2. To offer quantitative evidence about various aspects of IR and social dialogue in fostering GE in its several dimensions (e.g. earnings, labour supply, occupational segregation etc.) across the EU, following a multilevel framework. Such evidence is important to support the analytical framework and provide legitimacy to the report's conclusions. Empirical analyses are presented in Section 3.
3. To provide in-depth national case studies for selected Member States belonging to different IR regimes, to obtain insights and narratives on the interactions between IR and GE. These national case studies should then serve in a cross-country comparative analysis that will further inform the project' s conclusions. The comparative analysis is discussed in Section 4.

Finally, Section 5 concludes based on the results above, pointing out that social partners, CB and social dialogue can bring a significant contribution to addressing gender gaps in the labour market.

# 2. The analytical framework

## 2.1. Gender equality

GE is a challenging concept to define. This section therefore presents related concepts that can help to clarify the meaning of GE.

### 2.1.1. Concepts and definition(s)

Before discussing definition(s) for GE, some clarification regarding various terms and concepts is required. Firstly, gender is understood as culturally determined and a social construct attached to sex, with the latter defined as biological differences between men and women. Recognising that gender is a practice (or a process) implies that intersectionality becomes a suitable concept to better understand gender and to highlight its links and interdependencies with other social characteristics. Furthermore, representations of how men and women should behave are attached to gender, which therefore bears important normative expectations (Edwards, 1983). The concepts of gender roles and gender stereotypes capture such normative

attributes, emphasising cultural determinants (gender roles), and normative beliefs and expectations (gender stereotypes). Stereotypes in particular can lead to simplified assumptions and generalisations on groups or individuals within groups and can serve as a basis to motivate certain decisions, especially when there is a lack of information. As such, stereotypes can be linked to the concept of statistical discrimination[1]. More generally, discrimination, defined as the mistreatment of persons based on individual characteristics, including sex, is an important concept to bridge gender and equality.

GE is not an easy concept to define since it is affected by many factors of various kinds (e.g. historical, cultural, geographical). Moreover, its definition has evolved through time, reflecting the progress made towards a better understanding of the complex issues associated with GE[2].

### 2.1.2. Measuring gender equality

Given the complexity of GE, quantitative measures can only imperfectly represent its state. The EIGE tries to account for this complexity using 31 statistical indicators aggregated into 14 subdomains and 6 domains to construct an index of GE. A value of 100 in any of the (sub)indices indicates a situation of full equality. The composite indicator is available for the years 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2021[3]. Table 1 shows mean values for the GEI and its six domains by country and for the EU27, and Figure 1 displays the evolution of the GEI and its domains between 2013 and 2021 for the EU27.

At the EU27 level, these indices highlight the significant differences that persist between men and women and the substantial progress needed to close the gaps[4]. On average, with a value of 65.5, the GEI lies way below the desired level of 100. The highest average value is obtained for the health domain, at 87.2, followed by the money and work domains with values above 80 and 70 respectively. The lowest index value is obtained for the power domain (47.7), pointing out that much remains to be done to improve the representation of women in executive positions. Figure 1 shows the very slow progress achieved between 2013 and 2021 with the overall GEI increasing only by slightly less than 5 points. If we except the power domain, which was starting from a very low level, progress for all the other domains has been marginal and slow.

Table 1 further reveals the substantial heterogeneity between European Member States. Higher values for all the indices can be observed for Nordic and western continental European (WCE) countries. Sweden obtains the highest values in all domains except money (Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands). Index values for southern, central and eastern countries (with the exception of France and Slovenia) are generally lower. Greece and Hungary achieve the lowest average values of the overall index. Greece performs poorly in the time domain, whereas Hungary obtains the lowest value for the power domain, followed closely by Cyprus and Greece. Romania has the lowest values for the money and health domains and Italy for the work domain (with Greece a close second).

[1] Statistical discrimination is 'a concept developed to describe how inequality grows because actors (e.g. employers) lack information and tend to make decisions about an individual based on some common characteristics of the representative group to which they belong' (Baiocco et al., 2021).

[2] For instance, gender mainstreaming, introduced in the early 1990s, can be linked to intersectionality given that it recognises the need to consider and include a gender perspective at all stages of the policymaking process (Verloo, 1999). This requirement aims to fight latent institutions and norms that lead to the reproduction of inequalities. Therefore, the concepts of gender roles and stereotypes are also inherent to gender mainstreaming.

[3] These correspond to the year of release and the data used to construct the index are usually from a couple of years prior.

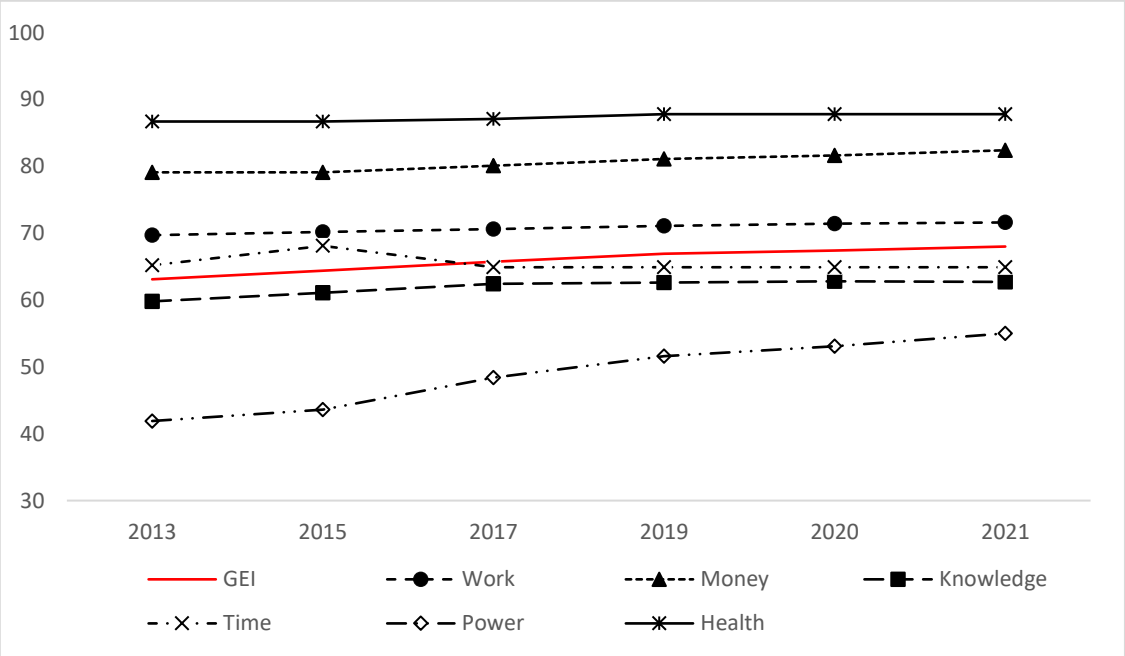
[4] For a much more detailed review of the state of GE in Europe, see https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index- 2021.

**Table 1.** EIGE indices averages – 2010-2021

| | GEI | Work | Money | Knowledge | Time | Power | Health |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 63.0 | 76.0 | 85.1 | 62.0 | 61.0 | 35.6 | 91.6 |
| Belgium | 70.5 | 73.6 | 87.1 | 71.0 | 67.6 | 52.5 | 86.4 |
| Bulgaria | 57.7 | 68.6 | 61.5 | 52.7 | 43.9 | 54.5 | 76.4 |
| Croatia | 54.3 | 68.8 | 70.4 | 50.0 | 51.5 | 32.1 | 83.0 |
| Cyprus | 53.6 | 70.3 | 80.8 | 57.0 | 49.1 | 23.1 | 87.6 |
| Czechia | 55.6 | 66.1 | 75.4 | 57.6 | 56.2 | 27.9 | 86.0 |
| Denmark | 76.5 | 79.6 | 86.0 | 72.3 | 83.0 | 61.6 | 89.9 |
| Estonia | 56.8 | 71.7 | 67.3 | 54.1 | 73.6 | 28.6 | 82.0 |
| Finland | 73.7 | 74.9 | 86.0 | 60.4 | 78.7 | 69.2 | 89.5 |
| France | 71.7 | 72.1 | 85.3 | 64.6 | 67.8 | 66.8 | 87.1 |
| Germany | 65.5 | 71.2 | 84.5 | 54.8 | 66.5 | 50.7 | 90.1 |
| Greece | 50.4 | 64.0 | 72.2 | 54.8 | 43.0 | 23.5 | 83.8 |
| Hungary | 52.0 | 67.0 | 71.0 | 56.0 | 54.4 | 21.4 | 86.2 |
| Ireland | 69.2 | 74.5 | 85.3 | 66.7 | 74.0 | 47.1 | 90.8 |
| Italy | 59.7 | 62.5 | 78.8 | 59.0 | 58.9 | 39.3 | 87.2 |
| Latvia | 58.0 | 73.7 | 62.7 | 49.2 | 64.0 | 41.0 | 78.1 |
| Lithuania | 55.5 | 73.2 | 64.3 | 55.4 | 51.9 | 32.8 | 79.8 |
| Luxembourg | 67.1 | 73.3 | 92.0 | 68.8 | 69.8 | 39.4 | 89.6 |
| Malta | 59.6 | 70.6 | 81.5 | 66.0 | 61.1 | 27.7 | 91.6 |
| Netherlands | 73.4 | 76.9 | 86.7 | 67.1 | 84.9 | 54.7 | 90.0 |
| Poland | 56.0 | 66.8 | 72.7 | 56.8 | 53.4 | 31.9 | 82.4 |
| Portugal | 57.1 | 72.0 | 71.9 | 54.1 | 45.4 | 39.3 | 84.3 |
| Romania | 52.7 | 67.6 | 60.7 | 50.6 | 50.9 | 33.8 | 70.6 |
| Slovakia | 53.5 | 65.7 | 73.1 | 60.1 | 44.4 | 26.9 | 85.3 |
| Slovenia | 66.6 | 72.3 | 81.7 | 55.4 | 71.9 | 53.2 | 87.2 |
| Spain | 68.8 | 72.5 | 76.7 | 65.6 | 63.7 | 58.8 | 89.5 |
| Sweden | 82.0 | 82.1 | 86.3 | 72.5 | 87.7 | 80.0 | 93.9 |
| EU27 | 65.5 | 70.6 | 80.2 | 61.7 | 65.6 | 47.7 | 87.2 |

***Source***: EIGE indices.

**Figure 1.** EIGE indices – EU27 – 2010-2021




***Source***: EIGE indices.

## 2.2. Industrial relations

### 2.2.1. Definitions and typologies

IR regimes (or systems, Dunlop (1993)) refer to the set of rules, institutions and actors that frame and organise the employment relationship (Kaufman, 2004). IR can be situated at the frontier between economics, political science, and sociology, and a significant number of contributions in the field analyse IR regimes at national level and identify shared characteristics across countries to build typologies/classifications. Many typologies and indices exist to categorise and quantify the salient aspects of IR regimes. In the VIRAGE projects, IR is analysed through the lens of the typology proposed by Visser (2009b) for European countries[5]. The typology relies on four dimensions[6]:

1. TU strength. This concept is difficult to capture, as it encompasses various aspects such as TU membership, independent finances or the ability to negotiate with employers and governments. Confederation (or union) centralisation is also an important aspect to consider.
2. The centralisation and coordination of the wage-setting mechanisms. Centralisation refers to the predominant level at which bargaining takes place (e.g. firm, sectoral or national), whereas coordination captures the existence (or not) of any (in)formal mechanism through which bargaining stakeholders can coordinate their decisions and actions.
3. Rights for workers/unions to information/consultation/co-determination at the firm level. The workers'/unions' involvement can take shape in their participation on company boards or through work councils (WC).
4. Participation/involvement of social partners in policy arrangements. These consultations are a key aspect of social dialogue and take the form of tripartite (government and social partners) or bipartite councils (only social partners). They can result in the signing of social pacts (OECD and AIAS, 2021).

Variables are associated with each of these four dimensions and Visser (2009b) then identifies five groups of countries characterised by a certain degree of geographical homogeneity. The first IR regime corresponds to Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) and is labelled organised corporatism (OC). This regime features strong social partners often consulted on policy-related questions, sectoral bargaining and high levels of bargaining coverage and trade union density[7]. The second regime is the social partnership (SP) regime, which comprises WCE countries (Benelux, Austria, etc.). This regime is similar to the OC one, except that governments can be slightly more involved in collective bargaining (CB), and trade union density is smaller. The third regime is called state-centred (SC) and corresponds to southern European countries (Greece, Spain, France, etc.). Social dialogue tends to be more oppositional and social partners are also less frequently consulted by governments. Bargaining coverage is high (similar levels to OC and SP) and the state can play a much more important role in wage setting. The fourth is the liberal pluralism (LP) regime (Cyprus, Ireland and Malta) in which bargaining is more decentralised (company level) and less coordinated. Social partners tend to be weaker

[5] A more recent typology has been proposed by Eurofound (2018), which makes use of similar IR dimensions as Visser (2009b), but includes additional variables to identify six different groups of countries.
[6] These dimensions are presented in more detail in Visser (2009a).
[7] High level of union density in these countries can also be explained by the administration of unemployment insurance by social partners (the so-called Ghent system).

compared to the previously mentioned IR regimes. The final type of IR is the mixed regime (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, etc.). As its name indicates, this group is more homogeneous geographically than in terms of IR. Nonetheless, social partners and social dialogue are usually weaker in these countries.

As noted by Meardi (2018), this typology is one of the most 'authoritative' in the IR literature and, given its European focus, it is particularly suited as a framework to analyse IR and GE within the VIRAGE project. Nevertheless, there is criticism of this typology that has been acknowledged by Visser (2009b) himself and which is worth keeping in mind. A first critique relates to the inherent simplification that such an exercise (i.e. typology construction) implies. As pointed out by Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2013), classifications of countries are a useful heuristic tool but are bound to generalise and ignore within-country specificities, possibly at sectoral (Bechter et al., 2012) or at regional (Regalia, 1998) level. A second critique comes from the static nature of typologies in a context where the Great Recession, the political development of the past twenty years and the further integration and internationalisation of EU economies, led to changes in IR regimes through time. A third and final concern regards central eastern European (CEE) countries, which are all gathered into one group. As pointed out by Bernaciak (2015), the transition period that followed the exit from the communist regimes and the entry into the EU in 2004 made it difficult to originally identify specific IR regimes in CEE countries. With the advantage of hindsight, many contributions have now made an effort to better classify these countries (Eurofound, 2018; Gardawski et al., 2019).

### 2.2.2. An index of industrial relations

As is the case for GE, IR is difficult to quantify. IR regimes are combinations of institutions influenced by historical and cultural traditions (Crouch, 1993; Black, 2005), which are very difficult aspects to capture when constructing a composite index. However, an index is more useful than a typology to empirically investigate the links between GE and IR. Many indices of IR have been proposed in the (academic) literature but these are usually available for specific (groups of) years and/or countries (Kim et al., 2015; Meardi, 2018; Eurofound, 2018), which restricts their usefulness for the tasks at hand in VIRAGE. As a result, it was decided to create an index of IR for European countries available at yearly frequency.

The index is constructed using 24 variables from the OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database. The variables are selected to match the four dimensions of IR regimes that Visser (2009a) uses to build his typology and include, for instance, TU density, bargaining coverage, variables on centralisation and coordination of bargaining (see Ounnas (2022a) for more details). The index is constructed using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (Le Roux and Rouanet, 2010), which can be seen as a counterpart to Principal Component Analysis for categorical data. Ounnas (2022a) shows that this method generates an index that assigns high values to the following characteristics of IR:

1. high TU and EO density rates (versus low density rates)
2. some degree of centralisation and coordination of wage bargaining (versus enterprise/company bargaining and no coordination)
3. automatic extension of CA to non-covered employees resulting in high bargaining coverage rates (versus no mechanism for extension and low coverage)

4. involvement of workers/unions at the firm level through WC or union workplace representation together with substantial information and consultation rights.

These categories are usually more specific to Nordic and WCE countries and, to some extent, to Latin/southern European countries. These countries correspond to the OC and SP regimes identified by Visser (2009b) (SC for southern European countries). The index thus leads to a rankingof countries 'consistent' with Visser's typology. In general, OC and SP countries obtain high values, SC countries intermediate ones and LP and mixed countries low ones. Overall, these characteristics depict IR regimes with strong social partners and a substantial role given to CB and social dialogue (at national and firm level).

Table 2 displays the IR index mean values for 1995 to 2019 and Figure 2 plots IR index time series by country. Apart from some specific cases (discussed in Ounnas, 2022a), which could be seen as surprising, the ranking of countries is in line with Visser's typology. This index will be used in parts of the empirical analysis in Section 3.2 and will help determine if IR regimes with or without some of the characteristics highlighted above can be linked to GE and if so, whether the relationship is positive or negative.

### 2.2.3. EU-level social dialogue

Alongside national IR, social dialogue at EU level holds a special place and substantial power in the field of employment policies. EU-level social partners have contributed to the definition of European social standards and brought significant social advances, in the field of GE in particular. Section 3.1 proposes an historical perspective on EU social dialogue and a discussion of its current state. In this section, we briefly present the organisation, actors and tools of EU social dialogue.

Social dialogue encompasses all negotiations, consultations and exchange of information between policymakers and social partners on economic and social policy (Lopez-Uroz, 2022). EU-level social dialogue refers mostly to bipartite exchange between social partners[8], which can originate from official consultations by the EC on the grounds of Articles 153 and 154 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) or from meetings of the Social Dialogue Committee (three times per year).

EU social dialogue can take place at cross-sectoral level between the four main recognised organisations: the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and its three counterparts on the employers side (Business Europe, SME United and SGI Europe)[9]. Furthermore, following the Commission initiatives in 1998, sectoral social dialogue committees were set up that offered the possibility for social dialogue between sectoral level social partners. There are currently more than 40 such committees, corresponding more or less to economic branches (e.g. banking, insurance)[10] .

Under Article 154 of the TFEU, the Commission has to consult social partners before taking any legislative initiatives in the field of social policy. Social partners may then be consulted a second time on the content of the proposal if the Commission decides that there is ground for action.

[8] Some tripartite bodies exist (the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) or the tripartite summits) but these are usually only consultative.

[9] And the liaison committees Eurocadres and CEC.

[10] https://www.worker-participation.eu/EU-Social-Dialogue/Sectoral

Moreover, Article 155 offers the possibility for bipartite negotiations between social partners, which, if successful, can lead to the signing of framework agreements (FA). Such agreements can then acquire legal force through a Council decision, which may be rejected. In this event, or if social partners decide not to propose the transposition of the FA, the agreement is labelled 'autonomous' and it may still be applied by social partners in Member States on a voluntary basis. FA constitute the main tool of EU-level social dialogue but social partners produce many other types of policy-related documents, including opinions and common positions, declarations, guidelines and codes of conduct and charters, and can decide on a framework of actions, which is a social dialogue tool to promote discussion and exchange of best practices at national/sectoral level.

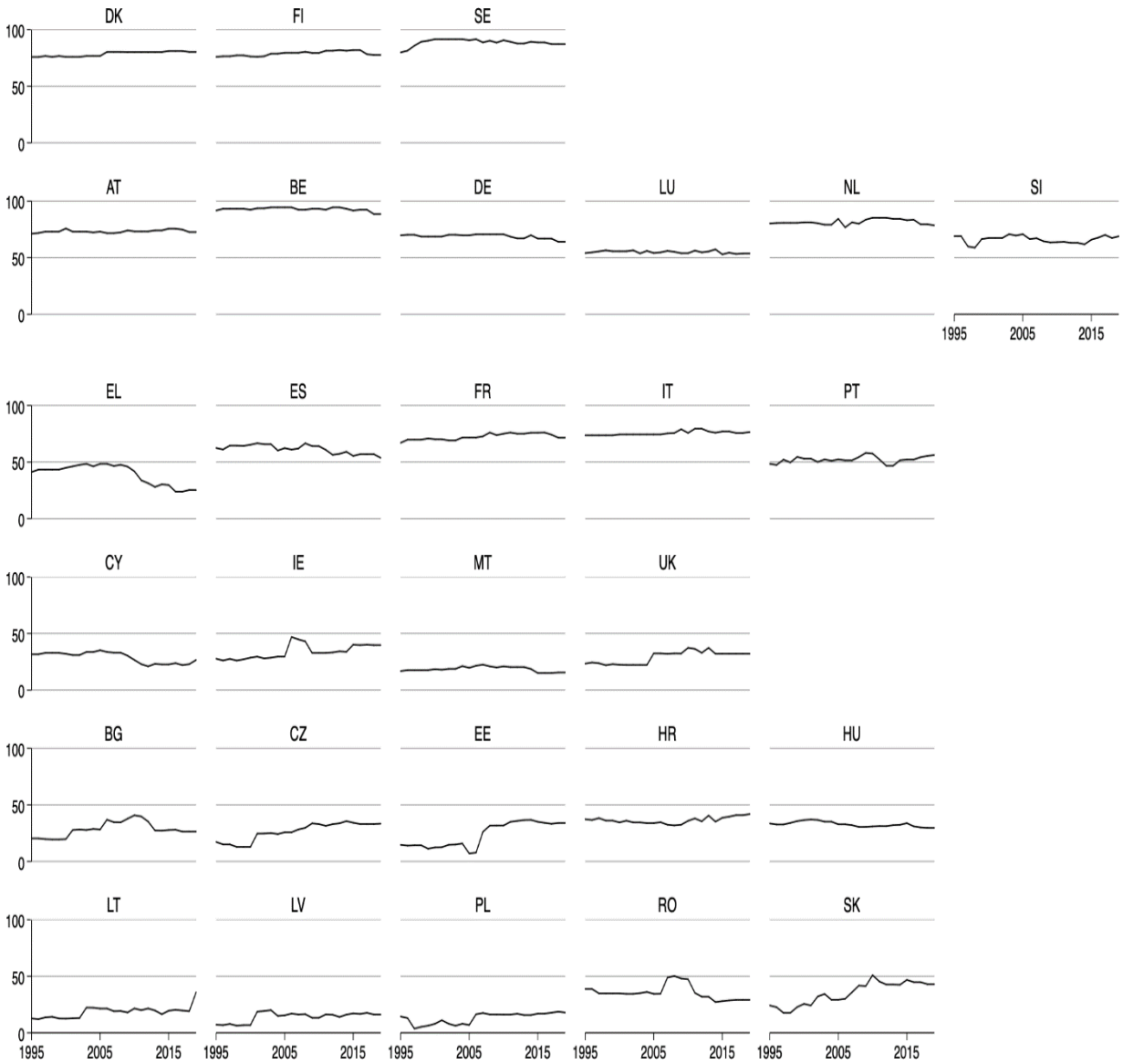
**Table 2.** Industrial relations index – descriptive statistics 1995-2019

| | Index | TU | Bargaining | Involvement | Part. | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BE | 92.5 | 15.5 | 32.2 | 28.7 | 6.0 | 10.1 |
| SE | 88.7 | 14.7 | 25.3 | 31.4 | 6.0 | 11.4 |
| NL | 82.8 | 12.4 | 29.7 | 25.7 | 4.4 | 10.6 |
| DK | 80.0 | 14.0 | 25.3 | 28.8 | 5.2 | 6.6 |
| FI | 79.8 | 13.9 | 31.4 | 26.0 | 0.0 | 8.5 |
| IT | 76.4 | 8.7 | 30.2 | 27.0 | 0.3 | 10.2 |
| FR | 73.9 | 10.1 | 26.3 | 30.0 | 0.3 | 7.2 |
| AT | 73.7 | 4.5 | 30.5 | 26.9 | 4.4 | 7.4 |
| DE | 67.5 | 7.9 | 26.4 | 26.9 | 1.6 | 4.7 |
| SI | 66.8 | 8.3 | 26.8 | 21.5 | 0.0 | 10.3 |
| ES | 58.7 | 4.2 | 26.6 | 21.5 | 0.0 | 6.4 |
| LU | 53.8 | 5.2 | 14.4 | 27.4 | 0.0 | 6.8 |
| PT | 53.1 | 4.2 | 25.7 | 18.5 | 0.3 | 4.4 |
| SK | 42.9 | 5.8 | 11.6 | 17.8 | 2.9 | 4.8 |
| HR | 37.6 | 6.9 | 8.0 | 17.4 | 0.3 | 5.1 |
| IE | 35.9 | 2.9 | 10.2 | 13.8 | 0.2 | 8.9 |
| EL | 33.4 | 3.1 | 13.9 | 13.5 | 0.3 | 2.6 |
| RO | 33.3 | 5.1 | 13.9 | 12.3 | 0.1 | 2.0 |
| UK | 33.1 | 4.8 | 11.7 | 10.2 | 1.6 | 4.8 |
| CZ | 32.0 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 18.9 | 0.0 | 0.7 |
| HU | 31.4 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 21.5 | 0.2 | 1.6 |
| BG | 30.8 | 3.8 | 13.3 | 9.4 | 0.0 | 4.3 |
| EE | 29.4 | 3.5 | 7.8 | 14.6 | 1.3 | 2.1 |
| CY | 25.1 | 5.5 | 12.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 7.1 |
| LT | 20.4 | 5.8 | 3.5 | 9.4 | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| MT | 17.7 | 8.1 | 2.5 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 6.5 |
| LV | 15.9 | 2.3 | 2.7 | 9.4 | 0.0 | 1.5 |
| PL | 15.5 | 5.5 | 1.2 | 7.9 | 0.0 | 1.0 |

*Source*: Ounnas (2022b).

**Notes**: The index values are obtained as the sum of the five dimensions displayed in columns 3 to 7. Blue (red) cells indicate high (low) values across countries. 'TU' relates to the strength of trade unions and 'part.' to participation to policy arrangements. See Section 2.2.1 and Ounnas (2022a) for more information on the index.

**Figure 2.** Industrial relations index – 1995-2019




*Source*: Ounnas (2022a)

**Note**: Overall IR index for the period 1995-2019 and grouped in rows by IR regime Visser (2009b).

## 2.3. Gender equality and industrial relations

IR is central to understanding labour market outcomes and as such, can form important levers for GE progress. However, the discussion in Section 2.1.1 has shown that GE involves important issues related to stereotypes that cannot, or only to a limited extent, be addressed[11] through IR. It is therefore important to precisely identify dimensions of GE that can be influenced by IR. This is discussed in the following sections, which conclude with the presentation of five dimensions of GE in the labour market, in which a potential role for IR can be identified.

### 2.3.1. Gender regime

To understand the potential effects of IR, it is important to precisely identify how gender inequalities materialise in the labour market. Cultural norms, the welfare state, the production regime and the economy's sectoral composition are key routes through which gender inequalities 'express' themselves in the labour market.

[11] It does not mean that IR, its actors and processes (social dialogue, CB) should ignore these stereotypes.

The notion of gender regime offers a unified framework to reflect on those factors/routes and their consequences in the labour market. A gender regime refers to institutions (i.e. the set of rules and norms) related to gender and which translate into stereotypes, roles and tasks allocated to men and women in many areas of social life, in particular in the labour market. The gender regime is influenced by the welfare state, with family policies having important implications for women's labour market participation and career progression. In this regard, country-specific cultures and gender roles about care also play an important role, as do the stereotypes leading to occupational and sectoral segregation and which already affect boys and girls in their education choices. This self-selection into specific sectors/occupations also reflects structural economic factors such as the sectoral composition within service-dominated economies, which are usually seen as more women-friendly (as opposed to manufacturing). Finally, the production regime[12], which informs the type of coordination mechanisms (market versus non-market based) used to address issues between economic agents, is also important to understand gender inequalities in the labour market, mainly because the institutions associated with the various production regimes will influence how inequalities take shape.

Table 3. Industrial relations, welfare and production regimes in Member States

| | North | Centre-west | South | West | Centre-east |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Country** | Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway | Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia | Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal | Ireland, Malta, Cyprus, UK | Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia |
| **IR regime** | Organised corporatism | Social partnership | Polarised/state-centred | Liberal pluralism | Fragmented/state-centred |
| **Welfare regime** | Scandinavian social-democratic | Continental conservative | Southern | Anglo-Saxon liberal | Hybrid/liberal |
| **Production regime** | Coordinated market economy | | Statist market economy | Liberal market economy | Dependent market economy/embedded neoliberal economy |

***Source:*** Baiocco et al. (2021), based on Visser (2009a).

### 2.3.2. Gender equality multidimensionality

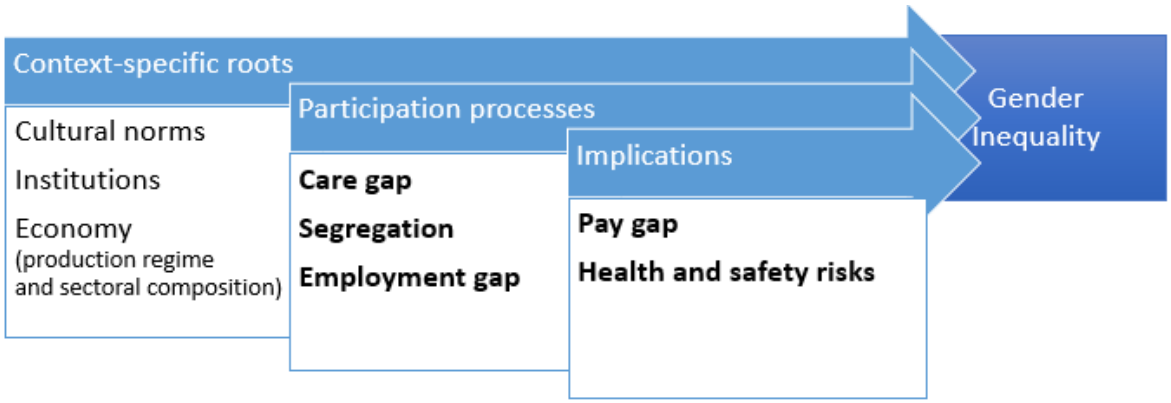
The notion of gender regime allows for the identification of a basis on which inequalities in the labour market can grow. Until now, cultural norms, institutions, including the welfare state and the production regime, and the sectoral composition of the economy, have been shown to affect how women participate in the labour market – whether they stay out of the labour force for care-related reasons, work under atypical forms of employment[13], or self-select into specific sectors and occupations.

[12] Production regime refers to the Variety of Capitalism literature (Hall and Soskice, 2001).

[13] Atypical is intended as the duration (open-ended and temporary) and type (part-time and full-time) of contract.

It is further important to acknowledge that these influences on the participation of women generate additional inequalities, in terms of pay and health and safety risks. For instance, atypical forms of employment usually lead to lower pay and slower career progression, as are career breaks for care reasons. Occupation and sectoral segregation have also been shown to generate gender differences in exposure to physical and psychological risk factors. Figure 3 represents how gender inequalities translate in the labour market and suggest five dimensions that IR can influence to improve GE. As explained by Baiocco et al. (2021), the linear representation in Figure 3 is not accurate and it should be clear that feedback, or second-round effects, are also important to characterise interactions between these five dimensions. For instance, the pay gap provides additional incentives for women to stay out of the labour force and makes it less costly for women to take parental leave compared to men in couples. The five dimensions are now discussed a little more extensively and their links with IR are presented more explicitly. Overall, these five dimensions highlight the multifaceted nature of GE, which reflects it cultural, institutional and economic influences.

**Figure 3.** Multidimensionality of gender inequality




***Source:*** Baiocco et al. (2021).

### The care gap and work-life balance

Interest in issues of care and work-life balance started to emerge and grow in the 1990s as the participation of women in the labour market and their employment rate increased. This gap interacts with many of the other dimensions and measures the difference in time spent on unpaid housework activities between men and women. These activities include caring for children and/or the elderly, voluntary work and any other unpaid help.

The concept of work-life balance is broader and encompasses the care gap as it also includes issues related to flexible working-time arrangements (e.g. part-time work, teleworking), personal leave and the personal equilibrium between work and family responsibilities. Work-life balance is usually measured through self-reported sentiments at individual level.

Figure 4 presents indicators for both concepts. The care gap obtained from the time-use survey is substantial (left panel in Figure 4) and could be slightly negatively correlated with the IR index. The remaining two panels display indicators on self-perceived access to flexible working-time arrangements for EU employees. The gender gap appears to be higher in Nordic and WCE countries, indicating that men report better access to flexible working-time arrangements than women in these countries. These results can be surprising, but these figures only display

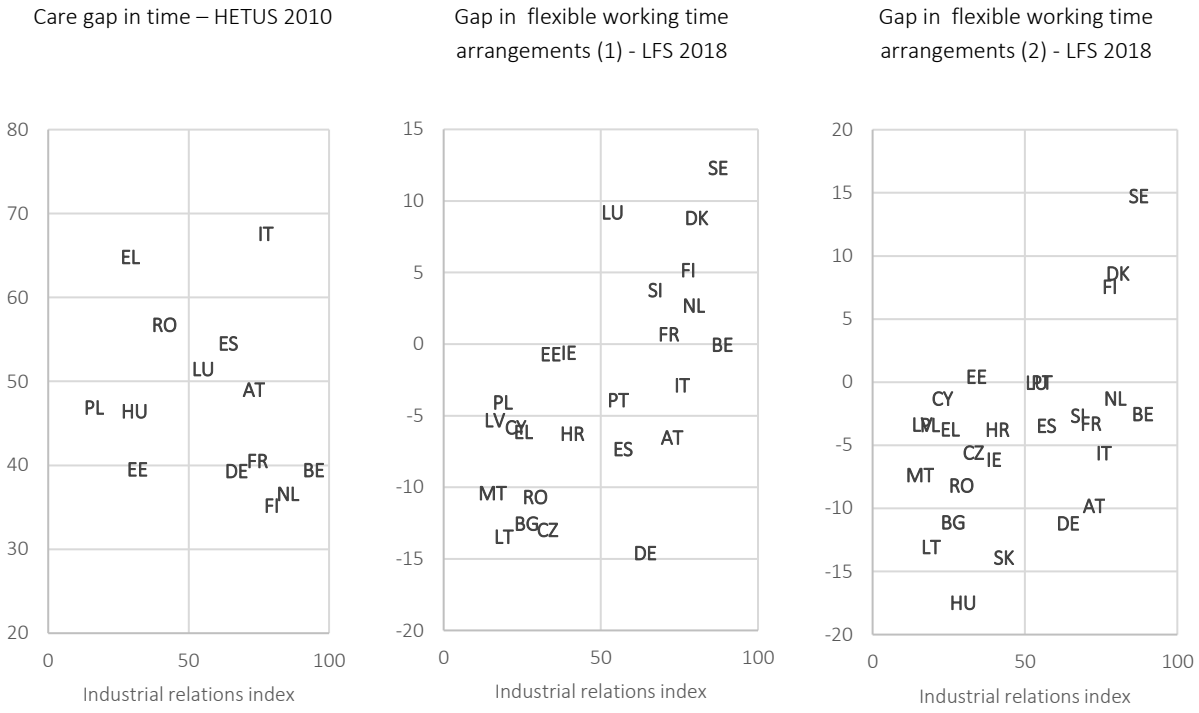
correlation with the IR index and effects related to women's labour market participation or sectoral segregation could also play a role in explaining the positive correlation.

Policies related to work-life balance cover three main areas (EIGE, 2015):

1. Care services for children, elderly and disabled individuals
2. Leave entitlements for care reasons
3. Flexible working-time arrangements

Such policies can rest on state legislations setting minimum standards and rights, but they can also result from collective negotiations. At EU level, the Directive 2019/1158 on Work-life balance constitutes an example of legislation addressing such issues. Social partners' consultations on the matter highlighted important differences between workers' organisations, in favour of expanding current leaves, and developing new flexible working-time possibilities, and EO, who argue against introducing additional burden on companies and support company/firm level negotiations to address these questions (see also Sections 3.1 and 4.1.1 for evidence of similar oppositions between social partners at EU and national level). Issues of leave and flexible working-time arrangements can be included in CA at national level or are the subject of awareness-raising campaigns. These initiatives appear insufficient as they remain centred around women and do not mainstream gender enough by considering gender roles and stereotypes.

**Figure 4.** Care and work-life balance indicators




*Source*: HETUS and Labour Force Survey 2018 ad hoc module.
**Note:** The first panel displays the difference in time spent on care activities between women and men and expressed in terms of women's total time spent on care activities. The remaining two panels display gaps between men and women employees reporting the possibility of having a flexible start and/or end to their day (1) or who can organise their working hours in a flexible way (2).

## Occupational segregation

Gender segregation can be defined as 'the systematic separation of men and women into different spheres of life' (Baiocco et al., 2021). Such segregation takes shape in the labour

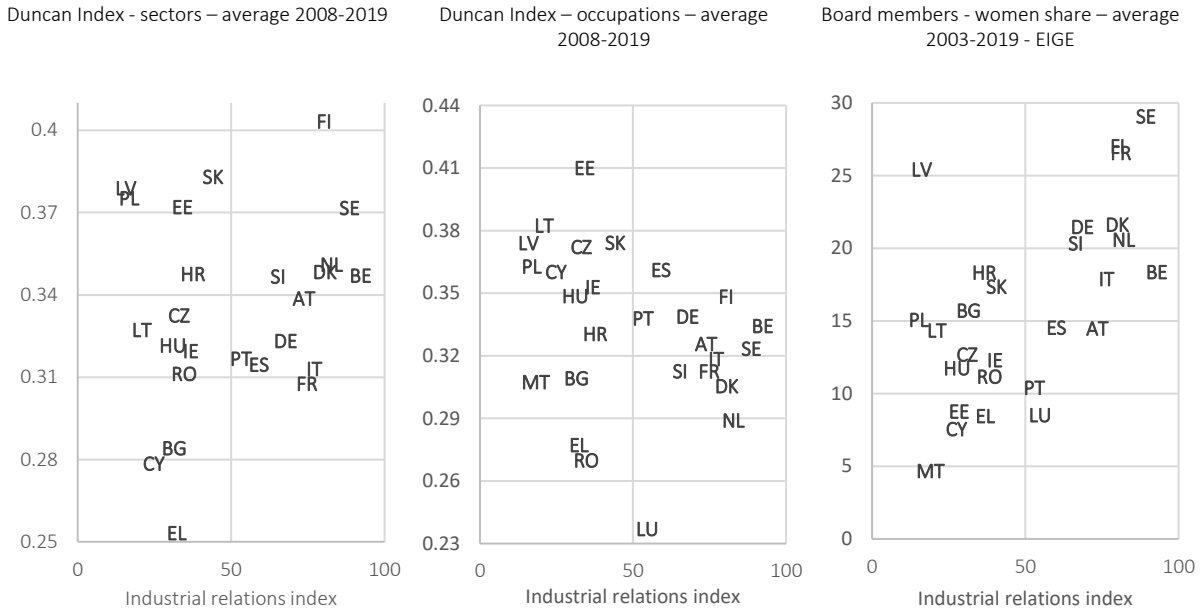
market through the occupational and sectoral repartition of employment across gender. In general, occupations/sectors in which the employment share of one gender exceeds 60 % are considered as gendered and unbalanced.

Occupational and sectoral segregation results from many factors, including cultural norms, gender roles, structural economic aspects or simply, personal preferences. The role of education is worth emphasising since the patterns of segregation can already be observed to some extent in education, with more women found in health and arts and humanities study tracks and men more often found in STEM subjects (EIGE, 2017).

A distinction can be made between vertical and horizontal segregation. Vertical segregation stands for the over-representation of men in managerial and leadership positions and it can therefore be linked to the issues of glass ceilings and sticky floors discussed in the GPG literature. Issues related to career breaks, leave and flexible working times can also be linked to vertical segregation. Horizontal segregation captures the more common phenomenon of the concentration of women into service occupations/sectors and men into industrial ones.

Figure 5 displays indicators that allow us to gain an idea of the extent of sectoral and occupational segregation in the Member States. The panel on the right of Figure 5 shows an indicator usually used to measure vertical segregation.

**Figure 5.** Occupational and sectoral segregation indicators




*Source*: Eurostat and EIGE.
**Note:** The first two panel show yearly averages of Duncan indices by sectors (Nace2) and occupations (ISCO08). These indices range between 0 (perfect integration) and 1 (perfect segregation). The last panel displays average shares of women board members obtained from the WMIDM EIGE database.

Occupational and sectoral segregation are particularly complicated to address through policies because of the multiple causes of very different nature behind the phenomenon. Such policies need to tackle issues related to gender stereotypes and education choices and should aim to affect the behaviour of men and employers as well. Examples of initiatives at EU level can be found under the Women in Digital heading, which promotes women's investment in ICT skills and competences while fighting gender stereotypes associated with this sector. Issues of vertical segregation have been addressed mostly through quotas, for instance by setting a

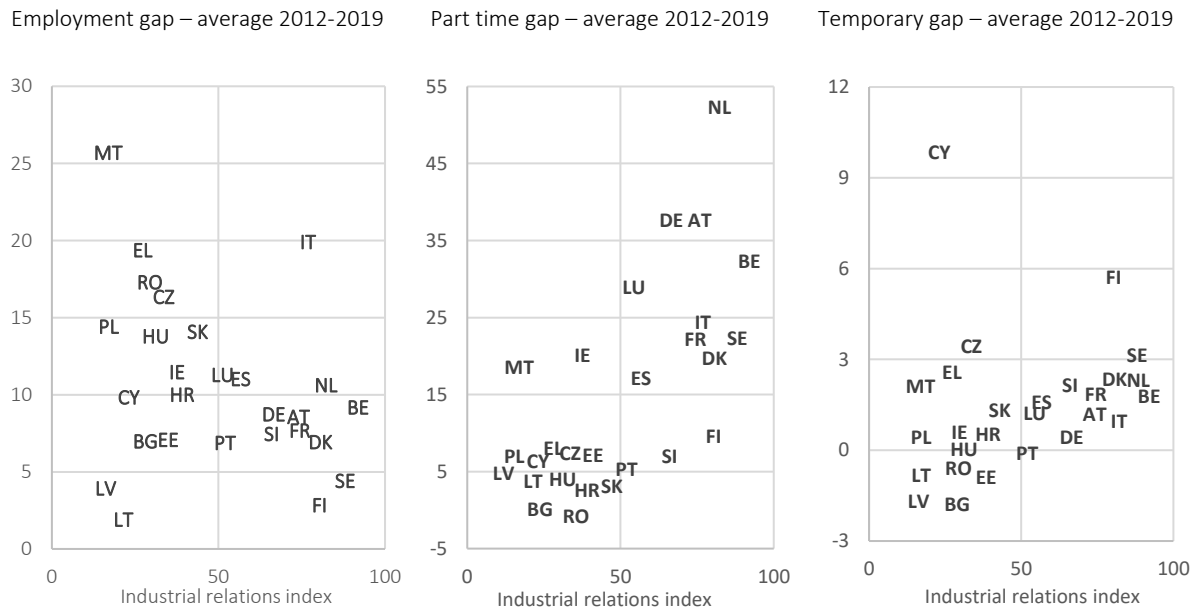
certain target for the share of women on boards of company or other public or private institutions. In this regard, the current discussion regarding a possible Directive on Women on Boards could incentivise lagging countries to catch up and reduce the country heterogeneity displayed in Figure 5. However, it should be kept in mind that such initiative will directly affect only large companies.

IR, through social dialogue and CB, can only expect to have limited influence on issues of occupational segregation, though the recent signing of an autonomous agreement in the rail sector constitutes a counter example worth noting. This agreement seeks to improve working conditions for women and thus encourage women to apply for work in the sector. Furthermore, the limited influence of IR does not mean that social partners ignore issues of segregation, but the means to address the issues are limited and mostly consist of awareness-raising campaigns. Social partners also make efforts to increase women's representation among their own executive bodies, such as the ETUC quotas in place.

### Employment gap

The emancipation of women and their increased participation in the labour market constitute one of the main labour market evolution of the past 50 years in the EU. Yet women's employment rates are still (way) below men's in most EU countries. Furthermore, a finer examination of women's employment conditions reveals their over-representation in atypical forms of employment, which partly results from care, work-life balance and segregation problems. These gender differences in employment and employment characteristics constitute what is defined as the employment gap.

**Figure 6.** Employment gap indicators




*Source*: Eurostat.
**Note:** Difference between men and women's rates for employment and between women and men for part-time and temporary employment rates. Gaps are expressed in percentage points.

Because of its links with other dimensions of GE, the employment gap can be tackled through improvement in work-life balance or better education orientation. Other important policy areas affecting the employment gaps are family and active labour market policies (ALMPs). Family policies include the provision of good quality and affordable care services whereas

ALMPs stand for programmes such as training or job counselling. Both types of policies can be key in favouring women's participation in the labour market and strengthening their positions to avoid and/or escape atypical forms of employment.

Social partners and collective negotiations can only have a limited effect on the employment gap, which would again go through CA on working arrangements and leaves. It is interesting to note that social partners, in particular workers' organisations, have taken a particular interest in precarious forms of employment such as part-time work. Negotiations on such issues are beneficial to women even though the gender dimension is often ignored.

### Gender pay gap

The GPG is one of the main labour market indicators of GE, and has been extensively studied in the academic literature (Blau and Kahn, 2003; Kunze, 2018). It can be partly explained by differences in men's and women's characteristics, such as human capital (e.g. education, job tenure), occupational/sectoral segregation, or the type of employment (Blau and Kahn, 2017). The GPG has been closing over the past 50 years, following the increase in the education level and labour market participation of women. However, most of the closing happened during the 1980s and progress since has been slow. A significant GPG sill persists today in most Member States[14].

Table 4 displays GPGs in Member States computed from four waves of the Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) between 2006 and 2018. The table shows the unadjusted GPG computed as the difference between men's and women's hourly wage and expressed in terms of men's hourly wages. The gap adjusted for observed characteristics[15] is also displayed in the table. Both measures reveal the substantial heterogeneity in GPGs across Member States. Moreover, countries in which the unadjusted GPG could be seen as surprisingly small (i.e. Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia) usually obtain a much greater adjusted GPG. This indicates that the GPG in these countries is underestimated due to the 'better' characteristics (e.g. education level) on average of women compared to men. A second group of countries sees their adjusted GPG decrease (Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Sweden). This is particularly true for Germany, which has one of the highest GPGs and one of the lowest adjusted GPGs. Furthermore, evidence in Table 4 confirms the stagnation of GPGs in both forms and we can note that pay disparities (slightly) increased in many countries between 2014 and 2018.

Many policies exist to address the GPG. Equal pay legislation is one of the main tools put in place, among which is the Directive 2006/54/EC on equal opportunities and treatment. Because of the persistence and the small gains measured over the past decade, other areas are being explored, for instance, in terms of pay transparency. In any case, the GPG is linked in complex ways with all the other dimensions studied in VIRAGE and effectively tackling this inequality requires a holistic approach. Wage-setting mechanisms obviously play a key role in determining pay, and the GPG is therefore a dimension on which IR and CB can have a substantial (but partial) effect. In general, it is admitted that more centralised and coordinated wage-bargaining systems lead to lower wage inequalities (Freeman, 2007). As such, the potential positive effect of bargaining indirectly affects the GPG since women are often found

[14] Furthermore, gender gaps in terms of non-wage benefits, not studied in this report, can be significant (e.g. In Belgium). These benefits are often out of CAs' scope and are therefore difficult to address for social partners.

[15] See Ounnas (2022b) for more information on how the GPG is decomposed and the variables included in the analysis.

at the bottom of the wage distribution and therefore benefit from lower inequalities. Other aspects of IR, such as social dialogue at the firm level, have also been shown to reduce the GPG (see also Section 3.2.3).

### Occupational safety and health and adverse social behaviour

Occupational safety and health (OSH) encompasses issues related to workers' wellbeing at the workplace, including both physical and psychological risks. OSH is linked to other dimensions of GE. For instance, OSH is closely linked with working conditions, working hours and work-life balance and therefore with issues of care. Likewise, differences in employment contract and duration generate differences in terms of OSH. Finally, occupational segregation is particularly important to understand gender differences in terms of OSH. Men tend to be affected more by physical risks (see Figure 7) as they work more often in industrial/construction occupations whereas women tend to be more affected by psychological and adverse social behaviours. Adverse social behaviours include violence at work, bullying/mobbing and sexual harassment. These are very hard to measure, and statistics are potentially biased by over-reporting of incidents in more gender-aware countries (like the Nordic countries).

**Table 4.** (Un)adjusted gender pay gap – Structure of Earnings Survey – 2006-2018

| | 2006 | | 2010 | | 2014 | | 2018 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GPG | Adj. | GPG | Adj. | GPG | Adj. | GPG | Adj. |
| Belgium | - | - | 7.6 | 5.7 | 4.9 | 1.7 | 5.6 | 0.7 |
| Bulgaria | 10 | 13.8 | 10.4 | 11.9 | 9.6 | 13.1 | 10.9 | 13 |
| Croatia | - | - | - | - | 5.8 | 13.8 | 9 | 14.7 |
| Czechia | 18.4 | 16.4 | 15 | 14.6 | 16.9 | 15.6 | 15.2 | 13.3 |
| Denmark | - | - | - | - | - | - | 12.6 | 8.7 |
| Estonia | 26.2 | 22.1 | 21.1 | 18.5 | 21.1 | 19.7 | 16.8 | 17.6 |
| Finland | 18.9 | 15.6 | 17.7 | 14.6 | 15.7 | 13.1 | 15 | 12.3 |
| France | 11.9 | 11.6 | 12.4 | 10.1 | 12.4 | 10.2 | 13 | 11.1 |
| Germany | 19.3 | 11.3 | 19.9 | 8.2 | 20.5 | 6.3 | 18.5 | 5.2 |
| Greece | 18.3 | 7.9 | 12.1 | 6.6 | 9.8 | 5.8 | 6.2 | 9 |
| Hungary | 8.3 | 10.8 | 9.5 | 10.8 | 6.2 | 10.2 | 8.8 | 13.2 |
| Italy | 2.2 | 12.8 | 1.9 | 10 | 2 | 10.6 | 1.3 | 10 |
| Latvia | 9.6 | 15.4 | 8.3 | 15.2 | 12.7 | 15.3 | 14.9 | 16.8 |
| Lithuania | 11.9 | 18.1 | 7.5 | 19.4 | 6.8 | 13.4 | - | - |
| Netherlands | 16.9 | 8.9 | 15.3 | 8.3 | 15 | 7.7 | 13.6 | 7.7 |
| Poland | 2.1 | 11.9 | -0.3 | 10.9 | 4.4 | 13 | 5.9 | 12.7 |
| Portugal | 4 | 16.1 | 7.5 | 12.9 | 9.6 | 11.2 | - | - |
| Romania | 6.2 | 11.7 | 7.5 | 8.2 | 2.4 | 9 | 1.2 | 14.5 |
| Slovakia | 20.9 | 17.2 | 15.4 | 15.5 | 15.4 | 14 | 15.9 | 13.7 |
| Slovenia | - | - | - | - | 1.4 | 12.5 | 4.9 | 15.3 |
| Spain | 13.8 | 13.5 | 13.5 | 11.4 | 12.1 | 9.3 | 10.6 | 10.5 |
| Sweden | 13.7 | 8.5 | 12.8 | 7.8 | 11.6 | 6.8 | 9.9 | 6.7 |

***Source***: SES based on author's own computations.
**Notes**: GPG and adjusted components in percentage points from the decomposition of hourly wages using the Ñopo (2008) matching decomposition method. Blue (red) cells indicate low (high) values of the (adjusted) GPG across countries (per column).

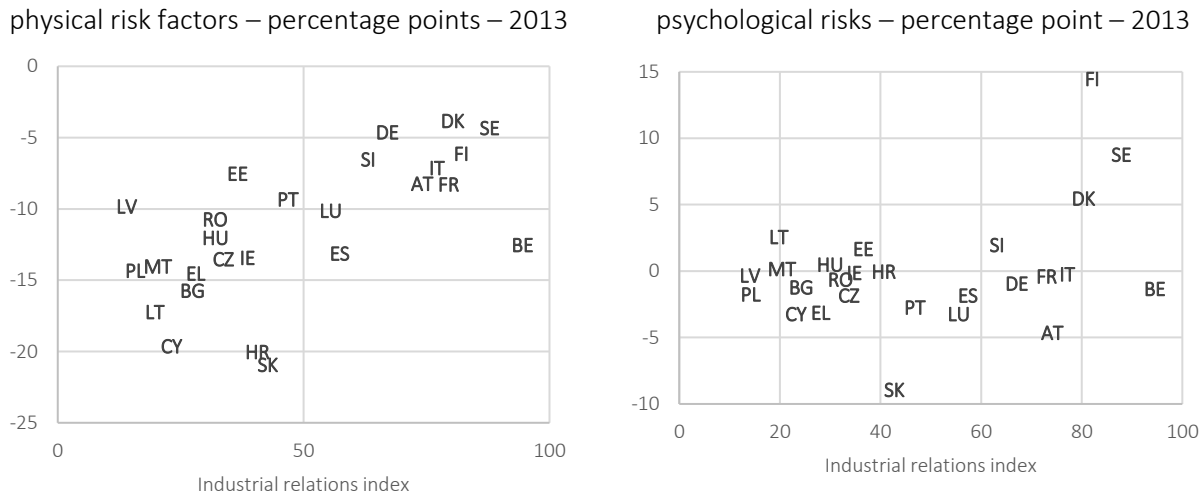
This latter notion is partly confirmed by the right panel in Figure 7, which shows that the gap between women and men employees reporting exposure to psychological risk factors is the greatest in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. When it comes to physical factors, the left panel in Figure 7 shows that the gap is negative in all EU countries, implying that men report being more

exposed to such risk factors. It is, however, interesting to notice that the gap seems to be lower in countries with high IR index values. This simple correlation suggests that social dialogue and CB could also contribute to closing gaps that represent disadvantages for men.

There is a quite dense policy and legal framework at EU level, with around 25 directives dedicated to OSH issues. It includes binding rules to protect workers from OSH risks and non-binding guidelines targeted at specific sectors or actors. OSH policies have been criticised for being gender blind and as a result, the EU-OSHA (2014) suggests a gender-sensitive approach to OSH practices. Note that in general, sexual harassment issues tend to be addressed more within equal opportunities legislation, such as the Directive 2006/54/EC. The Istanbul Convention adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011 or the ILO Convention 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work constitute materials available to support initiatives against sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The proposition for a new legislation on gender-based violence by the EC should also contribute to promoting GE in the labour market.

At EU level, social partners have addressed OSH topics through many FA (e.g. on work-related stress or violence and harassment at work) but without always considering explicitly the gender dimensions. At national level, social partners are also key actors of OSH policies contributing to the definitions and strategies to tackle such inequalities.

**Figure 7.** Gap in exposure to risk factors – 2013




*Source*: Labour Force Survey 2013 ad-hoc modules.
**Note:** Gap between women and men reporting exposure to one of the risks above. The difference is expressed in percentage points.

# 3. Empirical evidence on gender equality and industrial relations at EU level

This section is based on four distinct analyses that aim to explore and further characterise the relationship between IR and GE. Section 3.1 studies EU-level social dialogue (presented briefly in Section 2.2.3) by first taking an historical perspective to trace its evolution and present the main policy achievements in terms of GE, and second, by taking stock of the current state of EU-level social dialogue. This section is qualitative and based on 15 semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders, and a review of the relevant academic and grey literature. Section 3.2 presents three additional analyses of GE and IR with a quantitative approach that uses data

at Member States' level. Various dimensions of GE and IR are analysed and the conclusions tend to confirm a positive association between GE and IR characterised by strong social partners, social dialogue (at the firm and national level) and CB.

Section 3 is complementary to Section 2 as it provides empirical evidence on the links between GE and IR using the guidance from the analytical framework. This in turn also tends to provide support for the analytical framework.

### 3.1. EU-level social dialogue

From an historical perspective, social partners were involved in the European integration process in the 1960s through tripartite summits and various committees. European social dialogue really took off under the impulse of the first Delors Commission in 1985, which launched and promoted bipartite social dialogue. The main outcomes from social dialogue were non-binding and consisted mostly of resolutions, statements and joint opinions.

The protocol on social policy annexed to the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht opened up the way for the transposition of agreements between social partners into binding legal acts, pending a council directive. Three FA – on parental leave in 1996, which was revised in 2010 and in 2019 became the Work-life balance Directive, on part-time work in 1997, and on fixed-term work in 1999 – were transposed into directives and five other 'autonomous' agreements were reached (on telework, work-related stress, harassment and violence at work, inclusive labour market and active ageing and an intergenerational approach). Sectoral FA were also transposed into directives (e.g. FA on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector in 2010). Following this particularly productive period of the 1990s/early 2000s, social partners started to expand their work practices to include open consultations, exchanges of experiences and awareness-raising campaigns. Furthermore, this marked a change in EU-level social dialogue, which evolved towards autonomous work programmes between social partners setting their own priorities and agendas.

Over the past two decades, EU-level social dialogue has undergone profound transformations, from FA transposed into binding legal acts to non-binding outcomes such as best practices, guidelines or recommendations. The period that followed the Great Recession from 2010 to 2017 saw no signing of FA at cross-sectoral level. No reasons can be singled out and many factors have contributed to this period of bipartite social dialogue crisis. Some interviewees highlighted the changing role of the EC, that appeared less inclined to transform FA into binding legislation (e.g. the autonomous agreement in the hairdressing sector in 2012) and as such, provided fewer incentives for social partners to reach agreements through social dialogue. Furthermore, it is possible to note a widening divergence between TU, which were more inclined to binding legislation, and EO, that wished to limit additional (administrative) burden for firms and advocated mainly for the use of soft instruments. Such divergence complicates negotiations and dialogue. Moreover, and perhaps paradoxically, the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming affected the central role of social dialogue and social partners to tackle gender inequalities as issues of GE are now seen as broader than related only to the labour market. This decreased influence of social partners on the matter is also reflected in the transfer of gender-related issues from social policy in DG Employment to the human rights and anti-discrimination portfolio of DG Justice. Whereas labour market aspects of GE remain important, social partners now share their positions with other actors who often originate from the civil society.

The EU-level social dialogue crisis is likely to have affected GE progress, given the contribution that social dialogue made in the past by tackling issues of atypical employment. Under the Dutch presidency in 2016, a call for a new start for a strong social dialogue was signed by the main EU-level social dialogue stakeholders. The EPSR, in its 8th principle, acknowledges the central role of social dialogue and the EPSR action plan contains an initiative to strengthen social dialogue at national and EU level.

## 3.2. Evidence from EU-level analysis

This section briefly presents the results from three empirical analyses that aim to confirm a possible association between IR and GE using Member States data.

### 3.2.1. EIGE indices

The first study seeks to provide evidence on IR and GE[16]. As explained in Section 2.3, VIRAGE considers GE as a multidimensional concept, implying that we would ideally require a quantitative measure, available for all Member States, that accounts for this multifaceted nature. The GEI from the EIGE is a natural candidate that fulfils these criteria as it is constructed from multiple indicators and aggregates the six domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power and health) that encompass the five labour market dimensions of GE studied in VIRAGE (Sections 2.1.2 and 2.3.2). As a result, we also analyse the relations between IR and each of these domains separately, without forgetting that indicators used to construct the GEI are broader than the labour market. As such, the EIGE indices are likely to capture aspects on which IR and social partners can only have limited effects.

With regards to IR, we use the IR index presented in Section 2.2.2, which offers the advantage of being available at yearly frequency for all Member States. As a quick reminder, this index assigns high values to IR regimes characterised by the combination of strong social partners, CB and social dialogue at the firm and national level. Given the discussion in Section 2.3, we could expect these characteristics to be positively associated with GE and the GEI. Moreover, we are careful in working with the EIGE indices and use the year of the data as reference rather than the release year of the indices. The econometric estimation considers multiple specifications of our model, including different assumptions on how IR can affect GE, and we include additional variables to capture macroeconomic aspects of Member States that could affect the GEI.

Overall, the results are indicative of a positive relationship between the GEI and IR. In other words, countries where IR supports social dialogue and CB appear to obtain higher scores in terms of GE. Additional evidence suggests that the positive effect could be greater[17] for countries featuring all the above IR characteristics, which could be explained by evidence discussed later in Section 4.1.4. The positive effects on the GEI appear to go through the money and power domains. The effects of IR on the former domain are in line with evidence of the positive effects that CB can have on the GPG (Blau and Kahn, 2017). For the power domain, the effect of IR could be explained by a sort of institutional complementarity between the better representation of women in decisional positions and social dialogue at national and firm level. Results for other domains (knowledge, time, etc) are more inconsistent but IR is likely to have only indirect and limited effects on the indicators used to construct these domains.

[16] As mentioned in the introduction, studies linking both concepts tend to consider narrower definitions of IR and GE, and focus primarily on the effects of wage bargaining on the GPG.
[17] In more technical terms, the relationship appears to be non-linear.

### 3.2.2. The gender pay gap

Having provided evidence that the IR index is positively associated with the money domain, we seek to provide additional evidence on this effect for Member States using the GPG computed from SES micro-level data. In the labour market, the GPG is one of the main indicators of GE (Section 0) and the SES allows us to compute it based on hourly earnings, including payments for overtime and shift work. The GPG is then decomposed using the Oaxaca-Blinder (OB) method and Ñopo (2008) exact matching. The decomposition yields a GPG measure corrected for differences in firms' and individual characteristics as displayed in Table 4. The adjusted GPG is our main variable of interest since it captures differences in the wage structure (Blau and Kahn, 2017), or the (wage) return to characteristics that IR are likely to influence. The adjusted GPG is analysed at country level similarly to the EIGE indices, controlling again for macroeconomic characteristics and using the IR index.

The results show that higher values of the IR index are associated with lower adjusted GPG. However, the relationship appears to be U-shaped and the effects of IR could be positive for high index values. Estimation results by IR dimensions (see Table 2) help shed light on the U-shaped effect. Firstly, the IR dimensions on bargaining and involvement have significant and negative effects on the GPG, consistent with evidence from the academic literature (Blau and Kahn, 2003; Heinze and Wolf, 2010). Secondly, the dimension capturing TU strength is estimated to have a U-shaped or strictly increasing effect, which becomes positive when trade unions are strong, and which likely explains the effect found for the IR index.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that a gendered IR variable, namely the gender gap in TU density, has been included in all the specifications and models tested, for the GEI as well. The aim was to identify whether more feminised union membership could result in better GE performance, given the evidence on wage premium for union members. It should be kept in mind that this variable required significant adjustments and its quality could therefore be questioned. Nevertheless, the gender gap in TU density was rarely found to have a significant effect on GE when using the EIGE indices, but a negative effect was found on the GPG.

### 3.2.3. Within-company social dialogue and wages

In the third and last quantitative analysis proposed by the VIRAGE projects, the focus shifts to social dialogue at the firm level through the investigation of the relationship between within-company social dialogue and wages. This study uses another source of European micro-data from Eurofound, namely, the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which contains information on female employees and workplace environments in Europe.

Within-company social dialogue is defined as industrial relations processes where recognised employee representatives are involved in decisions concerning the employment relationship at the organisational/institutional level, either in relation to wider company issues (workplace social dialogue) or in their immediate job (task discretion). Such involvement may be limited to being informed by management, or may extend to consultation, negotiation, or joint participation in decision-making, in the form of TU, WC or similar committees representing employees.

Thanks to the availability of individual-level data for Member States provided by the EWCS, it is possible to estimate the impact of within-company social dialogue on wages for employed women in Europe. Therefore, this work is interested in studying whether the presence of any committee(s) representing employees at company/organisation level can support GE by

ensuring higher wages for female employees in Europe. The econometric specification includes controls for a series of variables that are usually not integrated, even in more accurate GPG decomposition exercises. Moreover, the analysis tries to uncover potential effects that other GE dimensions considered in the VIRAGE project can have on women's pay, for instance, family care burden and work-life balance, or gender occupational segregation. The latter dimension is particularly interesting given the remarkable polarisation of unionised female workforces in white-collar jobs, predominantly in the public sector, which justify further investigation on the interplay of within-company social dialogue and wages by occupational status (blue/white-collar, high/low-skilled workers). The overall achievement in GE, as measured by GEI, and the type of IR regimes obtained from Visser (2009b) typology are also included in the analysis.

The estimates consistently associate a higher wage with women employees that have a TU or WC or similar committee representing them in the organisations where they work. However, the wage effects are not homogeneous among women, and the magnitude of within-company social dialogue's effect seems to be greater for low-skilled women and white-collar workers. Huge geographical heterogeneity also exists at European level, suggesting that the agendas of unions and policymakers have different priorities in how they tackle the low wages of women employees. The empirical analysis indicates that the effect of unpaid family and social burdens and hostile work environments on wages, in terms of temporary contracts and inflexible working hours and sexual harassment risk, should be considered and monitored as well.

Although data limitations should not be forgotten, the results from the four empirical analyses presented in this section support our analytical framework by confirming that IR and GE tend to be associated together in the data. Overall, IR characterised by CB and social dialogue at all levels (within-company, national and European) tend to possess more gender-equal labour markets. The most conclusive evidence concerns wages and the GPG, but additional positive effects on women's representation (i.e. the power domain) have also been identified. Furthermore, the analytical framework underlines the interconnectedness between the five GE dimensions and the positive effects on the GPG should therefore have (positive) effects on other gender gaps.

# 4. Comparative analysis: gender equality and industrial relations in four Member States

This section of the report presents results from four country case studies using desk research, interviews with key national stakeholders and focus groups with employees, with the primary goal to deepen our understanding of the links between GE and IR[18]. These analyses are key and complement the empirical evidence presented in Section 3 by allowing us to study in more detail how different IR institutional regimes interact with GE. Of particular interest are the perceptions and priorities that the main stakeholders (and employees) attach to the various dimensions of GE and the actions undertaken to address gender gaps. Whenever possible, interviewees were asked to rank and determine an involvement (or priority) level assigned to each dimension, based on four value scales (from 0 - not involved to 3 – high involvement)[19].

[18] Some country reports include a zoom-in section focusing on a country-specific relevant question (i.e. the GPG in Belgium and the #Metoo movement in Sweden). Furthermore, four policy briefs synthesising the main outcomes of the country-level analysis can be found on the website of the project.

[19] This ranking can also result from researchers' perceptions based on the interview results.

However, this qualitative analysis presents the main drawback of being non-representative of the views of all stakeholders, as only a limited number of such detailed interviews can be carried out[20]. The four Member States are Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Sweden. Table 5 presents basic observations and statistics on GE and IR in these countries.

**Table 5.** Gender equality and industrial relations in Belgium, Italy, Poland and Sweden

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender equality | | | | |
| GEI 2021 (2013) | 72.7 (69.3) | 63.8 (53.3) | 56.6 (55.5) | 83.9 (80.1) |
| Legal framework | • Two main laws prohibit discrimination:<br>(1) anti-discrimination law of 10 May 2007<br>(2) law on equality between women and men of 12 January 2007.<br>• Gender mainstreaming is compulsory at the federal level and in some unions. | • GE proclaimed in article 37 of the Italian Constitution and discrimination is condemned by law.<br>• Legal framework on gender equality set by the National Code of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men proclaimed in 2006 (D.L. 198/2006). The code establishes the institutions responsible for the promotion of GE and gathers, organises and harmonises 11 laws on equal opportunities.<br>• Mainstreaming applied by unions within their organisations. | • GE granted in the Constitution.<br>• Policy support for traditional gender norms. | • Long tradition of institutionalising GE. Three main acts:<br>(1) Law on equality in working life in 1980, updated in 1991 and replaced in 2009 by the current Discrimination Act<br>(2) Parental Leave Act<br>(3) Work Environment Act<br>• National GE policy updated in 2006 and definition of six sub-goals. Mainstreaming is the main strategy to achieve these goals. |
| Examples of councils, institutes or other relevant institutions | • Belgian institute for the equality of women and men - autonomous federal institution.<br>• Gender Equality Council - tripartite councils. | • the National Advisor for Equality.<br>• the Unified Committees for the Guarantee of Equal Opportunities, the Enhancement of the Well-being of Employees and Against Discrimination (CUGs).<br>• Network of Advisors on Equality. | • Ministry of Family and Social Policy includes an office of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment.<br>• Commissioner for Human Rights, a stakeholder in gender equality. | • Swedish Gender Equality Agency to ensure implementation of GE policy in publicly funded organisations.<br>• Equality Ombudsman, a government agency to supervise compliance with the Discrimination Act.<br>• Swedish Work Environment Authority to monitor compliance with Work Environment Act. |
| Industrial relations | | | | |
| IR index value 2019 (1995) | 88.6 (91.7) | 76.6 (73.7) | 17.9 (14.4) | 87.3 (79.9) |
| Visser typology | Social partnership | State-centred | Mixed | Organised corporatism |
| Trade union density - 2019 (2005) | 49.1% (55.7%) | 32.5% (37.6%) | 12.3% (34.7%) | 65.2% (84.8%) |
| Private Employer organisation density - 2019 (2005) | 76% (75.6%) | 72% (74.3%) | 46.2% (33.8%) | 82% (77%) |
| Bargaining coverage | 96% (96%) | 100% (100%) | 13.4% (29.4%) | 90.4% (87.6%) |
| Centralisation - predominant level of bargaining - 2019 | Central and industry | sector or industry | company or enterprise | sector or industry |

***Source***: National reports, OECD/AIAS ICTWSS and Ounnas (2022a).

[20] In the comparative analysis that follows, we focus primarily on results that aggregate the views of all stakeholders, even though results by stakeholders (e.g. TU, EO) are often available. These can be consulted directly from the national reports.

Table 5 shows that the countries' performances in terms of GE, measured using the EIGE index, range from low values in Poland to high ones in Sweden. Moreover, the dynamics in these countries differ quite substantially, with a stagnation in Poland, relatively small increases in Belgium and Sweden and a 10-point increase in Italy's index between 2013 and 2021. All countries present rather well-established legal frameworks with regards to GE, which likely also reflects the EU's influence. In general, these laws prohibit and punish discriminations. Only Belgium and Sweden report a systematic use of gender mainstreaming in government, whereas Belgian and Italian unions claim to apply such principles internally. Interesting differences appear when looking at councils or institutes as Belgium and Sweden are the only two countries with bipartite or tripartite organisations focused on GE, which conduct awareness-raising campaigns on specific issues through the production of dedicated studies and guidelines or best practices[21]. In Italy and Poland, such areas for social dialogue on GE do not seem to exist and the main institutions are usually attached to ministries or under some sort of government supervision.

In addition to heterogenous GE performances and institutional frameworks, the four countries present very different IR setups, which belong to different regimes according to Visser's typology (see Section 2.2.1). Among the main differences, we note that Poland features decentralised bargaining at company level[22] whereas the other three countries present some sort of multilevel framework with bargaining predominantly taking place at a higher level than the company level. Belgium, Italy and Sweden are also characterised by relatively strong social partners as indicated by the above EU27 TU and EO density rates. Sweden can be differentiated from Belgium and Italy primarily based on the degree of state intervention in IR, which is low in the former country[23]. Finally, note that social dialogue is much more developed in Belgium (and Sweden) compared to Italy, with dedicated bipartite and tripartite bodies holding substantial decisional powers within the legal framework set at national level.

## 4.1. Stakeholders' perceptions, involvement, and actions for gender equality

In this section, we first briefly discuss points related to each GE dimension separately, including the main aspect of the relevant legislative framework as well as the perception, the involvement and the actions reported in the interviews of the main stakeholders. Table 6 to Table 10 summarise the main aspects discussed in the form of bullet points and provide a couple of statistical indicators to gain an idea of the state of play in the country regarding the dimension of interest. Unless stated otherwise, these statistics come from the respective national reports[24].

### 4.1.1. Care gap and work-life balance

Care gap and work-life balance issues are generally perceived as root causes of gender inequality in the labour market in all countries. Substantial gender differences persist, even in more gender-equal countries, and progress has been slow over time. All countries possess

[21] For Sweden, bipartite bodies also exist for issues related to OSH (Section 4.1.3).

[22] In Poland, a distinction should be made between the public sector, featuring greater intervention from the State, and the private sector. This sectoral distinction allows for a more precise characterisation of Polish IR.

[23] This is further exemplified by the slightly smaller bargaining coverage in Sweden, which can be explained by the absence of legal provisions for automatic extension of CA. Extension mechanisms exist in Sweden but are usually negotiated at sectoral level.

[24] Unfortunately, the very low interest in GE issues complicated the collection of detailed information on each dimension in Poland. The main aspects of stakeholders' interviews regarding this country are presented in Table 11 and mostly discussed in Section 4.1.4.

rather well-developed legislation regarding maternity and parental leave, although the length and replacement rates can vary significantly between the four Member States.

Table 6. Care gap and work-life balance

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State of play | • Ranked below EU average for care activities according to EIGE.<br>• Men spend 40% less time on care activities (Figure 4).<br>• Small improvements through time. | • Highest gender gap in the EU with men spending around 68% less time on care activities (Figure 4).<br>• Small gaps reported for availability of flexible work arrangements. | • Men spend 47% less time on care activities, a value close to the EU average (Figure 4).<br>• Gaps in accessibility to flexible working time arrangements are close to EU averages (Figure 4). | • Work-life balance is a key element addressed by Swedish GE policy.<br>• In 2020, women account for around 70% of total days used for parental leave.<br>• Slow levelling. |
| Policies and legal framework | • Part-time work and flexible working time arrangements.<br>• Leaves including:<br>(1) career breaks (public sector) and time credit (private sector) with the latter regulated by a collective labour agreement<br>(2) thematic leaves for childbirth, care or other reasons. Often go further than requirements set at EU level through collective agreements.<br>• Childcare services with relatively good accessibility as measured through Barcelona targets. | • Maternity is protected and regulated by law (one of the longest in the EU).<br>• Compulsory leave for father (1 day increased to 10 in 2021) and incentive to increase men's take-up (1 additional month if the man takes at least 3 months' leave).<br>• Law on reconciliation of work and family life, which promotes flexible working time arrangements and teleworking.<br>• Provision of childcare is still below Barcelona targets but very heterogeneous across regions and localities.<br>• Fully paid leave for disabled relative. Long-term care consists in cash transfers and provision of residential care services. | - | • Generous and general parental leave benefits.<br>• Reserved days of parental leave by gender.<br>• Workers on parental leave have to be included in general pay increase as other employees.<br>• Accessible and publicly funded childcare (also for elderly and disabled individuals). |
| Perception, involvement and example of actions | • No specific actions were reported from policymakers targeting work-life balance and the gender care gap, but it was noted that the transposition of the work-life balance directive should contribute to ensuring improvements in this area.<br>• Employers advocate for changes in leaves system, aiming for more flexibility and customisation to better address the needs of both employees and employers.<br>• Measures and actions launched by IO or EU often serve as a lever to push for change (e.g. transposition of the work-life balance directive). | • Issues of care are seen as important, but work-life balance problems have been mostly out of the debate and with a heavy cultural component.<br>• Transposition of the work-life balance Directive and Covid-19 pandemic (remote work, right to disconnect etc.) have brought new light to these issues.<br>• Petition to support childcare services and educational services. The former are sometimes offered by companies.<br>• Example of extra parental leave days offered at company level.<br>• Company survey on self-perceived work-life balance. | - | • Perceived mainly in terms of parental leave problems rather than flexible working time arrangements<br>• 'Daddy months' organised by gvt to favour fathers' take-up of parental leave on 3 occasions and awareness-raising campaigns to promote more equal take-up.<br>• CA can include an increase in leave benefits up to 10% to encourage take-up of highest earner in the household.<br>• Disagreement between social partners on next steps and measures to foster GE in care. |
| Priority/involvement | High | Moderate | Low | Moderate |

*Source*: National reports and Figure 4.

Notes: Priority/involvement aggregate all interviewees results or are set based on the researchers' perception. 'Gvt' stands for government, 'GE' for gender equality, 'CA' for collective agreement , and 'IO' for international organisations.

Moreover, mechanisms to incentivise take-up by men have also been identified across countries. The provision and accessibility of childcare is good in Sweden and Belgium and more heterogeneous across regions in Italy and Poland (it is rather poor in rural areas). Care also includes leaves and facilities available for disabled and elderly people, but issues are primarily seen through the childcare lens in Sweden and encompass flexible working-time arrangements in Belgium and Italy.

It is further interesting to note some alignment between the IR system and the involvement of various stakeholders. More precisely, the corporatist nature of IR in Sweden transpires through the room left to social partners for negotiations on parental leave issues, which can adjust key parameters, whereas the government ensures compliance with a (minimum) set of rules. The government seems to play a much more important role in Belgium and Italy, and the reference to the transposition of the Work-life balance Directive by stakeholders in these two countries reinforces this impression. In contrast to this, the implementation of this Directive is delayed in Poland. Finally, it is interesting to note a divergence between unions and EO views on how to foster GE in care, which is found across Member States, and to some extent, at the EU level too (Section 3.1). It appears that EO support measures and actions at company (or sectoral) level to preserve flexibility and avoid additional administrative burden on employers. As such, they reject any new binding legislations at national level that TU advocate for, together with more individualised care leave to favour gender-equal take-ups.

#### 4.1.1. Occupational segregation

Occupational segregation is mostly perceived as an issue beyond social partners' scope of action, as it requires interventions on gender norms, culture and education. Therefore, the importance attached to this dimension appears to be low, which does not imply that it is not problematic, as the statistics reported in Table 7 indicate. The links that occupational segregation shares with other important gaps (e.g. employment, pay) have been pointed out. Furthermore, stakeholders in most countries seem to give attention to vertical segregation, particularly in Italy, but less so in Sweden[25]. It is very interesting to note the alignment in Italy between the interest in occupational segregation, the legislative advances, for which compliance was checked, and the significant increase in the share of women board members, from 1.9 % in 2003 to more than 36 % in 2019, a level similar to the best-performing countries (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Sweden) according to EIGE data (see also Figure 5). In general, quotas were a measure heavily discussed and seen as a controversial tool that some national unions apply in their decision-making bodies (e.g. in Italy).

#### 4.1.1. Employment gap

With regards to the employment gap, no particular interest was reported by any stakeholders across countries. A potential explanation can be that employment gaps, including part-time and temporary work, are perceived as issues resulting from work-life balance, pay disparities or occupational segregation and should therefore be addressed through these dimensions. Indicators suggest nonetheless that substantial gaps exist between gender in terms of (atypical forms of) employment in the four Member States.

[25] Note, however, that in Sweden, occupational segregation was identified as an important issue by employees during the focus groups (Section 4.2). In Italy, the particular interest in the issue could be explained by segregation being identified as an important driver behind the low labour market participation of women.

**Table 7.** Occupational segregation

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State of play | • Usual pattern of horizontal segregation (e.g. men in industry).<br>• Average Duncan indices similar to EU averages for occupation but above EU average for sectors (Figure 5).<br>• Vertical segregation remains an important issue, even though Belgium performs better than the EU average in the power domain. | • Average sectoral and occupational segregation according to Duncan indices (Figure 5).<br>• Relatively high percentage of women on boards compared to EU average and significant increase between 2003 and 2019. | • High level of sectoral and occupational segregation according to average Duncan index in Figure 5.<br>• Poland is ranked 20th in EU27 based on its EIGE average power domain score.<br>• Vertical segregation among social partners hierarchical bodies. | • Standard pattern of occupational segregation (e.g women in care and education).<br>• Has been slowly improving over time.<br>• High sectoral segregation and average occupational segregation according to average Duncan index in Figure 5.<br>• Best EU average score on the EIGE power domain and highest share of women board members. |
| Policies and legal framework | • Law of 28 July 2011 set a one-third gender quota on board of some public companies, latter extended to large companies (2017) with small and medium enterprises to follow.<br>• List of good practices provided by the Belgian institute for the equality of women and men for companies seeking to improve working conditions. | • 2 laws establishing gender quotas in public administrations and on boards of listed and state-owned companies.<br>• The compliance to both laws has been evaluated. The law for listed companies is supervised by an authority that can act autonomously to change boards in case of quotas not respected. | - | • According to the Discrimination Act, employers have to promote gender balance in tasks, occupational positions and management. |
| Perceptions, involvement and example of actions | • Interviewees confirm that horizontal segregation is not really addressed by social partners.<br>• Employers' organisations have adopted the approach of 'inclusive panels' for internal and external events.<br>• Charter for equality of women and men in trade unions. | • Occupational segregation is recognised as an important issue.<br>• Both horizontal and vertical segregation are acknowledged by interviewees but the focus is on the latter.<br>• CGIL (and interviewed union) have gender quotas guaranteeing a 40-60% gender representation in executive bodies. Quotas for women managers were reported as well.<br>• Overall, quotas were a central point of discussions regarding this dimension of GE.<br>• Policy to ensure a non-gender biased recruitment. | • Quotas for women on boards have been pointed out as a potential useful tools to promote GE on the labour market. | • Limited room for social partners to act on segregation given the influence of gendered norms, culture and education,<br>• No particular considerations for vertical segregation in the interviews.<br>• (Joint) campaigns by sectoral social partners to promote and encourage the recruitment of the minority gender. |
| Priority/involvement | Moderate | Moderate | Low | Moderate |

*Source*: National reports and Figure 5.

Notes: Priority/involvement aggregate all interviewees' results or they are set based on the researchers' perception. 'Gvt' stands for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'CA' for collective agreement.

Table 8. Employment gap

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State of play | • Employment gap shows a decreasing trend but still substantial.<br>• Relatively high gender gaps in part time and temporary work compared to other EU Member States. | • 2nd largest employment gap in the EU.<br>• Relatively high gaps in atypical forms of employment as well. | • Large employment gap<br>• Relatively small gaps in terms of atypical forms of employment. | • Among the lowest employment gap across the EU.<br>• Relatively high gender gaps in atypical forms of employment. |
| Policies and legal framework | • Social partners had an impact on part-time work regulations. | • Measures consisting of subsidy/social contributions exemptions for employer hiring women.<br>• Gender Equality Strategy allocates funds to support organisational measures for mothers returning to work. | - | • Employment Protection Act of 1974 adjusted several times since then to allow for more temporary work or more lenient rules on dismissals. |
| Perception, involvement and example of actions | • No specific actions reported but government is currently working on involuntary part-time work. | • Limited interest for this dimension but often linked to issues of work-life balance and labour market participation.<br>• Issue seems to be discussed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (women in precarious work and sectors particularly affected).<br>• No general actions were mentioned. | • NGOs organise activities to support women's participation in the labour market. | • The gap is considered primarily in terms of part-time and full-time employment with importance attached to voluntary dimension.<br>• Linked to working time and organisational issues that are regulated through CA. |
| Priority/involvement | Low | Low | Low | Moderate |

*Source*: National reports and Figure 6.
Notes: Priority/involvement aggregate all interviewees' results or they are set based on the researchers' perception. 'Gvt' stands for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'CA' for collective agreement.

### 4.1.2. Gender pay gap

Results for the GPG dimension underline a difference between Belgium and Sweden, the two best 'performing' countries in terms of IR and GE, and Italy and Poland where the GPG is given low priority compared to other dimensions. There are a few possible explanations behind that difference. Firstly, Italy and Poland have a low GPG in unadjusted form, which could explain their low interest in addressing an issue that does not appear to be one. Obviously, the low unadjusted GPG is misleading and affected by self-selection of women in the labour force (see Section 0). Secondly, the low interest in the GPG could reflect the limited opportunity offered by bargaining institutions to negotiate and influence wages in these countries. The first explanation could be particularly relevant for Italy since the bargaining system appears to be well-developed with multi-employer agreements at sectoral/industry level. On the other hand, the second explanation is likely to apply to Poland, where the absence of multi-employer agreements does not allow for the compression effect that higher level agreements can have on wages (Ounnas, 2022b and references herein).

Moreover, the higher priority assigned by Belgium and Sweden translates into substantial legislations on equal pay and/or CA regulating pay and minimum wages[26]. Overall, results for the GPG reveal a close alignment between well-developed IR structures, stakeholders' interests in the GPG and low adjusted GPG measured from the data. Given its links with other gender gap dimensions (in particular, in terms of participation), addressing the GPG can have significant positive effects on GE in the labour market that go beyond pay inequality issues.

**Table 9.** Gender pay gap

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State of play | • The GPG has been on a steady decline over the past 50 years.<br>• A substantial GPG still persists though, whether computed from annual or hourly wage data.<br>• The adjusted hourly GPG was close to 0 in 2018 (Table 4). | • Small GPG but large adjusted GPGs reflecting mainly differences in educational level and self-selection in the labour force. | • As in Italy, small GPGs but large adjusted GPGs from differences in educational level and self-selection in the labour force. | • GPG has been declining over the past 14 years<br>• The GPG tends to be lower in the public sector and in blue collar occupations.<br>• The adjusted hourly GPG was slightly above 6% in 2018 (Table 4). |
| Policies and legal framework | • Very dense framework as legislative advancements are translated into CLA and interprofessional agreements (IPA).<br>• For instance, CLA no. 25ter enforces the EU Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment.<br>• Equal pay law of 22 April 2012 that provides provisions to fight the GPG at the wage formation level. Important efforts to ensure that job classifications are gender neutral. | • Gender Equality Strategy allocated funds to intervene and support wage equality. | • No multi-employer agreements. | • Collective agreements at sectoral level contain regulations on pay and set minimum wages.<br>• Pattern bargaining with export sector setting the norm for wage increase in other sectors.<br>• Discrimination Act requires employer to analyse and correct any gender differences in pay for equivalent work. |
| Perceptions, involvement and example of actions | • The trade unions run annual campaigns on gender pay gap (around 8th of March), linking the issue with other dimensions of GE.<br>• Development of an online tool to compute the gender pay gap at company and sectoral level. | • Low interest in the issue, possibly because of the impression that GPG is low.<br>• Monitoring activities, awareness-raising campaigns on pay disparities, and information on EU legislations. | • NGOs prepare bills to incentivise medium and large companies to compute GPGs.<br>• Some interest for pay transparency measures as a tool to address the GPG. | • The role of the wage norm is discussed as it is seen as preventing public sector wages from catching up with private sector ones, with important consequences on the GPG given occupational segregation.<br>• Some emphasis on income rather than wages. |
| Priority/involvement | High | Moderate | Low | High |

***Source***: National reports and Table 4.
**Notes**: Priority/involvement aggregate all interviewees' results or they are set based on the researchers' perception. 'Gvt' stands for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'C(L)A' for collective (labour) agreement.

[26] It is interesting to note the potential effect of pattern bargaining interacting with sectoral (public and private) segregation in Sweden. Whereas the existence of coordination mechanisms is seen as positive for (gender) pay inequalities, the interaction between pattern bargaining and segregation prevents a catching-up of wages (in level) between sectors. This sort of interaction is complicated to capture using aggregate data (Section 3.2).

### 4.1.3. Occupational, health and safety

The last dimension on OSH and adverse behaviours is particularly interesting to Swedish stakeholders. There is a long tradition of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue regarding these issues, which are extensively covered and monitored by the legislations and social partners. The legal framework regarding OSH issues appears well-developed in Belgium and Italy and the numerous EU directives on the matter (Section 3.1) probably contributed to supporting the development of these legal systems.

The events of the past five years have also brought attention to issues of adverse behaviours, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence. It appears that stakeholders in all countries have reacted and taken measures to address such issues. For instance, many stakeholders participate in campaigns, develop action plans or means for victims to share and talk.

### 4.1.4. Main takeaways from national case studies

This section provides a synthesis of the aspects discussed above and extracted from the national reports. Table 11 presents additional and more general points from the interviews that could not be assigned to any specific dimensions of GE.

Overall, it seems that in each country, stakeholders assign high priority and involvement to issues of care and work-life balance, and to a lesser extent, to the GPG. These two issues were identified in Section 2 as areas where social partners and collective negotiations can potentially have the most impact through social dialogue and CA. A country specificity worth noting regards Italy and the importance attached to occupational segregation problems. This particular interest could be understood as improvement in this area could help Italy raise women's labour force participation. Furthermore, Italy's interviewees were primarily concerned with vertical occupational segregation. In general, when it comes to (horizontal) segregation, stakeholders in all countries acknowledged the role of culture, norms and importantly education, which limits their potential for impactful actions on this matter[27]. Moreover, interest and involvement in GE issues of Polish social partners is generally very low, which appears to correlate with their strength and the state of IR institutions as a whole in this country.

This point is important as it seems to highlight a (first) alignment between IR and GE. More precisely, strong social partners evolving in an institutional set-up, which supports social dialogue and CB, appear to be more involved on GE issues. This could be explained by these actors and institutions being strong and having the tools and experience to address these issues through collaborations and negotiations[28]. The strength of IR institutions can also be used to separate Belgium and Sweden from Italy, which has well-developed IR (relative to Poland) but weaker social dialogue institutions, and more conflictual relations among social partners than Belgium and Sweden. Moreover, Italy's multi-tier system, with bargaining primarily at sectoral and company level, seems to suffer from potential issues of coordination between levels (Boeri, 2014). This highlights the potential key role that the company level can

[27] It is interesting to note that some stakeholders in Italy, Poland and Sweden made reference to the feminisation of words and terms related to work (e.g. job title in Italy, job tasks in Sweden). This issue can be seen as an expression of cultural norms in the world of work and can be linked to occupational segregation.

[28] This observation could explain the results of the empirical analysis in Section 3.2.1, which reported greater positive effects of IR on GE for countries with already strong IR institutions (as measured by the IR index).

play, and which was pointed out as an important level for a flexible and effective impact of CB and CA on GE. The articulation of bargaining between levels should therefore be kept in mind.

**Table 10.** Occupational, health and safety

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State of play | • Gender gaps in exposure to risk factors, both physical and psychological, are not too different from EU averages in Figure 7.<br>• Large and increasing gender gaps in workers suffering from burnout. | • Low gender gaps in exposure to risk factors for both physical and psychological factors. | • High gap (in absolute value) in terms of exposure to physical risk factors.<br>• The share of male employees reporting exposure to psychological risk factors is greater than the share of women (negative gap in Figure 7). | • Among the lowest gap in exposure to physical risk factors but substantial gap in exposure to psychological risks..<br>• This reflects the potential over-reporting of incidents in more gender-aware countries (Section 0). |
| Policies and legal framework | • OSH established in the law of 4 August 1996 and supplemented by the law of 28 February 2014, which introduced psychosocial risks at work as any other type of OSH risk. | • 2 main legislative decrees, in 1994 and 2008, have been influenced by the transposition of EU directives on the matter.<br>• The 2008 decree includes a gender dimension in the definition of health and safety at work.<br>• Issues of sexual harassment fall under the 2006 National Code for Equal Opportunities.<br>• National Plan Against Gender-Based Violence and Stalking in 2010 and a legislative decree of 2015 establishes the right to a paid leave of maximum 3 months for victims of gender-based violence. | - | • Work Environment Act with two important provisions:<br>(1) Organisational and social work environment - covers psychosocial, emotional and victimisation dimension of work<br>(2) Systematic Work Environment Management - procedure to map risks at the workplace.<br>• The Swedish Work Environment Authority monitors employers' compliance.<br>•Discrimination Act is also relevant for adverse social behaviour issues. |
| Perception, involvement and example of actions | • Adoption of a national action plan against gender-based violence 2021-2025 and its related actions.<br>• Development of 7 new centres dealing with sexual violence. | • Perceived mainly as a secondary issue linked to other more important dimensions for most interviewees.<br>• Examples of actions include the introduction of anonymous lines and collection points within (large) companies to retrieve complaints.<br>• Participation to various campaigns and organisation of seminars and other events to raise awareness of members/employees. | - | • Issues continuously addressed by gvt and social partners.<br>• Strategy and work environment goals for 2021-25 including the creation of a tripartite forum.<br>• Long history of collaboration between social partners on OSH issues through bipartite organisations Prevent ('Suntarbetsliv' in the public sector).<br>• These organisations produce information and support materials for companies. |
| Priority/involvement | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate | High |

*Source*: National reports and Figure 7.
Notes: Priority/involvement aggregate all interviewees' results or they are set based on the researchers' perception. 'Gvt' stands for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'OSH' for occupational safety and health.

As explained in Section 4.1.1, the alignment between IR and GE also shows itself in how GE issues are addressed in Belgium and Sweden. The role of the government is very different and involves a much greater degree of intervention in Belgium. This seems to be correlated with a denser and more binding legal framework[29] to address gender inequalities, whereas much more latitude is left to social partners in Sweden. Nevertheless, the government plays an important role in Sweden of setting up standards and ensuring that these are enforced. Overall and unsurprisingly, countries' institutional frameworks beyond IR appear to be a very important factor in reinforcing the positive influence of social dialogue on GE. Although Sweden seems to perform better than Belgium in terms of GE, the institutional set-ups in these two countries show that there is not just a single framework to promote GE and a common denominator to both countries appears to be the role and strength of social dialogue and CB in general.

Three points related to the institutional framework deserve to be expanded on and are developed below. Firstly, councils and various institutions promoting GE, possibly bipartite or tripartite, appear to be effective tools to raise awareness and promote GE. Such councils can contribute to publicising GE issues through studies, organising various events and publishing guidelines or best practices. Moreover, the inclusion of social partners can be very important as such councils can improve social partners' knowledge on gender inequalities and they also offer a space for social partners to interact on these issues outside of their usual environment, which could ultimately help create shared experiences between social partners and facilitate exchanges. Table 11 provides additional support for this point as it shows that cooperation and interaction between stakeholders are seemingly more frequent and of better quality in Belgium and Sweden.

Secondly, it is interesting to note the compulsory nature of gender mainstreaming principles in Belgium and Sweden at the government level. TU in Belgium and Italy have also committed to applying these principles within their organisations but gender mainstreaming describes processes primarily targeted at policymaking. The principles are therefore more likely to be effective in government and better GE performance in these two countries could be associated with the application of mainstreaming principles, at least at the national level of government. Moreover, Italy provides additional support for this point since GE issues have been dealt with separately in this country and it is only with the introduction of the gender equality strategy in 2021 (see Table 11) that policies addressing combinations of inequalities started to be implemented. A final comment regarding mainstreaming and the consideration of the gender dimension concerns women's representation among executive bodies. During the interviews (including at EU level), many stakeholders pointed out that an effective way to get social partners (even) more involved on GE issues is to keep on improving the representation of women among social partners' decision-making bodies.

Finally, a third point regards the perceived positive role of the EU, and of international organisations in general, which was frequently pointed out in all countries except for Sweden. EU-level social dialogue outcomes and policy initiatives from the Commission are often seen as drivers for change at national level. As already touched on, the Swedish reluctance for supranational binding requirements is more in line with a general mistrust for any government interventions in social dialogue and collective negotiations.

[29] Also, a higher expectation and request for government interventions from other stakeholders.

Table 11. General points on gender equality

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall observations on gender equality | • Social partners indicated they organise workshops and training around gender issues, and they themselves participate in training organised by the ETUC and ETUI.<br>• GE is an important issue for all stakeholders and the social dialogue is perceived as a key level to achieve equality.<br>• All 5 dimensions are tackled and most interviewees recognised the links between the issues (mainstreaming).<br>• Indication that GE is receiving less attention than it used to.<br>• Additional complications from Belgium's institutional set-up.<br>• All stakeholders highlighted the good cooperation between each other and many underlined linkages with civil society as well.<br>• Important role for European and international institutions in pushing forward GE agenda. | • In 2021, the Italian Government adopted its first National Strategy for Gender Equality with the aim of gaining 5 points in the EIGE index and reaching a level above EU average.<br>• The strategy identifies 5 areas of actions corresponding to dimensions of the EIGE index. Lack of binding measures but the strategy forces the government to adopt a transversal approach to GE.<br>• Most stakeholders mentioned collaboration with civil society institutions including universities and foundations.<br>• Limited examples of cooperation among stakeholders. Unions' and employers' dialogue appears to slightly conflict.<br>• Role of the EU is perceived as particularly positive to motivate change, but also guarantee a certain continuity across political instabilities. Some interviewees had a more mixed perception of EU's role.<br>• Role of gender denomination of jobs has been mentioned. | • Overall, interview results indicate that GE is seen as an issue of low importance, particularly in gvt.<br>• The main tripartite council plays almost no role in supporting and promoting GE and only representatives of NGOs and local gvt can cite example of actions.<br>• In addition, role of gender norms, which can hardly be influenced by IR, have been emphasised (role of gender denomination of occupation in Polish).<br>• Very low level of cooperation among and between various stakeholders including NGOs, academia or research institutes.<br>• The lack of women's representation among gvt and social partners' executive bodies has been pointed out as one of the reasons for the overall lack of interest in GE. | • Institutional framework for GE is very well established and developed.<br>• GE is perceived as a key issue and is addressed in many different ways by various stakeholders, which often collaborate together or with civil society.<br>• Joint guide on gender-equal working life and importance of social partners' representative at company/local level. Gender equality awards from some sectoral bipartite organisations.<br>• Collaboration between the Swedish Women's Lobby and social partners to develop a handbook on how to use collective agreements as a tool to promote GE.<br>• Active measures as a tool within the Discrimination Act to examine risks, obstacles and opportunities regarding equal rights, take preventive or promotional measures, and adjust and follow up.<br>• Not very keen on EU or any supranational intervention, which are seen as hindering the flexibility offered by sectoral negotiations. |

*Source*: National reports.
Notes: 'Gvt' stands for government, and 'GE' for gender equality.

We conclude this section by noting that many interviewed stakeholders were perfectly aware of the complex links between the various dimensions of GE and often linked the dimensions together. However, during the interviews, the topic of intersectionality was never raised unless brought up by the interviewers[30]. It is nevertheless possible to note a couple of interesting aspects that were raised in two or more country cases (not necessarily in the interviews). Firstly, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislations (e.g. Discrimination Act in Sweden) tend to have an intersectional approach in that they prohibit discrimination against other disadvantaged groups. Secondly, intersectionality aspects were sometimes linked to horizontal segregation, through (male) migrants taking jobs in low-skill services such as care, and contributing to closing the gender employment gaps in these sectors (e.g. in Sweden).

[30] Furthermore, the topic of intersectionality was not addressed in Section 3 as well. The main explanation is that intersectionality cannot really be analysed using European micro-level data since information on citizenship, ethnic background or disabilities are either not available or not recorded. It is therefore impossible to include these aspects in an empirical study of GE.

Intersectionality aspects were also raised in discussions related to care, with the need to improve the leave system for LGBTQIA+ individuals and the lower take-up of childcare by families of migrant origin in Belgium. Except for these very specific examples, the general conclusions from national reports are that GE policies are essentially blind to intersectional aspects of inequalities and the recognition that differences in personal characteristics generate different perceptions and experience of gender inequalities.

### 4.2. Workers' perceptions of gender equality and the role of social partners

This section proposes an additional analysis of the perception of IR and GE, but this time from the point of view of employees. For each country, three focus groups were organised where employees from different sectors gathered to exchange views on their perception of GE in their workplaces, but also on the role that they feel social partners have in promoting GE. The precise sectors were selected to cover three broad ones including public services, market services and industry/manufacturing. These sectors differ both in terms of IR and gender inequalities and potentially interesting conclusions could be reached from contrasting the perceptions by sectors across countries. Table 12, Table 13 and Table 14 display the main results extracted from the national reports for the public, the market services and the industry sectors respectively[31]. These tables provide general remarks on the perception of GE by employees in their sectors, and on the role played by social partners. Basic information on the sector and the focus groups is also included when available.

From these three tables, it is interesting to note a certain homogeneity in the information extracted from the focus groups, which is quite consistent across sectors and countries. In particular, occupational segregation appears as a central issue for all participants, and it should be noted that issues related to both horizontal and vertical segregation were raised. This interest could reflect the fact that the sectors were selected because they suffer from a substantial gender segregation, which is then easier to grasp for employees. It is nevertheless interesting to note employees' awareness of this reality and the need to address it.

Additional problems related to work-life balance and violence/harassment at work were also flagged as important, whereas issues of pay disparities were not really discussed per se and were linked mainly to vertical segregation. Regarding violence/harassment, it is important to note that such issues have been explicitly mentioned by many focus groups' participants, irrespective of the sectors and countries. Many employees were able to report specific example of issues related to 'micro-aggressions' often in relation to gender stereotypes. Furthermore, a related sector-specific aspect concerns issues of third party violence, which have been reported in sectors including public interactions (e.g. Human health and social services in Belgium) consistent with the empirical evidence on the prevalence of these problems in specific sectors (Baiocco et al, 2021). Overall, these focus groups indicate that participants are quite aware of GE issues at the workplace and the experience they report suggest that much remained to be done to further promote and ensure GE at the company level.

[31] In the case of Poland, it was difficult to differentiate results from the focus groups in the market service and industry sectors. Hence, the results displayed in Table 14 apply to both sectors and no results are reported in Table 13.

**Table 12.** Focus groups - public sector

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selected sector | Education | Public research institutions | Higher education | Librarians |
| Remarks and state of play | • Female dominated sector with close to 70% of women workers in 2020.<br>• Teachers for various education level, including elementary and secondary. | • 6 individuals, 4 of which are men.<br>• None of the participants were union members. | • Persons in charge of GE within institutions.<br>• Teams and committees on anti-discrimination or harassment exists.<br>• Equality ombudsmen are common. | • Public libraries include schools, university, hospitals, etc.<br>• 76% of employees are women in 2019 with little change through time. |
| Gender equality perception | • Care gap and work life balance as central issues and pointed out as the first priority<br>• Issues of horizontal and vertical segregation discussed as well.<br>• Other dimensions were discussed but to a lesser extent. | • Occupational segregation and the care gap as key issues in the sector according to respondents.<br>• Vertical segregation was particularly mentioned in relation to career advancements. | • Certain history in dealing with GE in universities.<br>• Issues related to harassment and `micro-aggression's are mainly addressed using committees mentioned above.<br>• Reference to occupational segregation within universities' jobs and positions.<br>• Feminisation of the language and support to LGBTQIA+ persons. | • Gender occupational segregation as a key problem but concerns regards diversity in general and not only gender.<br>• Both horizontal and vertical segregation but the latter received particular attention.<br>• Role of education, gender stereotypes and recruitment policies (e.g. wording to describe tasks) have been discussed. |
| Role of social partners | • Mismatch between employees and their representatives.<br>• Limited exchange of information on the topic. | • Unions and social partners as reflecting society and as such, they are perceived as lacking awareness on GE topics.<br>• Social partners (Unions) described as plagued by corporatist logic limiting their scope to tackle gender inequalities.<br>• Mentions of positive effects from EU requirements linked to project proposals (e.g. Horizon project). | • Social partners are not involved on GE issues unless members are concerned.<br>• Respondents emphasised however, that social partners would be very relevant actors to promote GE, should they decide to get involved on the matter.<br>• Role of external incentives (e.g. European Charter for Researchers, Horizon projects requirements) was pointed. | • Social partners appear to be involved (e.g. special issue on gender segregation by the trade's association magazine).<br>• Interviewees indicated that they felt social partners could do more to promote GE in the sector. |

*Source*: National reports.
Notes: 'FA' stands for Framework agreement, `GPG' for the gender pay gap, 'Gvt' for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'OSH' for occupational safety and health.

In this context, social partners could play a role to further promote GE in the labour market and the workplace. Hence, the focus groups' participants were asked about whether they perceive social partners (TU in particular) as relevant stakeholders to tackle these issues. In that regard, the results in the tables again suggest a certain homogeneity across sectors and countries. Most respondents tend to consider social partners as relevant actors and social dialogue as a potentially effective tool to achieve GE. However, many participants reported no interactions with social partners on the matter and many considered that GE is an issue overlooked and not addressed by social partners. A potential explanation for this result can be that employees appear to assign high importance to occupational segregation, which, as explained in section 0, is a dimension on which social partners can only have a limited impact. Nevertheless, this result contrasts with the evidence discussed in section 4.1 and indicate a potential misalignment between social partners' actions to promote GE and the actual outcomes perceived by employees in the workplace.

Finally, a more detailed analysis of the results in tables 12 to 14 reveals a certain alignment between IR regimes and the perception that employees have of social partners' actions and involvement on GE. More precisely, focus groups participants in countries with well-developed IR institutions such as Sweden, tend to indicate that social partners should do more to address GE issues. On the other hand, the weakness of social partners and social dialogue in Poland (and to a lesser extent in Italy, compared to Belgium and Sweden) is associated with doubts on the actual capacity of social partners to address GE. This alignment can be seen as somewhat consistent with the evidence discussed in section 4.1.4, which pointed out that IR regimes with strong social partners, social dialogue and CB seem to attach more importance to GE issues.

**Table 13.** Focus groups - market services

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selected sector | Human health and social services | Financial services providers | Accommodation | Human resources |
| Remarks and state of play | • Female dominated sector with close to 80% of women workers in 2020.<br>• Not only private sector but it is the most female dominated sector in 2020.<br>• The focus group includes paediatrician and other practitioners. | • 6 individuals with 4 women and 5 union members.<br>• Participants work or have worked in a bank. | • Small hotel employees | • 4 HR specialists in manufacturing companies.<br>• GE addressed both in the HR profession and in the industry in which interviewees work.<br>• HR is a highly feminised occupation but participants all work in male dominated industries. |
| Gender equality perception | • Importance of care services for a profession with irregular hours.<br>• A sector particularly affected by both horizontal and vertical segregation.<br>• Issues of segregation connected to care and pay differences.<br>• Issues of violence, aggressions, and sexual harassment. | • Care gap and the GPG perceived as main GE issues in the sector.<br>• Occupational segregation, vertical in particular, and harassment (micro-aggressions) also discussed.<br>• Feeling that very little is done within their organisations to address these issues. | • See bullet points below for manufacturing sector. | • Occupational segregation pointed out both in the HR and manufacturing industries.<br>• Horizontal segregation addressed with recruitment campaigns.<br>• Roles of stereotypes, gender norms and educations discussed as well, in relation to vertical segregation in particular.<br>• GE is seen as falling under the employer's responsibility. |
| Role of social partners | • Little contact with TU representatives.<br>• Perception that social partners do not address all the five GE dimensions. | • General agreement that social dialogue can play an important role to promote GE.<br>• Unions could do more whereas there is a perception that employers do not give any importance to GE. | • See bullet points below for manufacturing sector. | • As in the public sector, there is a feeling that social partners could do more.<br>• Unions were describe as being often too passive on the topic. |

*Source*: National reports.
Notes: 'FA' stands for Framework agreement, `GPG' for the gender pay gap, 'Gvt' for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'OSH' for occupational safety and health.

**Table 14.** Focus groups - industry

| | Belgium | Italy | Poland | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selected sector | Construction | Transport | Manufacturing | Manufacturing |
| Remarks and state of play | • 90% of workers are men making this sector the most male dominated in 2020.<br>• Share of women increases with level of education of the job within the sector.<br>• Slow increase through time. | • 7 individuals with 6 women.<br>• Include representatives of various transport sectors such as railways, airport, highway maintenance, etc.<br>• Substantial gender segregation in this primarily male-dominated sector. | • Employees from steel construction factory and sewing mattresses unit. | • Blue-collar workers from industries.<br>• Male-dominated industries but participants to the focus group were mostly women (3/4). |
| Gender equality perception | • Issues of work-life balance were discussed, including flexible hours, telework and parental leave.<br>• Horizontal and vertical segregation discussed at length, pointing out the role of education.<br>• Occupational segregation mainly linked to physical risks. | • Occupational segregation, the GPG, and the care gap considered as the most relevant dimensions.<br>• All participants pointed out the gender segregation in their sectors and the role of education as a solution.<br>• Stereotypes and gender norms are substantial in the sector which often leads to harassment, sexist remarks, etc. | • GPG and occupational segregation pointed out as central issues.<br>• Some reference to work-life balance and problems in articulating private and personal life.<br>• Occupational segregation is perceived as consequence from physical differences.<br>• Stereotypes and norms have been discussed in relation to physical differences and gender roles.<br>• Quotas as a way to help GE progress but supported mainly by women interviewees.<br>• GE should be addressed primarily by managers within companies. | • Focus on horizontal and vertical segregation.<br>• The issues was linked to the pay gap and the (social) valuation of jobs performed by women.<br>• Women in the sector as role model leading to additional perceived pressures.<br>• GE as a top-down problems that requires impulse from gvt or managers. |
| Role of social partners | • No participants reported exchanges with unions' representants.<br>• Perception that social partners do not work on GE issues. | • Examples of actions from social partners to favour work-life balance and OSH.<br>• The transposition of FA from EU-level social dialogue (e.g. Women in rail) have been mentioned.<br>• In general, social partners and social dialogue are considered as important for the promotion of GE but some participants doubt that social dialogue can have meaningful impacts.<br>• Social partners are often seen as (important) actors among others (e.g. gvt) | • Social partners are not perceived as relevant interlocutors on GE issues.<br>• Interviewees are perfectly aware of social dialogue's weaknesses in Poland which is seen as unable to impact GE. | • No particular role discussed at the company level except for the employer's responsibility.<br>• Social partners should act on GE at national level through influencing the political agenda. |

*Source*: National reports.
Notes: 'FA' stands for Framework agreement, `GPG' for the gender pay gap, 'Gvt' for government, 'GE' for gender equality and 'OSH' for occupational safety and health.

# 5. Conclusions

This report presents evidence at EU level and in four Member States on how industrial relations (IR) can impact gender equality (GE). The analysis is based on three main steps that complement each other and, taken together, allow to draw meaningful conclusions.

In the first step, the analytical framework identifies and analyses five interrelated dimensions of GE that can be influenced by industrial relations' actors and processes: the gender care gap and work-life balance; occupational segregation; employment gaps; the gender pay gap (GPG); and gaps in occupational safety, health and adverse behaviours. IR contribute to shape the work environment and could therefore constitute important levers for achieving GE in the labour market.

In a second step, the report takes a closer look at whether IR systems supporting social dialogue and CB are associated with an effective GE policy framework and better GE performance. It finds that EU-level social dialogue played an important role in addressing GE issues, but has entered a new and more conflictual phase over the past two decades. In addition, an empirical analysis at country level tend to confirm a positive association between IR and GE measured using EIGE indices, which seems to be driven by lower inequalities in terms of the money and power domains of the Gender Equality Index. The association between IR and the money domain is further investigated using GPGs computed from hourly wage information provided by micro-data from the European Structure of Earnings Survey. The results confirm the findings that the GPG is usually smaller in countries with well-developed IR institutions promoting social dialogue and CB. In a last analysis, the focus shifts to social dialogue at company level, argued below to be a key level for the promotion of GE, and women's wages in European countries. The study uses micro-data from the European Working Conditions Survey and shows large and significant effects of the presence of trade unions (TU), work councils (WC), or any other committees allowing for within-company social dialogue, on the wages of women.

All the evidence gathered above points to a positive association between social dialogue and GE. This evidence is primarily based on exploiting differences in Member States' IR and GE performance at an aggregated level. As a result, the third step seeks to complement these findings, through in-depth analyses of four Member States with various IR systems and different GE performances. These national analyses allow for a much more precise and detailed analysis of each country's legal and institutional framework addressing gender inequalities.

There are many interesting aspects worth mentioning from the comparative analysis. A first one is that higher involvement and priority seems to be given to work-life balance and the GPG, two of the dimensions on which social dialogue and CB can have a significant impact. Moreover, the involvement reported on GE issues appears to be greater in countries with well-functioning IR systems. This result is particularly interesting as it suggests that IR institutions supporting social dialogue are not only beneficial for GE per se, but such strong institutions seem to reinforce the involvement of stakeholders, leading potentially to even larger positive effects of social dialogue on GE. The company level was usually singled out by both social partners and employees as a key area where significant action to promote GE can take place. It should be noted that the company level has become an increasingly popular bargaining level with the development of multi-tier bargaining systems across Europe. Such evolution could therefore be used to further promote GE but caution is warranted when decentralising bargaining at such lower levels. Coordination mechanisms between the higher-up level and the

company level are key to ensuring a more efficient bargaining system (Boeri, 2014). Furthermore, some employees who participated in focus groups, have underlined that they do often interact with social partners' representatives, but never (or very rarely) on GE topics.

Another interesting observation highlighting an additional alignment between IR and GE concerns the degree of government intervention in IR and the articulation between the legislative framework and the room left to social partners for collective negotiations. Greater government intervention appears to be associated with denser and more binding legal frameworks, whereas more room seems to be left for bipartite negotiations in IR regimes with less government intervention. The role of bipartite or tripartite councils and of gender mainstreaming were also identified as potentially positive for GE as these aspects are specific to countries that perform well in terms of GE and IR.

While these observations are based on a relatively small numbers of interviews in only four Member States, they are largely consistent with the findings of the analytical framework and with the results obtained in the empirical analysis. As a general conclusion, the evidence supports the claim that IR characterised by strong social partners, CB and social dialogue, can make a substantial contribution to tackling gender inequalities in the labour market. IR actors and institutions alone should not be expected to close gender gaps, but because of their central role in shaping labour market outcomes, IR constitutes one of the most relevant sets of institutions and actors to help progress towards GE.

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