

Women in Construction, Wood and Forestry

A Resource
Toolkit for
Gender Equality
at Work





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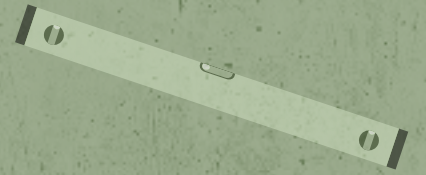
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Foreword



Women working in the European Union (EU) construction, wood and forestry industries continue to be severely underrepresented. There is an upward trend, but the pace is slow. Too slow. This state of play needs to be altered, and the players need to focus more on the opportunities to achieve the transformation needed. The European Green Deal, the digitalisation era, the Renovation Wave, the path to a low/zero carbon industry, should lead to more qualified jobs for women and for young people – workers so needed to tackle the labour shortage in the construction, wood, and forestry sectors. However, this change must be based on quality, direct jobs, proper training and skills, fair wages, and good social protection.

Trade unions have a pivotal role in leading this transformation. The EFBWW will continue to push for a Gender Agenda at the European level and to mainstream the gender perspective in every policy area. This work begun in 2011, with the creation of the EFBWW Women's Network to deal with gender policy issues related to our sectors and to share initiatives, identifying a space in the debate with other European organisations, within the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and with the Building and Wood Workers International (BWI). In 2019, we elected two female members in the new presidium (2/7 or 28.5%). As a follow-up to the resolution on gender equality adopted at the EFBWW congress in 2019, the topic became a horizontal priority and an integral part of the portfolio of all political staff.

The present study strengthens our commitment to promote gender equality: to identify, together with our affiliates, the main challenges faced by women in construction, wood, and forestry, but also to highlight the good practices and good examples of how to overcome obstacles, and to present the solutions in a practical and targeted way for those working in the field.

At national level, trade unions are essential to spearhead the change and to include the gender equality perspective into the national, sectoral and company levels. To help in this task, we developed this guide which includes existing good practices and policies addressing women's needs, making it a practical and useful tool for negotiators during collective agreement negotiations.

Nina Kreutzmann
Chair of the EFBWW Women Network

Tom Deleu
EFBWW General Secretary



Executive Summary



The project provides context to the low level of participation of women in the industry and highlights the barriers to their entry, retention, and career progression. It follows the administration of a survey by the EFBWW in 2020–2021, and entails:

- Collecting statistical data on the presence of women in construction, wood and forestry
- Identifying good practices and experiences related to gender issues in collective bargaining and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) in the construction, wood and forestry industries. This involves a large-scale literature review on the transforming nature of the construction, wood and forestry industries and data analysis of the EFBWW survey questionnaire.
- Producing a practical and industry specific toolkit for increasing the participation of women in the construction, wood and forestry industries.
- Identifying priorities for gender policies at various levels.

The toolkit is structured around five key themes: employment policy, industry culture and image, human resources policies and practices, working conditions, and training and education. Each thematic section connects the theme with gender equality, provides a checklist of specific actions to consider for improving gender equality and examples of rules and practices highlighted in the survey by EFBWW national affiliates.

Unions representatives can take inspiration from this toolkit to spearhead, support and monitor actions, including through collective bargaining, with the aim to:

- Support change in current employment practices in the industry,
- Implement gender equality policies and gender sensitive occupational safety and health priorities, supported by specific targets, in the workplace and beyond,
- Change human resources practices through gender equality mainstreaming,
- Ensure female and male employees are entitled to decent work-life balance arrangements,
- Address gender imbalances in education and training.



I. Introduction





Context

Women's participation in the construction, wood and forestry industries is directly relevant to several strands of the current European Union (EU) policy agenda. There is a long-term workforce projection in these industries for severe labour shortages due to an aging workforce and early retirement levels. This could make women an important source of new talent for the workforce, providing a pathway to a more inclusive – and at the same time more environmentally friendly and innovative – construction industry [1]. Women working in the EU construction, wood and forestry industries are severely underrepresented, despite their share increasing in higher education programmes [2]. As the construction industry strives to become low/zero carbon and include more environmentally sustainable technologies and practices, new employment is created. It is important to ensure that this employment does not result in occupationally segregated gender ghettos where women simply find employment in lower skilled and lower paid jobs.

The persistence of traditional career patterns based on full-time employment and trajectories reinforce gendered assumptions about careers in the industry. The structural, cultural, and organisational barriers to poor representation of women in construction have been identified by various scholars and include [3]:

- the fragmented nature of the construction industry, including layers of subcontracting and short-term concerns with output,
- fragmentation of employment, including self-employment and increasing use of agency labour,
- the lack of knowledge about and attractiveness of the industry,
- traditional stereotypes and sexist attitudes, including the persistence of a macho culture,
- a male dominated culture, networking, and environment,

- inappropriate selection criteria for recruitment and career progression opportunities,
- lack of formalised recruitment practices and procedures, including discriminatory recruitment practices based on 'word of mouth' rather than qualifications,
- male dominated vocational education and training (VET) courses,
- lack of mentoring and role models,
- inappropriate and poor working and employment conditions, especially long working hours (both on sites and in the professions), lack of flexible working and work-life balance possibilities.

Despite the initiatives taken to improve the participation of women across Europe, the extent of male domination in construction work has changed little over the past 30 years, with the participation of women in the industry averaging 10% in 2018 [4], just as in the early 1990s.

It has been nearly twenty years since the publication of the book *Women in Construction* [5], by the European Institute for Construction Labour Research (CLR), which presented a survey of European construction social partners, conducted with the help of FIEC and EFBWW, on the presence of women in skilled trades and the policies, collective agreements and practices playing a role in their integration, including successes of the Finnish and Danish painters' unions. However, the conclusion drawn was that, although the social partners pandered to a 'discourse' of gender equality, this was not a priority issue and did not lead to equal opportunity policies or programmes, including in east European countries where participation rates were much higher [6].

Nevertheless, the changing knowledge, skills and competence required in the construction, wood and forestry industries, the imperatives of climate change, and the shortage of workers present an opportunity for the industry to become more inclusive and gender balanced.

“ The extent of male domination in construction work has changed little.





Snapshot of the Presence of Women in Construction, Wood and Forestry Industries

Analysing the composition of the workforce can be tricky as the way the boundaries of the industry are defined can vary across studies. A recent analysis indicated that women represent

10% of the total workforce, ranging from 16.4% in Luxembourg to 5.2% in Ireland, an increase from 2010, which saw an average total of 9.6% across EU countries plus the UK [4].



Figure 1: Share of women in the narrow construction subsector in 2018, in %



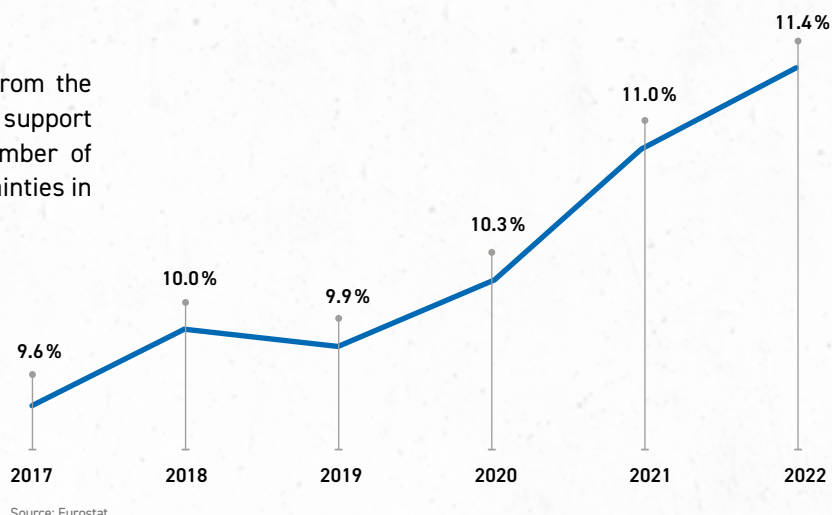
Source: European Construction Sector Observatory (ECSO) (2020)



More recent Eurostat data extracted from the Labour Force Survey (LFS)¹ appear to support this upward trend in the average number of women in construction² despite uncertainties in definition:



Figure 2: Proportion of women employed in Construction in the EU27 plus Norway and Switzerland between 2017 and 2022



Albeit with variations across European countries:

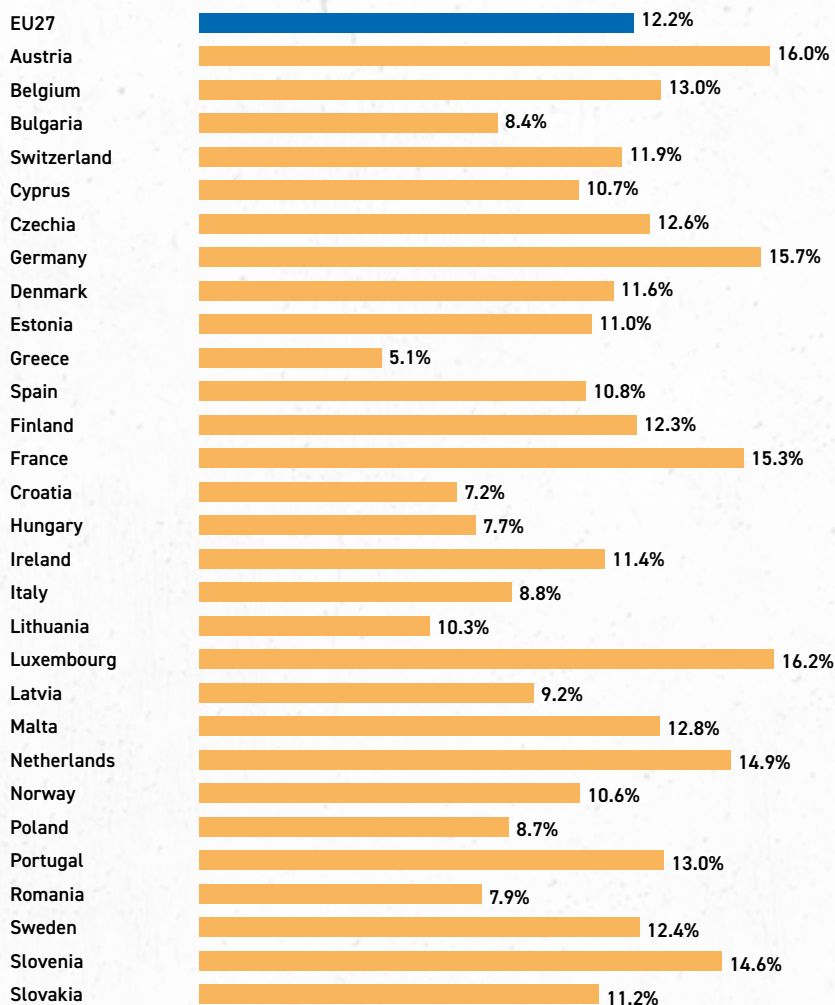
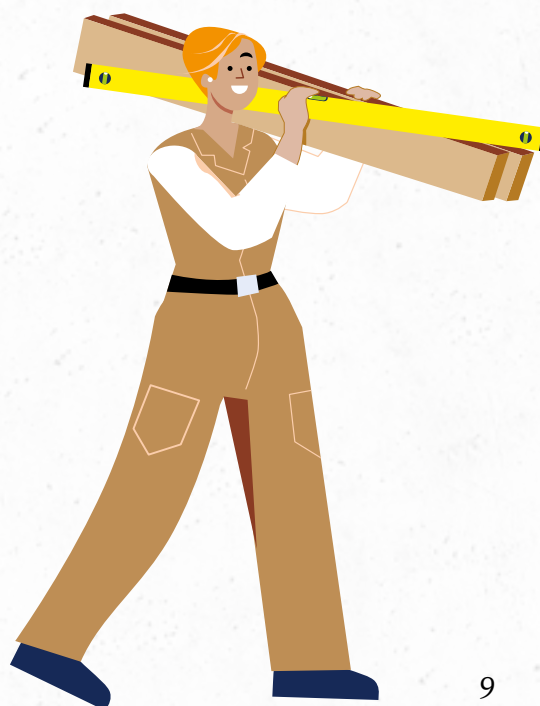


Figure 3: Proportion of women in construction across Europe in 2022

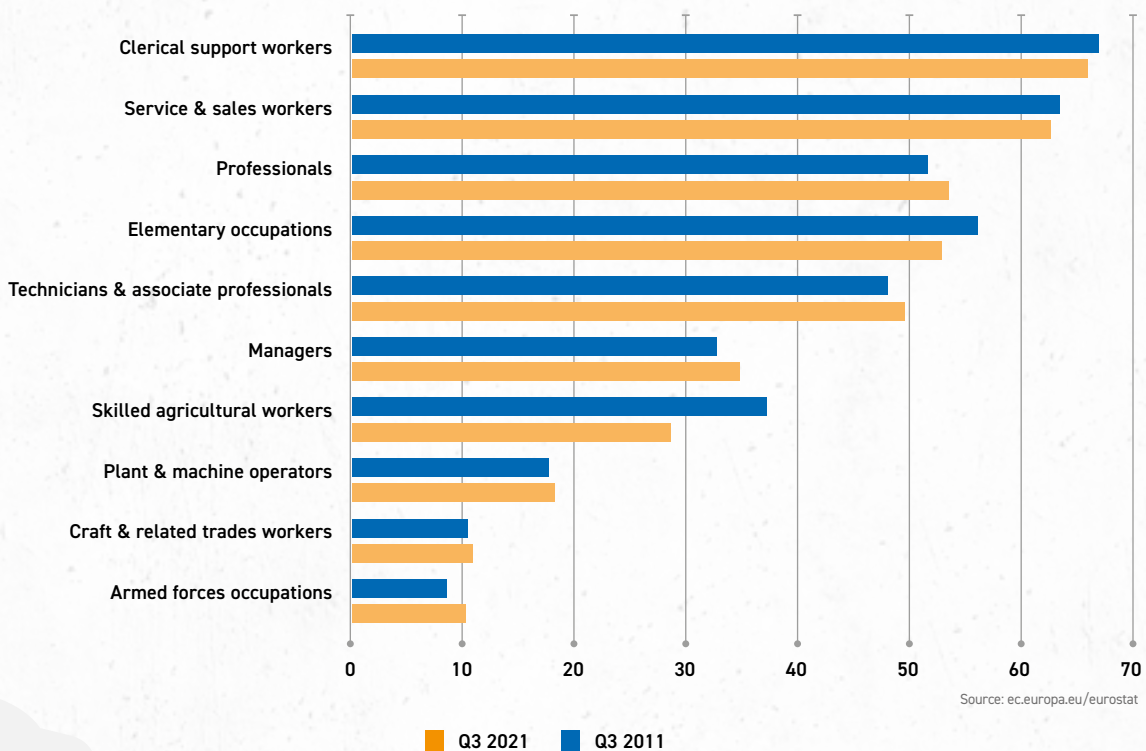


Such a trend has been recorded in the UK as well, with the proportion of women in the construction workforce now standing at 15.8% according to the Office of National Statistics, its highest level on record and representing a significant increase compared to pre-pandemic levels [7].

However, these country averages obscure the variation across occupations, as they include professionals, people working on site and those in administrative roles. Indeed, in terms of occupations, women tend to be overrepresented among clerical support workers (66%), service and sales workers (63%) and professionals (54%), but represent only 11% of craft and related trades workers³.



Figure 4: Share of women by occupation (age 15+; Q3 2011 – Q3 2021)

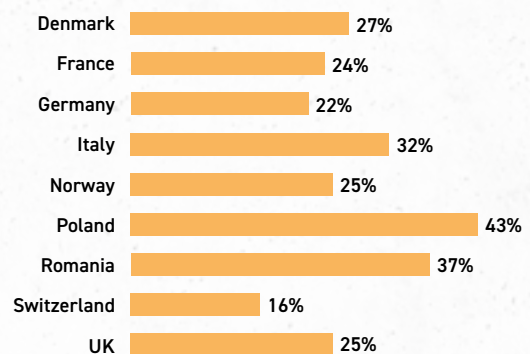


How these figures intersect with the participation of women in the construction industry is not always straightforward to measure. For instance, Eurostat data indicate that in 2018 women represented 12% of civil engineers, 10.5% of workers in the construction of buildings, but a considerably higher proportion in architectural and engineering activities, where women make up 30.3% of the workforce.

These figures do not necessarily reflect the corresponding proportion of graduates, which tend to be much higher [1].



Figure 5: Percentage of women graduating in engineering, manufacturing and construction (2018)



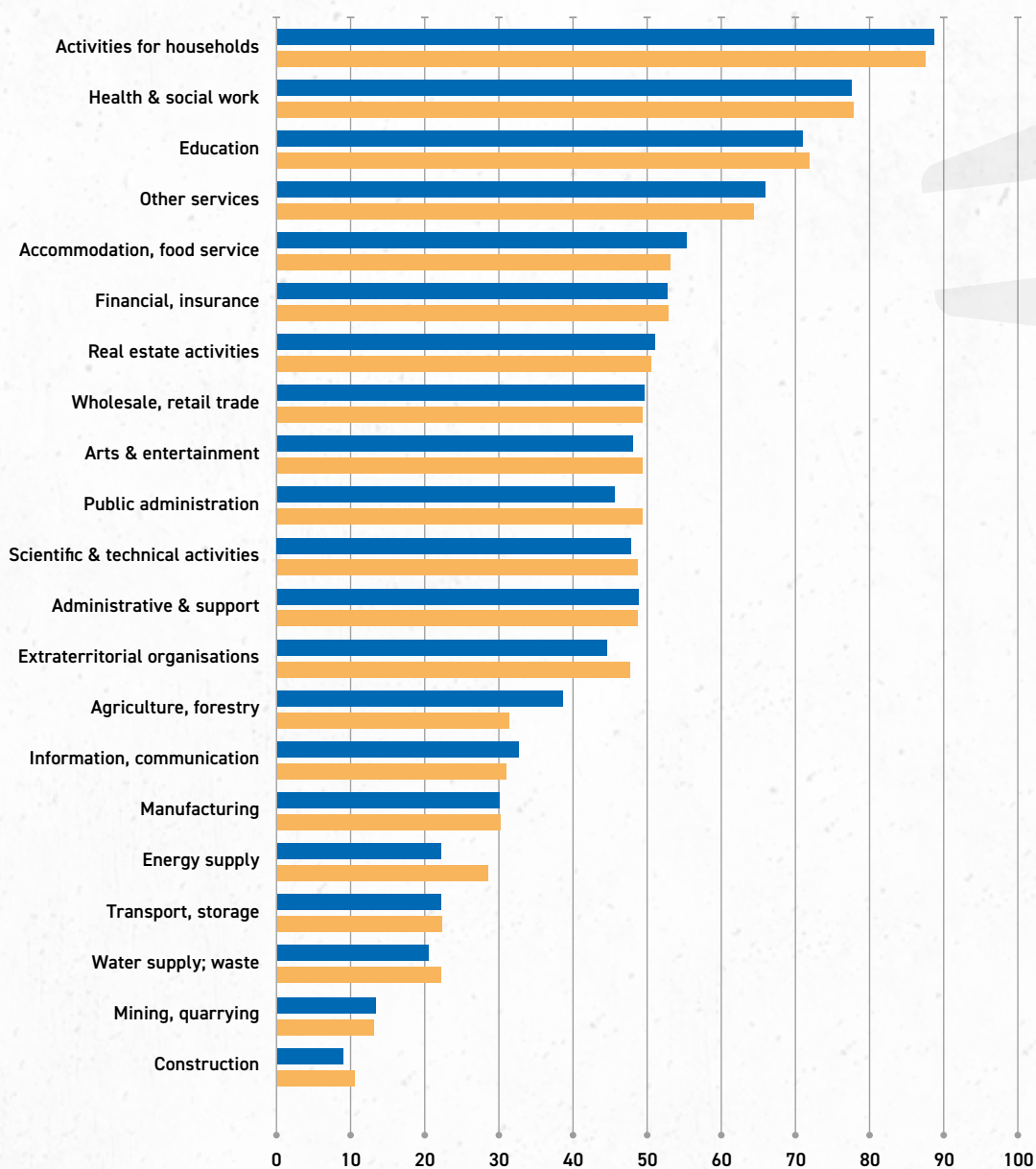
Distinguishing between the various sectors of the industry – construction, forestry and wood – can be very difficult as data recording the gender split in various occupations and sectors only generally offer aggregated figures for manufacturing and group forestry together with agriculture and fishing. Nevertheless, the difference in gender participation appears

less stark in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries⁴ with the participation of women reaching 31.3%, by comparison to the construction industry (11.4%)⁵.

To put this into perspective, it is useful to compare to other industries where women are more present⁶:



Figure 6: Share of women by economic activity (age 15+; Q3 2011 – Q3 2021)



Source: ec.europa.eu/eurostat

■ Q3 2021 ■ Q3 2011



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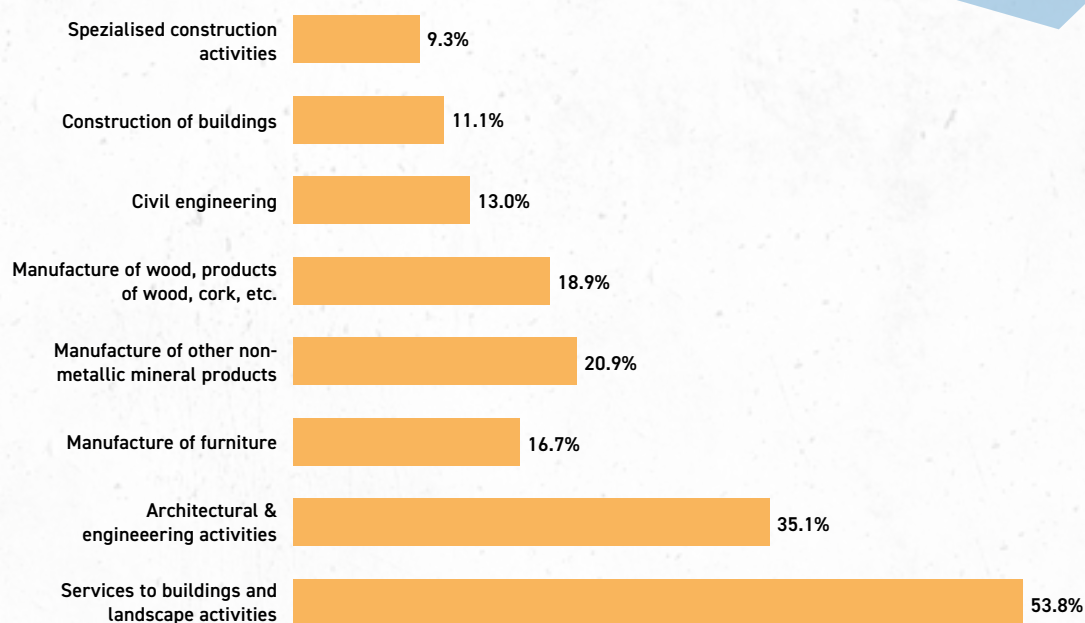
In 2022 in Belgium only 1% of labourers within the construction industry were women.

”

However, these figures obscure both the discrepancies between the different sectors within the industry and a lack of data for many sectors. For instance, Eurostat data extracted from the LFS record an average of 14.6% of women across the EU-27 in 2022 in the Forestry, logging and related service activities (NACE – A2), but national data are few and far between and mostly come with a warning of low reliability. Data provided for other sectors appear more consistent⁷:



Figure 7: Proportion of women employed per sector in the EU27 plus Norway and Switzerland in 2022



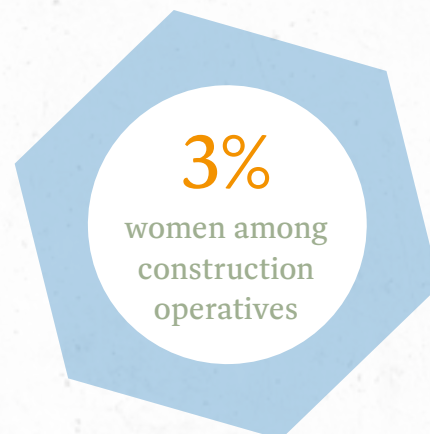
Source: EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) data; downloaded from Eurostat's online database as dataset lfsa_egan22d. Available from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>

Unsurprisingly, the lowest proportion of women is found among specialised construction activities, which would cover the skilled trades, including Demolition and site preparation, Electrical, plumbing and other construction installation activities, and Building completion and finishing⁸. In contrast, the highest proportion is found in the Services to buildings and landscape activities, which encompass cleaning activities.

The figures above also hide the comparatively much lower proportion of women among construction operatives, which remains consist-

ently extremely low, around 3% in 2016 [1], though, specific breakdowns are difficult to come by. For instance, a recent report by Constructiv⁹ in Belgium stated that in 2022 only 1% of labourers within the construction industry were women. Specific occupations such as scaffolders report even lower figures (0.3% in Belgium), with some national representatives going as far as saying that they can be counted on one hand¹⁰.

In Ireland in 2016, the number of women amounted to 9.2% across all skilled trades and 5% across building trades specifically, 1% of



“ The lowest proportion of women is found among specialised construction activities.

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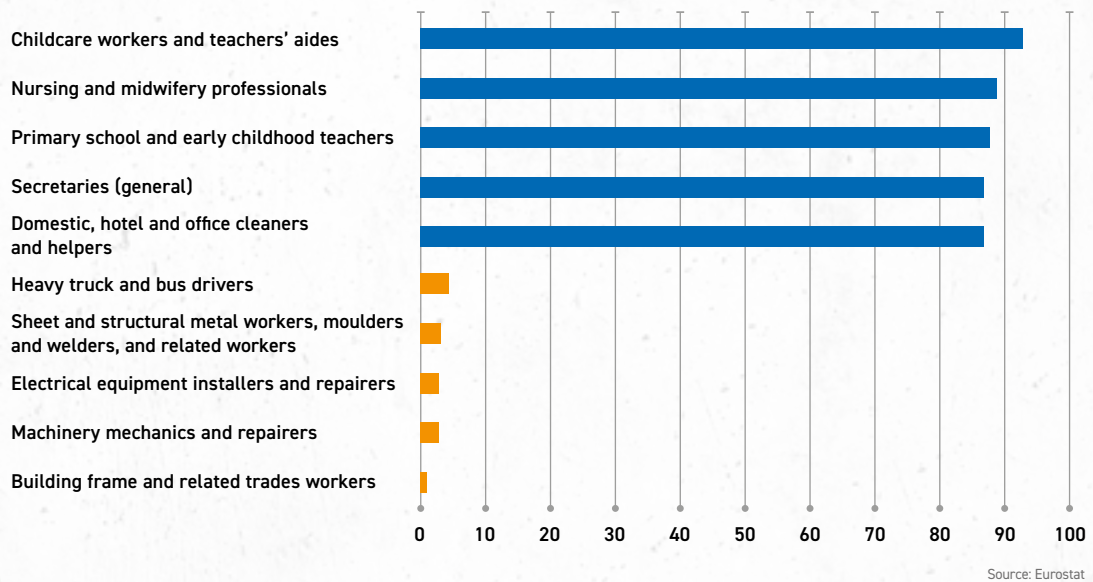
self-employed electricians and 4% of employed electricians. These low numbers extend to vocational education and training (VET), with only 33 of the 10,000 state funded apprenticeship being taken up by women. Confirming these results, a survey carried out in 2018 by the Construction

Industry Federation in Ireland has found that 99% of workers on construction sites are male, whilst the proportion of offsite workers is more balanced – 54% male and 46% female, with the majority of women working in administration, finance, HR and marketing^{11, 12}.

These specific examples are echoed by recent Eurostat data¹³:



Figure 8: Top and bottom 5 of detailed groups of occupations in terms of shares of female employment, EU, Q3 2022, in % of total employment in each group of occupations



Finally, updated in 2020, the EU Gender Equality Strategy reiterates commitment to gender mainstreaming to ensure women's participation in decision-making, with increasing female labour market participation and reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps constituting two of the five key priorities.

The EU also increasingly links the question of gender equality and transition to a low-carbon society. For instance, the European Institute for Gender Equality, for the release of its gender equality index, has made an explicit connection between gender equality and the EU Green Deal¹⁴. Previously, other EU initiatives had established this link, such as the Build-up skills initiative¹⁵.

Previous reports [8] have established that gender segregation exists in growing sectors linked to the green transition, such as the renewable energy sector, with women representing 35% of the workforce, but performing primarily administrative and non-technical roles. Key roles in the industry, such as metal workers, electricians, heating and cooling experts, insulation specialists, plumbers, are overwhelmingly performed by male workers [9].



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Key roles in
the industry are still
overwhelmingly
performed by male
workers.
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An industry in transition

Labour and skill shortages

Labour shortages and difficulties in attracting young people into the industry are reported across Europe [10]. A European yearly report on labour shortages and surpluses singles out the building trades in terms of recurring shortages, including bricklayers, carpenters and joiners, plumbers and pipefitters, electricians, welders, concrete placers and finishers, and sheet metal workers. The report points to structural issues in the labour market – as opposed to transient shortages – as these occupations consistently feature high on the list of occupations experiencing shortages [11]. Therefore, calls for recruitment have flourished and sometimes make the explicit link between shortages, the poor image of the industry and the lack of women [12].

Indeed, adopting a gendered perspective in relation to labour shortages and surpluses is essential as the yearly report quoted above [11] emphasises that women tend to be overrepresented in occupations experiencing surpluses and under-represented in the ones experiencing shortages.

Difficulties to recruit new entrants – women or young people – into the industry have become all the more acute as a result of the increasingly ageing workforce [10]. These difficulties have been attributed to issues relating to the image of the industry, perceived as providing low-paid, dirty, manual work, with a poor track record in terms of occupational safety and health (OSH) and working conditions in general, as well as a lack of investments in VET [13][14].

However, it is not always accurate and useful to think in terms of labour shortages, as labour shortages must be distinguished from shortages of qualified workers, which several countries across Europe also report [10]. The green tran-

sition constitutes a prime example of such an approach with the transition requiring additional, often technical, specialist knowledge in relation to insulation, installation of heat pumps, timber frame work, air permeability testing, etc. as well as an increasing need for communication and supervisor skills [10] [15].

The challenges of climate change

Being responsible for 36% of CO₂ emissions and 40% of energy consumption, the built environment is targeted for a major transformation as part of EU net zero carbon and climate change action plans. Many of the above-mentioned barriers to gender diversity are also barriers to achieving effective low carbon construction, including the needs: for a standardised VET system; to address the fragmented employment and occupational structure by providing stable and direct employment to allow for integrated team working; and for good working conditions [16] [17]. The suggestion is that meeting the challenge of low carbon construction also opens the possibility to include more women, especially considering their generally higher educational achievements, their greater presence in sustainability-oriented subject courses, and the persistent reports of skill shortages in construction in many European countries [10]. In terms of effective VET, achieving a net zero carbon European construction industry requires a workforce equipped with the necessary construction knowledge skills and competences, supported by appropriate VET schemes and recognised qualifications.

The EU/Member States mandate towards a nearly zero carbon and inclusive construction industry could be a transformative feature of the industry. For example, in the Netherlands, recruitment of young workers is often direct from vocational colleges, where generally

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a higher proportion of women are to be found than in the labour market. With the decline in apprenticeships in many countries and increasing reliance on placements and internships to obtain work experience, this form of recruitment could assume greater importance, instead of a reliance on agencies to provide the workforce needed, especially on large sites. This would therefore favour greater female participation, as women are reliant on formal qualifications for entry into construction. A net zero energy/carbon construction agenda is directly relevant for an industry that should be socially sustainable, driven by gender equality concerns, and involve women and their representative organisations in shaping institutional strategies at all levels.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals¹⁶ promote an interpretation of gender equality based on women's empowerment. Nevertheless, in practice, women often adapt to "be one of the boys" as a norm or coping mechanism for obtaining formal employment or even achieving female leadership in these masculine sectors [18]. As a result, their influence on the industry's sustainability agenda often comes from being in a senior management position and is not a gender-related matter.

From the above it is evident that a thorough review of best practice needs to be conducted across Europe to identify areas where women are represented and not represented, and where diversity involves female workers as first priority. In summary, these best practices include situations where the cultural and structural barriers to gender diversity have been addressed and solutions proposed in terms of:

1. Employment policies and practices,
2. Industry culture and image,
3. HR policies and practices,
4. Working conditions,
5. Effective VET.

This is a report of a research project highlighting ways in which inclusiveness can be embedded in site and firm operations, alongside other aspects, such as union involvement, OSH, risk avoidance, and employment security. Good practices identified also serve to reveal successful implementation of "gamechangers", that is strategies and tools for (internal and external) monitoring of compliance, reinforcing best practice for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workforce from day one (on a given project). Lastly, successful approaches to "good" EDI training, which embrace the complexity of the issues involved, are highlighted. In identifying examples of good practice, the role of different stakeholders is elucidated, pointing to what is required for a gender-sensitive approach, including equitable, and socially sustainable employment in a green construction industry.



II. Methodology





The Project

The overarching aim of this project is to strengthen, reinforce and promote gender equality and women's participation in the construction, wood and forestry industries, enhancing gender-based diversity and female leadership with a particular focus on the sectoral social dialogue¹⁷, including at European level.

To achieve this aim, the research project is divided into six phases, conducted sequentially:

1. Collection of statistical data and literature review on the presence of women in construction, wood and forestry, including statistics from Eurostat as well as those readily available from different European countries. The literature review is largely focussed on Europe but also draws on literature from further afield and on historical literature, both of which provide inspirational examples of success, and account the transforming nature of the construction industry.
2. Analysis of questionnaire responses to the EFBWW survey administered in 2020-21.
3. Identification of good practices and experiences related to gender matters, both from the literature and from the questionnaire responses, in particular in terms of collective bargaining¹⁸ and agreements in the construction, wood and forestry industries. For this, members of EFBWW women's network and/or respondents from specific countries were contacted and/or interviewed to dig deeper into interesting results.
4. Preparation of a practical and industry-specific manual for practitioners¹⁹ that includes tools and resources for increasing the participation of women in the construction, wood and forestry industries, drawing on research conducted in the previous phases and within the framework developed. This also draws on examples of manuals applied

in different European countries and elsewhere, including: the US RISE Up (Respect, Inclusion, Safety and Equity in the Construction Trades), a Respectful Workplace Programme designed to provide all workers with the tools and support necessary to create and maintain a safe, inclusive and productive environment²⁰; the Gamechangers, a checklist of best practices developed by the North American Tradeswomen Building Bridges network and presented to key stakeholders during a delegation of over 50 construction tradeswomen to London in June 2022, organised by the Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment (ProBE) and hosted by the University of Westminster²¹; and the detailed recommendations given in the ProBE report 'No more softly, softly' [3], presented and discussed at an international symposium on Women in Construction, organised by ProBE and held at the University of Westminster in 2015, attended by amongst others EFBWW representatives.


5. Identification of gender policy priorities, focussing in particular on European Sectoral Social Dialogue, drawing on the research carried out as well as discussion with construction social partners including in countries reporting good practice examples.
6. Dissemination and presentation of the manual and engagement in a wider discussion with external stakeholders, including employer representatives, at a side-event during the General Assembly of the EFBWW.

To bring together both the desk-based research, analysis of the EFBWW survey questionnaire results, and the good practice examples, an appropriate framework of analysis has been developed and continuously reviewed during the course of the project, encompassing the various aspects of the research and the relations

“
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”

between them. This framework has been used to interrogate the data and has served to structure the manual, embracing a range of barriers and enablers to the participation of women:

- 1. Employment policies and practices:**
 - Target setting,
 - Industry structure,
 - Procurement,
- 2. Industry culture and image:**
 - Engagement of women,
 - Stakeholder involvement and cooperation,
- 3. HR policies and practices:**
 - Recruitment and retention,
 - Career progression,
 - Mentoring,
- 4. Working and employment conditions:**
 - Working conditions, including OSH, support structures, and gender-specific provisions,
 - Employment conditions, including policies and practices on flexible working, work-life balance and equality,
- 5. Effective VET:**
 - Appropriate initial and continuing VET, including for low energy construction (including energy efficiency, retrofitting, etc), automatization, and digitalisation.



Barriers and enablers to the participation of women

In all the categories of the framework above, the report emphasises the importance of monitoring and reporting procedures, including processes of accountability and compliance, and making visible women's presence, as well as the role of social dialogue, including collective agreement clauses, and processes of negotiation.

This analysis informs the identification of gender policy priorities, with a particular focus on Sectoral Social Dialogue, in particular at European level, as well the practical and industry-specific recommendations for practitioners below.





The EFBWW survey²²

The respondents

The survey questionnaire was sent out to all 77 EFBWW national affiliates present in 36 countries and generated 25 responses from 19 trade unions from the following countries:

Austria	GBH, Building and Woodworkers' Union
Belgium	CG-FGTB, General Federation of Labour
Bulgaria	CITUB, Federation of Independent Construction Unions
Croatia	SGH, Trade Union of Construction Industry of Croatia
Cyprus	SEK, Federation of Construction Workers, Miners and Allied Professions
France	CFDT, FNCCB CFDT, National Federation of Construction and Wood
Finland	Rakennusliitto / Teollisuusliitto, Federation of Finnish Industries
Germany	IG Metall, Metalworkers' Union
Hungary	ÉFÉDOSZSZ, Federation of Building, Wood and Building Industry Workers Unions
Italy	FeNEAL-UIL, National Federation of Buildings and Wood / FILCA CISL, Italian Federation of Construction and Related Workers / FILLEA CGIL, Italian Federation of Wood, Building and Extractive Industries Workers
Latvia	LMNA, Forest Sphere Workers Trade Union
Lithuania	LMPF, Federation of Lithuanian Forest and Wood Worker Trade Unions
Norway	Fellesforbundet, Trade union in construction, industry, transportation, farming, hotels, restaurants and graphical sectors
Spain	CCOO del Hábitat, Construction and Services
Slovakia	IOZ, Integrated Trade Union Association
Sweden	Målareförbundet, Swedish Painter's Union
Switzerland	Unia, National Confederation of Trade Unions
The Netherlands	FNV, Federation of Dutch Trade Unions, sector Building and construction / CNV, Christian National Trade Union Confederation
The United Kingdom	Unite, GMB

Two additional rounds of feedback concerning gender-related issues in the industry were collected from Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Croatia, Spain, Latvia, Hungary, Switzerland and the Netherlands was received and included in the dataset.

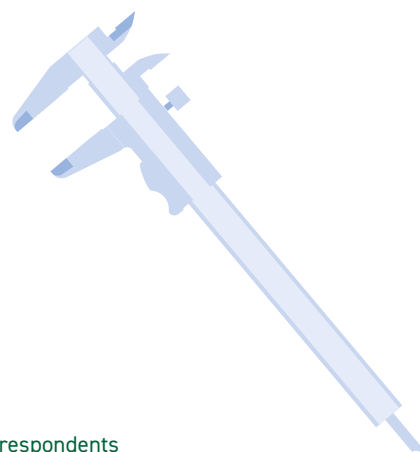


Table 1:
Female membership and representation reported by survey respondents

Organisation	Membership	Proportion of women	Women's representation
EFBWW²³	77 affiliated unions in 36 countries, a total of 1,5 million members	No data	Women's network, with the chair acting as liaison with the BWI Women's Committee. The latter also covers the EFBWW (as part of a co-operation agreement between both federations)
GBH (Austria)	90,000	3,800 (4%)	Women's Department / Federal Women's Executive Committee / Federal Women's Conference / Provincial Conferences or Provincial Women's Executive Committees in the Federal Provinces: Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Carinthia and Styria
CG - FGTB (Belgium)	52,192	406 (0.7%)	Gender commission (not specific to construction)
CITUB (Bulgaria)	900	300 (33%)	No
SGH (Croatia)	4,500	500 (11%) – mostly manufacturing, cleaning and administration)	Women's section in the umbrella organisation
SEK (Cyprus)	3,500	850 (24%)	No
CFDT (France)*	No data	No data	Working group on sexism in the workplace
FNCB-CFDT (France)	21,000	3,500 (16%)	Yes but no details
Rakennusliitto (Finland)	71,000	5,000 (7%)	Specific events
Teollisuusliitto (Finland)*	210,000 (all sectors)	42,000 – 20% (all sectors)	No
IG Metall (Germany)	39,000 (Wood and Furniture)	7,020 – 18% (Wood and Furniture)	Federal Women's Committee, District Women's Committee, Local Women's Committee and others
ÉFÉDOSZSZ (Hungary)	2,500	700 (28%)	Yes but no details
FeNEAL-UIL (Italy)	130,000	850 (0.6%)	Yes but no details
FILCA CISL (Italy)	No data	(5%)	Federation Gender Policy Manager and a Women's Coordination at the confederal level (formal structure) within which the Filca Manager also operates

FILLEA CGIL (Italy)	35,000	2,800 (8%)	Women's network
LMNA (Latvia)	1,000	350 (35%)	Women's committee at confederation level and all affiliates nominate one member in it
LMPF (Lithuania)	1,500	350 (23%)	Yes but no details
Fellesforbundet (Norway)*	165,383	28,284 (17%)	Equality network + network for women in male dominated sectors (in progress)
CCOO del Hábitat (Spain)	10,985	1,892 (17%)	State Secretariat for Women and Equality, with 17 specific Autonomous Representatives
IOZ (Slovakia)	2,637	391 (14%)	No
Målareförbundet (Sweden)	13,500	1,500 (11%)	Women's network called MIRA
Unia (Switzerland)*	188,259	83,191 (44%)	Women's Commission / Women's Conference
FNV (The Netherlands)	36,000	2,800 (7%)	Umbrella organisation does
CNV (The Netherlands)	Over 75,000	No data	No awareness
Unite (UK)	80,000	2,800 (3.5%)	Women in Unite (not specific to construction)
GMB (UK)*	620,000	Over 50%	Regional self-organised groups (SOG) National Womens' Network plus National lead for Women (not specific to construction)

* The data provided in the highlighted lines is not specific to construction, wood and forestry, as the unions themselves are general unions.





Study limitations

Survey data and academic literature

In terms of good practices, respondents to the EFBWW survey predominantly focus on measures relating to the working conditions section of the framework. This reflects perhaps both the emphasis of the EFBWW survey questions themselves²⁴, but also possibly practices on the ground. The report argues that all aspects identified in the framework are essential to making meaningful changes in the industry in terms of gender equality. Therefore, to remedy these blind spots, the report extensively builds on previous relevant studies available in academic literature.

Defining construction, wood and forestry industries

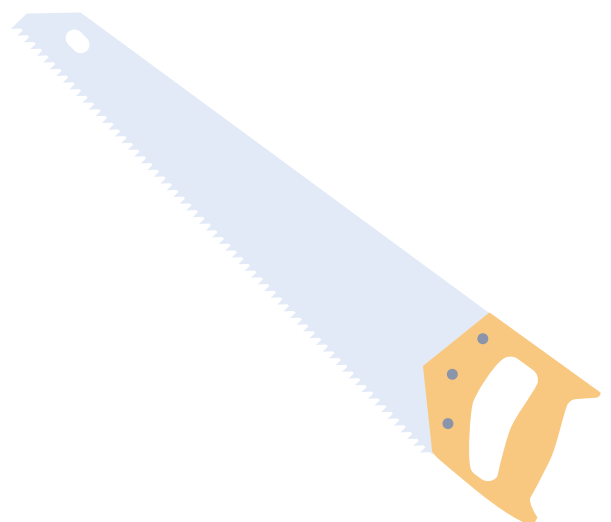
Inevitably, there are often very significant structural, institutional, social, and cultural differences in the construction, wood and forestry industries of different European countries, so that some framework categories are more relevant to some countries than to others, just as are some aspects of the manual, the good practice examples, and the policy priorities. This is therefore an important consideration, for which ProBE's previous comparative research [10][19], establishing groups of countries with similar characteristics in terms of, for instance, construction VET systems or labour processes, forms an important background.

Another source of variation stems from the fact that each country and each union organisation adopt a different definition of the industry. EFBWW affiliates, as per the organisation's constitution, can represent some, or occasionally all, the following areas:

- Forestry, logging and related service activities
- Other mining and quarrying (of minerals used for building materials)

- Manufacture of building materials (wood and products of wood and cork, furniture; articles of straw and plaiting materials, non-metallic mineral products such as bricks, cement, concrete, plaster, mortar, stone cutting, etc., structural metal products)
- Construction of buildings
- Civil engineering
- Specialised construction activities (including Demolition and site preparation, Electrical, plumbing and other construction installation activities, Building completion and finishing, etc.)
- Wholesale of wood, construction materials and sanitary equipment; hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies
- Architectural and engineering activities
- Renting of construction and civil engineering machinery and equipment
- Services to buildings and landscape activities (including cleaning)

Most of the recommendations, good practices and policy priorities detailed below will apply across all sectors of the industry and across occupations, but some might be more relevant to specific occupations and sectors.



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All aspects identified are essential to making meaningful changes.
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III. Resource Toolkit for Gender Equality at Work





Employment policy

Often overlooked, but an essential aspect for the effectiveness of any equality initiative, is the importance of addressing structural barriers connected to the fragmented nature of the construction industry as a whole. The extensive use of sub-contracting combined with inadequate procurement processes, as well as the prevalence of self-employment and temporary agency work, all act as major, albeit indirect, impediments to the participation of women in the industry and constitute obstacles to the implementation and monitoring of initiatives designed to bring in and retain women [3].

On this issue the main driver of change remains in principle the possibility to leverage influence and propagate good practices throughout the supply chain, mainly via procurement procedures that include equality requirements mandated through contract compliance [3]. Nevertheless, commitment by a wider range of actors, such as government authorities, employers, unions, and female workers through their representatives, is also critical. As the business case for gender equality does not provide sufficient motivation, legal impetus can provide additional motivation but leadership, strategic planning; and monitoring of implementation, as well as pressure from civil society, unions, and female workers through their representatives, are also essential [20].

Specific actions

1. Make sure that employers set equality targets and effective reporting and monitoring tools within the organisation
 - Targets must be robust, realistic, challenging relative to sector averages and provide benchmarks against which progress can be monitored.
 - They include pay, working hours, employment practices and career progression.

- They must be accompanied by regular and transparent audits, with public access to data where possible.

2. Ensure that larger employers and public authorities leverage their influence, including through public procurement

- In agreements with contractors, they include specific equality requirements as part of the bidding process and incorporate an evaluation of suppliers' diversity track records as part of the tender evaluation process.
- Ensure implementation through contract mandated compliance.
- Ensure that gender equality compliance is appropriately time budgeted and costed in every project, including resources for training and communication.

3. Ensure that employers provide meaningful worker participation and wider stakeholder engagement as part of implementation

- Include union and workers' representatives across occupation and gender in monitoring activities, especially officials dedicated to gender equality.
- Promote awareness and provide training for union officials on gender equality, including on monitoring, enforcement and the use of public procurement.

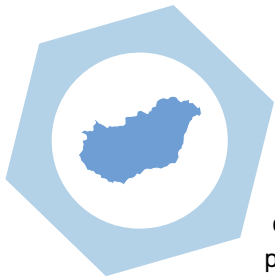
4. Encourage direct employment²⁵.

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Targets must be robust, realistic, challenging.”

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Members' perspectives



Hungary

According to the national legislation, any company over 50 employees should adopt an equal opportunity plan designed to deal with equal opportunities and combat discrimination. Company works councils are designated to monitor and supervise this plan. Even though not many companies have adopted such plan, as the law does not foresee sanctions in case of non-implementation, industry practice has evolved in such a way that equal opportunity plans now constitute an expected annex at the tendering and grant application stages. Their number has been growing as a result.



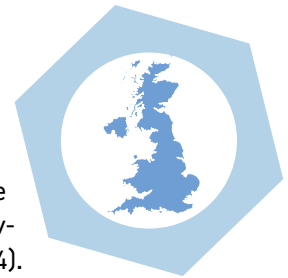
Italy

The National Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) in the Wood sector foresees that:

“Positive actions for the realisation of equality between men and women at work and to combat gender discrimination”:

- Through the sectoral bilateral Observatory, study and research activities will be carried out for the promotion of positive actions in favour of female employment and the achievement of substantial equality between men and women in work.
- Companies with at least 50 employees must prepare, every two years, a report on the employment situation of male and female workers and will provide it to the company's trade union representatives.

UK [21]

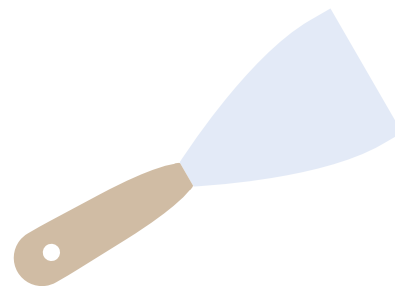


The UK has one of the lowest proportions of female engineers in the construction industry in Europe (averaging between 6% and 13% in 2014).

In 2001, Crossrail, a wholly owned subsidiary of Transport for London, was established to deliver the new railway system through central London, which was delivered in May 2022. Partly as a result of the business case for gender equality, the latter being conceived as a solution to labour shortages (engineers in this case), the project implemented a number of measures designed to enhance gender balance within the workforce, including:

- training on 'unconscious bias',
- blind recruitment,
- external advertisement of available positions to encourage recruitment of a diverse workforce,
- creation of women's forum, diversity working group and mentoring programmes with senior women acting as role models,
- work with local school to encourage more young people into engineering careers,
- work-life balance opportunities (including inclusive maternity leave and flexible working time schemes),
- assisted pre-employment training,
- organisation of a 'women in construction' meeting to share ideas and support women in engineering.

As a result of these, statistics show a significant increase in the number of women, with 29% of project managers; 12% of apprentices and 19% of graduates.



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The UK Crossrail project delivered a significant increase in the number of women: 29% of project managers; 12% of apprentices and 19% of graduates.

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Industry culture and image

Traditional stereotypes, sexist attitudes, and a certain macho culture [5] persist in the construction, wood and forestry industries, with the work in these industries considered as male work, unsuitable for women who are considered as not possessing the innate abilities or strength required to perform the work [22]. The entrenched nature of these stereotypes and attitudes partly explains the industry's long resistance to change [23].

A number of responses to the EFBWW survey mention this cultural barrier, but none manage to articulate practical solutions. This can be explained by the fact that this cultural issue is in fact connected to all the other sections mentioned in this report in some way.

In terms of recruitment and career progression, the male dominated culture, networking and environment can also create a boys' club culture, which excludes women or forces them to be one of the boys [24], with this phenomenon unlikely to lead to durable change regarding the participation and inclusion of women in the industry [25]. Conversely, 'protective attitudes', sometimes referred to paternalism or benevolent sexism, whereby female workers are assigned tasks deemed more appropriate to their gender, can undermine the workers' opportunities to learn and threaten their job security and possibilities for career progression [26].

The fact that abiding by these cultural norms, which often translate into very high expectations in terms of availability and commitment [27], can also act as an impediment, for both women and men, to making the most of work-life balance opportunities available [28].

Regarding OSH, it can be argued that the sexualization of the workplace, which can take the form of sexual harassment, serves to maintain male domination in these industrial sectors [29].

Formal equality policies, which are now relatively common, though possibly restricted to large companies, only have a limited impact on such cultural barriers if focus is not placed on adequate enforcement [27].

The multi-faceted impacts of industry culture highlight the importance of adopting a holistic approach to gender equality [5]. These interconnected impacts also include 'external' ones in terms of the image of the industry, and subsequent difficulties to recruit new entrants – both women and young people, an essential challenge for the industry, which faces increasing labour and skill shortages [10][11]. Indeed, the poor 'image' of the industry is consistently highlighted in the academic literature addressing barriers to the entry of women in the industry [30][31][32]. Both actual and perceived discrimination can deter women from entering the industry; for instance, a study of the perceptions of students in a construction module in a higher education institution in the UK shows that these perceptions are generally negative [33].

Specific actions

Unions, as organisations, and in their relationship with companies through their representatives:

- Adopt a holistic, clear, result-oriented policy on gender equality, including through collective bargaining, encompassing direct and indirect forms of discrimination and foreseeing specific steps for enforcement supported by adequate resources.
- Communicate about policies on equality widely to embed these principles within the culture of the organisation.
- Create a diversity working group (this can be done in any sort of setting but needs to

“ A certain macho culture persists in the construction, wood and forestry industries. ”

be representative across occupations. Its role is to oversee, capture learning, and enhance visibility).

- Create and encourage informal social networks accessible to women working within, or aspiring to work in, the construction, wood and forestry industries.
- Organise sector-wide 'Good Practice Forums' to showcase effective diversity training and development programmes.
- Where appropriate, mobilise wider institutional pressures on the equality agenda, particularly in relation to discriminatory behaviour, or breaches of codes of professional conduct for which externally enforced sanctions already exist.

Members' perspectives



Spain

The collective agreement for the construction industry foresees that companies with more than 50 employees must adopt and implement an equality plan. This agreement was ahead of the legislation at the time, which initially only included in its scope companies with more than 250 employees. Legislative changes have now aligned thresholds, with the law requiring all companies with more than 50 employees to have an equality plan, to be negotiated with the Workers' Legal Representation and/or the trade unions. Companies with less than 50 employees have the possibility to negotiate an equality plan on a voluntary basis but are still bound by equality laws and must establish equality measures negotiated with the Workers' Legal Representation.

Company equality plans are an ordered set of measures, adopted after a diagnosis of the situation, aimed at achieving equal treatment and opportunities between women and men in the company and eliminating discrimination based on sex. They must cover at least the following areas: selection and recruitment, professional classification, promotion, training, working conditions, remuneration and salary audit, under-representation of women, work-life balance

and co-responsibility, and prevention of sexual and gender-based harassment. In addition, it is recommended that they include aspects related to gender-based violence and non-sexist communication and language.

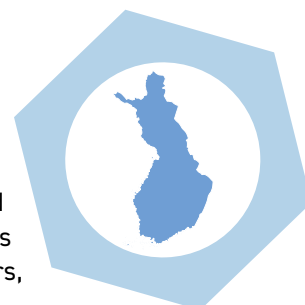
The collective agreement for the construction industry brought together several strands of Spanish equality law by including them in the design and implementation of the equality plan. First, Spanish law compels all companies to implement pay transparency. As such, they must keep a salary register (with averages of fixed and variable salaries by position and sex and differentiating the different extra-salary payments) in order to detect inequalities. Companies with more than 50 employees must also carry out a wage audit (internal or external). The entire workforce has the right to access the data on the percentages of differences detected between men and women. And the Workers' Legal Representation has the right to access the full content of the registers and audits. Second, equality laws require all companies to establish measures for the prevention of sexual and gender-based harassment, which can consist in the implementation of protocols. These must be negotiated with the Workers' Legal Representation. In CCOO (one of the trade union federations in Spain), when a protocol on sexual and gender-based harassment is negotiated, they ensure that the Workers' Legal Representation is involved in the investigating committee responsible for the implementation and monitoring of harassment protocols, as a way of establishing guarantees.

Finally, in equality plans, unions generally negotiate to include a gender perspective in risk assessment for the purpose of OSH, including in relation to sexual harassment.

Examples of data gathering and awareness raising

Finland

In 2017, Rakennusliitto (the Finnish Construction Trade Union) carried out a survey of women's experiences of harassment among their members,



and subsequently launched a campaign called *Syrjintä on syvältä* (Discrimination sucks) to raise awareness about harassment and help people recognize what harassment is and what should be done if someone is being harassed at work. The most important message of the campaign was that there should be a zero-tolerance policy with regard to all harassment. Since this campaign took place, this theme has been part of the union's shop stewards training in the form of discussions on the subject.

4. Have you taken action or requested measures to improve working conditions at your workplace? Please describe what the issue was and whether it was resolved successfully?

The survey underlined significant problems that women still experience in the industry. The main issues identified concerned:

- Serious welfare concerns around toilet, changing and shower facilities
- Examples of a culture of undermining women in the workplace
- A lack of action when women raise issues of concern that impact on OSH within the workplace
- The need for access to sanitary products in the workplace and separate, adequate provision of welfare facilities for women.



Switzerland

From December 2022 to March 2023, Unia surveyed women in the building trades about their day-to-day experiences at work. Around 300 female participants answered questions on hygiene conditions, work-life balance, discrimination and sexual harassment, and wages.

Women from various building trades all over Switzerland discussed the results of the survey at a meeting in Bern on 22 April 2023. On this occasion, the participants adopted their main demands for the women's strike on 14 June 2023 and beyond²⁶.



UK

Unite conducted an online survey of all women members in the construction industry where they possess an email address. The survey generated 176 responses and gave a lot of insights into the working lives of women in construction.

The survey included the following questions:

1. Has your employer made changes at your workplace to allow you to carry out your role?
2. Do you think your skills and abilities are properly appreciated and recognised at your workplace?
3. How have attitudes to women construction workers changed since you started at your current workplace?

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The survey underlined significant problems that women still experience in the industry.

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Human resources policies and practices

The principle of non-discrimination based on gender is enshrined in various pieces of European legislation, as well as in national legal systems, and several records of collective bargaining clauses addressing equality issues in the EFBWW survey responses confirm that it is also a theme in collective bargaining negotiation.

A clear application of this principle concerns recruitment and career progression. The participation of women in the industry is characterised both by horizontal segregation, between occupations, with a higher proportion of women in administrative and clerical occupations and professional occupations compared to on site positions, and also vertical segregation in terms of their presence in leadership positions [19][34].

Recruitment

The lack of formalised recruitment practices and procedures, combined with inappropriate selection criteria, is often mentioned as a barrier to the entry of women in the industry [35]. Indeed, informal recruitment based on word of mouth and existing social networks tend to favour recruitment of the 'likes', with men more likely to recruit other men. In fact, women tend to be found where more proactive measures are in place and formal qualifications are a pre-requisite to recruitment [19]. A UK example from the BWI 2021 report [36] is illustrative of direct discrimination:

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When a contractor at the Hinkley Point Nuclear Power Station in England carried out a blind recruitment process by removing the names and gender of the applicant, 50 per cent of the recruits were women.

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More indirect manifestation of discrimination based on gender can also occur, such as the use of language that exclusively refers to men in job adverts [37].

Of course, even formal rules can fail to make a change if they are not implemented or improperly implemented (see for instance tokenistic implementation [38]) as well as monitored. Some also claim that these rules should be adaptable and revisable [39].

In this first phase of recruitment, the link between workplace and vocational education is of crucial importance. For instance, the Gamechangers, a checklist of best practices developed by the North American Tradeswomen Building Bridges network, advocates in favour of integrating supply and demand by establishing 'partnerships between outreach and training resources (supply) and upcoming construction projects with diversity targets (demand)'.

Career progression

These barriers, however, are not limited only to recruitment, but affect retainment and career progression of women already present in the industry [40], with lack of formal development procedures, the prevalence of informal networks, and preferences for male employees all playing a part [31].

Mentoring

Framed as a solution for bringing and retaining women in the industry, or as a barrier when lacking, mentoring and role models can play a key part in the integration of women workers [3]. The existence of networks and mentors is also associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and better retention [41], though it is

important to acknowledge that in a male dominated sectors, support cannot only come from women but has to come from men too [24].

To ensure effectiveness, the role of human resources departments has to be aligned with the objective of recruiting, retaining and promoting women in the industry. This can be achieved by ensuring senior management support and mainstreaming equality through management practice via statements of objectives, monitoring and review. Also important is promoting equality as integral to good human resources management practice, in particular open and transparent recruitment processes, as well as mentoring schemes.

Specific actions

Make sure that employers:

- Use transparent and formalised recruitment and promotion procedures and criteria.
- Apply a gendered lens to new and existing policies and practices.
- Provide equality and diversity training interventions (for instance, embedded in normal training, including sessions on unconscious bias, role-playing scenarios, and training for potential mentors, etc., and challenging cultural expectations and stereotypes).
- Disseminate tailored information about equality and diversity (specific groups have specific needs and it is important to signpost to specific support available).
- Employ dedicated managers/co-ordinators of the gender equality policy at strategic positions, charged with responsibility for policy enactment and accountable for performance against the targets set.
- Nominate equality champions to act as points of contact and to represent the interests of particular groups.
- Encourage the promotion and training of administrative and non-technical staff (where there is greater representation of women) to help move them into technical roles and leadership positions.
- Actively support senior women in acting as role models for less senior employees.

- Monitors progress, including in terms of career pathways.
- Develop an annual event aimed at celebrating diversity as something that is enjoyable and fulfilling, and a way of bringing the workforce together around an agenda of mutual interest and importance.



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The construction, wood and forestry industries are characterised by a comparatively high level of occupational safety and health risks.

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Working conditions

Occupational safety and health

The construction industry's record in terms of both physical and mental health is rather poor; the industry is responsible for more than one fifth of all fatal accidents at work in the EU²⁷, as well as significant reported mental health issues and work-related stress [42].

A gendered approach to occupational safety and health

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognises [43] that traditionally men are more likely than women to work in hazardous industries such as construction, forestry, mining, or fishing. As a consequence, OSH laws have traditionally focused on visibly dangerous work largely carried out by men, while the focus in the case of women has been on protective laws prohibiting certain types of hazardous work and exposures, such as working in mines, at night, with lead or ionizing radiations or carrying heavy loads, etc. with a clear focus on pregnant workers.

Work undertaken by women is generally regarded as safe, because it is less hazardous, and women's occupational injuries as well as illnesses have been under-diagnosed, under-reported and under-compensated compared to men's [43].

As a result, OSH policies and prevention strategies must consider gender differences, acknowledging and making visible these differences to identify OSH risks adequately and implement effective solutions.

A sector-specific and gendered approach to occupational safety and health

The construction, wood and forestry industries more specifically are characterised by a com-

paratively high level of OSH risks, made perhaps even more acute as a result of the macho culture and short-term focus on output rather than workforce development [3], which constitute higher risks in general but also especially for women [44]. Indeed, previous studies have found that women are subjected to higher levels of occupational stress (psychosocial risks) and injuries (physical risks) [27] [44].

Stress factors specific to women can include slower career advancement [45], and bias and discrimination based on gender [46], which can take the shape of women's professional capability being systematically scrutinised and questioned where male capability is often taken for granted [32]. But women also face more practical issues, such as a lack of access to properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) [44].

A survey carried out in the UK by the trade union Unite revealed gender specific concerns, a crucial aspect being the need for access to separate and adequate welfare facilities in the workplace, including clean toilets, feminine hygiene bins, and sanitary and shower facilities. These results are echoed in a similar survey carried out by Unia in Switzerland²⁸.

The UK survey also provided evidence of a culture undermining women in the workplace, including a lack of action when women raise issues of concern that impact on OSH within the workplace, which can aggravate feelings of isolation and therefore give rise to stress and its consequences [44].

Additionally, outside of the more traditional focus on pregnancy and breastfeeding, are issues such as menstrual health and the menopause, in vitro fertilisation.

“ Women are subjected to higher levels of occupational stress and injuries. ”

Violence and harassment

Violence and harassment in the workplace correspond to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether in a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and include gender-based violence and harassment. Sexual and gender-based violence and harassment in particular are directed at a specific person because of their sex or gender, or affect people of a particular sex or gender disproportionately²⁹.

Harassment can be exercised by one or more superiors or colleagues and violates the dignity of the person, harms the physical and mental health of those who suffer it, and creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment. Examples of harassment and violence include: unwelcome verbal appreciation; unwanted intentional physical contact; explicit or implicit promises of career or concessions and privileges; intimidation, threats and blackmail for rejecting unwelcome behaviour; attitudes and acts with aggressive, derogatory and oppressive connotations; and forms of psychological persecution, reputational attacks, malicious innuendo, defamatory reports, isolation aimed at boycott, continuous checks and surveillance.

This is a very widespread phenomenon, with women most affected, but which often goes unreported, partly due to the psychological pressure and lack of support (see UK survey above).

In highly masculine working environments, such as the construction, wood and forestry industries, the phenomenon can be worse and can have negative effects on the psychophysical health of the workers who are subjected to it. Incidentally, it also has negative consequences for employers in terms of high staff turnover, worker absenteeism, use of sick leave, long-term disability costs, and increased risk of errors and accidents.

Trade unions and collective bargaining can contribute to addressing harassment and violence in the workplace, including through prevention. The European social partners in 2007 signed a "Framework Agreement on harassment and violence in the workplace", and in 2019 the ILO

adopted an international standard, Convention 190, which respectively mandates national governments and trade unions to adopt measures and policies to prevent and eliminate harassment and violence, including gender-based violence and harassment.

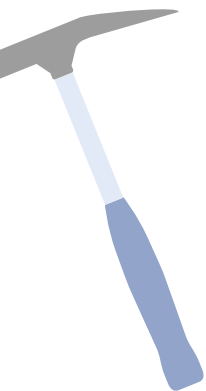
The ILO Convention 190 was ratified by seven EU countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain) and the UK, and is either currently in force or soon to be.

The EFBWW survey indicates a very low rate of implementation of the Framework Agreement on harassment and violence negotiated in the workplace, with only Italy providing concrete examples of implementation in CBAs at regional level.

Specific actions

- CBAs improve on statutory minimum requirements in terms of OSH, including protections related to pregnancy.
- As part of OSH, CBAs address issues around harassment in the workplace. They provide a clear definition of harassment (including the different forms), a joint commitment to a zero-tolerance policy, definitions of respective responsibilities, complaint mechanisms (including investigations procedure and persons of reference), protection for whistleblowers, victims and witnesses, as well as sanctions.
- Ensure that training on OSH addresses its gender aspects, including on harassment in the workplace.
- Ensure that employers demonstrate a 'no tolerance' policy on sexism (including sexist drawings, wording, behaviour), sexual and gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace (including on site). Spell it out in site inductions and company events. Enforce it.
- Ensure that employers provide proper support in relation to harassment of all kinds in the workplace, including when claims are being lodged.
- Include women in OSH committees in unions and the workplace and ensure participation of women in OSH training.

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Harassment
and violence
are a very
widespread
phenomenon,
with women
most affected.”



- Where possible, women construction professionals work with at least one other woman construction professional on site, in training, at events, to avoid them being the only woman.
- Make sure that female workers are provided with PPE in women's sizes, and including trousers and jackets, not overalls.
- Make sure that women have access to separate changing rooms and welfare facilities.

Members' perspectives

Regarding the issues connected to OSH, four recurring themes emerge from the EFBWW survey results:

- Provision of separate changing rooms and washrooms (five accounts respectively from Spain, Italy, Finland, Norway, and Sweden).
- Provision of adequate work uniforms for everyone (two accounts from Spain and Latvia, though the latter only reports on industry practice, not existing CBAs).
- Protection of pregnancy (five accounts from Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, and Switzerland), including implementation of prevention of risk to pregnancy, paid leave to attend pregnancy-related medical appointments, right to refuse over-time and obtain extra-breaks, and exclusion from carrying out certain tasks.
- Prevention of sexual harassment (six accounts respectively from the UK, Italy, Croatia, Austria, Finland, and Switzerland), including implementation of a zero-tolerance policy, support for lodging grievances, procedures for dealing with complaints in the workplace, provision of aid for legal and psychological counselling and awareness raising campaigns.



Italy

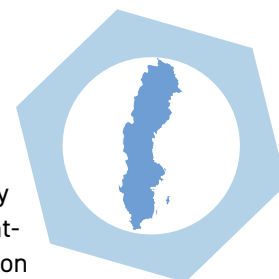
Agreement of the Wood Furnishing Sector negotiated in 2015 outlines the 'Codes of conduct to be adopted in the fight against sexual harassment and mobbing'. The agree-

ment aims to promote a culture based on respect for the dignity of workers, principles of fairness, equal opportunities, cooperation, and fairness in the workplace. It aims to prevent acts and behaviour that violate the dignity of workers and to guarantee adequate and timely forms of intervention and protection. The codes formalise the procedures to be put in place in the event of bullying or harassment within the company (the informal and confidential procedure, recourse to arbitration, formal complaint) and to identify the reference figures. It was the first of its kind in the private sector in Italy.

Additionally, some regional construction CBAs transposed the EU Framework on harassment and violence at work. For instance, the collective agreement of the construction industry of the province of Rome negotiated in 2019 provides for a one-off bonus to be granted to construction companies with a female presence that formally adopt the 'Code of conduct against sexual harassment and mobbing'.

The national CBA for wood and construction materials provides for three months of paid leave for women workers who are victims of violence.

Sweden



The collective agreement for the painting profession negotiated by Målareförbundet (the Swedish painters' union) regulates the provision of basic training for appointed safety representatives. The duration of this basic training has been increased from 24-32 hours to 28-32 hours, which implies that employers must pay for at least 28 hours of basic training. The extra four hours should be focused on how to work to prevent sexual harassment.

This agreement also specifies that changing rooms must be separate for men and women: 'It is the employer's responsibility to designate meal and dressing rooms washing facilities according to the options below. Dressing room should be separate for men and women if they need to use the rooms at the same time. The employer must also provide hygiene items such as soap, detergents, lotions, and towels'.



UK

Unite has been running a period dignity campaign across all sectors in the economy, including construction, wood and forestry. The campaign is about period poverty and the fact that some workers struggle to pay for sanitary products.

Unite is demanding that women and girls have period dignity. By making changes in our workplaces, our places of education, and in society, women and girls will be able to have a positive period knowing that they are able to access sanitary products. Having a period is natural and should not be a source of awkwardness for anyone.

The replies to a survey carried out among female construction workers (see above) clearly identified that for period dignity to be achieved for female construction workers the campaign needed to go further. Unite is now asking construction companies to sign up to four simple pledges to help achieve period dignity for construction workers:

- Each site or depot has a designated female toilet, always accessible, regular cleaned and lockable
- Handwashing facilities with running water and soap are provided in every welfare area.
- Sanitary bins are provided and are cleaned and emptied regularly.
- Sanitary products are provided in a dispenser in a discreet location, free to workers.

Work-Life balance

Balancing personal life and work is an issue that predominantly affects women, especially as gender relations at work and gender relations at home are connected.

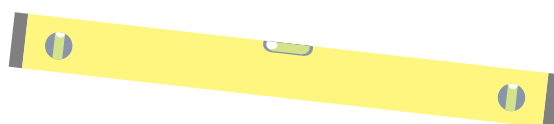
This is by no means specific to the construction, wood and forestry industries, nevertheless these industries present specific challenges that constitute major barriers to the entry and retention of women in the industry and are connected to the fact that the industry has been male dominated for a long time, as well as the prevalence of macho culture.

Long working hours, change in work location with little notice for site-based staff, potentially involving travelling long distances and even time away from home, are characteristic of many occupations in these sectors. Not abiding by these expectations can negatively affect future job prospects and career advancement. One solution often chosen by women is to adopt the male approach and prioritise career over family responsibilities, but that can also be met with negative judgement from colleagues, women lose out either way [31]. Such circumstances serve to explain the general lack of work-life balance arrangements. It is important though to keep in mind that the mere availability of work-life balance arrangements will not on its own provide acceptance of career breaks.

Specific actions

Make sure that employers:

- Provide maternity leave (including extended periods and better rates of pay, as well as protection from dismissal during and after), and paternity and parental leave including in CBAs, which improve on statutory minimum requirements.
- Grant the right for paid leave in the event a child is ill, for both mothers and fathers.
- Grant the right to request a change of jobs when pregnant; provide breast-feeding breaks; menstrual leave and period dignity (including additional rest periods for women during their menstruation or one-day leave).
- Ensure holiday and pension entitlements, and any other entitlement based on length of service, are not reduced as a result of maternity, paternity, and parental leave.
- Regularly monitor the working hours of employees to ensure their well-being and the effectiveness of wider employment policies.
- Consider the introduction of core working hours to ensure availability at certain times of the week for meetings, but with flexibility at other times.
- Consider taking into account the time spent working during commuting to work.



“

Work-life balance arrangements should go hand-in-hand with promoting acceptance of career breaks.

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- Consider the provision of childcare places near to the workplace.
 - Offer seminars explaining the policies, how they operate and how they can be used by and benefit all employees, not just women.
 - Create further opportunities for part-time and flexible hours working where appropriate, and do not reward or promote excessive working hours and monitor fatigue.
 - Develop a clear policy around home-based working for all employees.
 - Introduce a 'gender audit template' for evaluating particular departments and areas of the organisation to provide a framework for data collection, analysis and evaluation, demonstrate the need for equality measures, and act as a management tool to try and assess the impacts of actions going forward.
 - Monitoring of progress (including use of fixed-term contracts, flexible working arrangements and requests, and the progression of different groups through the organisation, gender balance of teams).
 - Allocate a dedicated budget to enforcement.
- The crediting of childcare and care-related absences, or part of it (Switzerland), for some (Finland, Italy) or all entitlements related to length of service (Austria),

2. Maternity

- CBAs often complement legal rules by increasing the allowance paid during maternity leave (Italy, Switzerland) or length of leave (Finland, Belgium, Switzerland).
- Some agreements also foresee paid leave for breastfeeding (The Netherlands), generally for an hour per day (Norway), but the periods of leave can alternatively be cumulated (Spain).

3. Paternity

- At the time of the EFBWW survey, only three respondents (Belgium, Italy and Norway) reported the existence of disposition on paternity leave. Such dispositions are likely to be more common now as a result of the transposition of the EU directive on work-life balance³⁰.

4. Flexible working

- Arrangements to work from home (The Netherlands, Lithuania)
- Right to flexible working time (France, Norway, Austria, Lithuania), including through setting up time banks (Germany) or shorter working days (Finland), requested as a result of care obligations, including childcare (Austria, Slovakia, Switzerland, Spain), or entitlement to reversible part-time for up to one year (on request) for female workers returning from maternity leave.
- In case of shift work, obligation for the employer to hear the workers first to know who has the possibility to do the shift in question (Finland).

Members' perspectives

Work-life balance measures, which are either a result of national legislation or CBAs, are by far the most common type of measures described by respondents to the EFBWW survey. They address a number of issues, in particular:

1. Care-related leave, including parental leave, encompassing:

- The extension of the duration of parental leave and the increase of the allowance paid during periods of leave (Italy), including increased allowance for men (Italy) and mandatory quotas (Latvia) to encourage uptake by fathers,
- Paid leave for family or care-related obligations (Croatia, Spain), including leave to take care of a sick child or attend children's medical appointments (Norway, France, Finland),
- Additional annual leave for parents of young children (Croatia, Latvia),
- Employers' contribution to childcare or obligation to facilitate childcare on the work premises (The Netherlands),

Sweden

Working time

The collective agreement negotiated by Målareförbundet (the Swedish Painter's Union) foresees a 40-hour working week and do not allow part-time work or other forms of employment. Union officials consider this provision as one of their



most important working conditions to maintain. They report that their members are not interested in working part time and subsequently giving up the benefits that full time work generates in the society as a whole.

In their experience, there is an increasing interest from women entering the painting sector later in life by retraining in vocational schools for adults. These women often come from more traditional women's occupations such as healthcare. They themselves state that the reason they apply to the painting sector is because of the terms of employment, not only because of the payment per hour, but the fact that it is a full-time job that gives economic stability.

Working hours in the sector are normally between 7am and 4pm, which are also the hours when childcare is the most easily available. Children are also provided with all meals during daycare, and in Sweden there are no mid-day breaks, meaning that parents do not need to pick up children in the middle of the day as can be the case in other countries.

Their commitment not to open up to flexible working hours, in combination with fairly strong social welfare system, even if there is always room for further improvement, gives their members full payment, predictable working hours, more gender equal actual income, and later in life also better and more equal pensions.

Maternity

This spring the same union negotiated a new collective agreement and managed to include in the agreement a measure called "Pregnancy pay".

When working as a painter, it is very likely that the pregnant worker will be unable to work all the way to the birth of the child. If the working conditions cannot be adapted to be safe for the pregnant worker, it is possible to get permission to leave and be paid by the national social welfare system during this time of leave. However, the allowance paid represents only up to 80% of the salary, which results in a loss of payment. To reduce the negative impact of this, the new agreement states that the employer still needs to pay 10% of the pregnant worker's salary, meaning that, with the social welfare system

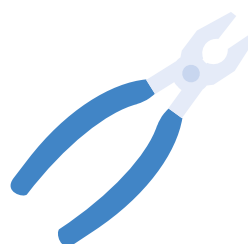
covering up to 80% and the employer 10%, the loss of income is reduced to 10% instead of 20%.

Additionally, the employer cannot dismiss a pregnant worker due to lack of work during the last two months of pregnancy.

Finally, the union also covers the costs of a pregnancy insurance for their pregnant members that includes both the pregnant person and the unborn baby.

Parental leave

The collective agreement also extends a measure applicable to maternity leave to parental leave and provides that when an employee on parental leave is dismissed from work, the period of notice does not start until the parent is back to work after the period of parental leave. Not having to look for new employment gives the new parent safety and a needed sense of calm during their period of leave.





Training and education

The barriers described above affect the access of women to both employment and training, though perhaps not to the same extent.

In Europe, approaches to occupational training vary widely between either collectively managed – by the State or social partners – vocational education programmes and on-the-job training provided by employers. Each approach has an impact in terms of the entry of women within the industry, first into education programmes, and second into the industry after having completed their studies, with the collectively managed systems favouring formal qualifications for entry.

“ Formal education is far more accessible to women compared to training connected to employment ”

Formal education is far more accessible to women compared to training connected to employment, such as apprenticeships or on-the-job training, though the formal training system itself has to be inclusive, and also acknowledge difficulties that exist to transition from education to employment [19].

Beyond labour shortages in the industry, ‘skill shortages’ also constitute a recurrent theme in discussion about the industry in relation to the transition to low-energy construction [15], with a significant portion of the workforce having low levels of general education and a lack of formal vocational education and training and qualifications [10].

Specific actions

Where union representatives are involved, they contribute to, support and monitor:

- The design high quality training with embedded low energy construction elements to improve the attractiveness of the industry and provide a better prospect for labour market entry. These elements should be accessible in both initial and continuous education.

- The sponsorship of female students as part of a structured training programme in connection with mentoring schemes.
- The provision of targeted work placement opportunities to give first-hand experience to potential female candidates (especially on large-scale projects).
- The involvement of key stakeholders, including unions (employers, local authorities, educational institutions) in the development and regular updates of education and training curricula.
- The organisation of women only information sessions and training days (for instance job tasters for women).

Members’ perspectives

Very few respondents to the EFBWW survey addressed the question of training and how this might also be connected to gender equality.

Italy



The National collective agreement for the building sector requires the bilateral vocational training system (For-medil and Building schools) to formulate specific training programmes to increase sectoral female employment³¹.



IV. Final Recommendations



The report has identified five key themes – broader employment policy, industry culture, human resources policies and practices, working conditions, including OSH, and finally training and education – that can be used to structure actions designed to improve and increase the participation of women within the construction, wood and forestry industries. These actions serve to enhance not only the entry of women in the industry, but also their retention and career progression.

Unions can contribute to spearheading, supporting and monitoring the implementation of actions in all these five areas. These actions include:

1. Support change in employment practices by promoting opportunities to leverage contractors' influence in supply chains, including through public procurement, by encouraging the inclusion of equality and direct employment targets as part of the bidding process and evaluation of suppliers and sub-contractors.
2. Adopt a clear, holistic and result-oriented policy on gender equality, which addresses both direct and indirect forms of discrimination, and keep adapting these policies through training, raising awareness and learning by creating diversity working groups, women's networks, good practice sharing forums, etc.
3. Focus on enforcement by jointly setting sector-specific, robust, realistic but challenging equality targets, which measure pay, working hours, employment practices, career progression, and ensure union and workers' representatives across gender and occupation are involved in transparent and regular monitoring.
4. Ensure gender equality mainstreaming throughout human resources policies and practices through provision of proper training of managers and coordinators, awareness raising, mentoring and promoting visibility of role models, and implementing formalised and transparent recruitment and promotion procedures and criteria.
5. Adopt and enforce a gender sensitive OSH policy in the workplace, which includes issues around harassment. Additionally, access to separate and lockable changing room and welfare facilities, as well as properly sized PPE must be addressed as an urgent and short-term change.
6. Ensure all employees, male and female, are entitled to decent work-life balance arrangements, monitor use of these arrangements, and promote them widely to inspire cultural change within the industry.
7. Address gender imbalances in initial and continuous training and education, including through mentoring and outreach, and connect formalised education and recruitment.

Going further, lessons can be learned from this project and serve to inform future actions:

- a) The analysis of the EFBWW survey results has highlighted that measures adopted in favour of gender equality through the legal system and collective bargaining tend to predominantly focus on working conditions, in particular on maternity and parental leave and to some extent flexible working time. Not only do these constitute the main focus, but in terms of method, the measures tend to also consist in adopting rules designed to be implemented from the top down. However, this report shows that a more holistic approach, which includes addressing working conditions but also goes beyond, would be more effective. In terms of method, more informal, participatory and bottom-up approaches also have a major role to play. These can take the shape of multi-stakeholder engagement and network building.
- b) The report also brings to the fore the need for more consistent, detailed, sector-specific, comparable and generally higher quality data, generated through more extensive surveys or formalised reporting mechanisms that could potentially feed into international databases.

“
Meaningful change means addressing employment policy, industry culture, HR policies and practices, working conditions, as well as training and education.
”

- c) Though this report makes use of the concept of equality, previous studies have shown that approaches based on equity, which are mindful of the different challenges that underrepresented groups face, may be more effective [34].
- d) Finally, this report also shows that the participation of women in certain sectors of the industry has not progressed in any significant way in recent history. Therefore, an additional avenue to consider is the possibility that the transition to low-carbon construction could open up possibilities for a more gender balanced workforce in the industry. Such reflections stem from the observations that zero carbon construction requires more formalised, trans-disciplinary knowledge and competence, and that women generally obtain higher educational achievements and are more present in sustainability-oriented courses [10].

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Annex

3rd GENDER QUESTIONNAIRE

Investigation of women policies addressed in the national collective bargaining agreements of the building, wood, cement and building materials sectors

I. General questions

1. Trade union organisation, country, name and email address of contact person
2. Number of trade union members
3. Number of women trade union members
4. Does your trade union have a structure for women i.e. a network, a committee, a working group?
5. Are there specific concerns that should be addressed in the building, wood, cement and building materials sectors?

II. Specific measures tackling women's needs in our industries (building, wood, cement and building materials)

1. Are there specific women-related health and safety prevention measures?
If so, please provide some examples.
2. Do you have any specific women-related working measures in place (for instance flexible working arrangements, maternity leave, parental leave)?
If so, please provide examples.
3. Could you specify if the above-mentioned measures come directly from your national law or they are rather implementation of it? Could you please specify if these measures are set up only in your collective bargaining agreement/general agreement?

III. Trade Union collective bargaining agreements

1. Do the collective bargaining agreements include specific women-related and/or equal opportunity clauses? Please, provide us with examples.
2. Could you please share with us some good practices from your collective bargaining agreements (in building, wood, building materials or other industries that your trade union represents) regarding work-life balance?
3. Could you please share with us some good practices on bargaining agreements that are specifically helpful to women?

IV Harassment and violence in the workplace

1. Do women, associated to your trade union, experience any harassment and violence in the workplace? Are there any measures in place to prevent it?
2. What is the status of the implementation of the EU Framework Agreement on harassment and violence at work at national level?
3. What kind of measures concerning harassment and violence in the workplace have been adopted in your collective bargaining agreements?

Endnotes

- 1 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>, See also, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs> for a gender informed breakdown of data extracted from the labour force survey.
- 2 Here Construction is understood as the NACE code F, which includes construction of buildings, construction of roads and railways and specialised construction activities.
- 3 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20220304-1>
- 4 NACE code A
- 5 EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) data; downloaded from Eurostat's online database as dataset lfsa_egan2 – available from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>
- 6 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20220304-1>
- 7 EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) data; downloaded from Eurostat's online database as dataset lfsa_egan22d. Available from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>
- 8 Including Plastering, Joinery installation, Floor and wall covering, Painting and glazing, and other.
- 9 Constructiv is an organisation funded by the social partners in the construction sector that provides services for the construction sector. Visit: <https://constructiv.be/fr-BE/Andere/Over-Constructiv.aspx>
- 10 <https://www.3f.dk/om-3f/grupperne/byggegrupper> – Denmark's largest trade union and unemployment fund.
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- 17 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=480&langId=en&intPagel=1831>
- 18 See ILO Convention 154, article 2: 'All negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organisations, on the one hand, and one or more workers' organisations, on the other, for (a) determining working conditions and terms of employment; and/or (b) regulating relations between employers and workers; and/or (c) regulating relations between employers or their organisations and a workers' organisation or workers' organisations'. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312299:NO
- 19 'Practitioners' include various stakeholders such as unions, construction employers, municipalities, community-based organisations, and VET providers. In this way, the findings will contribute to mainstreaming equality and diversity through HR/management practices, improving employment and working conditions (e.g. mentoring and career-support, promoting work-life balance via flexible working practices), communicating equality policy, policy enforcement, strengthening industrial relations, and fostering social dialogue structures in the construction, wood and forestry sectors.
- 20 The Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues (PGTI), V9(1). 2021. Finishing the Job: Best Practices for a Diverse Workforce in the Construction Industry. See: <https://policygroupontradeswomen.org/2021/12/08/launching-v-9-of-finishing-the-job-best-practices-best-practices-for-a-diverse-workforce-in-the-construction-industry/>
- 21 See <https://tradeswomenbuild.org/best-practices/>
- 22 See Annex
- 23 In 2019, the EFBWW elected two female members in the new presidium (2/7 or 28,5%). As a follow-up to resolution on gender equality adopted at the organisation's congress in 2019, the topic has been adopted as a horizontal priority and constitute an integral part of the portfolio of political staff.
- 24 See annex
- 25 See for instance, the EFBWW campaign on subcontracting: <https://limitsubcontracting.eu/>
- 26 Meeting in April: DE <https://www.unia.ch/de/aktuell/aktuell/artikel/a/19899> / FR <https://www.unia.ch/fr/actualites/actualites/article/a/19899>
Survey results: DE <https://www.unia.ch/de/arbeitswelt/von-a-z/gewerbe/frauen-auf-dem-bau> / FR <https://www.unia.ch/fr/monde-du-travail/de-a-a-z/arts-et-metiers/vous-les-femmes-sur-les-chantiers>
- 27 Eurostat (2022) Accidents at work Statistics: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Accidents_at_work_statistics#Analysis_by_activity
- 28 See footnote 12 : Vous, les femmes sur les chantiers – Unia, le syndicat (French); Frauen auf dem Bau – Unia, die Gewerkschaft (German)
- 29 ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3999810:NO
- 30 Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj>
- 31 A recent example is showcased in a 2020 report published as part of an EU-funded initiative called Women can build (visit: <https://www.womencanbuild.eu/en/inicio-2/>). The report is available from: https://www.womencanbuild.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WCB_I02_Joint-Report_immersive_experience-for-women.pdf

List of acronyms

BWI	Building and Wood Workers' International
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CLR	Construction Labour Research
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EFBWW	European Federation of Building and Woodworkers
EU	European Union
FIEC	European Construction Industry Federation
HR	Human Resources
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LFS	Labour Force Survey
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
ProBE	Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment
UN	United Nations
VET	Vocational Education and Training



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