

STUDY

Requested by the FEMM committee



# The professional status of rural women in the EU

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STUDY



Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs  
Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union  
PE 608.868 - May 2019

EN



# The professional status of rural women in the EU

## STUDY

### **Abstract**

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee, gives an overview of the professional status of rural women in the EU, as well as their employment situation and position in the labour market in rural areas in most relevant Member States. The study provides identification of the best practices implemented in the Member States and concludes with policy recommendations on the improvement of the employment situation and legal status of women living in rural areas of the EU.

## **ABOUT THE PUBLICATION**

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<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union
<b>CESI</b>	The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>EAFRD</b>	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>GPG</b>	Gender Pay Gap
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Office - Geneva
<b>LEADER</b>	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale
<b>MS</b>	Member State
<b>PPS</b>	Purchasing Power Standard
<b>RDP</b>	Rural Development Plan/Programme
<b>SIMRA</b>	Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas
<b>WIEGO</b>	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

European rural areas can be characterised by gender-selective migration since the number of women leaving rural areas exceeds the number of men doing so. This process results in severe demographic imbalances between and within regions, and hampers the solid economic and social development of rural areas. Consequently, adequate policy measures are needed to tackle such challenges.

Equality between women and men is recognized in the Treaties since the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. However, results of recent studies and reports show that progress remains insufficient and many inequalities between women and men persist. Globally, women remain less likely to participate in the labour market than men, are more likely to be unemployed than men, and are over-represented in informal and vulnerable employment. Women also bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work. As a result, women are less paid than men on a global scale, with the gender pay gap being estimated at 23 percent.

Women and girls are central to the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing, but their role and significance is often overlooked. It is hard to estimate women's importance in rural economy since their participation through informal rural economy is not statistically recognised. Female entrepreneurs represent only one third of self-employed people in the EU and women farmers represent 30% of total EU farm managers. Women tend to have smaller farms than men but take more calculated risks than men. Women's ideas for innovation are as marketable as men's, but they are not recognised by predominantly male stakeholders (COPA, 2017).

### Main conclusions

- Women in rural areas of the EU make up below 50% of the total rural population, they represent 45% of the economically active population, and about 40% of them work on family farms. Their importance in rural economy is even greater, since their participation through informal rural economy is not statistically recognised.
- Despite an overall increase in women's employment rates in the EU between 2013 and 2017, including in predominantly rural areas, important differences between EU countries remain.
- Women are more likely than men to work in the overall informal economy<sup>1</sup>, although there is no single pattern among Member States. Sweden leads in the share of women workers as informal employees<sup>2</sup>, followed by Spain, Germany and France.
- Regarding informal employment in agriculture, the highest participation of women is registered in Romania, Slovenia, Lithuania and Croatia, and the lowest share is seen in Sweden, Malta, Czech Republic and Germany.

<sup>1</sup> By definition of WIEGO (available at: [www.wiego.org/informal-economy/about-informal-economy](http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/about-informal-economy)), **informal economy** is the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state. The concept originally applied to self-employment in small unregistered enterprises. It has been expanded to include wage employment in unprotected jobs.

<sup>2</sup> By definition of ILO (2018: 7) **informal employment** is a job-based concept and it is defined in terms of the employment relationship and protections associated with the job of the worker.

- The greatest number of women as contributing workers in informal employment is in Romania, Luxembourg and Slovenia.
- The rate of self-employed women in rural areas is about 38%.
- The unemployment rate in rural areas began to decline during the analysed period (2013-2017); women have been more affected by unemployment than men (7.1% vs. 7.6% respectively). The biggest rate of women's unemployment is registered in rural regions of Greece.
- Around 30% of farms across the EU-28 are managed by women. Member States with the highest share of women as farm managers are Latvia and Lithuania, while in some Member States (Germany, Denmark, Malta, The Netherlands) the proportion of female farm managers is below the EU average (30%).
- Women's gross hourly earnings are on average 16.2% lower than those of men in the EU-28; according to statistical data analysis, the gender pay gap varied from 5.2% in Romania to 25.3% in Estonia. The gender pension gap is 37.6% in the 65 and over age group, and is 10% higher in rural areas.
- The role of national and local authorities is to provide the necessary social and physical infrastructure that enables rural women's participation in projects and activities, in turn resulting in sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural production, processing, transport and marketing.
- EU gender policies are insufficiently implemented on a national level, since gender equality and gender mainstreaming are often a rhetorical reference than an integral part of (national) programmes, as proved by research from 2016 (Wiest, 2016: 236). Researchers suggest that gender issues should be integrated into rural policies at various levels (EU, national and local) and there is a need to intensify research on rural governance structures and processes from a gender equality perspective (Wiest, 2016).
- More business education and training focusing on making business plans, developing leadership skills and bookkeeping is needed for women in rural areas. Personalised coaching tailored to the needs of women is more important than traditional classroom teaching.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### KEY FINDINGS

- Despite an overall increase in women's employment rates in Europe, including in predominantly rural areas, important differences between EU countries remain.
- Women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy, however, their participation through the informal rural economy is not statistically recognised.
- The rate of self-employed women in EU rural areas is about 38%.
- Female employment rates depend on numerous socio-demographic and cultural factors, as well as the economic and political environment in particular Member States.
- There is a new phenomenon occurring in some European regions which shows that well-educated women are deciding to move to the countryside to carry out their professional activities.
- The role of national and local authorities is to provide the social and physical infrastructure that enables rural women's participation in projects and activities.
- There is insufficient implementation of the EU gender policies.
- Effective policies for informal workers require better gender-disaggregated statistics, particularly in those employment categories that are usually unaccounted for, such as domestic and home-based workers.
- Aside from a better understanding of the productive work of both men and women, Member States have to, within the common European policy framework guaranteeing gender equality, identify major priorities in terms of labour market outcome achievements.
- Rural women still face serious disadvantages, compared not only to rural men, but also to urban women. Despite policy efforts to reduce these differences, results of recent studies and reports show that progress remains insufficient.
- The material conditions of rural life have been undergoing a profound change resulting in various new employment opportunities to women.
- Women in rural areas of the EU make up just below 50% of the total rural population, they represent 45% of the economically active population, and about 40% of them work on their family farms.

## 1.1. Gender equality issues in rural areas of the EU

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among policy-makers and academic scholars in the research on the relationship between gender and 'the country'. Results of previous studies show that despite increasing attention to gender issues, rural women still face serious disadvantages, compared not only to rural men, but also to urban women. This emphasises the importance of further research in this area. Contemporary transformation of rural areas across Europe is influenced by economic restructuring, environmental changes, the expansion of information technology, migrations and other globalisation processes. The material conditions of rural life have been undergoing a profound change due to the shift to new information technologies and the rise of the service economy, resulting in various new employment opportunities for women (Wiest, 2016: 302).

European rural areas can be characterised by a gender-selective migration, since the number of women leaving rural areas exceeds the number of males doing so. This process results in severe demographic imbalances between and within regions, and hampers the solid economic and social development of rural areas. Therefore, adequate policy measures are needed to tackle such challenges.

Equality between women and men is recognized in the Treaties since the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. EU institutions have established stable goals and objectives regarding gender equality, and adopted extensive legislation to ensure a framework for equal opportunities and treatment of men and women. The principal goal is to prevent all gender-based discrimination practices and to integrate the principle of gender equality in all its activities (Malgesini Rey and Cesarini-Sforza, 2015).

However, recent studies and reports have shown that progress remains insufficient and many inequalities between women and men still persist. Globally, women remain less likely to participate in the labour market than men, they are more likely to be unemployed than men, and are over-represented in informal and vulnerable employment. Also, women bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work. As a consequence, women are less paid than men on a global scale, and the gender pay gap is estimated to be 23 percent.

Women's economic empowerment helps to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas by bringing the following benefits<sup>3</sup>:

- Empowerment of women in the economy and closing gender gaps in the workforce, which are key to achieving sustainable development goals.
- Women's economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes.
- Women's economic equality is good for business, since companies greatly benefit from their organizational performances.

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<sup>3</sup> UN Women: Fact and Figures: Economic Empowerment, available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>.

## 1.2. Position of rural women in the EU

Women and girls are central to the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing, however, their role and significance is often overlooked. Recent European Commission reports (EC, 2015, 2017, 2018), however, underline that significant progress has been made towards achieving gender equality and female empowerment, although the level of achievement has been uneven across EU regions and Member States. The repeated conclusions of many studies indicate the following:

- In the EU, young women are less likely than young men to be in paid work, education or training. This inequality is reflected in their professional and payment status, so women still do not earn the same wages as men and do not have the same access to, or control over, productive resources such as land.
- Women's time spent on unpaid labour severely limits their capacity to participate in income-generating activities. In all regions of the world, women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic work.
- OECD estimates that closing the labour force gender gap by 2030 could yield a potential average gain of 12% to the size of the total economy across OECD countries. If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30% and raise total agricultural outputs.
- Generally, women have little power and control over decisions that affect them and/or their resources, be it in their households, communities or societies as a whole. Women participate less in formal politics than men and are underrepresented at most levels of decision making.
- The EU's financial investment in gender equality, as well as the results achieved, have not systematically been measured – they take the form of mainstreaming gender equality in many types of different interventions across sectors (EC, 2015).

Although women in rural areas of the EU make up just below 50% of the total rural population, they represent 45% of the economically active population, and about 40% of them work on their family farms. Moreover, their importance in rural economy is probably even bigger, since their participation through the informal rural economy is not statistically recognised. Female entrepreneurs represent only one third of self-employed people in the EU and women farmers represent 30% of the total number of EU farm managers. They tend to have smaller farms than men, but take more calculated risks than men. Women's ideas for innovation are as marketable as men's, but they are not recognised by predominantly male stakeholders (COPA, 2017).

Due to the structural deficiencies of local labour markets, women (mostly highly-qualified) have to out-migrate from rural areas at a higher rate than men. Out-migration is essential for rural women to access higher-quality occupations. Yet, for older generations, the domestic caregiver role is a significant barrier to mobility. In some Member States (for instance in Germany, Poland and Spain), most young rural women adjust their socio-economic roles according to the changing rural milieu, developing a postmodern suburban/rural lifestyle. Also, they are more dissatisfied with educational and employment opportunities in their regions (Wiest, 2016).

Women empowerment encompasses a broad range of concepts, which generally comprises of, at least in part, the idea of having an environment or conditions in which an individual can achieve their goals, as well as having the ability to make decisions about one's life. The empowerment policy focuses primarily on improving the role of women in the labour market and ensuring equal work opportunities

for women and men concerning freedom, equity, security and dignity. Within the common European policy framework guaranteeing gender equality, Member States have to identify strategic priorities in terms of labour market outcome achievements, as well as a better understanding of the overall productive work of both men and women. The first step is to recognize that men and women may not have the same opportunity and treatment in the workplace and women may face different constraints around family and work engagement (Hillesland et al., 2016).



## 2. LABOUR MARKET SITUATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS IN THE EU

### KEY FINDINGS

- The EU policy proposals suggest different ways of closing the employment gap in rural areas by improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises, and ensuring better education and skills.
- Employment rates are highly influenced by gender differences; the EU-28 employment rate gender gap in 2015 was 11,6%.
- Women in rural areas had less employment opportunities compared both to men in rural areas and women in urban areas.
- Women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy, lacking opportunities to access better jobs and social security coverage.
- In rural areas the share of women in self-employment is about 38%. The greatest number of self-employed people in rural areas are in France, Germany and Italy.
- The EU-28 unemployment rate in rural areas was 7.9% in 2018. Historically, women have been more affected by unemployment than men.
- Women farmers have significantly less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets compared to their male counterparts.
- For the economy as a whole, in 2016, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.2% below those of men in the European Union (EU-28) and 16.3% in the euro area (EA-19). Across Member States, the gender pay gap varied by 20 percentage points, ranging from 5.2% in Romania to 25.3% in Estonia.

In recent years, there has been a low, but steady migration into the rural areas. Europe's rural areas face a common challenge: the creation of high-quality, sustainable jobs. In this area, the gap between urban and rural areas continues to widen. Although rural areas make up 93% of European Union territory, income per capita in these areas is little more than half that of urban areas. For that reason, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain skilled individuals. Years ago, several challenges were identified for the future of rural employment:

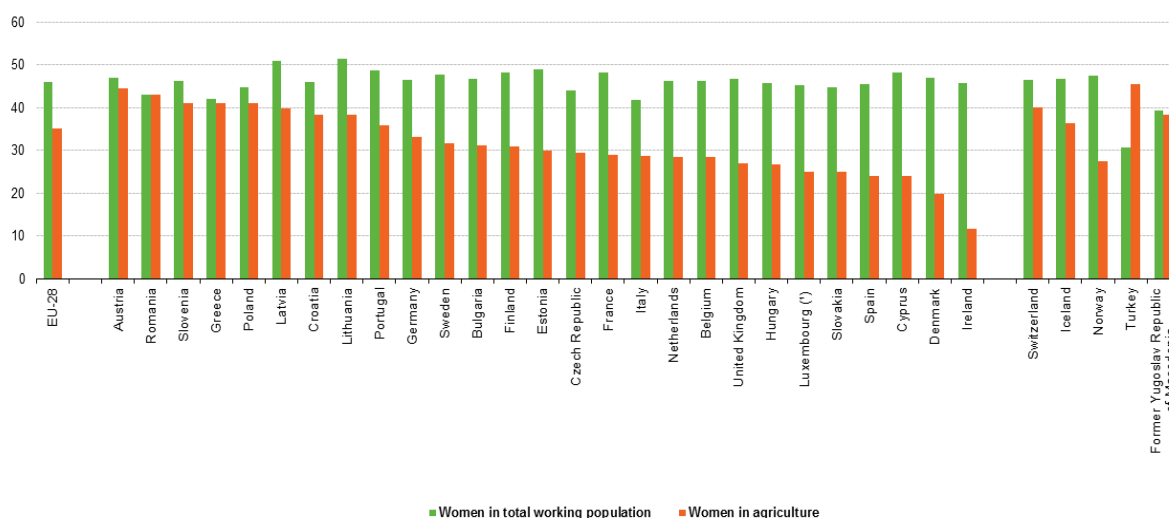
- the ageing of the farming population;
- the participation of young people and women in the rural economy;
- the expansion of the EU;
- producer support under the new CAP, based on a reinforced rural development policy which focuses on jobs, growth and sustainability.

Therefore, over a decade ago, the policy proposal (EC, 2006) had already suggested different ways to close the employment gap in rural areas by improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises, and ensuring better education and skills. It starts with finding the key stakeholders of rural development and/or the most sensitive elements in rural societies and communities, and determining which measures should be taken.

Just over one quarter (28.0%) of the EU-28 population lived in a rural area in 2015, with a somewhat higher share living in towns and suburbs (31.6%), while the biggest share lived in cities (40.4%). During the five-year period from 2010 to 2015, there was a gradual increase in the number of people living in rural areas across the EU-28; their relative share of the total number of inhabitants rising by 1.7 percentage points. The increase in the share of the population living in towns and suburbs was even greater (rising by 4.7 points), while the share of people living in cities declined at a relatively rapid pace. These patterns possibly reflect Europeans leaving inner city areas in search of more affordable and comfortable living space in suburbia, towns, or the countryside.<sup>4</sup>

Agriculture, still the most abundant sector of rural economy, can be an important factor in growth and poverty reduction. Unfortunately, the sector is underperforming in many countries - in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity. In 2016 (Figure 1), women comprised about 45% of the total working population and about 35% of workers in the agricultural sector of the EU-28. However, deeper insight into their position in the labour market reveals some causes of social and economic differences across the European Union rural areas.

**Figure 1: Women in the total working population and in agriculture, 2016**



Note: Malta not represented due to low reliability.

(\*) women working in agriculture: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat

Almost a third of women's employment globally is in agriculture, forestry and fishing (this may exclude self-employed and unpaid family workers). Differences across countries and regions are considerable – from about 9.5% in upper-middle income countries (GNI<sup>5</sup>/Capita range 3,896-12,055 current US\$) to 2.6% in high-income countries (GNI/Capita >12,055 current US\$). In lower-income countries (GNI/Capita <995 current US\$)<sup>6</sup> agriculture remains the most important employment sector for women (UN Women, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Statistics on rural areas in the EU, available at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_rural\\_areas\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_rural_areas_in_the_EU).

<sup>5</sup> GNI – Gross National Income - is defined as gross domestic product, plus net receipts from abroad of wages and salaries and of property income, plus net taxes and subsidies receivable from abroad. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/natincome/gross-national-income.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank : New country classifications by income level : 2018-2019, available at :

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-country-classifications-income-level-2018-2019>.

Participation of women in employment and economic growth is crucial for reaching the EU's 2020 strategy goals, and in this respect agricultural and rural areas could make a significant contribution. In the last decade in the EU, agriculture was the seventh largest employer of women, but this data may be misleading as it does not cover the informal rural economy, in which women are still involved. Women play a key role in rural families, communities and economies, and they are also important as farmers. In addition to paid farm work, women still assume the main share of unpaid responsibilities involved in the running of families and communities. Some women's work is under-reported, as women tend to classify and report themselves as not in employment, particularly when undertaking unpaid agricultural work.

## 2.1. Employment in rural areas of the EU

The domain of work and employment relates to the position of women and men in the European labour market. It measures gender gaps in labour market participation, duration of working life, sectorial segregation patterns and quality of work, such as flexibility of work hours, training at work, and health and safety.

The employment rate is the percentage of employed persons in relation to the total population. Comparisons are usually based on the working-age population, defined here as those aged 20 to 64. There was almost no difference (0.5%) between EU-28 employment rates for the three different degrees of urbanisation: in 2015, the lowest employment rate was recorded among people living in rural areas (69.7%), while the rates for cities (70.0%) and for towns and suburbs (70.2%) were only marginally higher.

The EU employment rate for persons aged 20 to 64 stood at 72.2% in 2017, the highest rate ever recorded for the EU. The employment rate was still higher for men than for women in all EU Member States, but the employment gap at EU level reduced. Since 2002, the employment rate of women has increased overall in Europe, and the largest increases for female employment rates were observed in Malta, Bulgaria and Germany. In 2017, the highest employment rates for women were found in Iceland (84.5%) and Sweden (79.8%), whereas the lowest female employment rates were recorded in Greece (48%) and Italy (52.5%).<sup>7</sup>

Employment rates are highly influenced by gender differences and in particular by different levels of female participation in the labour force. The EU-28 gender gap for employment rates (again among those aged 20 to 64) stood at 17.3% in 2002 (the first reference year for which data is available). While the EU-28 employment rate for men was 75.8% in 2002 and again in 2015, there was a gradual increase in the employment rate for women, which rose to 64.2% by 2015. As a result, the gender gap narrowed to 11.6 percentage points. An analysis for rural areas reveals a similar pattern, with a slightly wider gender gap for employment rates in rural areas (13.1 percentage points in 2015) and a slightly lower female employment rate (63.1% in 2015). Therefore, the impact of female participation in the labour market was even greater in rural areas than in urban areas.<sup>8</sup>

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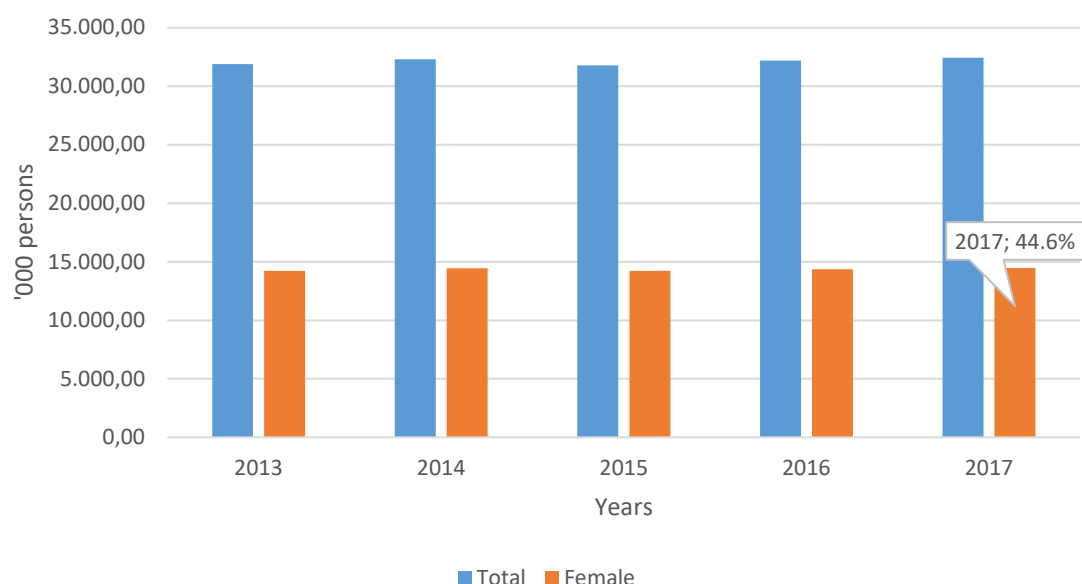
<sup>7</sup> Employment statistics, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment\\_statistics#Employment\\_rates\\_by\\_sex,2C\\_age\\_and\\_educational\\_attainment\\_level](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment_statistics#Employment_rates_by_sex,2C_age_and_educational_attainment_level).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics on rural areas in the EU, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_rural\\_areas\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_rural_areas_in_the_EU).

### 2.1.1. Women in employment in predominantly rural regions of the EU

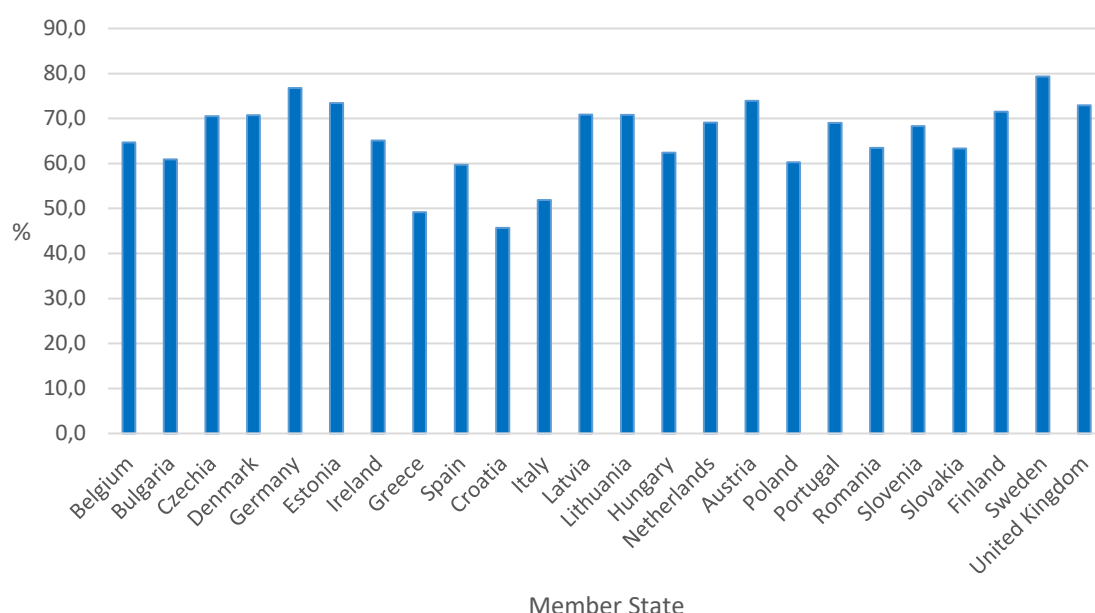
Conclusions of previous research show that throughout Europe, women in rural areas had less employment opportunities compared to both men in rural areas and women in urban areas (Bock, 2004). Although a lot has been changed during the past decades, ensuring equal employment opportunities for women is still subject to analysis, as well as political debates and operational action. Over the last decade, the share of women's employment in predominantly rural regions of the EU has remained at around 45% (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Women in employment in predominantly rural regions of the EU (age class: 15-64 years)**



Source: Eurostat

Analysis on the situation in EU Member States shows that in the 20-64 age group, countries with the highest registered employment rates are Sweden, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom (70-80%), while in Italy, Greece and Croatia these rates are around or even less than 50% (Figure 3), reflecting demographic, educational and overall economic and even political characteristics in these countries.

**Figure 3: Share of women in employment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 20-64 years), EU-28, 2017**

Note: Data for Cyprus, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Malta is not available

Source: Eurostat

### 2.1.2. Informal employment and the position of women

Informal employment is widespread throughout the world<sup>9</sup> where it comprises over half to three-quarters of non-agricultural employment. A recent data collection carried out by International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) shows that of the total 61.2% of global employment that is informal, 51.9% is in the informal sector, 6.7% in the formal sector and 2.5% in households. The same reference, provided by Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)<sup>10</sup>, shows evidence that women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy<sup>11</sup>, lacking opportunities to access better jobs and social security coverage. The percentage of women employed in the informal economy is higher than the percentage of men in the majority of countries analysed. The definition of employment in the informal economy includes both those workers who work in informal sector enterprises (enterprises that are not officially registered and do not maintain a complete set of accounts) and those workers who hold informal jobs (jobs lacking basic social or legal protection and employment benefits). Women are particularly overrepresented in this second group, representing the majority of vulnerable home-based workers.

In light of the entrepreneurial nature of agricultural work, 43% of unpaid workers in agriculture are women, 26% of which are farm owners. According to a statement by the World Farmers' Organization<sup>12</sup>,

<sup>9</sup> Countries which have more than 80% of women employed in the informal economy are Mali (89,20%), India (84,7%), Tanzania (82,81%), Madagascar (21%) and Zambia (80,1%).

<sup>10</sup> Women and Informality, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/womenandinformality.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Employment in the informal economy consists of employment in the informal sector, informal employment outside of the informal sector (i.e. informal employment in the formal sector and informal employment in households). (ILO, 2018 : 11).

<sup>12</sup> Social Security for Women and Their Status As Assisting Spouses Women Are Essentially The Backbone of The Agricultural Sector, available at: <http://www.wfo-oma.org/women-in-agriculture/articles/social-security-for-women-and-their-status-as-assisting-spouses-women-are-essentially-the-backbone-of-the-agricultural-sector.html>

they may not necessarily be from the family and many only enter the agricultural profession upon marrying a farmer.

One of the obstacles for young women entering the profession is their access to the family property. Where they have a recognised status, women farmers are able to invest and be granted a loan in the same way as the farmer owner. At European level, the status of assisting spouses<sup>13</sup> should allow women farmers to obtain social cover and access to cover against accidents in the workplace. These should be granted in proportion to the contribution made by the assisting spouse, in the same way as to the farmer (often her husband). Within this framework, a Directive-2010/41/EU has been adopted to develop adequate social cover for women in agriculture. In this respect, all Member States should facilitate and improve access to social services and loans for women, encourage the establishment of women in rural areas as actors in the agricultural sector with reference to country-specific property-law and tax-law situations.

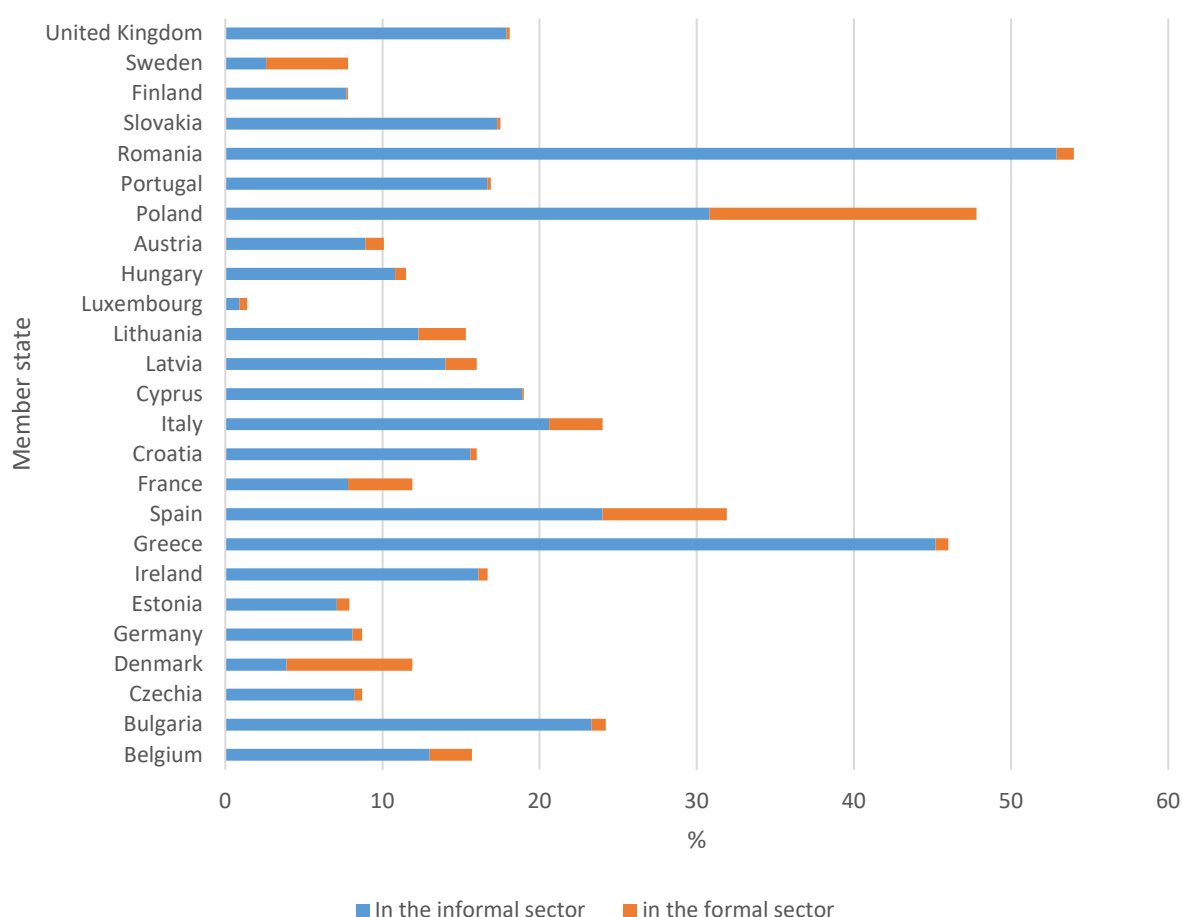
Analysis of the position of women's work in the domain of time spent is focused on the trade-off between economic, care-giving and other social activities (including cultural, civic etc.). Because of this trade-off it only measures time spent in unpaid activities, including gender gaps in time spent in childcare and domestic activities, but also other aspects of life such as cultural, leisure or charitable activities. The amount of time spent by women and men in the EU on activities other than economic, shows strong differences. A wide gender gap exists in the time spent on caring and educating children and grandchildren, in addition to time spent on cooking and housework. Throughout all Member States, it is women who perform the bulk of these caring activities. Men are, however, more likely than women (in the vast majority of Member States) to participate in sporting, cultural or leisure activities on a regular basis.<sup>14</sup>

Recent data on rural areas of the European Union show that informal jobs hold a considerable share in the structure of overall employment, especially in Romania, Greece, Poland and Spain, while in Poland, Spain, Denmark and Sweden the share of informal employment is considerable in the formal sector (Figure 4).

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<sup>13</sup> Spouses of people who are engaged in work usually of a self-employed or independent nature, where the spouse is an important contributor to the work but does not necessarily receive direct remuneration for it, and is often not entitled to social protection benefits, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1042?lang=en>.

<sup>14</sup> Gender Equality Index 2017: Measuring gender equality in the European Union 2005-2015 - Report, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-index-2017-measuring-gender-equality-european-union-2005-2015-report>.

**Figure 4: Share of informal employment in total employment in rural areas of the EU**

Source: ILO, 2018: pages 91-96

While women are active in rural communities, their multiple roles and responsibilities are not well recognised. Results of the recent study by Williams and Horodnic (2017) indicate how participation in the informal sector varies by socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics. They concluded that unemployed people are found to be more likely to participate in the informal sector than those in formal jobs, as well as that women are more likely to participate than men. There is also evidence that informal work is more prevalent in affluent regions and localities, subsequently combining two risk factors for rural women in finding decent and recognized work (the risk of being a woman, as well as the risk of living in a rural area).

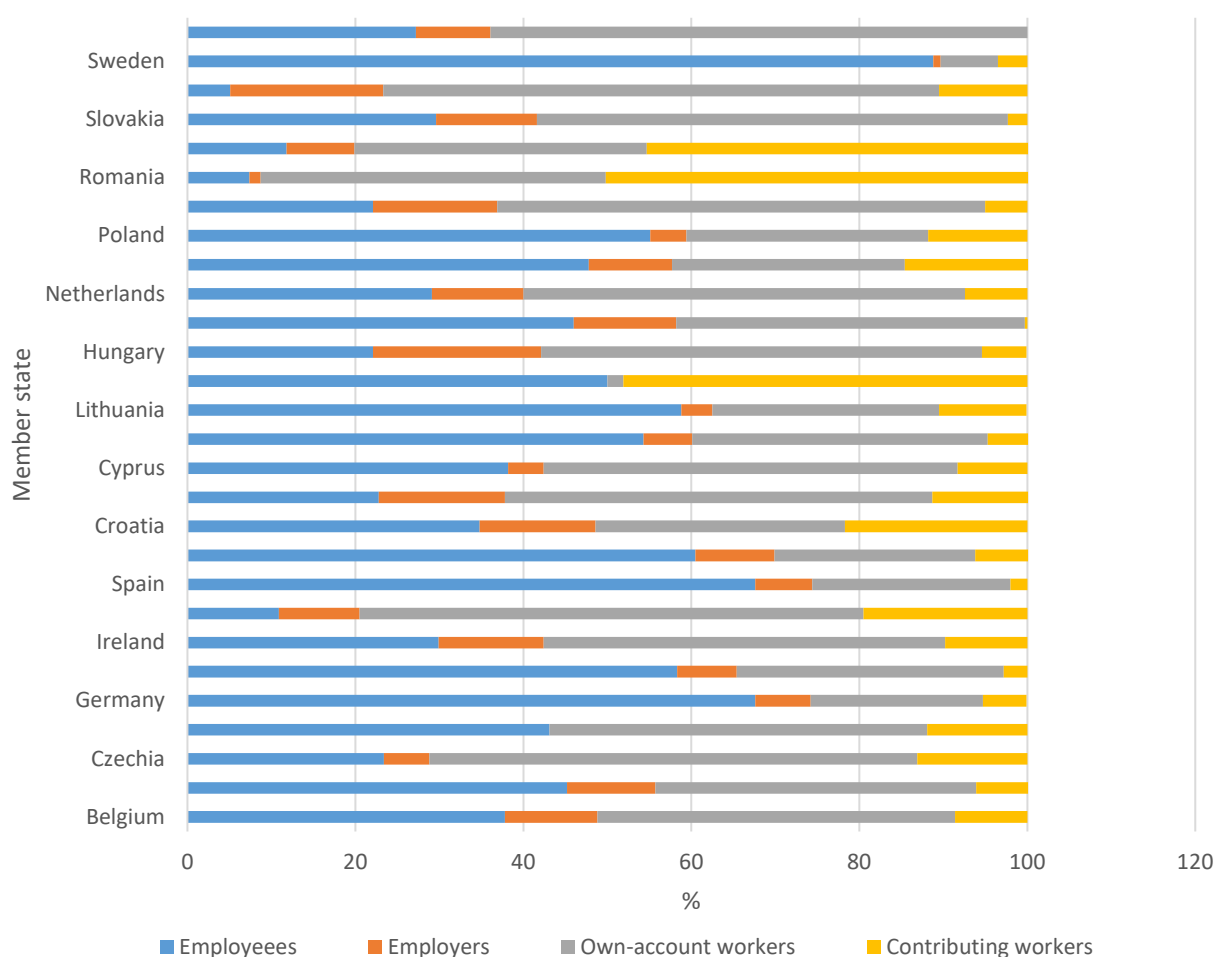
Figure 5 gives an insight into the distribution of women workers in informal employment by employment status (employees, employers, own-account workers, contributing workers). It is obvious that there is no single pattern in the Member States, and the most interesting findings are as follows:

- Sweden leads in the share of women workers as informal employees, followed by Spain, Germany and France. This could partly be explained by the fact that informal work is more prevalent in affluent regions and localities (Williams and Horodnic, 2017: 10), but is also better regulated with employment contracts. For instance, a written employment contract is required in Sweden; a written contract is considered good practice but is required either only for “atypical” employment in France; in Spain, a written contract is required if either party requests it; in Germany, a written

contract is not generally required, but it might be oral, accomplished with written terms of employment (Hazans, 2011: 8).

- Women employers are most numerous in Hungary and Finland.
- Self-employed (own-account) women are most prevalent in United Kingdom and Finland, then Portugal and Slovakia.
- The highest share of women as contributing workers in informal employment is in Romania, Luxembourg and Slovenia.

**Figure 5: Distribution of women workers in informal employment by employment status**



**Source:** ILO, 2018: Table B.5, pages 113-114

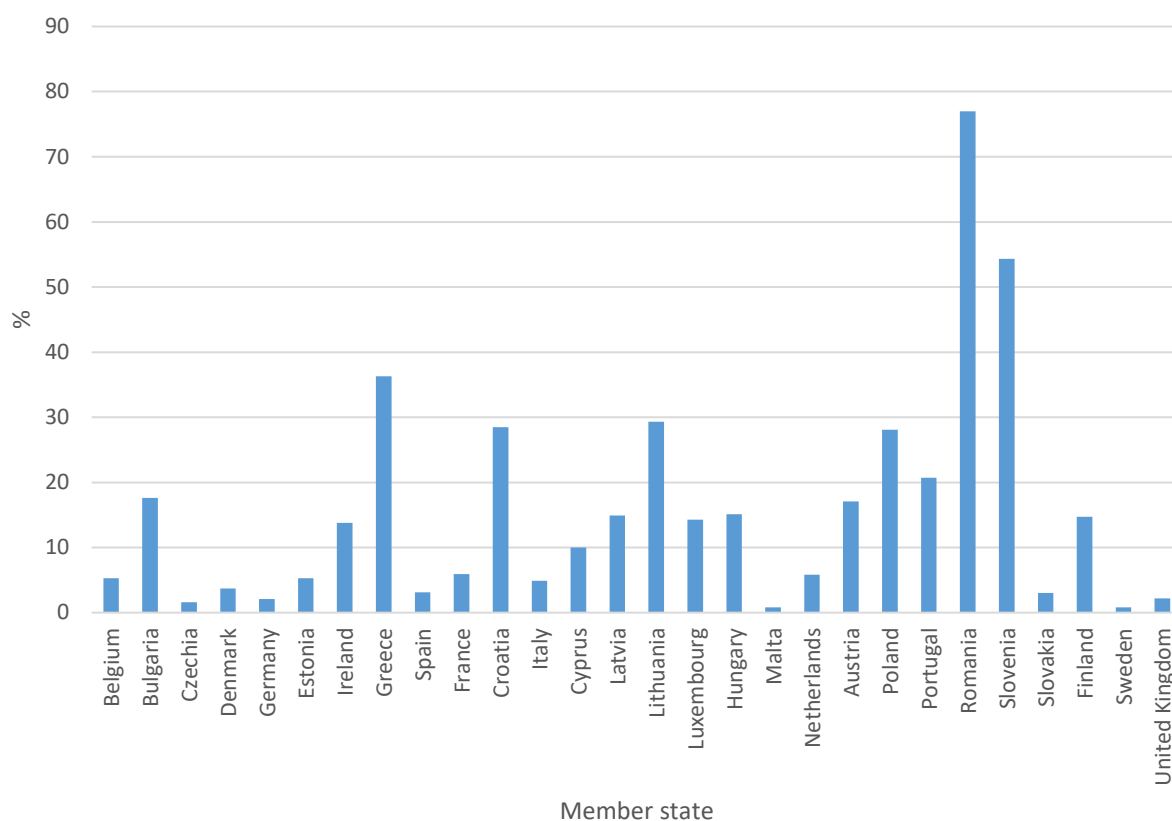
However, Williams and Horodnic (2017) also concluded that men are found to be significantly more likely to work informally than women, particularly those living in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. When gender and regional variations were analysed, women in EU regions where GDP is less than 75% of the EU-28 average<sup>15</sup> were significantly less likely to participate in the informal sector. Taking into consideration the

<sup>15</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Southern Italy, Southern Spain, Southern Portugal (GDP per inhabitant, by NUTS 2 Regions, 2016, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/2/25/Gross\\_domestic\\_product\\_%28GDP%29\\_per\\_inhabitant%2C\\_by\\_NUTS\\_2\\_regions%2C\\_2016\\_%28based\\_on\\_data\\_in\\_purchasing\\_power\\_standards\\_%28PPS%29\\_in\\_relation\\_to\\_the\\_EU-28\\_average%2C\\_EU-28\\_%3D\\_100%29-RYB18.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/2/25/Gross_domestic_product_%28GDP%29_per_inhabitant%2C_by_NUTS_2_regions%2C_2016_%28based_on_data_in_purchasing_power_standards_%28PPS%29_in_relation_to_the_EU-28_average%2C_EU-28_%3D_100%29-RYB18.png))



expansion of the EU during the past two decades, an emphasis has been put on targeting poorer EU regions such as East-Central and Southern Europe when allocating resources through European structural funds to tackle informal work. However, according to Williams and Horodnic (2017: 10), these poorer EU regions are not disproportionately engaged in informal work. Indeed, affluent European regions have significantly higher participation rates, suggesting the need to rethink the spatial allocation of European funds for tackling informal work. Their research reveals that this targeting of the unemployed by many national governments when tackling informal work is not a mistake. The unemployed are significantly more likely to participate in informal work. Popular policy initiatives such as those seeking to smooth the transition from unemployment to self-employment are, therefore, worthwhile. Their survey also reveals that it is inappropriate to target particular marginal populations (such as women, those living in rural areas, the less educated, those living in less affluent EU regions). When tackling informal work, it shows that it may be worthwhile to target other marginalised population groups as well as the unemployed, like the youth, single-person households, the divorced/widowed and those with household financial difficulties. In other words, despite their conclusion, rural women are not excluded from these groups.

From a brief analysis of women's participation in informal employment in the prevailing rural sector, agriculture (Figure 6), higher participation can be observed in several Member States (Romania with 77.0%, Slovenia with 54.3%, Greece with 36.3%, and Lithuania and Croatia with about 30%). The lowest participation of women workers in informal employment is seen in Sweden, Malta, Czech Republic and Germany, probably because of a rather low share of agriculture in the overall economy (less than 3%, Figure 6) and a mostly formally-organised agricultural sector in particular European regions (Hazans, 2011: 34).

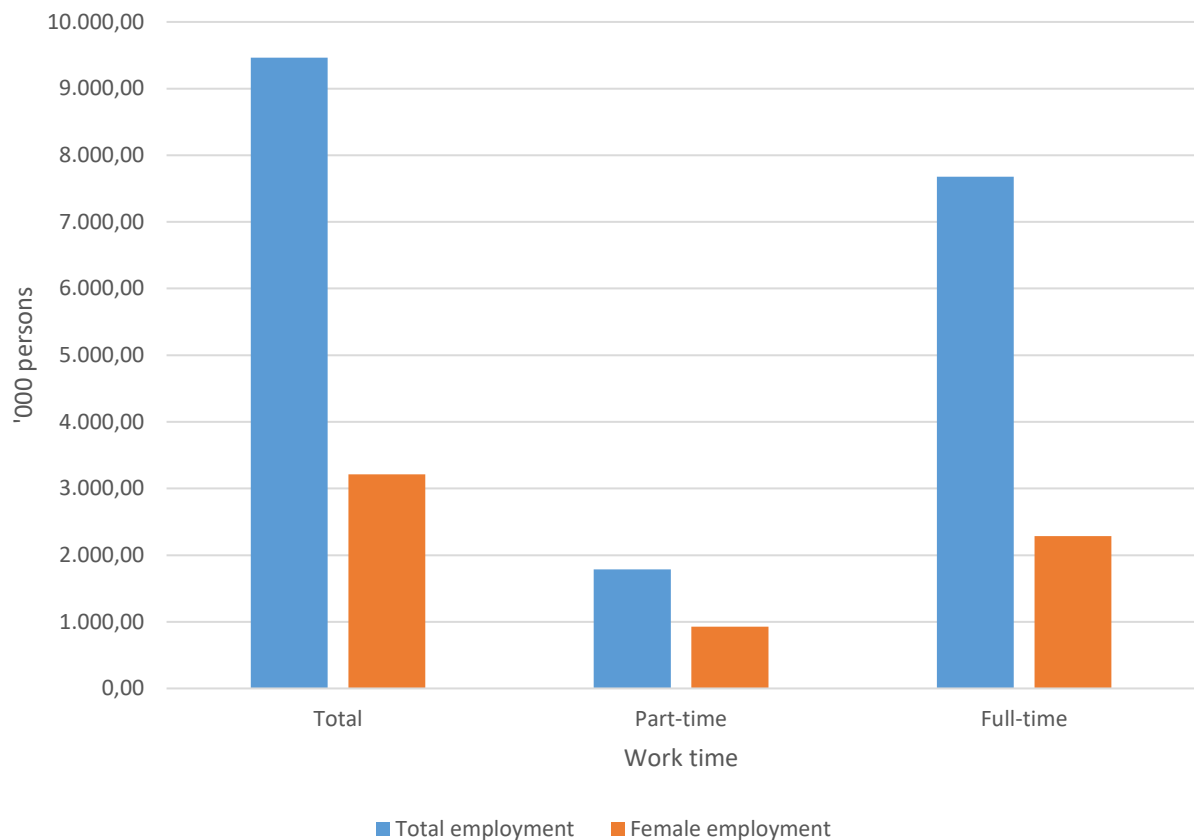
**Figure 6: Participation of women workers in informal employment, agriculture**

Source: ILO, 2018: Table B.7, pages 124-125

### 2.1.3. Total, full-time and part-time employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing

Women are the backbone of the development of rural and national economies. They comprise 43% of the world's agricultural labour force, which rises to 70% in certain countries. In most Member States employment in agriculture has been declining over the last 50 years, and the ageing of the existing workforce poses an additional challenge. In the EU-28, 58.2% of the total labour force is male. The 'visible' contribution of women in the agricultural labour force is less pronounced than that of men, as the share of agricultural jobs in female employment is around 41% (EIGE, 2016).

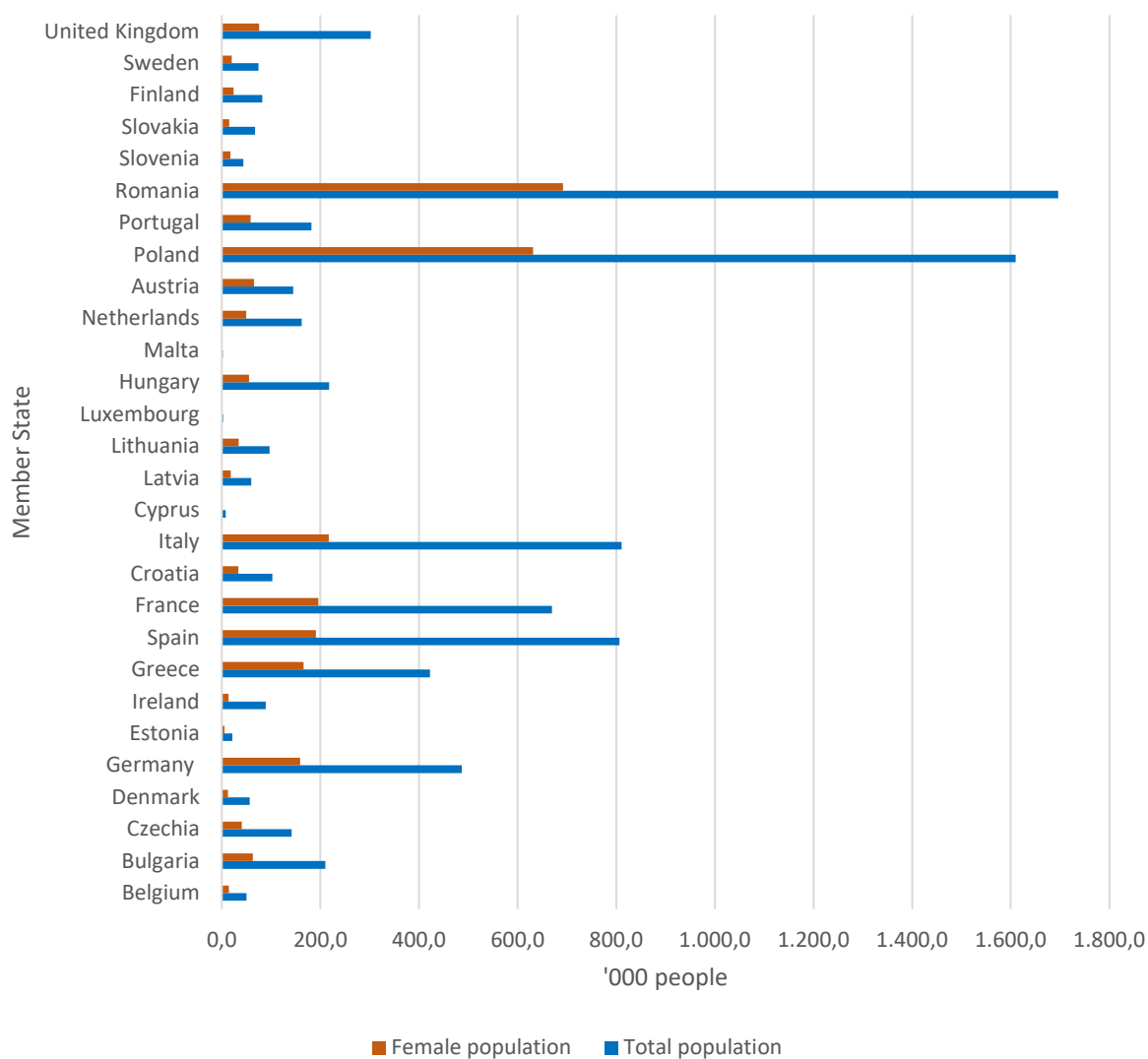
According to recent data (Figure 7), the share of female employment in the sector of Agriculture, forestry and fishing in the EU is about 34%. However, there is a great difference between women's participation in full-time employment (less than 30%) in comparison to part-time jobs (around 52%). The most obvious particularity of part time-work is that it is a specific form of employment which primarily affects women. About 80% of all part-time jobs in the EU are occupied by women.

**Figure 7: Total and female employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing by working time, EU-28, 2018**

Source: Eurostat

According to the data shown in Figures 8, 9 and 10, the main conclusions about female work in Agriculture, forestry and fishing are the following:

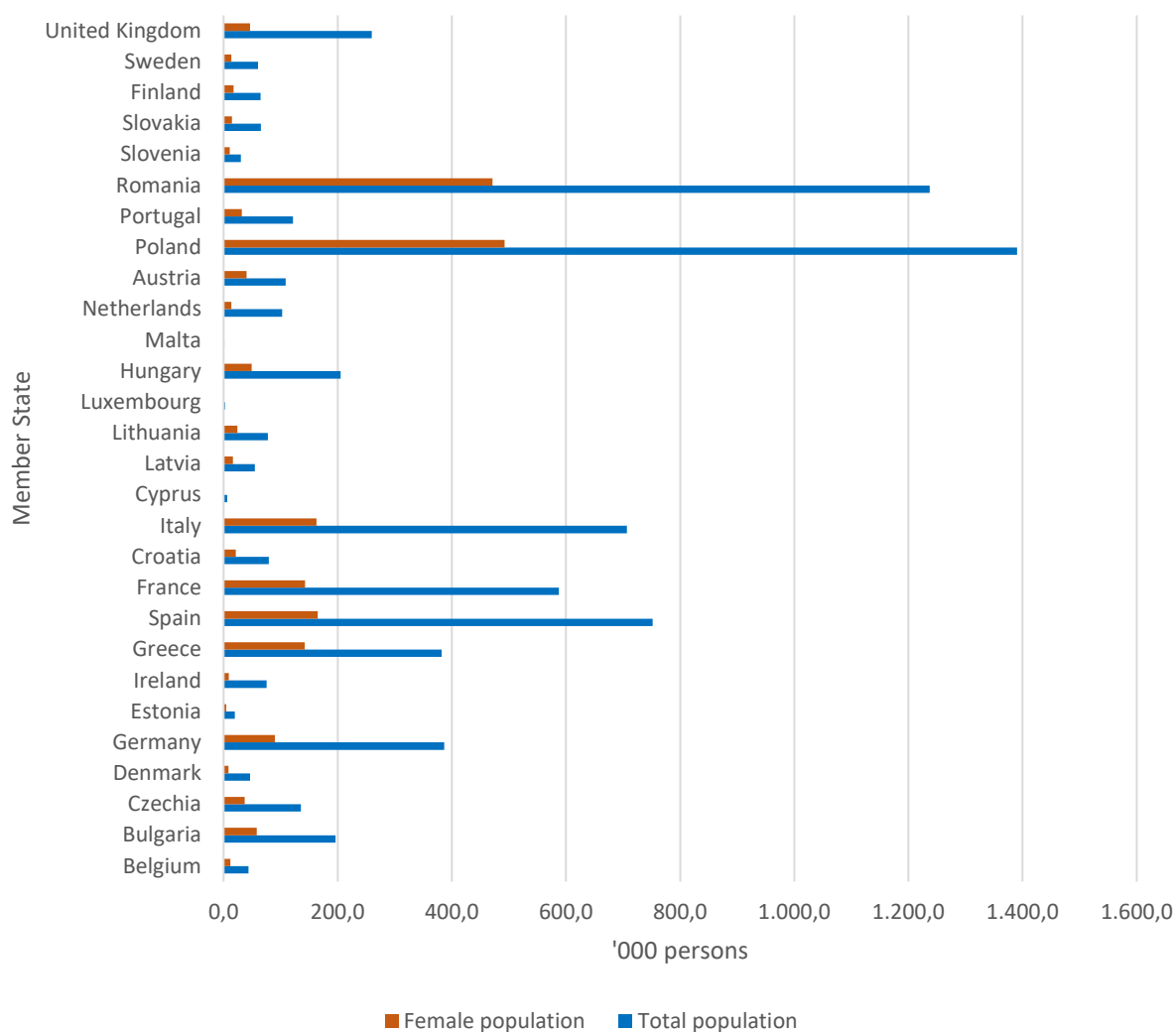
- Romania registers the highest values of total work time in the sector and also the biggest share of women's work (40.8%); Poland follows with total work and female participation (39.2%).
- Insight into full-time work in the sector shows that Poland has the biggest number of employed persons, followed by Romania, but with a slightly higher share of women (38.1% and 35.4%, respectively).
- In the category of part-time employment, the highest values are registered in Romania, Poland and Germany; however, the share of women in part-time work is highest in Germany (68.5%), then Poland (63.5%), and the Netherlands (61.0%).

**Figure 8 : Total work time in agriculture, forestry and fishing, age class 15-64, 2017**

Note: Data for total work time for women in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Malta is not available

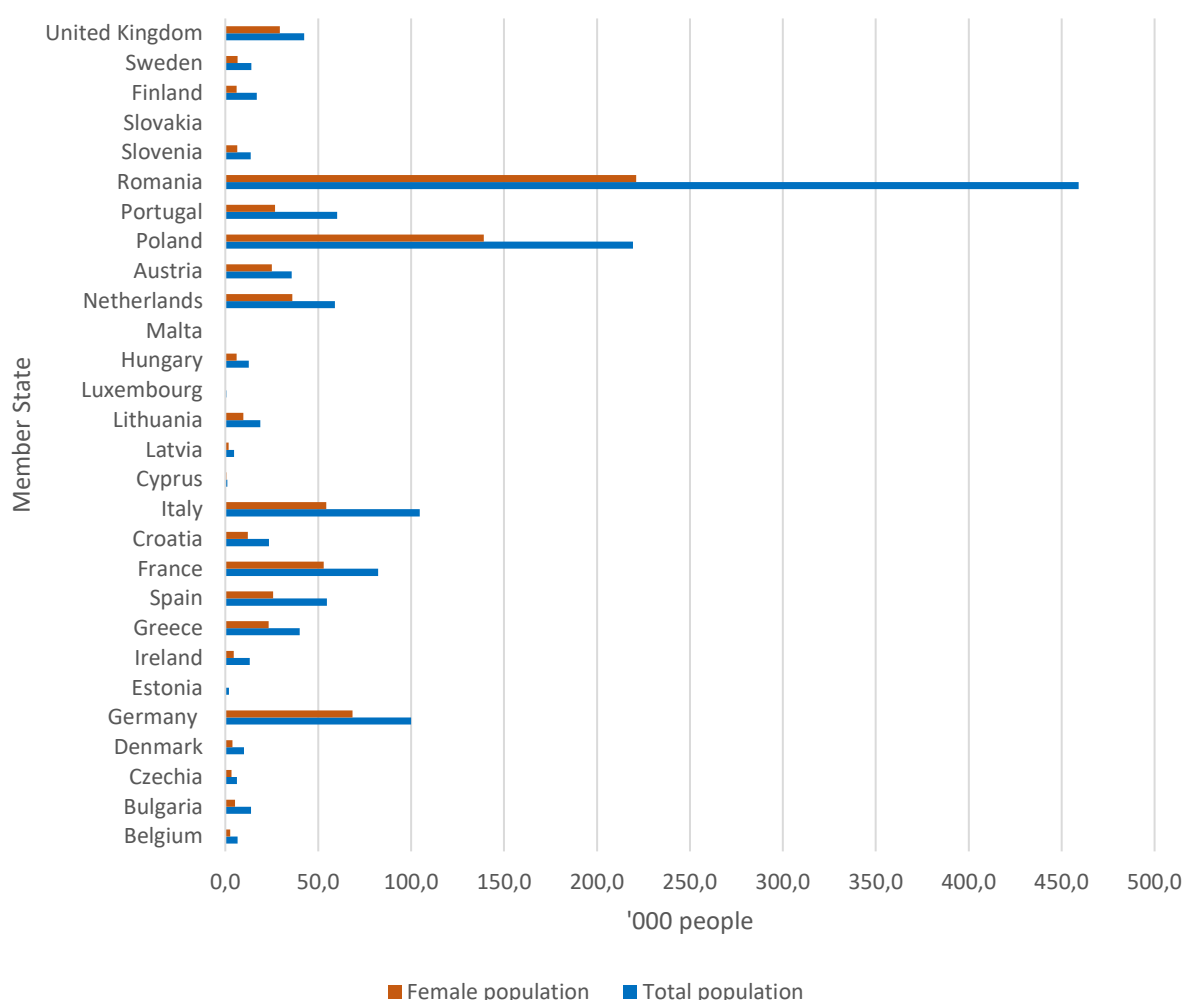
Source: Eurostat

**Figure 9 : Full-time work time for total and female population in agriculture, forestry and fishing, age class 15-64, 2017**



Note: Data for full-time work time for female population in Luxembourg and Malta is not available

Source: Eurostat

**Figure 10 : Part-time work time in agriculture, forestry and fishing, age class 15-64, 2017**

Note: Data for part-time work time for the total population in Malta and for the female population in Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovakia is not available

Source: Eurostat

There are different perspectives on the role of women's part-time work. A position favouring the development of part-time work aimed at women sees part-time work as an efficient solution which allows working women with children to better reconcile the often-contradictory demands of their careers and family responsibilities. The position in favour of women's part-time work can be expressed through two radically opposed visions of women's place in the labour market. In the first case, the argument for women's part-time employment questions the legitimacy of women's employment and calls for a partial return of women to their housewife role. This position presupposes the existence of a working spouse and places part-time work within the traditional gender division of paid and domestic work (not necessarily indicating a desire to "send women back to where they belong"). On the other hand, part-time work offers an efficient means of enabling women to avoid a career break after having children and thereby overcoming difficulties encountered by many women returning to the workforce. This argument recognises the importance of domestic duties which especially affect women and defends women's right to part-time work as an alternative to a career break.

There is also a critical view of part-time work which stresses the dangers of this phenomenon for women. In this perspective, part-time work is analysed in relation to market flexibility and is viewed essentially as a tool used by employers to increase the flexibility and productivity of their female workforce, thus increasing their own competitiveness in business. In this way, part-time work can

increase job insecurity and vulnerability for women, resulting in partial salary and subsequent partial retirement benefits.<sup>16</sup>

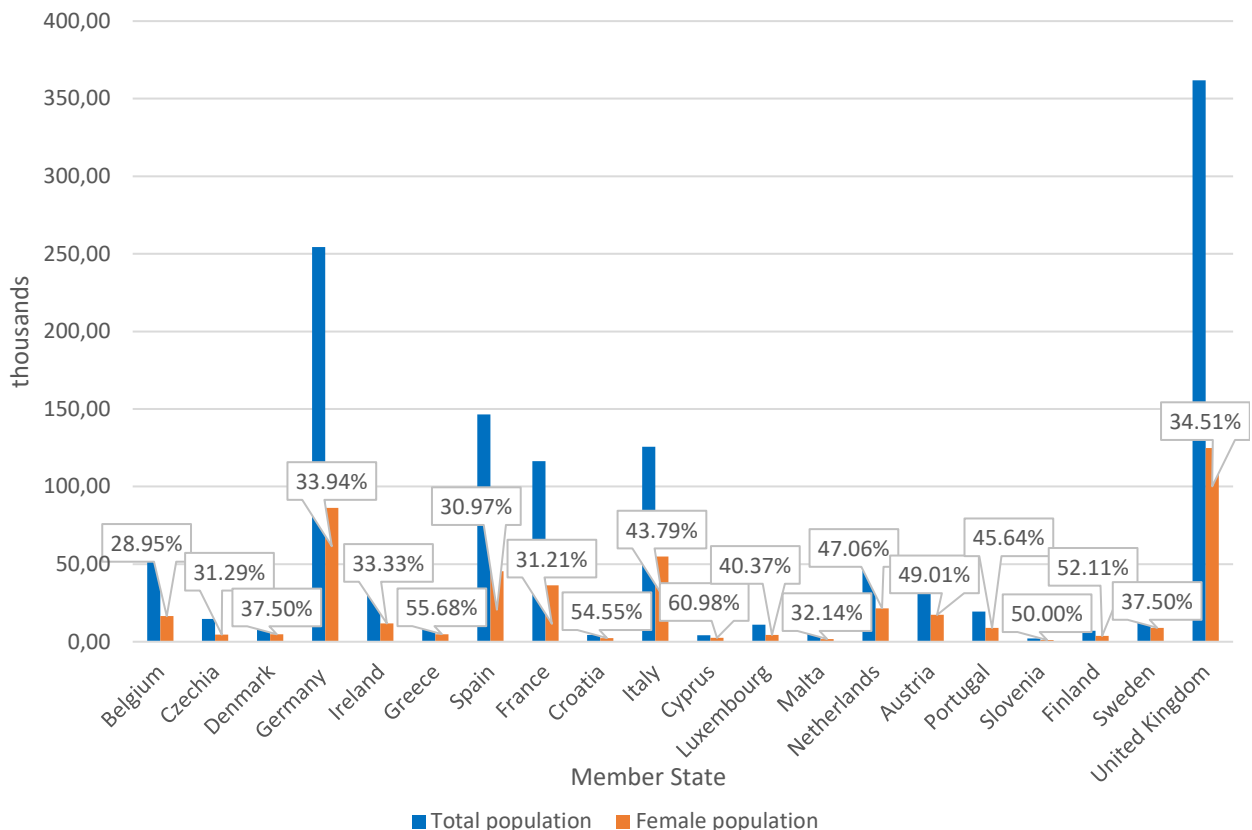
Generally, in rural areas, women are more frequently employed in part-time and temporary jobs than in urban areas. Generally, there is a higher concentration of women in lower paid roles, which in turn has consequences on the social structure of rural communities. Women are more likely to live in poverty or social exclusion than men (COPA, 2017).

#### 2.1.4. Self-employment

According to the Eurostat, about 30.6 million people aged 15 to 64 in the European Union were self-employed in 2016. They accounted for 14% of total employment. Two out of three were men (67%), over half (55%) were aged 45 or over, about a third (35%) had tertiary education and 7 in 10 (71%) were own-account owners (they had no employees).<sup>17</sup>

For the total EU economy, the average share of self-employed women in 2017 is around 36% and differs considerably across Member States (Figure 11). According to available data, the highest share of self-employed women is registered in Cyprus, Greece, Croatia and Finland.

**Figure 11: Total self-employment and women in self-employment in total areas, age class 15-64, 2017**



Note: Data for total self-employment in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania and for women in self-employment in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia is not available

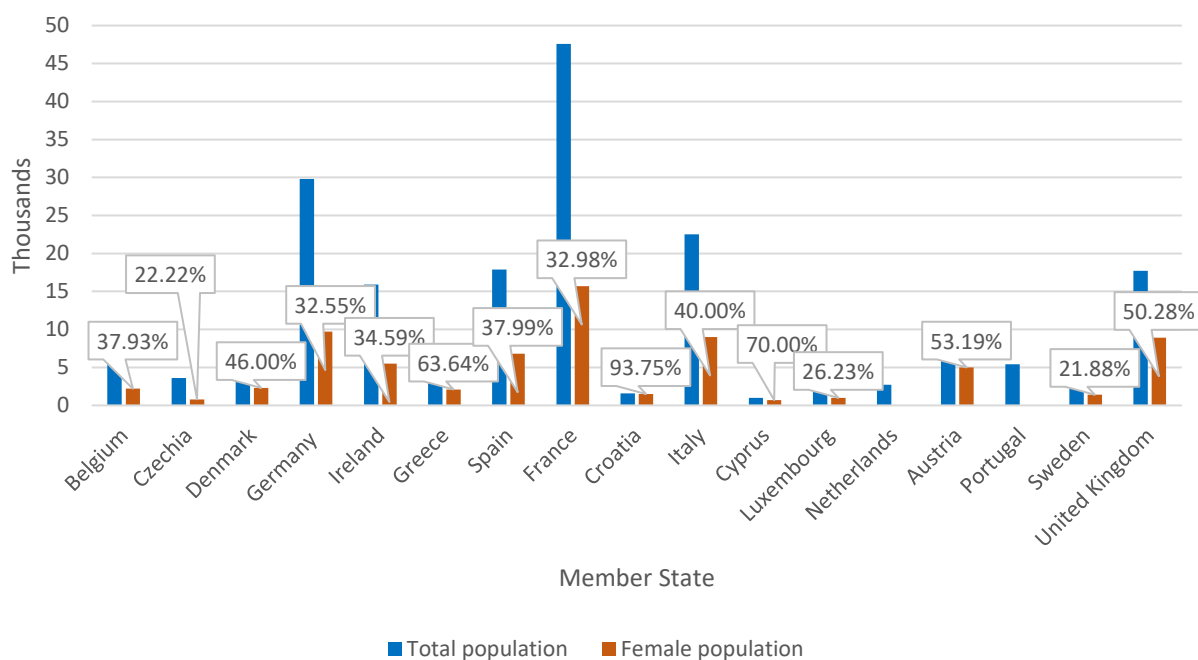
Source: Eurostat

<sup>16</sup> Features of women's employment rates in Europe, available at: <http://www.helsinki.fi/science/xantippa/wee/weetext/wee222.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Taking a look at self-employment in the EU, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20170906-1>

In rural areas of the EU the share of women in self-employment is about 38%, slightly higher than in total areas. The greatest number of self-employed people in rural areas is in France, Germany, and Italy. According to available data, the highest share of self-employed women in rural areas is registered in Croatia, Cyprus and Greece (Figure 12).

**Figure 12 : Total self-employment and women in self-employment in rural areas, age class 15-64, 2017**



Note: Data for total self-employment in Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia and for women in self-employment in the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia is not available.

Source: Eurostat

Results of a recent study on self-employment in the EU<sup>18</sup> show that more men (61%) than women (57%) indicate that they are self-employed by choice, while more women (21%) than men (19%) say that their decision was based on no other alternatives for work being available. Similarly, workers aged 50 and over most often indicate that being self-employed was their own choice (61%), compared with the middle age group (35–49 years) and the younger age group (aged under 35) (59% and 53% respectively). A quarter of the younger self-employed aged under 35 (24%) say they have no other alternatives for work, compared with 19% of the self-employed between the ages of 35 and 49, and 18% of the self-employed aged 50 and over.

Some 42% of the self-employed in elementary occupations and 26% in skilled agricultural occupations indicate that they had no other alternatives for work. More workers in agriculture (27%) than in other sectors are self-employed because they have no other alternatives for work.

Self-employment in the European Union is in a process of continual change. While the proportion of self-employed workers in the EU28 Member States is stable, its composition has shifted. While on the one hand there has been a decline in employment in agriculture (generally self-employment), on the other hand the proportions of self-employed workers in the services sector and public sector have increased.

<sup>18</sup> Exploring Self-Employment in the European Union, available at : <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/intl/625/>.

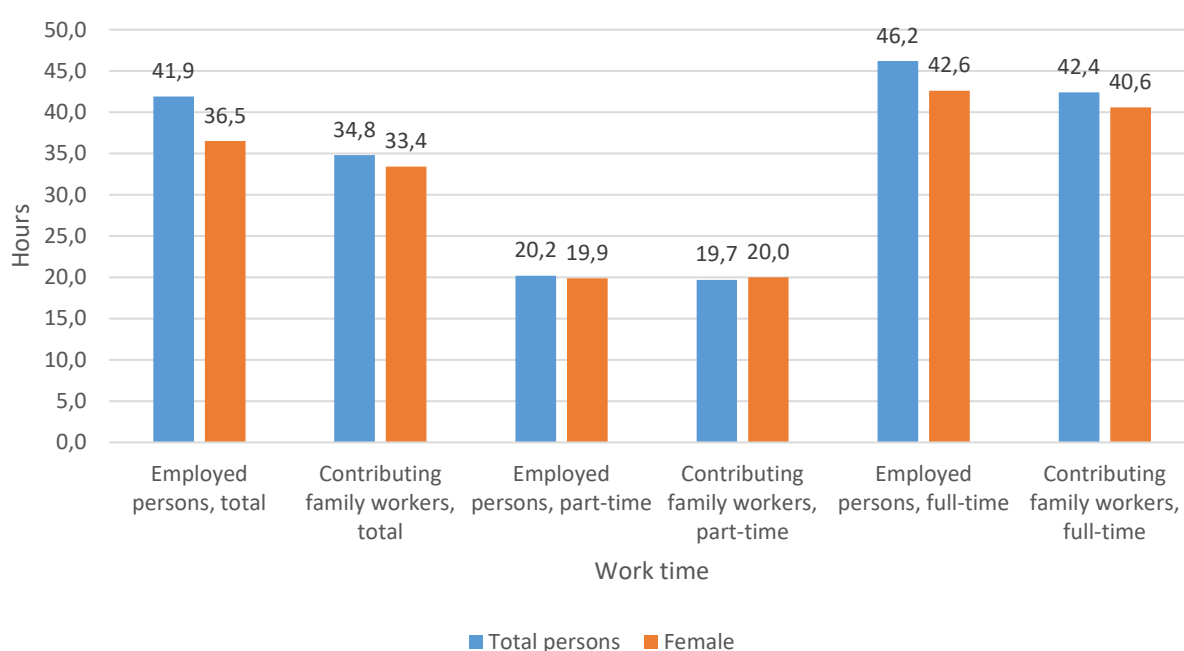


### 2.1.5. Work status and working time in the most relevant sectors for rural development

In general, the self-employed are more often men (62%) than women (38%). The 'stable own-account workers' and 'small traders and farmers' clusters follow this distribution, but men are overrepresented in both the 'employers' and 'concealed' clusters, while in contrast the 'vulnerable' self-employed are more likely to be women. When differentiating by age, only the 'vulnerable' and 'concealed' clusters deviate from the overall age distribution of self-employed: the 'vulnerable' are overrepresented by people aged 50 years or older, and among the 'concealed', the share of younger self-employed (<35 years old) is roughly twice as big as for the other clusters.

The highest share of 'vulnerable' self-employed can be found in Romania, but the share is also high in other countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia). They are relatively uncommon in Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and Sweden and the UK. The cluster is overrepresented in agriculture. Women are strongly overrepresented in this cluster: 51% are female, compared with 37% for all self-employed.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 13: Average number of usual weekly hours in agriculture, forestry and fishing in the EU-28, 2018**



Source: Eurostat

In the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, the data for 2018 show that women work, on average, more frequently as part-time employees and do even more than the average amount of work as part-time employed contributing family workers (Figure 13).

The steady decline of self-employment in recent decades is often linked to the decline in agriculture. At the same time, self-employment has become more diversified and is used in a wider range of sectors

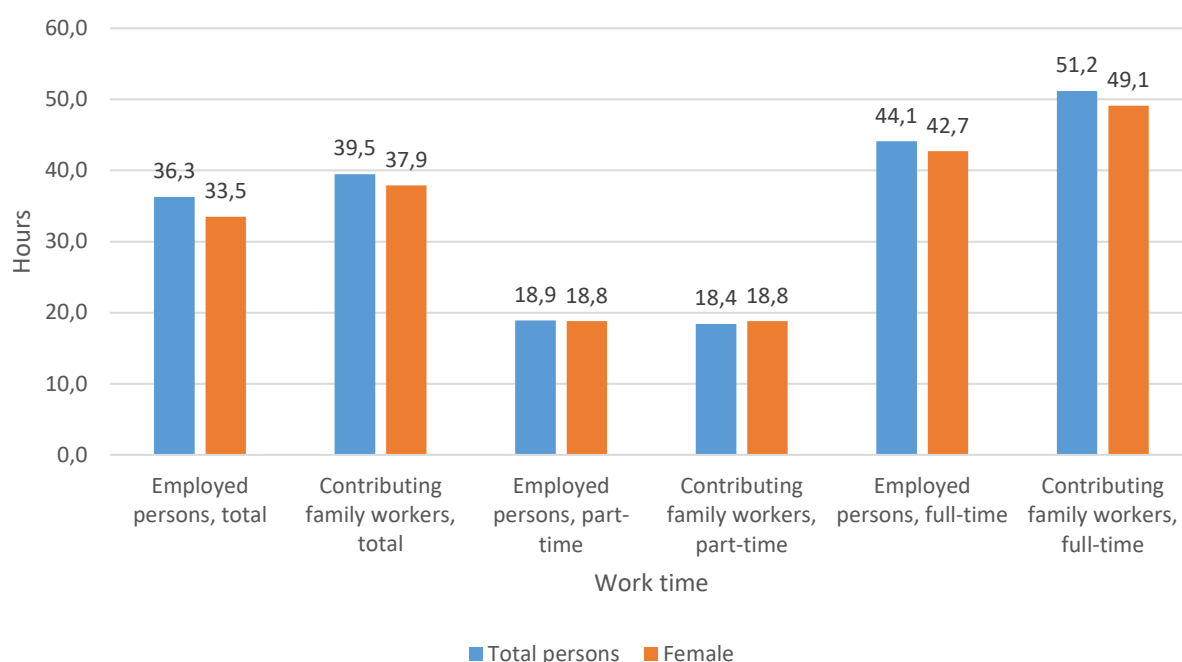
<sup>19</sup> Exploring Self-Employment in the European Union, available at: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/intl/625/>

and occupations. Consequently, the proportions of self-employed workers in the services sector and public sector have increased.

Tourism is seen as an economic activity that can significantly contribute to rural development and is also a major employer of women. Compared with the total non-financial business economy, where 36% of people employed are female, the labour force of tourism industries includes more female workers (58%) than male workers. The highest proportions are seen in accommodation (60%), in travel agencies and tour operators (64%)<sup>20</sup>.

According to Eurostat, tourism activities in the accommodation and food services sector accounted for almost 10 million jobs, or 4% of total EU employment. One third of these jobs were seasonal. Latvia is the Member State with the highest share of jobs in tourism occupied by women; 78% as opposed to 51% in the wider economy. Malta reports the lowest figures, with women accounting for 33% of the tourism workforce (38% of the total economy).

**Figure 14: Average number of usual weekly hours in accommodation and food service activities in the EU-28, 2018**



Source: Eurostat

Distribution of usual weekly hours in the accommodation and food service activities sector (Figure 14) confirms female engagement in part-time jobs, particularly as contributing family workers. Even though nearly one in three women working in tourism industries works part-time (compared with one in seven men), women working full-time still represent the biggest share of employment (40%). Female employment accounts for less than 50% of tourism industry employment in only three Member States (Belgium, Luxembourg and Malta). In Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, more than two out of every three people employed in tourism are women. In Poland and Slovakia, the proportion of female

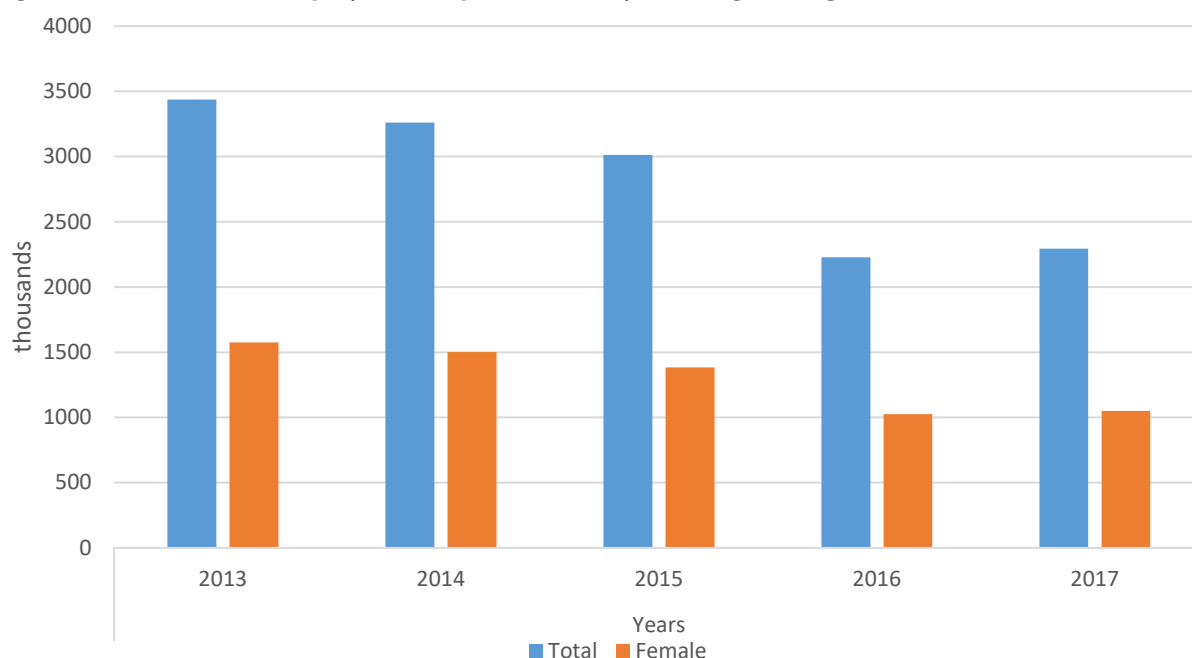
<sup>20</sup> Tourism industries – employment, available at : [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism\\_industries\\_-\\_employment#\\_The\\_tourism\\_industries\\_employ\\_over\\_13\\_million\\_people\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_industries_-_employment#_The_tourism_industries_employ_over_13_million_people_in_the_EU).

employment in tourism industries is nearly twice as high as in the economy as a whole (67% versus 36% for both countries).<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2. Unemployment

According to the European Commission<sup>22</sup>, the unemployment rate is higher in cities than in towns, suburbs or rural areas for both men and women, and is higher for women than for men in towns, suburbs and rural areas. For both men and women, unemployment rates have been declining in all Member States since 2013. From 2008 onwards, male and female unemployment rates have been converging in towns, suburbs and rural areas.

**Figure 15: Women in unemployment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 20-64), EU-28, 2013-2017**



Source: Eurostat

The EU-28 unemployment rates in rural areas have also been declining since 2013 (Figure 15), reaching 7.9% in 2018. Historically, women have been more affected by unemployment than men. In 2000, the unemployment rate for women in the EU-28 was around 10%, while the rate for men was below 8%.

By the end of 2002, this gender gap in unemployment had narrowed to around 1.4% and between 2002 and mid-2007 this gap remained more or less constant. Since the first quarter of 2008, when they were at their lowest levels of 6.3% and 7.4% respectively, the male and female unemployment rates in the EU-28 converged, and by the third quarter of 2009 the male unemployment rate was higher. The decline of the men's rate during 2010 and the first half of 2011 and the corresponding stability in the women's rate over the same period brought the male rate below the female one once again. Since then the two rates had risen at the same pace until mid-2013, when they reached their highest value of

<sup>21</sup> Tourism industries – employment, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism\\_industries\\_-\\_employment#Source\\_data\\_for\\_tables.2C\\_figures\\_and\\_maps.28MS\\_Excel.29](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_industries_-_employment#Source_data_for_tables.2C_figures_and_maps.28MS_Excel.29).

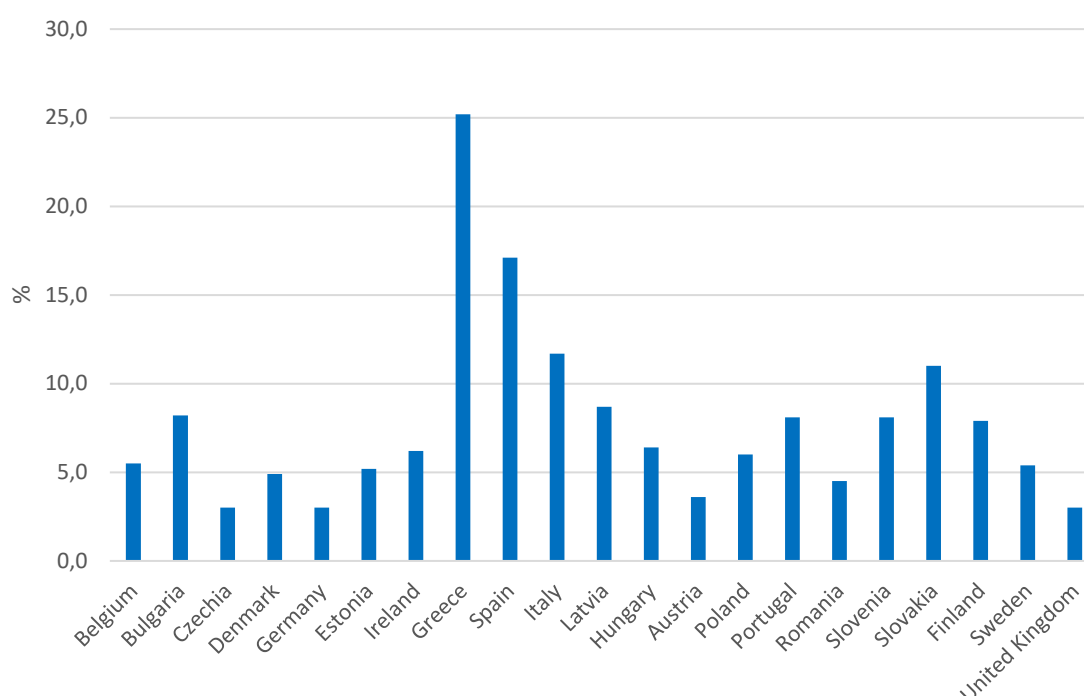
<sup>22</sup> Rural areas and the primary sector in the EU, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/statistics/facts-figures/eu-rural-areas-primary-sector.pdf>.

10.9% for men and 11% for women. Starting from 2013 both the male and the female unemployment rates began to decline and reached 7.1 % and 7.6% respectively at the end of 2017.<sup>23</sup>

In 2015, there were nine EU Member States that recorded their highest unemployment rate in rural areas by degree of urbanisation; located in the Baltic Member States, eastern and southern Europe. By contrast, there were 12 Member States where the highest unemployment rates were recorded in cities; these were generally not in the eastern parts of the EU, although Slovenia was an exception. Much higher unemployment rates were recorded for rural areas (compared with cities) in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia in 2015. In these Member States, the difference was more than 5.0 percentage points, with unemployment rates in rural areas systematically higher than the EU-28 average, while unemployment rates in cities were systematically below the EU-28 average. By contrast, the unemployment rates recorded in rural areas of Belgium, Greece and Austria were considerably lower than those recorded in cities, with differences of more than 5.0 percentage points. Very low unemployment rates (less than 4.0%) were recorded in rural areas of Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

Available data for 2017 regarding the share of women in unemployment in predominantly rural regions (Figure 16) show a significantly high percentage of unemployed women in Mediterranean countries (Greece, Spain, Italy), but also in new Member States (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia).

**Figure 16: Share of women in unemployment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 20-64), EU-28, 2017**



Note: Data for Croatia, Cyprus, France, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands is not available

Source: Eurostat

<sup>23</sup> Unemployment statistics, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics#Male\\_and\\_female\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Male_and_female_unemployment).

<sup>24</sup> Statistics on rural areas in the EU, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_rural\\_areas\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_rural_areas_in_the_EU)

### 2.3. Farm ownership and managerial positions

By the provisional results of the Farm structure survey 2016, a little over 171 million hectares of land in the European Union were used for agricultural production in 2016, and agricultural landscapes dominated the countryside in certain Member States (Ireland, the United Kingdom, Denmark with about 60–70%). Agriculture and food related industries and services provide over 44 million jobs in the EU, including regular work for 20 million people within the agricultural sector itself.

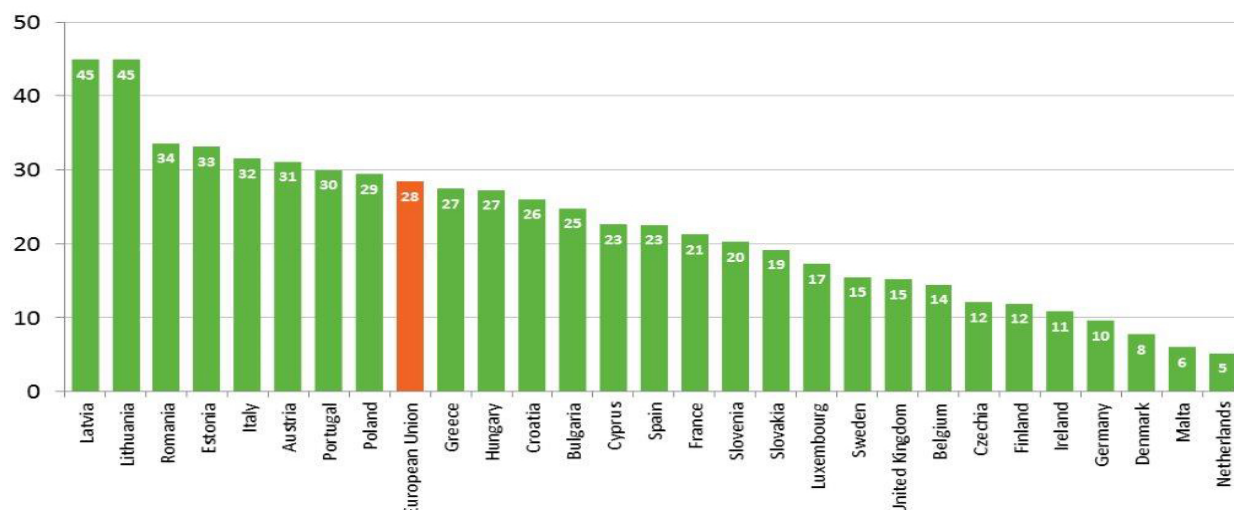
From a gender point of view, there are significant gaps between women and men in the sector of agriculture. Farming continues to be a predominantly rural profession and male domain. Women farmers have significantly less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets compared to their male counterparts. However, the number of farms run by women is continuously growing. The Eurostat data suggest that despite huge differences among Member States, an average of 30% of farms across the EU are managed by women. Female entrepreneurs represent only one third of self-employed people in the EU and women farmers represent 30% of total EU farm managers. They tend to have smaller farms: on average 5.84 ha compared with 12.88 ha owned by male farm holders. Women take more calculated risks than men, yet it is still difficult for them to access loans. Women's ideas for innovation are as marketable as men's, but they are not recognised by predominantly male stakeholders (EC, 2017; COPA, 2017).

According to Jackova et al. (2016), rural women achieve managerial positions first of all in agriculture (21%), in their own business (14%), in small companies (14%), in large enterprises (10%). However, in comparison to a decade ago, the share of female farmers is growing, albeit slowly: in 2005, around 27% of EU-28 farms were female-owned, and most of the growth had come from the expansion of the EU in 2004, with the countries in the east generally tending to have more female-owned farms than those in the west.<sup>25</sup>

The most recent data available (Figure 17) suggest that, on average, around 30% of farms across the EU-28 are managed by a woman, but there are quite considerable differences between specific countries – from just over 5% in The Netherlands to around 47% in Lithuania. According to Eurostat data, there are about 10.3 million holdings in the EU, and more than 10 million people work as farm managers in the EU. The farming profession is dominated by men, and holdings are mostly managed by men (72%).<sup>26</sup> Countries with the highest share of women as farm managers are Latvia and Lithuania (45%), followed by Romania, Estonia, Italy, Austria, Portugal and Poland – all above the European average. In four member states the proportion of farm managers who were female was 10% or below (Germany, Denmark, Malta and The Netherlands).

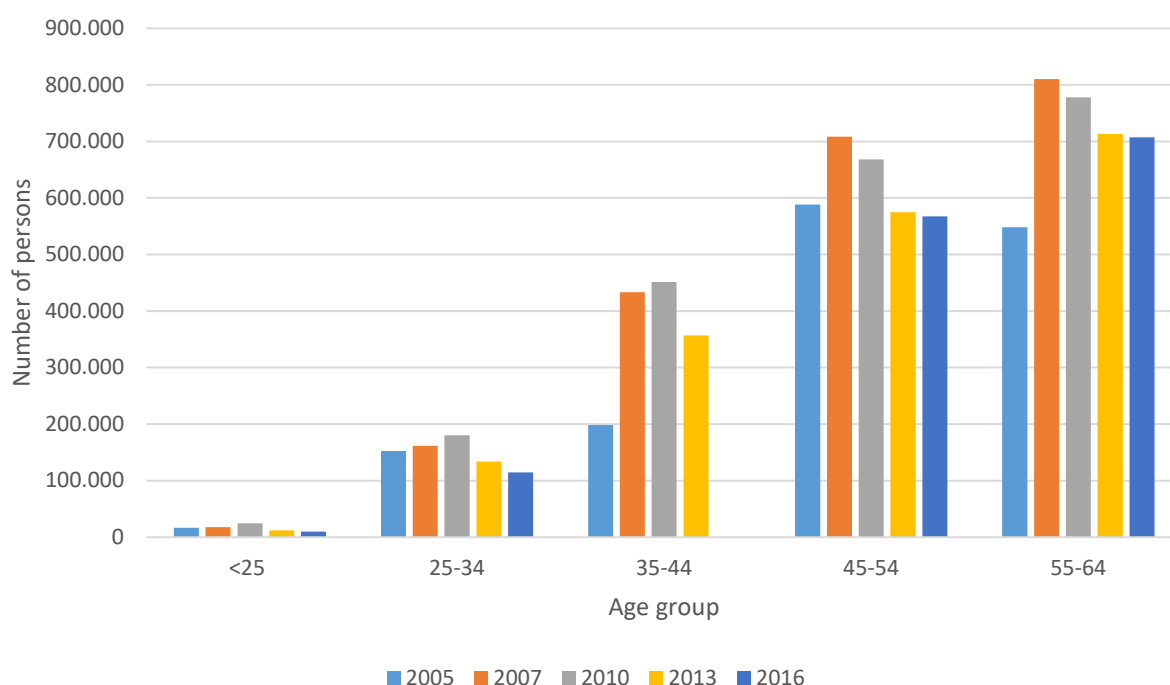
<sup>25</sup> Future of CAP: Women and farming, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/future-cap-where-are-all-women\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/future-cap-where-are-all-women_en).

<sup>26</sup> Eurostat newsrelease 105/2018 – 28 June 2018, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/9028470/5-28062018-AP-EN.pdf/8d97f49b-81c0-4f87-bdde-03fe8c3b8e\\_c2](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/9028470/5-28062018-AP-EN.pdf/8d97f49b-81c0-4f87-bdde-03fe8c3b8e_c2)

**Figure 17 : Proportion of farm managers who are women, 2016 (%)**

Source: Eurostat

In terms of age, the majority (58%) of farm managers were aged 55 years or over. Only about one in every ten (11%) farm managers were under the age of 40 and this share was even lower among female farmers (9%), as shown by Figure 18.

**Figure 18: Total number of female farm managers by age class, 2005-2016**

Note: Data for age class 35-44 in 2016 is not available.

Source: Eurostat

According to the EIGE (2016), female farm holders have significantly smaller farms than male farm holders. The average farm size for farms managed by women is 6.4 hectares, less than half the 14.4 ha for farms managed by men. Moreover, the share of female farm holders is particularly high on farms with no clear specialisation in livestock rearing or crop production. More than 70% of EU farms with

livestock are run by male farm holders, and only 27% by female farm holders. Organic farming is practised by around 2% of all EU farm holders, regardless of gender. Women represented about 24% of EU farm holders in organic farming (data from 2013), and they occupied 13% of the EU area devoted to organic farming.

Differences in the average size of owned farm land between men and women reflect also in the output per holding: women farmers also fare much less well than their male counterparts: just under €12,000 in 2013 compared to nearly €40,000. This reflects the fact that women farmers control far less land than men (12% to 61% respectively, the remaining 28% of land is held by 'legal entities' such as companies). These variations are much less pronounced in the newer EU countries where, on average, women farm around 3.4 ha compared to 6.0 ha for men.<sup>27</sup>

The EU is increasingly committed to promoting gender-responsive land actions and has embedded the promotion of women's rights, including equal rights to land, in its Gender Action Plan (GAP II) 2016-2020.

## 2.4. Gender pay gap

The domain of money (overall indicator of wellbeing) examines inequalities in the access to financial resources and the economic situation of women and men. An analysis of gender gaps in the domain of money shows that women are, with few exceptions, disadvantaged when compared to men. Throughout the EU, women earn less than men, and progress in closing the gender gap is moving at an extremely slow rate. Across the EU Member States, disposable income is also lower for women than for men and, as a result, women are more likely than men to be at risk of poverty.

As an unadjusted indicator, the GPG gives an overall picture of the differences between men and women in terms of earnings, and measures a concept which is broader than the concept of "equal pay for work of equal value". A part of the difference in earnings can be explained by differences in the average characteristics of male and female employees.

### 2.4.1. Differences in wages caused by gender

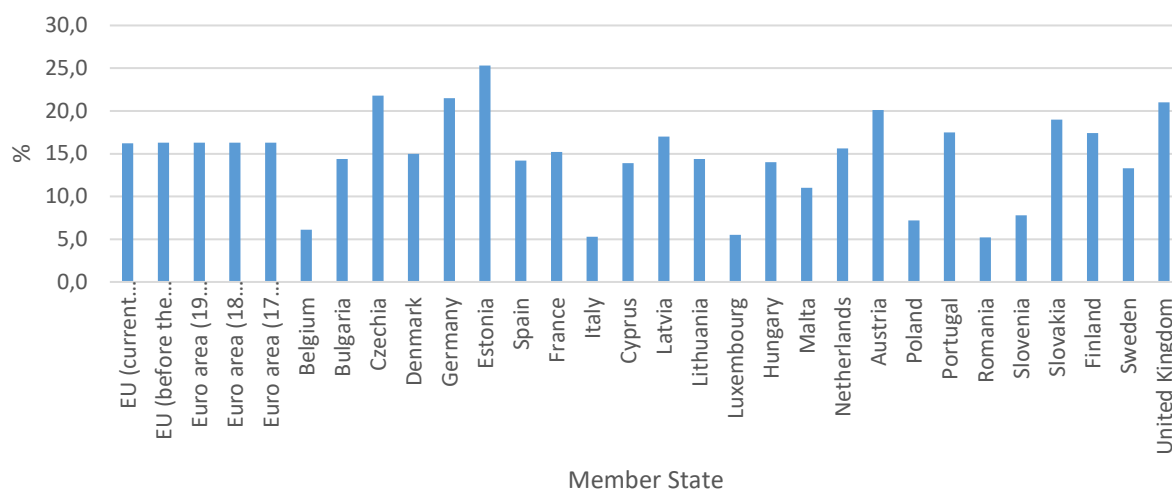
Regarding wages, there are differences among EU countries, which change in time, due to various social, cultural, religious and economic factors.

Data for 2013 show that in Czechia and Slovakia, the income gap between men and women is up to 23.6%, and the most unfavourable result was achieved by Estonia with 30.3%. The best results were registered for Italy (4.4%), Malta (5.2%), Poland (7.5%), Portugal (8.3%) and Belgium (9.1%) (Jackova et al., 2016: 48).

For the economy as a whole, in 2016, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.2% below those of men in the European Union (EU-28) and 16.3% in the euro area (EA-19). Across Member States, the gender pay gap varied by 20 percentage points, ranging from 5.2% in Romania to 25.3% in Estonia (Figure 19).

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<sup>27</sup> Future of CAP: Women and farming, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/future-cap-where-are-all-women\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/future-cap-where-are-all-women_en)

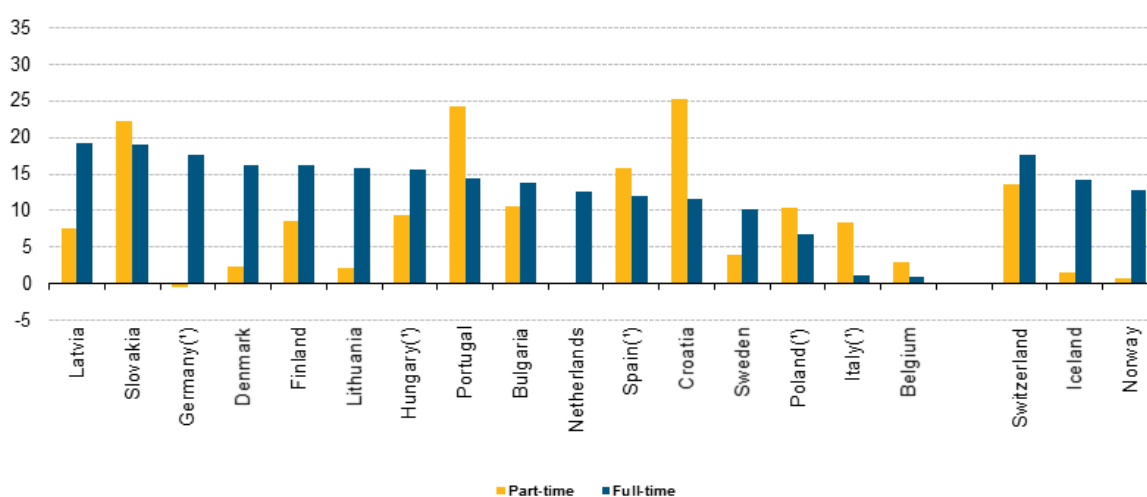
**Figure 19: Gender pay gap in unadjusted form of industry, construction and services, 2016**

Notes:

- 1) Structure of earnings survey methodology (public administration, defence and compulsory social security are not included)
- 2) Data for Croatia, Greece and Ireland is not available

Source: Eurostat

Pay gaps can also be analysed from the perspective of part-time or full-time employment. Information at this level of detail is not available for all EU Member States. In 2016 the gender pay gap for part-time workers varied from -0.5% in Germany to 26.7% in Portugal. A negative gender pay gap indicates that women's gross hourly earnings are higher, on average, than those of men. For full-time workers, pay gaps also widely varied in the EU Member states, ranging from 0.1% in Italy to 18.7% in Latvia. In 2017, the gender pay gap for part-time workers varied from -0.5% in Germany to 25.3% in Croatia. For full-time workers, pay gaps also varied widely in the EU Member States, ranging from 0.9% in Belgium to 19.3% in Latvia.

**Figure 20: The unadjusted gender pay gap by working time (%), 2017**

Notes:

- 1) For all the countries except Ireland data for enterprises employing 10 or more employees: NACE Rev. 2 B to S(-O); Iceland: NACE Rev. 2 sections C to H, J, K, P, Q. Data not available for CZ, EE, IE, EL, FR, CY, LU, MT, AT, RO, SI and UK
- 2) <sup>(1)</sup> Provisional data

Source: Eurostat

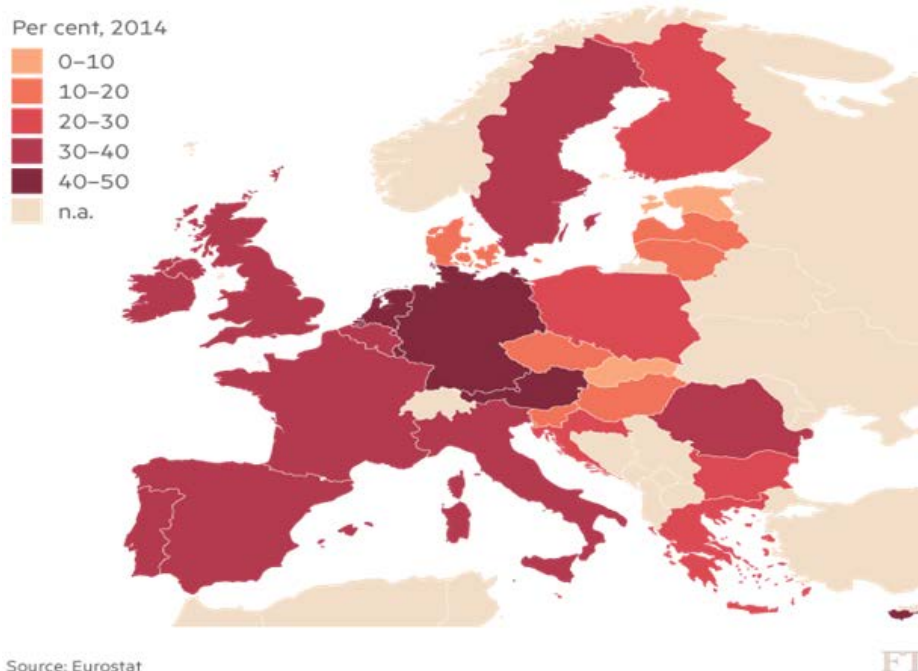


The gender pay gap is generally much lower for new labour market entrants and tends to widen with age. However, these differences over age groups can have different patterns across countries. The gender pay gap might increase with age as a result of the career interruptions women experience during their working life, particularly older women unable to benefit from specific equality measures which did not yet exist when they started to work.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.4.2. Pension pay gap

The gap between women's and men's pensions in the EU is more than twice the gap between their earnings. EU gender pension gap, measured by annual pension received and based on Eurostat data, was 40%, compared to a gender pay gap of 16%. There were wide variations between countries, with the gap ranging from 4% to 49%. Half of the 28 EU members had a gap of 30% or more (Map 1). The gap was particularly small in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, some countries in Eastern Europe and Denmark. It was highest in western Europe, with Cyprus at 48.8% and Germany at 46.5%. Since women lived longer and saved less, they faced a higher risk of retiring into poverty than their male counterparts.

**Map 1: Gender pension gap across Europe**



Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/9aecde2a-49f6-11e7-a3f4-c742b9791d43>

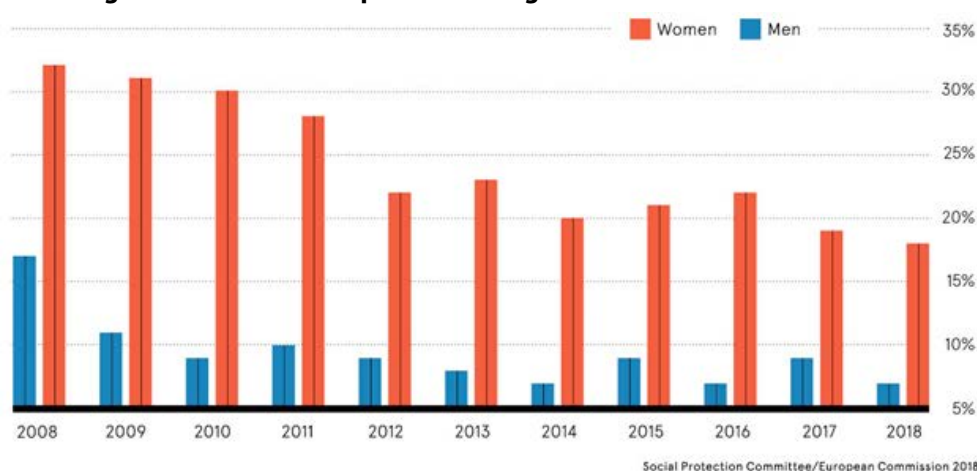
<sup>28</sup> Gender pay gap statistics., available at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics#Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_levels\\_vary\\_significantly\\_across\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics#Gender_pay_gap_levels_vary_significantly_across_EU)

The pension gender gap ranges between 1.8 percent and 48.7 percent across Member States, and is around 37.2 percent for pensioners aged 65-79 in the EU-28. Cyprus, The Netherlands and Malta have the largest gaps (above 44%), while the gender pension gap is currently insignificant in Estonia. The smallest gender gaps in pensions (below 10%) are in Estonia, Denmark and Slovakia (EC, 2018a: 69). In rural areas, the figures are 10% higher. Some European women face an even more difficult challenge: they do not have access to legal recognition of their part-time or full-time work on a farm. In fact, apart from farm managers, in many countries, most family members working on farms do not have social protection or legal recognition, and are therefore not covered for maternity leave or against workplace accidents (COPA, 2017).

Since women earned less on average than men, this led to lower pensions for women (or with no pension savings at all – Figure 20), an effect compounded by the greater likelihood of women working part-time or taking career breaks to assist with raising a family or caring for older or disabled relatives.

**Figure 21 : Percentage of retirees with no pension savings**



Source: <https://www.raconteur.net/hr/gender-pension-gap>

Interesting research about rural women's access to pensions<sup>29</sup> has resulted in conclusions (gender norms) that can be applied to women's pension issues across the EU:

- Pension gaps exist as a result of career breaks for child rearing and caring;
- Older women are segregated into caring, cleaning, retail, hotel work;
- Women's work was low paid and they worked in poor conditions – tending to be employed in part-time jobs;
- Women heavily rely on state pension and on partners' incomes.

One of the main sources of women's economic vulnerability at retirement age is their interrupted work trajectories due to the traditional gendered care-giving norm. The most important factor in explaining the lower pensions of older women is that they are unlikely to have been employed steadily throughout their adult lives. Even where women have worked in the past, they were much more likely than men to have worked part-time and to have earned less (often because of their engagement in

<sup>29</sup> Rural women and access to pension in the island of Ireland, available at: [https://www.academia.edu/3073395/Rural\\_women\\_and\\_access\\_to\\_pensions\\_in\\_the\\_island\\_of\\_Ireland](https://www.academia.edu/3073395/Rural_women_and_access_to_pensions_in_the_island_of_Ireland)

low-paid jobs). Women have traditionally earned less than men and continue to enter retirement with smaller pension packages.<sup>30</sup>

Reasons for the pension gap can also be explained by the low awareness rural women have about the importance of pension savings at the start of their working lives or simply in the lack of money for saving. A number of them felt that pension information was lacking or confusing, or have no trust in private pensions. A minority had adequate occupational pensions of their own (teachers, nurses, financial sector workers); others plan (or need) to work as long as possible, many of them working in the informal economy to supplement their pension.

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<sup>30</sup> CARDI Grants Programme, Research Brief. 'Older women and pension inequalities', available at: <http://www.cardi.ie/userfiles/Older%20women%20pensions%20%28Web%29%283%29.pdf>

### 3. EFFICIENCY OF LEGAL INSTRUMENTS IN IMPROVING RURAL WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POSITION: EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Extensive research on the characteristics of women's work in rural activities and their role in rural environments confirms that there are many opportunities for gender equality in the field of work. Women can be at the forefront of innovation and diversification in rural areas by developing new activities, production and services. Women often have the added advantage of an awareness and knowledge of local needs, and specific interpersonal and communication skills.
- Gender mainstreaming in rural development policies means that Member States are required to adequately analyse women's situation in agriculture and rural areas, and design rural development programmes which take those findings into account.
- The most important common characteristic of the professional status of women in rural areas across the EU is that, despite a gradual increase in the employment rate for women, equality has not yet been achieved, even in the most developed Member States and regions.
- On average, the employment position of women is better in the Northern and Western Member States compared to the Southern and Central-Eastern Member States.
- It is not possible to precisely understand and explain the situation of rural women regarding work and income based on statistical analysis due to a lack of gender-segregated statistics. Another reason is the unreliability of female (un)employment statistics and their insufficient reflection of the real working situation of women. Many women have informally paid work that does not appear in statistics.

#### 3.1. Brief review of key documents on gender equality in the field of work and employment

EU institutions have recognised the inequality problem of women's professional status since the end of the 1970s. Since 1975 a series of directives have been adopted in order to implement the principle of equal treatment between women and men. They have made a considerable contribution towards effectively promoting gender equality. The key documents<sup>31</sup>, which focused on improving the situation of women, include:

- Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.

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<sup>31</sup> Key EU directives in gender equality and non-discrimination, available at: <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/legal-developments/16-law/76-key-eu-directives-in-gender-equality-and-non-discrimination>; Equality between men and women, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/59/equality-between-men-and-women>.

- Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.
- Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by INICE, CEEP and the ETUC.
- Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. It covers the fields of employment and occupation, vocational training, membership of employer and employee organisations.
- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.
- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).
- Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC.
- Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC.

The adoption of the Employment Equality Directive initiated a movement throughout Europe, in EU Member States and beyond, towards the adoption of national non-discrimination legislations transposing the provisions of the directives. However, one of the legal approaches to the gender equality issues in rural areas at the EU level was the Council of Europe Recommendation No 1321 (1997) on improving the situation of women in rural society, the document that calls on governments to take up actions to increase women's participation in decision-making and make an integrated approach to equality a primary concern. Additionally, in its Resolution No 1806 (2011) on rural women in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly stated that, considering that women are a driving force for the maintenance, conservation and development of rural areas, they can contribute to the agriculture workforce and the preservation of tradition in rural areas. The Resolution calls on the Member States of the Council of Europe to devise legal measures and policy specifically focusing on rural women (EIGE, 2016).

### **3.2. Relevance of gender in the area of agricultural and rural policy**

In 2015, the European Parliament confirmed this lack of progress, through the resolution on progress on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013 (2014/221(INI)). Specifically, the resolution refers to the need to reduce gender gaps in pay and pension by addressing the persistent concentration of women in part-time, low-pay and precarious work, and by securing care facilities of a sufficient quality for children and other dependants. The unfavourable structure of women's jobs and weak social support in which they work result in lower salaries in cases where they hold the same jobs as men, and consequently lower pensions.

The resolution accounts for the different problems faced by women and their relation both to the economic crisis, as well as to the policies promoted to address it. The European Parliament refers to the increase in discrimination; to the way women are affected by layoffs in the public sector due to "fiscal

consolidation policies"; how the situation of women is affecting birth rates and ageing, and that single-parent and large families are discriminated by policies - including taxation policies. The European Parliament clearly states the impossibility in meeting the EU 2020 poverty reduction target without gender equality.

The Parliament therefore calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement proactive policies to promote good jobs for women, by encouraging the transition from part- to full-time work, focusing in particular on the not-in-education-employment-or-training (NEET) category. Member States are also called to set specific employment targets in the framework of their national reform programmes. For instance, policies should encourage women to embrace careers in science and to promote awareness-raising campaigns, specifically ones encouraging women to enter sectors traditionally viewed as "male".

Women's financial independence is seen as a key means of securing equality, and could be achieved by measures of promoting and support entrepreneurship among women, by facilitating access to financial resources, training and lifelong learning, increased flexibility in working arrangements, promoting women's presence in political, economic and social activities, and their participation in decision making.

Parliament recognised the progress of some Member States in reconciliation of professional and private life (Sweden, Belgium, France, Slovenia, Denmark and the UK) through achieving the Barcelona objectives<sup>32</sup>, and called on the Commission to provide continuing financial support to Member States so that they can offer adequate childcare systems. Recommendations also relate to establishing paid paternity leave and to promote measures, legislative and otherwise, with the intent to achieve equal responsibility of parents in business and private life.

The latest report from 2017 on equality between women and men in the EU in 2014-2015 (2016/2249(INI)) indicates slow changes in women's employment situation and working status as a result of applied policies. It seems that only marginal improvements have been recorded in achieving gender equality, with the overall score of Gender Equality Index since 2005 having risen from 51.3 to 52.9 out of 100. Most findings suggest that the causes of gender inequality are yet to be resolved:

- the employment rate for women reached an all-time high of 64.5% in 2015, but remained well below that for men, which stood at 75.6%; women are four times more likely than men to engage in and remain in part-time work, often involuntarily, and the female unemployment rate is still an underestimation, since many women are not registered as unemployed, particularly those who live in rural or remote areas;
- in countries affected by the economic crisis and budget cuts, women have been disproportionately affected, particularly young women, elderly women, single mothers and women suffering from multiple discrimination, causing their poverty, social marginalisation and exclusion from the labour market;
- social exclusion among women is linked to budget cuts in public services (healthcare, education, social services, welfare benefits), causing greater job instability due to the increase in involuntary part-time work and temporary contracts;
- women in general take overwhelmingly greater responsibility for parental care tasks and household chores, and traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to have a strong influence on role distribution between women and men in the home, in the workplace and in society in general;

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<sup>32</sup> Barcelona objectives. The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/130531\\_barcelona\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/130531_barcelona_en_0.pdf).

- family-related types of leave still continue to be grounds for discrimination and stigmatisation for both women and men, despite the existing policy framework and legislation at EU and national level;
- despite the fact that women, on average, attain a higher level of education than men, the EU-average gender pay gap remained at 16.1% in 2014, though there are significant differences between the Member States;
- gender segregation in employment is still a prevalent phenomenon which prevents women from reaching the highest and best-paid positions; there is still uneven access to economic and financial resources between men and women. Consequently, a pension gap still persists in the EU and stood at an overwhelming 40.2% in 2014;
- some Member States in the EU maintain the practice of non-individualisation of tax and social security systems, making women dependent on their spouses.

The problems of inequality between women and men are even more pronounced when it comes to women in rural areas. Challenges for rural women are well identified in the European Parliament resolution of 4 April 2017 on women and their roles in rural areas (2016/2204(INI))<sup>33</sup>, while some policy suggestions for the Member States are directed to:

- promoting information and technical assistance measures and exchanging good practices in EU Member States to establish a professional status for assisting spouses in farming;
- supporting the participation of women in decision-making in rural areas by means of training activities and awareness-raising campaigns;
- promotion of equality between women and men in the various management and representation bodies to foster equal participation and power, as well as in farmers' organisations;
- highlighting the need for effective measures at European and national levels to reduce the existing gender pay and pension gaps by designing specific policy measures within the EU strategy for rural development;
- reviewing and improving statistical plans to include mechanisms measuring the overall contribution of women to rural income and the rural economy;
- emphasising the importance of advising and supporting women to enable them to carry out farming activities and perform other innovative functions in rural areas;
- stressing the importance of providing new opportunities for paid employment, especially for women, in order to preserve rural communities, while creating the conditions to facilitate a satisfactory work-life balance.

EU Rural Development Policy 2014-2020 (Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013)<sup>34</sup> goes beyond agriculture and forestry and targets wider rural economic development. The inclusion of the priority "promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas" as one of the six EU priorities for rural development, plays an important role in creating a wider variety of better-quality jobs and in improving local development overall. The relevant measures to contribute to this priority are "basic services and village renewal in rural areas" and "LEADER", the community-led local development method for mobilising and developing rural communities through local public-private partnerships (local action groups). On a wider scope, one of the three long-term objectives of the EU

<sup>33</sup> European Parliament resolution of 4 April 2017 on women and their roles in rural areas (2016/2204(INI)), available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0099\\_EN.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0099_EN.html).

<sup>34</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1305>.



Rural Development Policy 2014-2020 is to achieve a balanced territorial development in rural areas, including creating and maintaining jobs.<sup>35</sup>

The main issues relating to gender equality and the role of women in rural areas are as follows<sup>36</sup>:

- Ageing and masculinisation of agriculture and rural areas.
- Invisibility of women's work in agriculture.
- Under-representation of women in farm ownership and agricultural decision-making.

Research on the characteristics of women's work in rural activities and their role in rural environments confirms that there are many opportunities for gender equality in the field of work because:

- women can be at the forefront of innovation and diversification in rural areas by developing new activities, products and services.
- women often have the added advantage of an awareness and knowledge of local needs, and specific interpersonal and communication skills.

Measures available under RDP offer support for business start-up aid for young farmers, investments in physical assets, knowledge transfers, advisory services, co-operation for developing new products, organising joint work processes or sharing facilities and a wide variety of financial instruments. Gender mainstreaming in rural development policies means that Member States are required to adequately analyse women's situation in agriculture and rural areas and design rural development programmes which take those findings into account. Rural development measures which are seen as well suited in addressing women's needs can be found in the field of business development, co-operation, training and knowledge transfer, and improvement of rural basic services – healthcare, education, transport, leisure.

Over recent years, an additional factor in causing gender differences has arisen from the migration movements towards and within the EU: asylum seekers, refugees, and EU nationals. This has entailed the creation of new forms of vulnerability and exploitation in the agricultural sector. The requirements of cutting overall production costs and increasing profit margins result in a general compression of the workers' rights (European Parliament, 2018).

### **3.3. Best practice examples in different Member States**

#### **3.3.1. Germany: Changing times for life in rural Germany**

Rural women in Germany are organized, as in the *Deutscher LandFrauenverband e.V* (German Rural Women's Association), with 500,000 women members working on farms and in other professions.<sup>37</sup> An important goal is to improve the living and working conditions in rural areas through skilled training opportunities, a sufficient number of jobs, as well as cultural, social and infrastructural facilities. Although the situation of German rural women is relatively good by international standards, the Rural Women's Associations describe problems that are common to other Member States: the gender

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<sup>35</sup> Rural areas and poverty, available at: <https://epthinktank.eu/2016/12/16/rural-areas-and-poverty/>.

<sup>36</sup> European Commission: EU policies to promote women and youth in agriculture, G7 International Forum for Empowering Women and Youth in Agriculture and Food Systems, Japan, 12-13 December 2016.

<sup>37</sup> ENWRA – European Network for Women in Rural Areas Grundtvig – learning partnership; available at: <http://www.eurolink-eu.net/european-network-women-rural-areas-enwra/>



pension gap (as a result of lower wages despite better education than men), the double burden of family and professional life, bad and sometimes no mobility in rural areas, lack of transport services, problems in recruiting young women because of the brain drain from rural areas to cities, etc.

Life in rural Germany is going through changing times<sup>38</sup>: young women abandoned Germany's rural East 25 years after reunification. The countryside is losing women, creating a demographic imbalance that is most pronounced among the young. In many affected communities, only around 40% of residents in the 18-29 age group are female. This is considered not just a demographic problem, but rather a cultural, social and economic disaster, greatly hindering potential for development desperately needed to solve eastern Germany's economic problems. Young women are, on average, better educated than their male peers and more ambitious to seek their luck elsewhere; unemployment across the East is 4% higher than in the West and wages lag behind those in the west by a third. In the West, which remains socially conservative, women from the countryside often return to their villages once they turn 30.

A recent study prepared by Unay-Gailhard (2016) about labour market transitions of young people attempting to access jobs after leaving education focused on differences in these transitions between women and men in rural Germany. The main conclusions can be applied to rural women's situation across the EU:

- Gender differences begin to appear with out-migration, leading to a shortage of young women in Europe's rural areas.
- Unskilled individuals are more likely to be hired by employers, but a high education level is seen as a means to prevent the risks of long-term unemployment.
- Being married decreases female graduates' likelihood of transitioning from student to employment in relation to their single peers (however, being married has a positive influence on flows into employment for male graduates).
- Living in rural areas has a positive effect on the likelihood of becoming employed within a one-year period for male graduates, although this doesn't equally apply for females.

Germany also provides a good example in the application of tools and actions for more gender equality. Adapted from the Swiss model, Logib-D is a pay calculator and audit system developed by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. It consists of a pay calculator to identify the gender pay gap in a company's pay structure, as well as consultancy services to assist in analysing and eliminating the gender pay gap. This tool identifies the factors that determine the wage gap between men and women, where women and men share the same employment characteristics.

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<sup>38</sup> Young women abandon Germany's rural east 25 years after reunification, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/germany-reunification-women-idUSL5N1214CH20151002>

### 3.3.2. France: Facilitation and production of artistic work for gender equality

Supported by LEADER, a component of one of the most effective policy instruments, an EAFRD-funded project<sup>39</sup>, the local action group GAL du Velay decided to launch a project to introduce gender equality as a topic in a local primary school, aiming at children in rural areas. The project aimed to respond to evidence showing that girls living in rural areas – compared to those living in urban areas – tended to limit their professional ambitions to “traditional” and stereotypical female roles. The project’s activities included training school teachers, sourcing appropriate facilitation material (i.e. children’s books on gender equality), coming up with creative workshops for students and also communicating and promoting activities within the local community.

Lessons and recommendations:

Promoting gender equality, especially in rural areas, is an enduring issue and awareness-raising activities should start at infancy.

A very interesting and challenging aspect of the initiative was to bring local elected representatives and educational teams together in order to seek a consensus on how to move the principles of gender equality forward.

### 3.3.3. Italy: Learning-growing-living with women farmers

A good example of putting legal options and policy suggestions into practice is the project SIMRA<sup>40</sup> - Learning-growing-living with women farmers. In South Tyrol, a group of women farmers provides childcare on farms, which diversifies farm income while encouraging the children’s interaction with nature. Moving away from classical education about the environment and nature towards a direct integration of agricultural resources and the environment as teaching elements, the farm aims at stimulating the curiosity of children in learning, as well as developing their awareness of environmental, sustainable and rural resources. Social farming activities have been established due to the changing demands of today’s society (i.e. the ageing population, changing family structures, the revaluation of rural life in an ever-urbanising society, the high influx of migrants and the increase of people with chronic diseases). They are a practical and innovative response to societies’ needs that many institutionalized social services are not able to adequately provide. Hence, social farming contributes to social and economic wellbeing as it stimulates vulnerable people’s independence and their personal development. It promotes women farmer’s empowerment and provides an additional income in peripheral rural areas as women can directly practice their pedagogical, health, care-giving or therapeutical profession on the farm.

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<sup>39</sup> Projects & Practice, available at: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice_en)

<sup>40</sup> Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas, EU Horizon 2020, available at: <http://www.simra-h2020.eu>

### 3.3.4. Belgium: Growing Green Care

A Belgian EAFRD project<sup>41</sup> is boosting growth of social farming products and services. EAFRD from the Flanders Rural Development Programme in Belgium is helping to build a growing network of new farm-based healthcare products and services, demonstrating economically diverse project opportunities that are transferable to other areas in rural Europe. Care concepts are deeply rooted in agriculture and Europe's farmers have always been proud of their ability to provide the right type of care for their land, livestock and crops. This care capacity is now extending into using farms as facilities for providing healthcare to people affected by mental, social, physical disability or psychiatric conditions. Since care activities are still predominantly a female domain (according to the European Parliament, 2016), it is no wonder that farmers' wives have found the training courses particularly popular, with Green Care providing many interesting employment opportunities for women in rural areas. Starting with less than 100 professional farmers offering care, the project resulted with more than 400 care farms.

### 3.3.5. United Kingdom: Gender-thematic projects

Within the Northern Ireland Rural Network (EIGE, 2016:22) financed during the 2007 – 2013 programming period, a thematic working group on women in rural development was established. The group explored the role of women in rural life and rural business. The main aims of the group were to examine the current levels of female participation in the Northern Irish Rural Development Policy, identify food practice projects implemented by women under the current rural policies and identify the best approaches and good practices in rural women's issues. The group focused on a range of issues facing rural women and held events and activities to encourage women to become economically active.

Another EAFRD assistance in Northern Ireland is oriented on childcare training benefits.<sup>42</sup> Helping the parents of Northern Ireland's future rural residents – EAFRD assistance for childcare-related projects can provide beneficial rural services that help to support the early development of children whilst also improving access to the labour market for their parents and childcare workers. Childcare services represent important rural development tools. Childcare enables increased employment choices for parents from rural communities. This is especially true for women in rural Europe who can often be restricted as a result of traditional family responsibilities. Moreover, childcare helps rural children to integrate and develop at an early age.

The Growing Club developed within the SIMRA project<sup>43</sup> in the United Kingdom as an alternative model business growth club for women sole traders, female owners of microbusinesses and female founders of non-profit organisations. The entrepreneur behind this social enterprise is a single mother and business owner who could not find a coach that really grasped what she wanted to achieve. The aim is to help women struggling in rural areas, who are often overlooked by business support services or dismissed as a lifestyle business as they run their business from home, to work around their family. The women enrolled in the programme are targeted, recruited and selected from socially-sensitive platforms such as domestic abuse organisations, mental health sufferers and persons recently released from prison looking for a second chance to integrate back into society.

<sup>41</sup> The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; Examples of Projects brochure, available at: [http://www.europski-fondovi.eu/sites/default/files/dokumenti/K3AK10001ENC\\_002.pdf](http://www.europski-fondovi.eu/sites/default/files/dokumenti/K3AK10001ENC_002.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; Examples of project support for young farmers and younger people in rural Europe, available at: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/fms/pdf/6B892598-9EFD-5574-62AE-4D75E320D118.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas, EU Horizon 2020, available at: <http://www.simra-h2020.eu>.

### 3.3.6. Spain: Rural woman, employment and new technologies together with traditional practices

Research on rural gender issues in Spain (Alonso and Trillo, 2014) focuses on three social problems: rural exodus and, consequently, depopulation (especially among better-educated women), masculinization and ageing. Analysis of the socio-economic situation of women in rural municipalities suggests solutions for improving employability and economic conditions of women through entrepreneurship in certain activities and sectors. It is obvious that the laws of equality between men and women, sustainable development of the rural environment and shared ownership of the farm have been a great starting point in the quest to improve rural women's situation since 2007. Women have made visible progress in economic, social and political life participation as well as in self-employment in rural tourism.

One of the best examples of Spanish gender-oriented projects is "Rural woman: employment and new technologies project" (EIGE, 2016), with eight local action groups located in five Spanish regions participating. The initiative is part of the broader National Rural Network, which is a platform used to reinforce the alliance between the most relevant agents in the rural policy field. National, regional and local administrations, professional associations and ecologists' groups are represented. The main objective is the promotion of women's entrepreneurial initiatives and employment-based social economy (cooperatives, worker-owned companies, partnerships). It uses information and communication technologies in order to eliminate differences between men and women in the access to the labour market and business. As the network's main results, more than 830 women have participated in training courses and 43 new companies have been created and included in the virtual enterprise incubator. Moreover, 'employability agents' have supported and assisted around 1,000 women since 2010. Project partners have also used the networking opportunity to create the Federation of Development Association for Gender Equality (FADIG).

Another interesting project, "Adding value to traditional rural products: Spanish almond processing business benefits from EAFRD assistance",<sup>44</sup> highlights some of the different ways that value can be added to improve product quality and maintain levels of income in rural areas. In addition to the mainstream business benefits, the project has resulted in environmental improvement and socio-economic benefits: 47 new jobs were created, 70% of which were for women.

Varela-Candamio et al. (2018) examined the role of public subsidies in farming efficiency for Spain, starting from the position that a higher degree of direct payments negatively affects farm efficiency. The research results suggest that these higher subsidies become an incentive for environmentally-friendly behaviour by farmers in order to improve the productive efficiency. Additionally, the positioning of rural women in the whole process of functional foods results in building their competitive advantage as local entrepreneurs. Findings reveal that rural women are better positioned than others to create a business based on functional foods.

### 3.3.7. Sweden: Accelerating economic empowerment for rural women

Business Development for Women – tailored support for female rural entrepreneurs<sup>45</sup> has provided a business training programme to 60 women, giving them the knowledge and skills necessary to create a business plan for developing their rural business. The full potential of female entrepreneurship in

<sup>44</sup> The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; Examples of Projects brochure, available at: [http://www.europski-fondovi.eu/sites/default/files/dokumenty/K3AK10001ENC\\_002.pdf](http://www.europski-fondovi.eu/sites/default/files/dokumenty/K3AK10001ENC_002.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Projects & Practice, available at: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice_en)

rural areas can be hampered by insufficient business knowledge, skills and confidence. This project provided a business training programme, where theoretical courses were mixed with practical exercises based on real cases, and the whole story is promoted through a Facebook group created to facilitate networking and peer support amongst female entrepreneurs.

Since the professional position of rural women in Sweden is rather favourable in comparison to other EU Member States, the Swedish Government, through its development agency Sida, develops support projects to improve the economic situation of rural women in Asia, Africa and South America.

### 3.3.8. Estonia: Adding value to young business women through organic growth support

Tackling problems related to rural depopulation remains a challenge for Member States and the availability of EAFRD support for small rural businesses run by young people can help provide sufficient incentives to help redress out-migration trends. Findings from an EU-funded research study about problems linked to population changes in rural Europe suggest that young and well-educated women are becoming the most likely to leave peripheral regions. This gender imbalance can exacerbate existing concerns about age imbalances and 'brain-drains' in rural communities because a countryside containing mainly elderly or male citizens is disadvantaged in terms of its future viability. EAFRD assistance through the RDPs is able to help provide new opportunities for young women and this type of funding support can counter the push factors which lead to depopulation. A good example of how this happens in practice can be found in rural Estonia where EAFRD has helped a young business woman to develop her own organic fruit enterprise.<sup>46</sup>

We can see another example of good practice through the SIMRA project<sup>47</sup>, Konnu Smart Work Centre. Motivated local people available in the community initiated a smart working centre to solve the unemployment problem in the area. Women share their knowledge, jobs and childcare duties with each other, develop their competences as a team and compete as a unit for work in the labour market. Women with more extensive educational background, work experience and social networks act as mentors, organising training courses and launching projects.

### 3.3.9. Bulgaria: Exchange of knowledge between urban youth and rural women

Another SIMRA activity is being conducted in Bulgaria under the "Baba Residence" project. "Baba", which means grandmother, is an initiative bringing together urban youth and elderly women in depopulating villages in the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria. It lays the ground for a truthful exchange of knowledge and care between the youth and the elderly through design thinking and ethnological approaches. The result is a new quality of human relations between generations, documentation and creative utilisation of local folklore and social entrepreneurial projects that help the villages flourish again. The general idea is to activate unemployed young people to create new innovative ideas based on rural tradition.

### 3.3.10. Croatia: Raising rural women's awareness of their opportunities

The "European opportunities for rural women" project was implemented by the Centre for Education, Counselling and Research, K-zone (gender and media association), a local radio-station, and women's association HERA, in three north-west Croatian counties<sup>48</sup>. The project's goal is to inform women from

<sup>46</sup> The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; Examples of project support for young farmers and younger people in rural Europe available at: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/fms/pdf/6B892598-9EFD-5574-62AE-4D75E320D118.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas, EU Horizon 2020, available at: <http://www.simra-h2020.eu>

<sup>48</sup> European opportunities for rural women, available at: <http://www.cesi.hr/en/european-opportunities-for-rural-women/>

rural areas about the opportunities that come with European Union membership and to raise awareness of their contributions to the EU. It includes the education of women regarding the financial opportunities through EU funds and is targeted to women who show interest and capabilities for the development of innovative projects in the educational programme. Women who lead innovative projects, run collectives, family farms, crafts or initiatives will be filmed in four short movies which will be shown at round table discussions, fairs, various events, on local TV stations and a YouTube channel. The intention is to display examples of good practice and innovative approaches which have potential in other parts of the country as well as to display their contribution to the development of local communities.

### **3.4. Common features and main differences**

#### **3.4.1. Professional employment status**

The most important common characteristic of the professional status of women in rural areas across the EU is that, despite a gradual increase in the employment rate for women, equality has not yet been achieved in most Member States and regions. Typical, traditional expectations of women's professional ambitions predominate in many Member States, which is surprising at a time of new technology that provides opportunities for more educated professionals. Although data confirm that rural women are more educated, they still have less employment opportunities compared to both men in rural areas and women in urban areas.

On average, the employment position of women is better in the Northern and Western Member States compared to the Southern and Central-Eastern Member States. This has often been explained by a more conservative gender contract in the Mediterranean, as well as Eastern European countries, reflected in less political support for family and work reconciliation services. The economic strength of Member States also plays an important role in the availability of employment in the tertiary sector of the labour market.

#### **3.4.2. Women's labour force participation and farm ownership**

In recent decades the percentage of female farm heads has been increasing steadily. Moreover, many farm women start business-activities and small businesses on their farm to help continue the farm business in times of lower income from primary production. Statistics illustrate the increase of new on-farm businesses and there is evidence that many of the diversifying farms are doing well economically. This is particularly evident from the projects mainly implemented in Western and Northern European Member States focusing on the development of entrepreneurial and managerial skills of rural women.

#### **3.4.3. Measures implemented in improving gender pay gaps**

Women play an important role in numerous new activities, but often have to fight against traditional ideas of male entrepreneurship and experience, experiencing difficulty in being respected by business advisors. Many of the new activities lean heavily on traditional female interests and capabilities, and use the traditional idyllic image of rural areas and rural women to promote new products such as local food, accommodation and way of life. This claim is particularly confirmed by examples of gender-oriented rural development projects in new Member States.

There are differences between rural and urban areas in relation to income, levels of deprivation and subjective economic strain, with the most difficult situation occurring in the Member States with GDP below EU-28 average (PPS 16 468 in 2016). It is, however, in the rural areas of the Member States with

GDP above EU-28 average (PPS 16 468 in 2016)<sup>49</sup> that women worry most about their job security and income, but at the same time they are the most mobile in seeking better working conditions and leaving a rural environment. It is not possible to precisely understand and explain the situation of rural women regarding work and income based on statistical analysis; first of all because there is still a lack of gender-segregated statistics, and secondly because of the unreliability of female (un)employment statistics and their insufficient reflection of the real working situation of women. Many women do informally paid work that does not appear in statistics. Also, a lot of female work is not officially registered. This problem is even more obvious in rural areas where hidden unemployment and seasonal work is prominent.

#### 3.4.4. Legal recognition of informal work and other “invisible” activities

When it comes to balancing work and private life, urban women worry more than rural women do, which can be explained by different expectations among women. Many rural women accept that the combination of work and family is more complicated in rural areas, which reduces complaints about their situation.

There is a difference in recognizing different forms of “invisible” work of rural women between Member States. Socio-economically developed countries of Western and Northern Europe develop projects aimed at formal recognition, monitoring and remuneration of “invisible” activities, including different kinds of vulnerable social groups in the process. In the new Member States, particularly those with GDP below EU-28 average (PPS 16 468 in 2016)<sup>50</sup>, attention is still more focused on raising awareness of “invisible” activities and promotion of the professional role of rural women, but a strong (and even emotional) appreciation of tradition remains.

<sup>49</sup> Living conditions in Europe, 2018 edition, available at : <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9079352/KS-DZ-18-001-EN-N.pdf/884f6fec-2450-430a-b68d-f12c3012f4d0>

<sup>50</sup> Living conditions in Europe, 2018 edition, available at : <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9079352/KS-DZ-18-001-EN-N.pdf/884f6fec-2450-430a-b68d-f12c3012f4d0>



## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### KEY FINDINGS

- Female participation in the informal rural economy is not statistically recognised.
- Women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy.
- Women in rural areas are also an invisible force as their presence and role are not accurately reflected in statistics.
- There is a new phenomenon occurring in some European regions showing that well-educated women decide to move to the countryside to carry out their professional activities.
- Effective policies for informal workers require better gender-disaggregated statistics, particularly in those employment categories that are usually unaccounted for, such as domestic and home-based workers.

### 4.1. Main conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the data analysis:

- Women in rural areas of the EU make up below 50% of the total rural population, they represent 45% of the economically active population and about 40% of them work on their family farms. Their importance in rural economy is even greater, since their participation through the informal rural economy is not statistically recognised.
- Despite an overall increase in women's employment rates in Europe, including predominantly rural areas, important differences between EU countries remain. According to the analysis, women's employment in EU rural regions (age class 15-64) has increased by almost 2% in the period 2013-2017. The largest increase in the share of employed women in rural regions was recorded in Hungary (17.1%), followed by Spain, Lithuania and Croatia, with about 12%; in the age category 20-64, countries in which the highest employment rates are registered are Sweden, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom, while in Italy, Greece and Croatia these rates are the lowest.
- Women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy (overall economy), although there is no single pattern in the Member States; Sweden leads in the share of women workers as informal employees, followed by Spain, Germany and France.
- Regarding informal employment in agriculture, a higher participation of women is recorded in Romania, Slovenia, Lithuania and Croatia, and the lowest share in Sweden, Malta, Czech Republic and Germany; the most obvious particularity of part-time work is that it is a specific form of employment primarily affecting women. In the sector of Agriculture, forestry and fishing, the highest values are registered for Romania, Poland and Germany.
- The greatest number of women as contributing workers in informal employment has been found in Romania, Luxembourg and Slovenia.
- The average rate of self-employed women in EU rural areas is about 38%, but due to a lack of data it is hard to compare and explain the share of women in self-employment per Member States.



- The unemployment rate in rural areas began to decline during the analysed period (2013-2017); women have been more affected by unemployment than men (7.1% vs. 7.6% respectively). The highest rate of women's unemployment is registered in rural regions in Greece.
- Around 30% of farms across the EU-28 are managed by women; countries with the highest share of women as farm managers are Latvia and Lithuania, while in other Member States the proportion of female farm managers was below the EU average (Germany, Denmark, Malta, The Netherlands). The majority of female farm managers are in the age category 55-64. The number of female farm managers has declined during the past decade in all age categories.
- Women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.2% below those of men in the EU-28; according to the statistical data analysis, the gender pay gap varied from 5.2% in Romania to 25.3% in Estonia. The gender pension gap stood at 37.6% in the 65-and-over age group, and in rural areas it was 10% higher.

Conclusions from the literature analysis are as follows:

- Female employment rates depend on several key factors: education and qualification level, motherhood status, family situation, number and age of children.
- Women in rural areas are also an invisible force as their presence and role are not accurately reflected in statistics; many of those who are involved in agricultural work do not receive a separate income from their husband or other male members of the household. By assisting their employed spouses, they are not entitled to social security in their own right and often do not hold property rights to land or farms.
- Data show that women workers were generally more often salaried than their male counterparts, but important differences exist in the number of salaried workers from country to country. These differences reflect the distribution of jobs between different sectors of the economy, since women tend to be concentrated in the tertiary sector (services). However, rural areas are still dominated by the primary sector (agriculture, fishing), especially in Member States with GDP below EU-28 average (PPS 16 468 in 2016), and that is why this trend is not obvious in rural women's wages.
- There is a new phenomenon occurring in some European regions showing that well-educated women are deciding to move to the countryside to carry out their professional activities. They are more aware of gender inequality, have greater bargaining power, and therefore, achieve better work-life conciliation with their male partners. These women are slowly building new rural societies with their work, skills and insights, changing social norms concerning family responsibilities (Baylina et al., 2017).
- The supranational gender equality regime of the EU, in place since the 1990s, affects gender-related social policy including the so-called 'gender-neutral' policy fields such as the common agricultural policy and rural development policy. However, a number of analyses reveals that instead of promoting rural women's agencies and empowerment, RDPs often preserve and perpetuate traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures in rural societies (Istencic, 2015; Oedl-Wieser, 2015; Shortall and Bock, 2015).
- The personal knowledge and capabilities of rural women confirm that they are prepared for managerial positions in the agri-food business and for entrepreneurial activities; they have the capabilities to diversify agricultural and rural activities, and to create new employment

opportunities in the countryside. The higher involvement of rural women in agricultural and rural areas would lead to bettering their social status and to new labour opportunities, particularly in the domain of sustainable management of natural resources, education, extension service, social and professional alliances (Jackova et al., 2016).

- The contribution of women in the rural economy may be promoted through self-employment and small business; women can be leaders of innovative projects and diversification in rural areas (agro-tourism activities, artisan food and drink production, craft enterprises, telecommunication and care-giving services).
- In remote areas, stereotypical gendered behaviours and sexist attitudes are more commonplace than in urban areas; they also start to emerge very early in life.
- The EU still insufficiently implements its gender policies, and gender equality and gender mainstreaming are often no more than a rhetorical reference rather than an integral part of (national) programmes. Gender issues should be integrated into rural policies at various levels, and there is a need to intensify research on rural governance structures and processes from a gender equality perspective (Wiest, 2016).

## 4.2. Policy recommendations

- The integration of gender symmetry in rural areas is an obligation in the design and implementation of rural development strategies, programmes and projects. To fill the void that still exists in data about women in farming across Europe, particularly for new Member States, surveying, as well as data collection, are important preliminary steps in the implementation of gender symmetry-focused development policies, as already suggested by researchers (Sayadi and Calatrava-Requena, 2008; Istenic, 2015).
- Effective policies for informal workers require better gender-disaggregated statistics, particularly in those employment categories that are usually unaccounted for, such as domestic and home-based workers.
- Shared ownership of farms and agricultural enterprises must be promoted and supported, and the economic and social role of assisting spouses recognised.
- Since one of the key disadvantages of informal work performed by women is the risk of non-payment for the work done, there is a need to legitimise their informal work as much as possible.
- Women living in rural areas require support to achieve better health care, childcare and elderly care by investing in training, counselling and coaching to strengthen the potential for change in traditional assumptions, attitudes and behaviours.
- Policies should support women's involvement in professional, cultural and civic associations.
- Policies should develop specific educational programmes for men, who should be encouraged to think critically and assess their own behaviour and attitudes towards women, as this is the critical point at which transformation happens<sup>51</sup> (particularly for rural regions where a more traditional mentality prevails).

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<sup>51</sup> Food & Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture – ROSA, available at: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/hunger-foodsecurity-nutrition/discussions/changing-womens-lives-rural-world-joint-eu-germany-finland-and-netherlands-panel-2018>.

- Retirement plans have to reflect women's divergent needs. Policies should review their plans and communications through a gender lens to ensure they address the specific issues and needs of the female workforce.
- As suggested by Alonso and Trillo (2014), the focus should be on designing a trade network with a singular brand, taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the ICTs to provide a platform for business innovation in traditional products linked to the image of "rural authenticity".
- More business education and training focusing on making business plans, developing leadership skills and bookkeeping is needed for women in rural areas. Personalised coaching tailored to the needs of women is more important than traditional classroom teaching.
- Through training and skills development, rural girls and women can play a much greater role in the development of green food and agricultural value chains, both as current and future agricultural workers and entrepreneurs. Policy measures should support women farmers who can play a significant role in protecting biodiversity through the use of indigenous crops and agro-ecological farming methods that are environmentally friendly and free of toxic chemicals.
- The role of governments is to provide the social and physical infrastructure that enables rural women's participation in projects and activities resulting in sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural production, processing, transport and marketing.
- Policy measures should be developed to respect the specificities of each Member State, including socio-economic, demographic and cultural characteristics of rural regions and women themselves (using as much of an individual approach as possible).

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## ANNEX

### 1. USEFUL LINKS:

- Equality between men and women, available at:  
[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/employment\\_and\\_social\\_policy/1710.html?root=1710](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/employment_and_social_policy/1710.html?root=1710)
- The European Network of Equality Bodies, available at:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/who-we-work-gender-equality/national-gender-equality-bodies\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/who-we-work-gender-equality/national-gender-equality-bodies_en)
- EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality; Literature and legislation, available at:  
<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/literature-and-legislation>



## 2. ADDITIONAL DATA

**Table 1: Women in employment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 15-64 years), EU-28**

Number of persons	2013	2017	2017/2013
Total persons ('000)	31,903.50	32,447.40	<b>101.70</b>
Women ('000)	14,214.80	14,487.00	<b>101.91</b>
(%)	<b>44.56</b>	<b>44.65</b>	

Source: European Commission, Statistical Factsheet, May 2018

**Table 2: Women in unemployment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 20-64), EU-28**

No. of persons	2013	2017	2017/2013
Total persons ('000)	3,437.80	2,293.70	<b>66.72</b>
Women ('000)	1,574.10	1,050.40	<b>66.73</b>
%	<b>45.79</b>	<b>45.80</b>	

Source: Eurostat

**Table 3: Structure of the farm labour force, 2013**

No. of persons	Holders	Members of holder's family	Total family labour force	Regular non family labour force
Persons	10,398,890	9,800,500	20,199,360	<b>2,005,920</b>
Of which women (%)	30.00	57.60	43.40	<b>35.10</b>

Source: Eurostat

**Table 4: Share of women in employment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 20-64 years) by MS, %**

Member State	2013	2017	2017/2013
Belgium	62.4	64.7	103.7
Bulgaria	55.7	60.9	109.3
Czechia	63.9	70.5	110.3
Denmark	70.6	70.7	100.1
Germany	73.9	76.8	103.9
Estonia	69.4	73.4	105.8
Ireland	59.6	65.1	109.2
Greece	44.8	49.2	109.8
Spain	53.0	59.7	112.6
Croatia	40.8	45.7	112.0
Italy	49.5	51.9	104.9
Latvia	65.6	70.9	108.1
Lithuania	62.9	70.8	112.6
Hungary	53.3	62.4	117.1
Netherlands	67.8	69.1	101.9
Austria	71.2	73.9	103.8
Poland	55.9	60.3	107.8
Portugal	63.6	69.0	108.5
Romania	58.8	63.5	108.0
Slovenia	61.0	68.3	112.0
Slovakia	57.8	63.3	109.5
Finland	69.6	71.5	102.7
Sweden	78.5	79.3	101.0
United Kingdom	70.7	72.9	103.1

**Source:** Eurostat

**Table 5: Share of women in unemployment in predominantly rural regions (age class: 20-64 years) by MS, %**

Member State	2013	2017	2017/2013
Belgium	8.4	5.5	65.5
Bulgaria	13.9	8.2	59.0
Czechia	8.1	3.0	37.0
Denmark	6.5	4.9	75.4
Germany	4.7	3.0	63.8
Estonia	6.1	5.2	85.3
Ireland	12.8	6.2	48.4
Greece	29.0	25.2	86.9
Spain	23.3	17.1	73.4
Croatia	...	...	...
Italy	12.1	11.7	96.7
Latvia	13.5	8.7	64.4
Lithuania	13.4	...	...
Hungary	11.8	6.4	54.2
Netherlands	...	...	...
Austria	4.0	3.6	90.0
Poland	12.7	6.0	47.2
Portugal	14.1	8.1	57.5
Romania	5.7	4.5	79.0
Slovenia	12.5	8.1	64.8
Slovakia	16.3	11.0	67.5
Finland	7.3	7.9	108.2
Sweden	5.7	5.4	94.7
United Kingdom	4.0	3.0	75.0

Source: Eurostat

**Table 6: Gender pay gap in unadjusted form of industry, construction and services (except public administration, defence compulsory social security) – structure of earnings survey methodology**

Member State	2013	2014	2015	2016	2016/2013
EU (current composition)	16.8	16.6	16.5	16.2	<b>96.4</b>
EU (before the accession of Croatia)	16.9	16.6	16.6	16.3	<b>96.5</b>
Euro area (19 countries)	17.1	16.9	16.7	16.3	<b>95.3</b>
Euro area (18 countries)	17.2	16.9	16.7	16.3	<b>94.8</b>
Euro area (17 countries)	17.2	16.8	16.6	16.3	<b>94.8</b>

Source: Eurostat

**Table 7: Gender Equality Index in the EU**

Category	Index 100 = Equality
<b>WORK</b>	<b>69.0</b>
- Participation	76.6
- Segregation & quality of work	62.2
<b>MONEY</b>	<b>68.9</b>
- Financial resources	69.5
- Economic situation	79.6
<b>TIME</b>	<b>38.8</b>
- Care activities	45.5
- Social activities	33.0

Source: Malgesini Rey and Cesarini-Sforza, 2015



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This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee, gives overview of the professional status of rural women in Europe, their position in the labour market, their employment situation in rural areas in most relevant Member States. The study provides identification of the best practices implemented in the Member States and concludes with policy recommendations on the improvement of the employment situation and legal status of women living in rural areas of the EU.

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