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**Long-term trends in gender equality
and the empowerment of women in the ECE region**

Trends in gender equality in the ECE region

Note by the ECE Statistical Division¹

Summary

Resolution 2013/18 of the Economic and Social Council encouraged the United Nations Regional Commissions to undertake a regional review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to assess progress made toward gender equality and the empowerment of women. The present note addresses trends in gender equality in selected areas over the last 15-20 years, using data from the UNECE Gender Database. It examines life expectancy, education, employment, pay, power and decision-making, and violence against women. Notwithstanding considerable improvements in most countries, important gender gaps remain. There is also a great variation among UNECE countries in all the areas examined.

I. Introduction

- As with all policy programmes, the Beijing Platform for Action needs to be monitored with objective statistical indicators, and several international initiatives have aimed at compiling the necessary statistics. The Platform itself identifies the production and

¹ The document is submitted after the deadline because of the need to consider most up-to-date statistical data.



dissemination of gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation as one of its strategic objectives.

2. Globally, the United Nations Statistics Division has published the World's Women reports every five years and now publishes data on the global minimum set of gender indicators.²

3. The European Union has been developing a set of indicators to monitor in its member countries the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the EU Road Map and Strategy on Equality between Women and Men.³ In summer 2014, the European Institute for Gender Equality launched the EU Gender Equality Index, which synthesizes data on gender equality from a number of different domains.⁴

4. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Gender Data Portal includes selected indicators that shed light on gender inequalities in education, employment and entrepreneurship as well as a Gender, Institutions and Development Database.⁵ The World Bank portal for gender equality data and statistics includes gender datasets from the United Nations, as well as World Bank-conducted or -funded surveys and reports.⁶

5. At the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Task Force on Indicators of Gender Equality completed its work on consolidating and systematizing existing gender relevant statistical indicators in 2014. It developed a framework for grouping indicators according to most of the domains defined by the sections of the Beijing Platform for Action, with each of these domains including a hierarchy of headline and supporting indicators. The outcome of this work will be reflected in the UNECE Gender Database⁷ which currently contains data for monitoring the situation of women and men in UNECE member countries and for evaluating the effectiveness of policies.

6. The UNECE Gender Database was launched in 2003 in English and Russian. The topics covered include population, fertility, families and households, work and the economy, education, public life and decision-making, health and mortality, crime and violence, science and information and communication technology, and work-life balance. Data are collected from national statistical offices as well as international sources.

7. The present paper addresses changes in gender equality in selected areas relying on data from the UNECE Gender Database. It begins with the examination of the gender gap in life expectancy, proceeding further to education, employment, pay, power and decision-making, and violence. The number of UNECE countries for which data are available varies. Data coverage is best on life expectancy, graduates and parliamentarians, whereas data on homicide rates and on employment rates of parents are available for less than half of the member countries.

8. For most issues, the reference year against which the changes are presented is 2000, as this is the year when the time series in the Database has the highest country coverage. In the case of life expectancy, graduates and parliamentarians, the available data allows examining changes since 1995, the year of adoption of the Beijing Platform.

² Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/default.html>.

³ Available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_social_policy_equality/equality/indicators_gender.

⁴ Available at <http://eige.europa.eu/content/activities/gender-equality-index>.

⁵ Available at <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data>.

⁶ Available at <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender>.

⁷ Available at <http://www.unece.org/data>.

9. For clarity of presentation, most graphs in this paper display the values for the beginning and end of the period. Some graphs display just a few countries selected to represent different patterns of level and change based on analysis covering the entire studied period. The complete set of available data can be accessed through the link under each graph leading to the corresponding section of the UNECE Gender Database.

II. Trends in selected aspects of gender equality

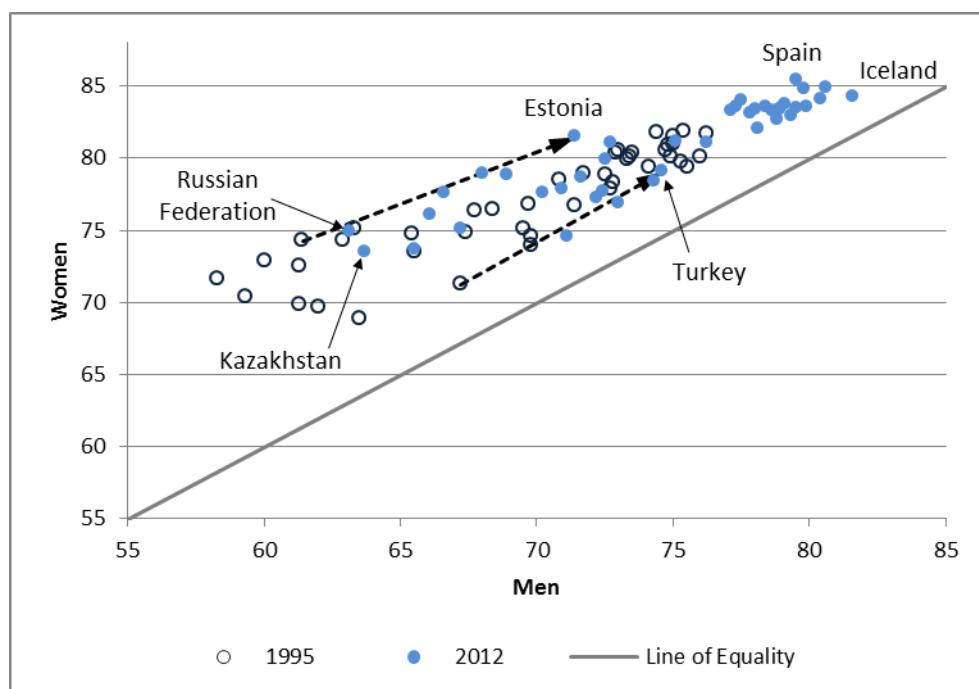
A. Life expectancy

10. Life expectancy is the most commonly used summary measure to describe population health and human development. A well-known characteristic of life expectancy is that it is higher for women than for men, which is determined by a combination of biological and socio-economic factors.

11. Since 1995, life expectancy of women and men has increased in all UNECE countries whereas its level varies considerably. The points in figure 1 reflect the distribution of life expectancy for men and women in 43 UNECE countries in 1995 and 2012, respectively.

12. The cluster of countries with the highest life expectancies in 2012 – over 77 years for men and over 82 years for women – are all members of the OECD. The points towards the left side of the chart with male life expectancy below 70 years are countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Baltic countries. The highest life expectancy in 2012 for women was 85.5 years in Spain, and 81.6 years for men in Iceland.

Figure 1
Life expectancy of women and men at birth – scatter chart



Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: unece.org/data-LifeExpectancy](http://unece.org/data-LifeExpectancy)). The latest data for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania and Russian Federation is from 2010.

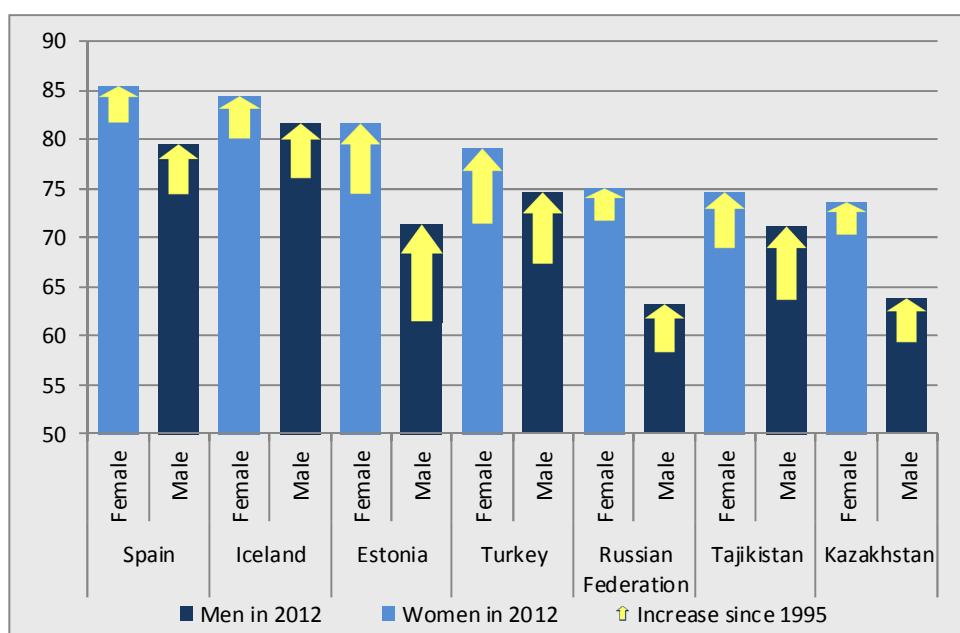
13. In figure 1, the distance between each data point and the line of equality reflects the difference between women's and men's life expectancy. A country with equal life expectancy for men and women would lie on this line. However, we see that all of the data points lie above this line, which indicates higher life expectancy for women than men in all countries. This gender gap varies considerably across countries.

14. Whilst women live longer than men, men have caught up slightly: the median increase in the life expectancy for men was an extra 4.8 years, compared to 3.5 for women. Nevertheless, in six countries the difference between life expectancy of men and women is ten years or more, comprising Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

15. Since 1995, the largest increase in women's life expectancy was an extra 7.8 years in Turkey, and for men an extra 10.0 years in Estonia (marked by arrows in figure 1). Individual changes for a selection of countries are also illustrated in figure 2, which includes the countries with the highest and lowest life expectancies for men and women, as well as examples of countries from different geographical regions.

Figure 2

Life expectancy at birth in 2012 for men and women in selected countries, with change since 1995



Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: Unece.org/data-LifeExpectancy](http://Unece.org/data-LifeExpectancy)). The latest data for Kazakhstan and Russian Federation is from 2010.

B. Education

1. Tertiary level graduates

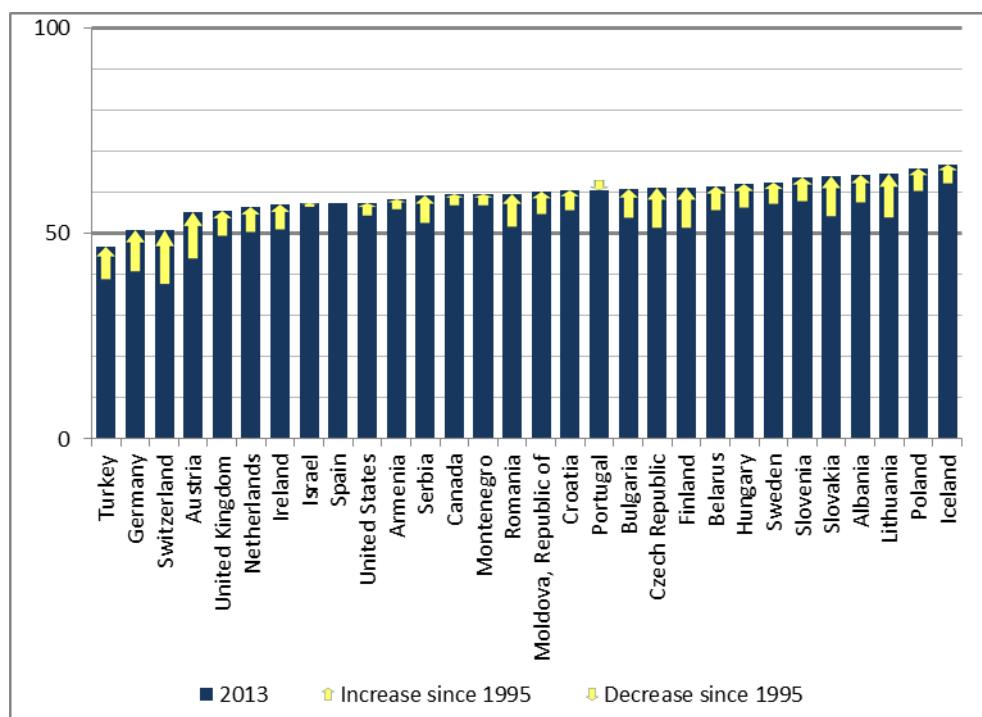
16. This section looks at women's share of graduates in tertiary education, which includes graduates at levels 5A (Theoretical programmes) and 6 (Advanced research programmes) of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

17. Among the 50 UNECE countries for which data are available for 2011⁸, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Turkey and Uzbekistan are the only countries where men outnumber women among the graduates of theoretical and advanced programmes. Of these, Tajikistan has the lowest share of women amongst graduates at 32 per cent, whilst Turkey has 47 per cent women graduates, with large increases since 2000. In the rest of UNECE countries, the percentage ranged between 51 and 68.

18. From 1995 to 2011, women's share of graduates in tertiary education has generally increased (figure 3). In 25 out of the 30 countries with data for both years, women already accounted for more than half of tertiary graduates in 1995, and have since continued to increase their share amongst graduates. In further four countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom), parity of women and men was achieved since.

Figure 3

Percentage of female graduates from theoretical and advanced programmes in 2011, with changes since 1995



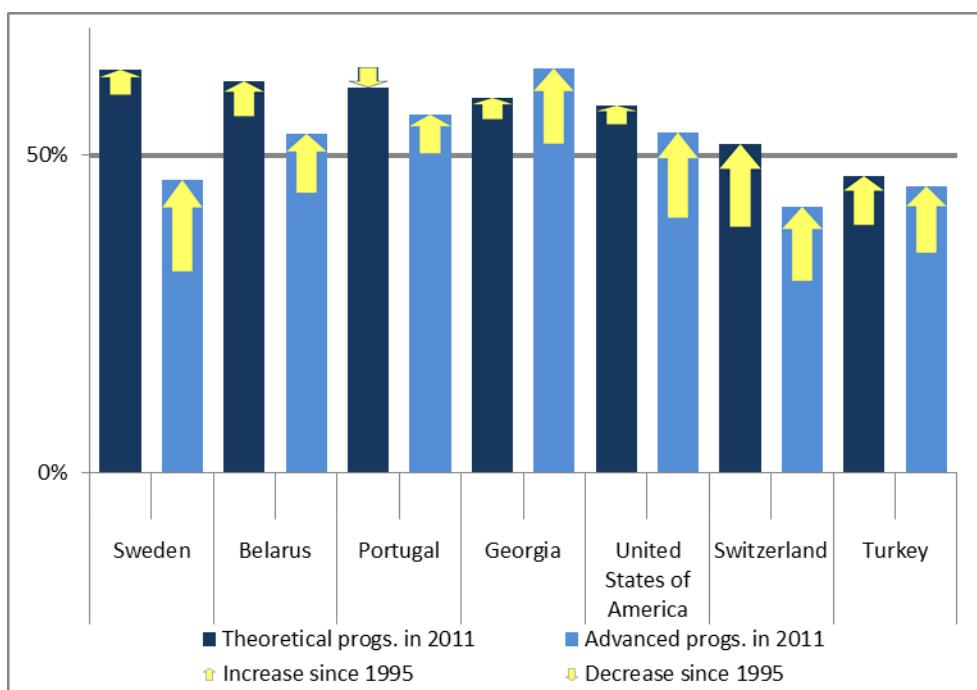
Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: Unece.org/data-Graduates](http://Unece.org/data-Graduates)). For Albania and Israel, 2011 data refer to 2010. For Iceland, 2011 data refer to 2009. Includes theoretical and advanced programmes (ISCED levels 5A and 6).

19. Whilst women generally make up the greatest share of theoretical programmes (such as Bachelor's degrees), which comprise the bulk of graduates, they lag behind with regard to advanced research programmes (such as PhDs) (figure 4). An exception to this is Georgia, which has a greater share of women graduates in advanced research programmes, compared to theoretical programmes. In 21 out of 47 countries with data, women's share of advanced research graduates has increased to a majority since 1995.

⁸ In this section, 1995, 2000 and 2011 refer to the academic years of 1995/96, 2000/01 and 2011/12, respectively.

Figure 4

Percentage of graduates who are women (in theoretical and advanced programmes) in selected countries in 2011, with change since 1995



Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: Unece.org/data-Graduates](http://Unece.org/data-Graduates)). The reference year for the change in Switzerland is 1997 and in Georgia 2000. Includes theoretical and advanced programmes (ISCED levels 5A and 6).

2. Subject choices of men and women

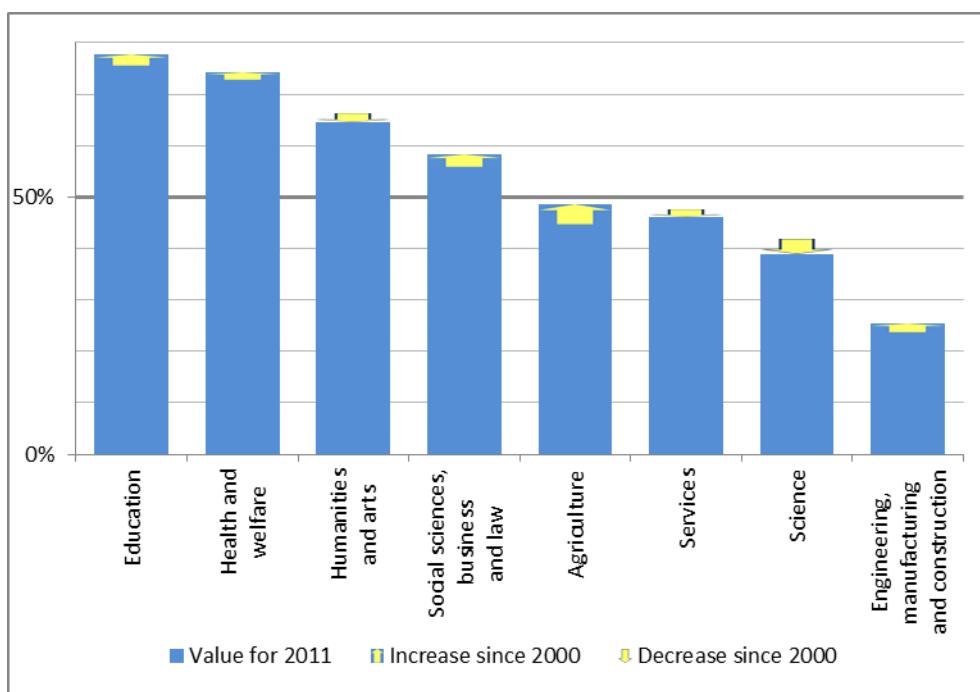
20. Subject choices at tertiary level are of interest to gender analysis as they can reflect stereotypes of “masculine” and “feminine” subject areas. Furthermore, some subjects may be preferred by potential employers, and may affect occupational segregation once graduates enter the labour market.

21. Whilst the take-up of particular subject groups by men and women varies between countries and over time, in many UNECE countries the overall gender disparity in the enrolment of students in different subjects has changed relatively little. Where progress towards parity is made for one particular subject, it is often offset by a growing disparity for another subject.

22. Looking at the gender balance in the take-up of particular subject groups in 33 UNECE countries, we see that there has been a very slight shift in the subjects studied by men and women from 2000 to 2011. The same subject groups remain dominated by one particular sex. This can be seen by slight increases since 2000 in the proportions of women studying subjects that were already female-dominated, such as Education, and Health and welfare, and the decreases in the proportions of women studying Science, where men were already in majority.

Figure 5

Percentage of women studying selected subject areas at tertiary level in 2011, with change since 2000



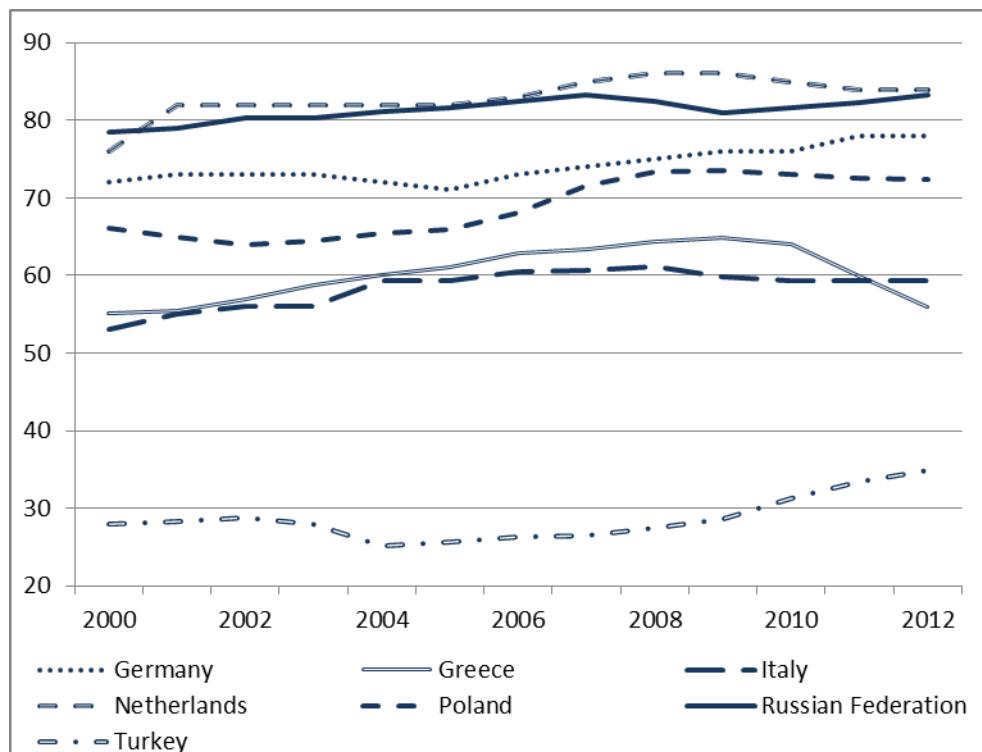
Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: Unece.org/data-TertiaryStudents](http://Unece.org/data-TertiaryStudents)). Average of the 33 countries with available data for both the beginning and the end of the period. Includes advanced research, theoretical and occupational-oriented programmes (ISCED levels 5A, 5B, and 6).

C. Employment

23. Women's employment rates in UNECE countries have remained considerably lower than men's. Figure 6 shows employment rates of 25-49 year-old women in selected countries, expressed as the percentage of the population that is employed. The age group 25-49 allows focusing the measure on the ages when most people have completed education and when commitment to childrearing can be a significant factor of the gender gap in employment.

Figure 6

Employment rates of women aged 25-49 in selected countries from 2000 to 2012, percentage



Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database ([url: Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate1](http://Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate1); for the Russian Federation and Turkey, the url is Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate3)

24. There is a wide variation between countries in both the levels and trends of women's employment rates (figure 6). In 21 countries out of 27 for which data is available, there was an increase in female employment rates between 2000 and around 2008, although in 9 of these 21 countries men's employment rates decreased over that period. Following 2008, 17 countries saw a decrease in employment rates of both men and women as a result of the global recession.

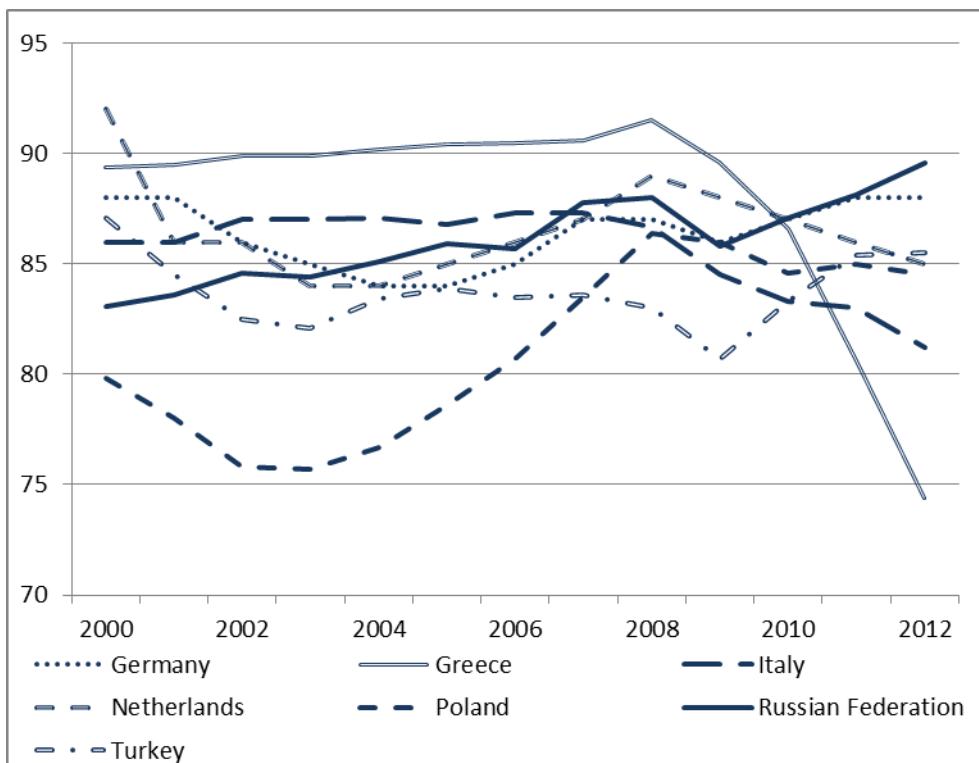
25. Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina had the lowest employment rates of 25-49 year-old women amongst countries with available data in 2012, at 35 and 39 per cent, respectively. Other countries with relatively low levels include Malta at 50 per cent, the Republic of Moldova, at 53 per cent, and Greece at 56 per cent. At the other end of the scale, Austria, Norway and Sweden had employment rates for women of between 82-83 per cent in 2012, followed by Switzerland at 80 per cent.

26. Among the countries selected to represent the different employment rate trends in figure 6, Germany and Turkey did not see a dip in women's employment rates after 2008. In the case of Greece and Poland, the decrease continued to 2012, with the decrease in Greece being particularly large. In Italy, after an increase until 2004, the rate levelled. The Russian Federation saw a small dip in women's employment rates, followed by increases that reached the pre-2008 level.

27. The post-2008 recession in Greece and in Italy has effected men's employment more than women's. Similarly, the dip in employment rates that occurred in Poland around 2003 also effected men's rates more than those for women, although men's employment rates recovered more strongly afterwards than women's.

Figure 7

Employment rates of men aged 25-49 in selected countries from 2000 to 2012, percentage.



Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database ([url: Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate1](http://Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate1); for the Russian Federation and Turkey the url is Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate3).

28. The gender gap in the employment rates of men and women has also changed. The existing gap can be partly attributed to the traditional gender division of labour, as well as to economic circumstances. Family responsibilities therefore have a significant impact on women's participation in the labour market and employment.

29. Figure 8 shows the gender gap in employment rates and its change since 2000. Out of the 28 countries with data, 20 saw a reduction of the gender gap in employment rates. Particularly large decreases were observed for Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg. In 16 countries, the decrease in the gender gap in employment rates occurs in the context of falling employment rates of men, marked with red arrows in figure 8. In Germany, Israel, Kazakhstan and Poland, the gap narrowed in the context of increasing employment rates for both men and women.

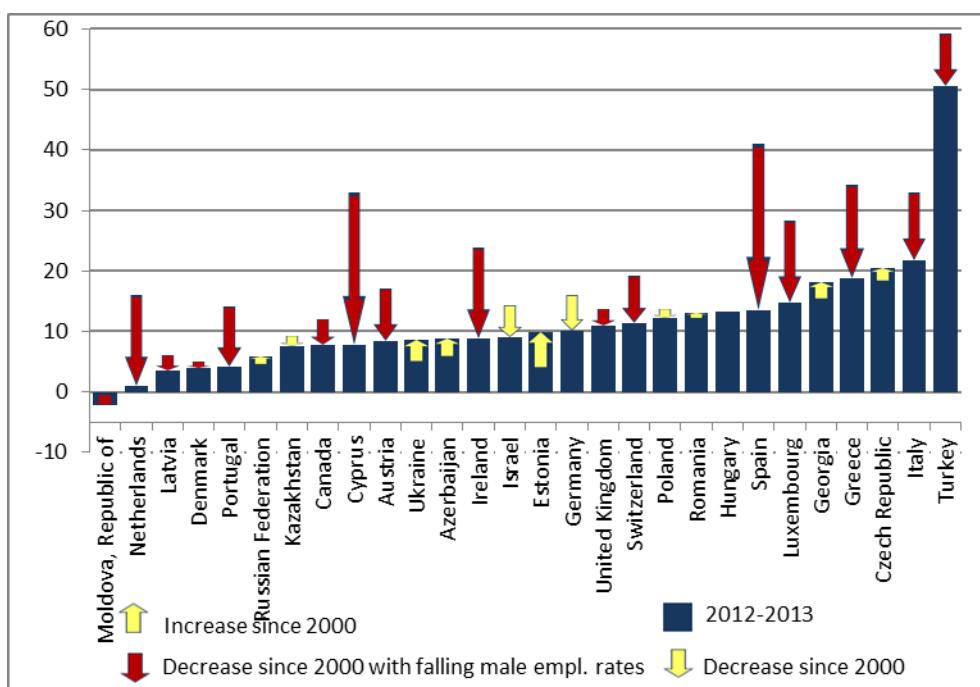
30. In the Republic of Moldova, men's employment rates have become lower than women's rates. In five countries (Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine) the gap increased by more than two percentage points. In seven countries, the magnitude of the change in the employment gap was within two percentage points of its 2000 value.

31. While the gender gap in employment rates has diminished in the crisis years starting 2008, in most countries this has been due to a worsening of men's conditions on the labour market rather than to the improvement in those of women. Male employment appears to have been more severely hit by the crisis, probably related to the fact that lay-offs have

occurred especially in male-dominated sectors.⁹ However, even before the 2008 crisis, in the period from 2000 to 2008, there were more countries where women's employment rates increased while men's rates decreased, compared to the number of countries with the reverse pattern of changes.

Figure 8

Gender gap in employment rates of 25 to 49 year olds in 2012-2013, with change since 2000, percentage points.



Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database (url for CIS countries, plus Georgia and Turkey: Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate3; for other countries, url: Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate1). The 2000 data for Kazakhstan refers to 2001 and for Czech Republic and Latvia to 2002.

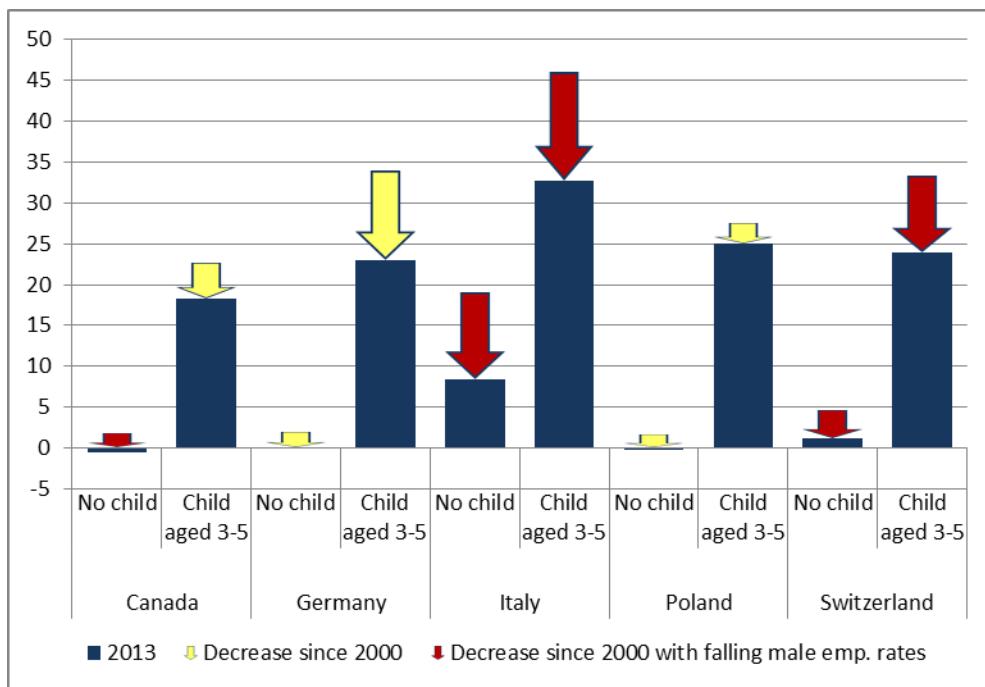
32. The gender gap in employment rates is much lower for men and women without children than for parents having a child between three to five years old. In many countries, men and women aged 25 to 49 without children had almost equal employment rates in 2013, as can be seen from the examples of Canada, Germany and Poland in figure 9. For parents with a child aged 3-5, women had 25 percentage points lower employment rate than men, indicating that women still undertake most of the care for their children in the pre-school age. Furthermore, in a number of UNECE countries the employment rate of women without children has exceeded that of men without children.

33. In many countries, including Canada, Germany and Poland represented in figure 9, men's employment rates increased or remained unchanged between 2000 and 2013, so the narrowing of the gender gaps in these countries can be attributed to increases in employment rates of women. For others, including Italy and Switzerland in the chart, the narrowing of these gaps is partly attributable to decreases in men's employment rates over that period.

⁹ Istat (2014), *The gender impact of the economic crisis*. Paper for the UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, March 2014.

Figure 9

Gender gaps in employment rates for 25-49 year-olds without children and with 3-5 year-old children in 2013, with change since 2000, percentage points



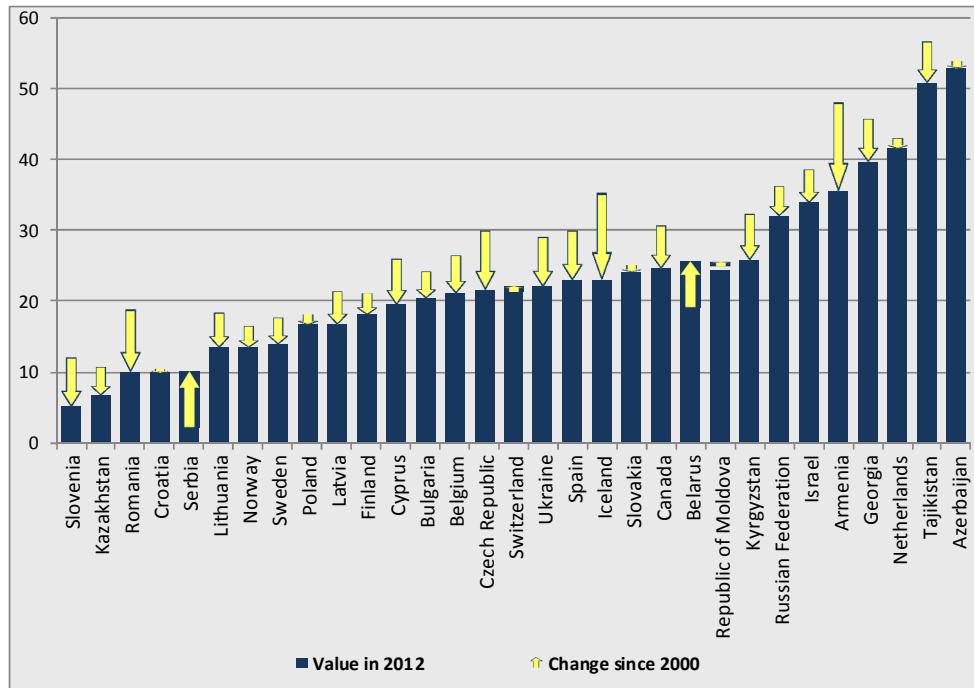
Source: UNECE Gender Database (url: Unece.org/data-EmploymentRate1). Data for Germany and Italy refer to 2012.

D. Pay gap

34. The UNECE Gender Database contains data on the gender pay gap in monthly earnings and hourly wage rates. The monthly earnings figures pertain to employees and self-employed people regardless of the number of hours they worked in a month. They also take into account overtime payments, bonuses and other payments, which are not included in the hourly wage rate calculated for employees. Since on average, women work fewer hours than men, the gender gap in monthly earnings usually exceeds that in hourly wage rates.

35. Variation across UNECE countries is large according to both measures of the gender pay gap. The gap in monthly earnings is highest in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan (53 and 51 per cent, respectively, see figure 10). The Netherlands also has a high gender gap in monthly earnings, which is related to the high prevalence of women's part-time work in that country. The lowest levels are recorded in Kazakhstan (7 per cent) and Slovenia (5 per cent). Out of the ten countries where the gender gap in monthly earnings exceeds 25 per cent, eight are from the region of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. In the other end of the distribution, four out of five countries with the gap of ten per cent or less are from South-eastern Europe.

Figure 10

Gender pay gap in monthly earnings in 2012 (per cent), with change since 2000

Source: UNECE Gender Database (url: Unece.org/data-GenderPayGap1).

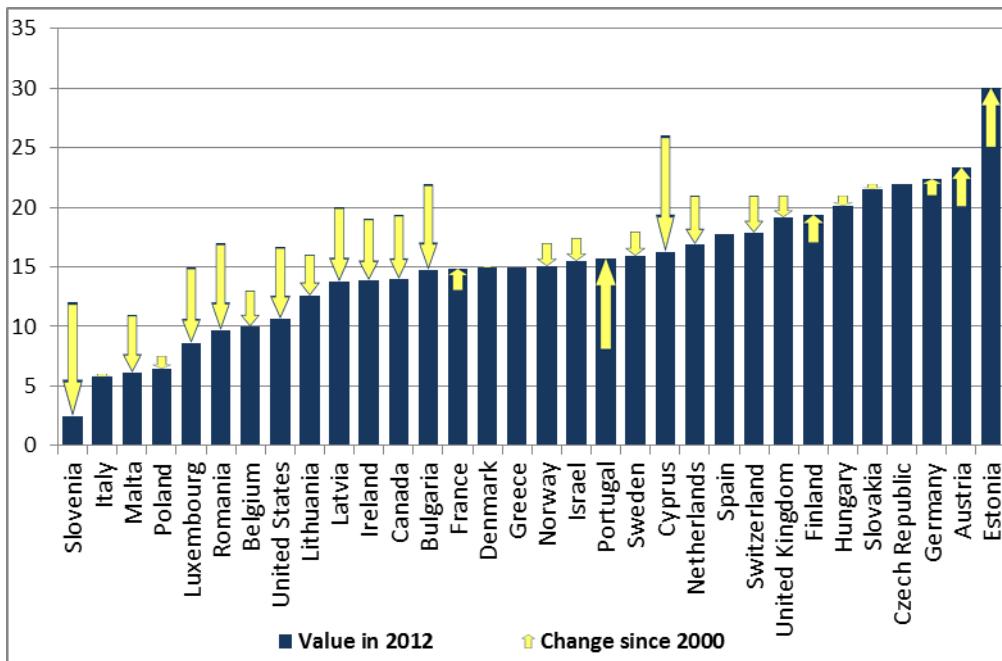
36. Out of the 31 countries with available data, 27 saw a decrease of the gender gap in monthly earnings over the last decade. Only two countries, Belarus and Serbia, had a noticeable increase, albeit in Serbia the gap remains among the narrowest in the UNECE region.

37. The gender gap in hourly wage rates varied in 2012 from 2.5 per cent in Slovenia to 30 per cent in Estonia (figure 11). The gap exceeded 20 per cent in a group of countries central Europe: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. Other than that, the variation in the gender gap in wage rates does not show any particular pattern by geographical region or by level of economic development. However, comparable data on the gap in wage rates are not available for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

38. In 22 out of the 32 countries with data, the gender gap in wage rates decreased from 2000 to 2012. In nine of them, the decrease was greater than five percentage points. A marked increase was observed in Estonia, from 25 to 30 per cent, and in Portugal, from 8 to 16 per cent.

39. In the intermediate years between 2000 and 2012, the gender gap trends had minor fluctuations from the overall direction indicated by the difference between the beginning and the end of the period. Notable exceptions include Slovenia and Hungary where there was first a decrease followed by an increase in the end of the period, and Portugal where most of the observed increase occurred after 2009.

Figure 11
Gender pay gap in wage rates in 2012 (per cent), with change since 2000



Source: UNECE Gender Database (url: Unece.org/data-GenderPayGap1).

40. The gender pay gap reflects complex interactions of factors that affect pay levels and the different ways in which men and women respond to those factors. Studies have found that factors such as education level, sector of activity, occupations, seniority and hours worked, have direct influence on pay levels and help understand the mechanisms behind the levels and trends in the gender pay gap¹⁰.

41. The influence of part-time work, for example, works not only on monthly earnings though the fact that the number of hours worked is lower. It is also seen to be associated with lower hourly earnings¹¹. Concerning education levels and occupational categories, returns from investments in human capital, namely through education and work experience, increase earnings. However, in spite of the higher proportions of women getting higher education degrees than men, the gender pay gap remains. Another factor is the choice of occupations. Women, including the highly educated, tend to work in occupations where the pay levels are lower compared to occupations generally held by men.

42. The UNECE Gender Database holds data on the gender gap by education level, though very few countries have these available since 2000. In 21 out of the 33 countries with available recent data, the gap in wage rates was largest among employees with tertiary education. No dominating pattern could be detected in the variation of the gap in monthly earnings by education level.

¹⁰ Nopo H, Daza N, Ramos J, 2012. Gender earning gaps around the world: a study of 64 countries. International Journal of Manpower Vol. 33 No. 5, 2012 pp. 464-513

Jingyo S, 2010. Decomposition of the change in the gender wage gap. Research in Business and Economics Journal, Vol 1.

¹¹ OECD (2012), Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now, OECD Publishing
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264179370-en>, p162

E. Power and decision-making

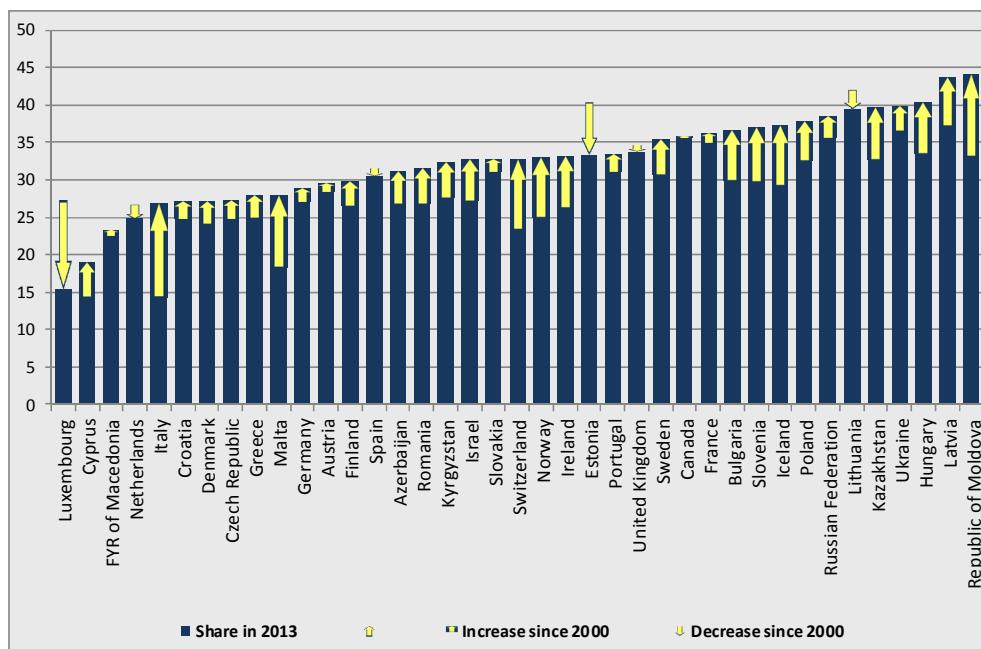
43. This section looks at the share of women in managerial positions and among members of national parliaments. Managerial positions are defined as employed persons in the major group 1 of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).¹²

44. In 2013, women in the UNECE region occupied less than one third of managerial positions, the percentage ranging from 16 per cent in Luxembourg to 44 per cent in the Republic of Moldova (figure 12). Four of the seven countries with the highest share of female managers are countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

45. The share of women among managers increased in 33 out of the 39 countries with data. In 13 countries, the increase was greater than five percentage points and in two of them, Italy and the Republic of Moldova, it was greater than ten percentage points. Only Estonia and Luxembourg experienced a noticeable decrease, from 40 to 33 per cent and from 27 to 16 per cent, respectively.

Figure 12

Percentage women among managers in 2013, with change since 2000



Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: Unece.org/data-EmploymentOccupation](http://Unece.org/data-EmploymentOccupation)). The 2013 data for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine refer to 2012, and to 2010 for Kyrgyzstan. The 2000 data for Kazakhstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia refer to 2001, and to 2002 for Kyrgyzstan.

46. In 2013, the share of women in UNECE countries' national parliaments varied from 9 per cent in Hungary and Ukraine to 40 per cent in Sweden. The five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – are the closest in achieving equal representation of men and women in their national parliaments (figure 13). Out of the 17

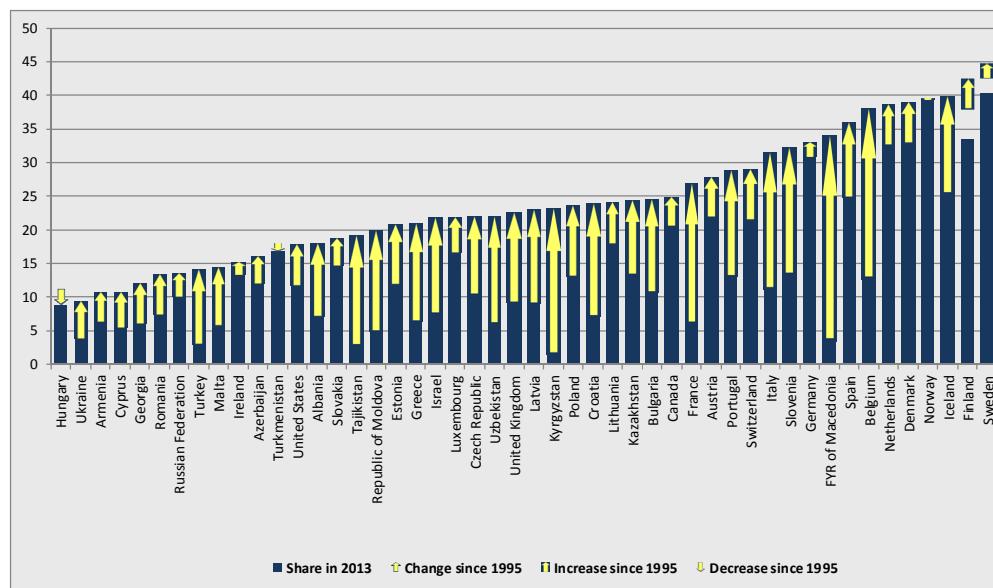
¹² According to ISCO 2008, managers plan, direct, coordinate and evaluate the overall activities of enterprises, governments and other organizations, or of organizational units within them, and formulate and review their policies, laws, rules and regulations.

countries where the share of female parliamentarians is below one fifth, 8 are from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and 4 from South-eastern Europe.

47. With very few exceptions, the share of women in national parliaments has increased markedly in UNECE countries. Twenty countries saw an increase of more than ten percentage points, among which five countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Kyrgyzstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) had an increase of 20 percentage points or more. No country had a sizeable decrease in the share of female parliamentarians.

Figure 13

Percentage of women among parliamentarians in 2013, with change since 1995



Source: UNECE Gender Database (url: Unece.org/data-MembersParliament).

48. Women's representation in senior positions in general is not necessarily correlated with their representation in parliament. For instance, in Sweden the share of women represented in national parliaments is much higher than among managers. The opposite is true in the Republic of Moldova, thus indicating that all countries in the region have room for improvement.

49. Equal representation of men and women in different power and decision-making bodies is still far from reality in most of the UNECE countries. No country has reached equal representation of men and women among national parliamentarians and managers. However, the trend towards more equal representation prevails.

F. Violence against women

50. Safety and security are another aspect of concern, both for human rights and for wellbeing, where the Beijing Platform for Action insisted on improving the situation of women. The Platform for Action stressed the need for policies to eliminate all forms of violence inflicted on women and the need to produce relevant data to track progress being made in this regard.

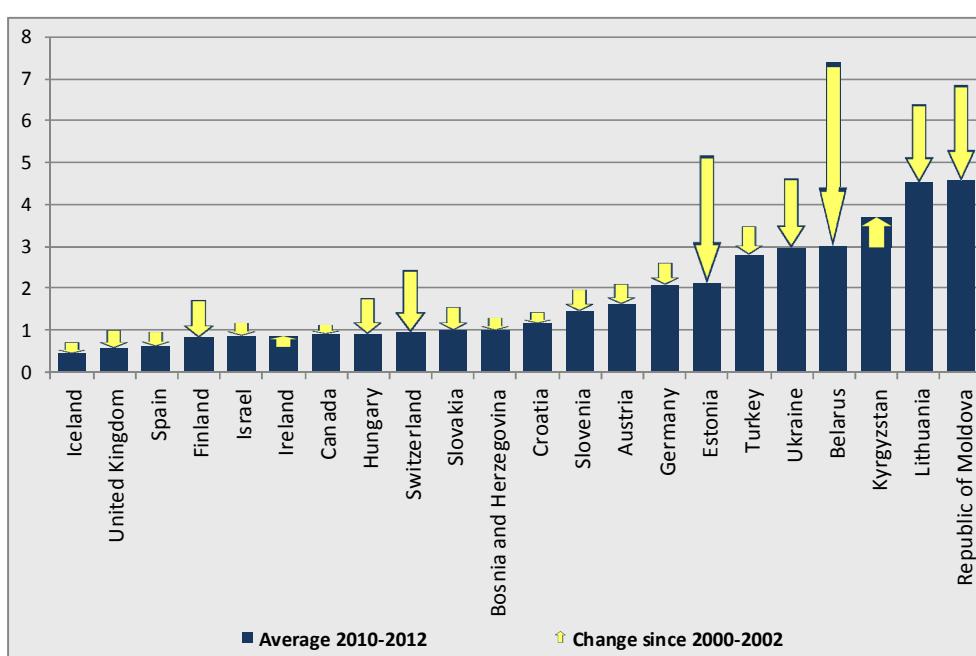
51. UNECE Gender Database contains administrative data on assaults, which depend heavily on national laws and practices of registering different types of crimes by the authorities as well as on the possibility and willingness of victims to report. These data do not give a guide to the actual level of violence against women and an increase in rates of

registered offenses can be a sign of increased engagement with the issue. However, concerning the most serious form of violence, homicide, administrative data can be regarded more reliable for an international comparison. Due to its seriousness, the killing of a person tends to be recorded more effectively and the definitions vary less than on other crimes.¹³

52. We can see in figure 14 that the homicide rate of women has decreased in the last decades for almost all countries with available data. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, countries with a high level of female homicide rate in 2000-2002 had a marked decrease over the decade. In Belarus and Estonia, the rate was reduced to less than half of the level of the early 2000s. After these decreases, the four countries Eastern Europe and Central Asia with data (Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and the two Baltic countries (Estonia and Lithuania) still have higher rates than most other countries.

Figure 14

Homicide rates of women per 100 thousand in 2010-2012, with change since 2000-2002



Source: UNECE Gender Database ([url: Unece.org/data-VictimsCrime](http://Unece.org/data-VictimsCrime)). Because of the low number of events in one year in small countries, the rates are calculated as averages for 2000-2002 and 2010-2012, respectively.

53. Over the same period, decreases have also been observed in men's homicide rates in most countries over the same period. In general, the homicide rate tends to be considerably higher for men compared to women. For women, a greater share of homicides is perpetrated by family members compared to homicides of men.

54. Survey data that would allow measuring the prevalence of violence against women is scarce. The recent EU-wide survey on violence against women, conducted in 2011-2012, provides some insight into the extent of the gender-based violence, at the European Union

¹³ European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010). International statistics on crime and justice. HEUNI Publication Series No. 64

level¹⁴. According to this, one third of women in the EU have suffered at least some form of violence since their fifteenth birthday (whether physical or sexual violence) and 22 per cent of women reported having suffered violence from a partner, whether a previous or a current one. The percentage of women who had suffered violence from a non-partner perpetrator since age 15 was also 22 per cent. Over the 12 months preceding the survey, 8 per cent of women suffered some form of violence, 4 per cent of women experienced partner violence, and 5 per cent non-partner violence.

III. Conclusions

55. Overall, for the past 15-20 years, development in the UNECE region has been towards more gender equality. The gender gaps in pay, occupying managerial positions and parliamentary representation have considerably narrowed in most countries. The gap in employment rates also narrowed, although in most countries, this was primarily related to the decline in men's employment rates. Nonetheless, the smaller decrease in women's employment compared to men's in the crisis years is at least not countering the overall trend towards more gender equality, and it would be important that both women's and men's employment rates recover after the crisis years in the affected countries.

56. In almost all countries, women now outnumber men among tertiary level graduates, indicating that women do not suffer from gender-specific barriers to higher education. The gap in life expectancy, where men have disadvantageous situation, has also narrowed in most countries and the life expectancy of women has continuously increased in all countries. Homicide rates against both men and women have gone down in most countries.

57. Notwithstanding all these positive developments, important gaps remain to the disadvantage of women. Women's employment rates remain much lower than men's, especially when there are small children in the family, and women's wage rates are lower. Related to this is the continuing differentiation of women and men in subjects of study, which translates into occupational segregation. Women remain under-represented among managers and parliamentarians. Whilst the bulk of reported violent crimes are against male victims, women suffer considerable levels of partner violence and sexual violence. There is also great variation among UNECE countries and the countries or sub-regions that lead or lag differ depending on the topic at hand.

58. Improvement of statistics over the last decades is another trend documented in the UNECE Gender Database. Nonetheless, not all UNECE countries can produce all the indicators that are necessary for a good understanding of their gender equality situation. For example, survey data that is indispensable for understanding the prevalence of violence against women remains missing in a great part of the region and even the most developed statistical systems have only recently started to collect them. Country coverage also remains weak on employment rates of population groups targeted by gender equality policies. It is therefore necessary to continue building national capacity in gender statistics in countries in need of support, and to emphasise the importance of the evidence base and monitoring of policy initiatives on gender equality.

¹⁴ FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results. Available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/vaw-survey-main-results>.