



Trade union action to promote equal pay for work of equal value

ITUC POLICY BRIEF

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The gender pay gap: key data and facts at a global level

Economic growth has failed to be sufficiently translated into improvements in the living and working conditions of people globally. Over the past decades, the share of wages as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), i.e., the labour income share, has substantially declined in most advanced and emerging market economies, as wages have stagnated compared to productivity increases.¹

Inequalities between women and men in the labour market continue to persist, leading to greater exposure to economic vulnerability for women. Women continue to be underrepresented in employment and overrepresented in part-time work, low-paid jobs and sectors, as well as precarious and informal work. Moreover, women tend to disproportionately take part in unpaid work and care activities. However, such activities tend not to be included in GDP accounting,

leading to a failure to recognise and value women's contributions to the economy, and broader society.² Women have also been disproportionately impacted by macroeconomic adjustment measures implemented during times of economic crisis, through cutting jobs and freezing wages in the public sector, in sectors such as health and education where they tend to be heavily represented.

Despite some advancements of women in the labour market across many countries over past decades, gender differences in pay persist, having barely changed on the aggregate level. Estimates by the ILO³, based on data from 80 countries (ILO 2018), **show that on average, women still continue to be paid around 20 per cent less than men.** UN Women has reported that at the current rate of change, it will take 257 years to close the global gender pay gap.⁴ **Together with the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap is one of the primary dimensions of wage inequality, that hampers equitable and inclusive labour markets.**

What drives the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap is a product of numerous and interconnected factors, including:

- **Occupational segregation** (vertical and horizontal): women

are overrepresented in sectors and jobs that pay less and are underrepresented in management positions. Such segregation has numerous causes, including gender stereotypes in education and in the labour market, as

¹ See, [Working towards an inclusive economy: trade union priorities](#), ITUC 2023

² Conservative estimates have shown that the unpaid work being undertaken by women across the world could amount to US\$10 trillion of output per year, equivalent to around 13 per cent of global GDP, See, [Working towards an inclusive economy: trade union priorities](#), ITUC 2023

³ ILO Global Wage Report 2018/2019

⁴ UN Women (2023) [Closing gender pay gaps is more important than ever](#)

well as imbalances in caring and household responsibilities between women and men that

may lead women to seek occupational niches where hours are shorter or more flexible.⁵

While progress towards achieving gender equality in education has been made, major discrepancies still exist, especially when it comes to access to digital skills training. Women's access to higher education and training in STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields and the development of their digital skills remains problematic.⁶ Of the estimated 2.7bn people currently unconnected, the majority are women and girls⁷. The digital gender gap continues to expand in many developing countries, creating a specific and urgent need to support digital gender equality.

The tech workforce continues to be dominated by men, with women making up only 22 per cent of AI professionals globally and the majority of technical and leadership roles still held by men. In STEM fields, women are promoted at a slower rate than men, with only 52 women being promoted to a managerial post for every 100 men. A shocking 22 per cent of women in tech are considering leaving the workforce altogether given the prevailing masculine working culture, reflected in impediments to advancing and other barriers, including exposure to violence and harassment and lower wages.⁸

While data shows that both women and men are well paid in ICT, the gender pay gap persists. In the tech sector, data from the EU show that men are offered higher salaries than women for the same job title and attracting women to well-paid ICT and STEM jobs is seen as an important policy tool to reduce the gender pay gap.⁹

- **Work-life balance deficiencies** with gendered differences in the division of family responsibilities. The disproportionate higher share of unpaid care work assumed by women, often exacerbated by the lack of adequate policies such as affordable childcare services and adequate family leave arrangements, affects women's opportunities to access and remain in secure and paid work, as well as their career progression and pay prospects.
- **Gender discrimination**, both direct (i.e., explicitly paying an employee less because of gender) as well as indirect (i.e., unconscious bias), remains a pervasive problem and a major contributor to the gender wage gap. It continues to be the largest factor behind the gender pay gap in many countries, accounting, for instance, for around 38 per cent of pay differentials in Australia.¹⁰ Intersectional discrimination further exacerbates the pay gap for women who are members of disadvantaged groups, such as migrant women, ethnic minority women, women with a disability, older women and women of colour.
- **The gender wage gap has accordingly been shown to be particularly acute for parents, and many of the above drivers are particularly linked to having children or**

⁵ European Commission, Gender segregation in the labour market: Root causes, implications and policy responses in the EU

⁶ See, *Working towards an inclusive economy: trade union priorities*, ITUC 2023

⁷ See UNCTAD 2023, *How to unlock women's potential in the digital economy*

⁸ See ILO 2023, *Preparing Future Generations of Women for New Job Demands: Skilling, Re-Skilling, Digitalization and Automation*

⁹ See EIGE *Gender Equality Index 2020: Digitalisation and the future of work*

¹⁰ Australian Diversity Council (2017) *The Economics of the Gender Pay Gap*

caring responsibilities. Several studies have documented the so-called ‘motherhood penalty’, Several studies have documented the so-called ‘motherhood penalty’, whereby mothers tend to earn less than non-mothers, as well as the ‘fatherhood bonus’, whereby men tend to earn more.¹¹ This phenomenon is due in part to the fact that women are more likely to interrupt their careers to take care of children and old or sick relatives, leading to absences from the labour market, and are also more likely

to return to part-time work compared to men. These gendered differences in the division of family responsibilities, often driven by socially gendered norms and the absence of adequate work-life balance policies, can in turn affect women’s career progression, their opportunities to access paid work and full employment, and their pay prospects, contributing to occupational segregation, as mentioned earlier, as well as discrimination on the basis of parenthood or potential parenthood.

Why do we need equal pay?

Equal pay for work of equal value is an internationally recognised fundamental right, rooted in the ILO Convention 100 (1951) on Equal Remuneration, which focuses on gender discrimination in employment and sets out that signatories must promote and ensure equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.¹²

The key role of equal pay in fostering gender equality, dignity, fairness, respect and recognition for the work of women, has been prioritised by the **UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. SDG 8 on inclusive growth, full employment and decent work** enshrines equal pay among its targets, underscoring that an equitable and inclusive world of work is a precondition to gender equality and societal progress overall (SDG 5).

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) developed an innovative approach related to SDG 8 progress assessment by creating an SDG 8 global composite indicator.¹³ **If we include the data on the gender pay gap in the SDG 8 composite indicator¹⁴, lower performance is observed on the overall composite indicator ranking, especially for Asian countries and North America (with data availability only for USA).**¹⁵

The downward effect is driven by the sub-domain “labour vulnerability” where the pay gap indicator is included.



¹¹ See for instance OECD (2022) Same skills, different pay

¹² Article 1 states: “For the purpose of this Convention — (a) the term “remuneration” includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage or salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the employer to the worker and arising out of the worker’s employment; (b) the term “equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value” refers to rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex”

¹³ The SDG 8 global composite indicator covers 149 countries, corresponding to more than 98 per cent of the world population and it is built upon a selection of indicators based on relevant, reliable and available statistical data, collected from official international sources. See *A New Social Contract for a Gender-Transformative Agenda*, ITUC 2022

¹⁴ This was possible only for those countries where data is available: Data on the gender pay gap is available only for 90 countries worldwide; therefore, we are able to do this exercise taking into consideration only those countries. The indicator used is the Eurostat: Gender pay gap in unadjusted form. See *A New Social Contract for a Gender-Transformative Agenda*, ITUC 2022

¹⁵ See *A New Social Contract for a Gender-Transformative Agenda*, ITUC 2022

|  SDG 8 Composite Indicator: results on the subdomain of labour vulnerability and on the overall composite without considering the gender pay gap | | | |  SDG 8 Composite Indicator: results on the subdomain of labour vulnerability and on the overall composite considering the gender pay gap | | | |
|--|------------------|----------------------|---------------|--|------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | NO. OF COUNTRIES | LABOUR VULNERABILITY | SDG 8 INDEX | | NO. OF COUNTRIES | LABOUR VULNERABILITY | SDG 8 INDEX |
| UN REGIONS | | | | UN REGIONS | | | |
| ASIA | 22 | 98.29 | 95.57 | ASIA | 15 | 91.91 | 90.32 |
| EUROPE | 36 | 116.32 | 112.55 | EUROPE | 35 | 110.72 | 109.74 |
| LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN | 23 | 96.51 | 96.86 | LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN | 14 | 95.46 | 95.81 |
| NORTHERN AFRICA | 6 | 94.18 | 87.53 | NORTHERN AFRICA | 1 | 94.17 | 85.24 |
| NORTH AMERICA | 2 | 117.03 | 110.04 | NORTH AMERICA | 1 | 112.31 | 104.74 |
| OCEANIA | 3 | 98.75 | 104.40 | | | | |
| SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA | 41 | 78.52 | 86.93 | SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA | 21 | 77.60 | 85.79 |
| WESTERN ASIA | 16 | 99.65 | 93.49 | WESTERN ASIA | 7 | 100.33 | 91.28 |
| INCOME GROUPS | | | | INCOME GROUPS | | | |
| LOW | 25 | 72.03 | 83.71 | LOW | 11 | 65.27 | 81.17 |
| LOWER MIDDLE | 40 | 88.90 | 90.05 | LOWER MIDDLE | 26 | 88.94 | 88.87 |
| UPPER MIDDLE | 39 | 101.54 | 96.96 | UPPER MIDDLE | 28 | 102.12 | 96.80 |
| HIGH | 45 | 114.70 | 111.65 | HIGH | 29 | 111.68 | 112.20 |

Measuring progress in closing gender pay gaps is essential to address pay discrimination wherever it happens and to foster the implementation of the SDGs. Unfortunately, the lack of comparable disaggregated data by gender, race, disability and migration status and other characteristics among countries on gender pay gap means there is an absence of vital statistical evidence upon which calls for meaningful policy change could be based.

Governments and international institutions must improve the availability and the comparability of statistical data (especially for less-developed countries) to ensure a more

comprehensive, robust and precise analysis of progress made. Ultimately, producing and measuring data is a question of political choice that directly affects global policy responses and governance.

Therefore, the work of international alliances like the **Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)**¹⁶, which provides support to improve legislation, build capacity and strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to accelerate progress towards equal pay, is crucial in global efforts to close the gender wage gap.

Despite global commitments to reduce the gender pay gap, pay differences between women and men remain a structural problem in both low- and high-income countries alike.¹⁷ Large and persisting gender pay gaps place

women at greater risk of poverty, during their working lives and beyond. Women's lower pay, combined with their greater concentration in part-time, informal and precarious work as well as lower labour market participation, leads

¹⁶ See <https://www.equalpayinternationalcoalition.org/>

¹⁷ ILO Global Wage Report 2018/2019

to their higher risk of experiencing poverty. It also contributes to their lower social security contributions, and in turn inadequate or even inexistent social security entitlements, leaving them especially vulnerable in old age. In the EU alone, women's pensions are on average around 30 per cent lower than men's.¹⁸

Reducing the gender pay gap can have a strong benefit in terms of improving economic security for women and reducing their risk of poverty. In the case of the United States, for instance, a **2021 study** by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that if working women received equal pay with comparable men, poverty for working women would be reduced by more than 40 per cent. The research also found that **reducing these gaps could have broader positive effects on the economy as a whole.** Ensuring equal pay for working women would also increase their annual average earnings from US\$41,402 to US\$48,326, adding US\$541 billion in wage and salary income to the US economy.¹⁹

Similarly, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), increasing women's participation in the workforce and closing the pay gap between women and men would have a positive impact on economic growth in the EU. Despite recent improvements, there are still persistent gender gaps in labour market activity and pay, which result in lower employment rates for women, potentially limiting EU growth. EIGE's data shows that while closing the wage gap would have a rather small effect on the GDP, with a 0-0.2 per cent increase in GDP per capita over the 2030-2050 period on the one hand, higher wages encourage more women to enter the labour market, leading to an **increase in the productive capacity of the economy** and therefore **increased employment.**²⁰

Therefore, **closing pay gaps means lower poverty rates overall, optimisation of social assistance spending and more dynamic societies.**

What can be done to help close the gender pay gap?

There are several policies that have been shown to have a positive effect in reducing the gender wage gap, especially when effectively combined.

Firstly, establishing and enforcing **equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation** has been recognised as essential in order to establish a legal framework for ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, as well as to provide legal

recourse to victims of pay discrimination.²¹ International labour standards in the area of equal pay and non-discrimination, namely ILO Convention 100 on equal remuneration for work of equal value and ILO Convention 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) provide important frameworks for governments in this respect. Still, the ILO Committee of Experts has acknowledged that while many countries have ratified ILO C100, a smaller number of countries have actually passed

¹⁸ Based on latest data available from Eurostat (2020)

¹⁹ **Narrow the Gender Pay Gap, Reduce Poverty for Families: The Economic Impact of Equal Pay by State**, IWPR, May 2021

²⁰ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality/activity-pay>

²¹ See for instance UK Equality and Human Rights Commission: Why equal pay matters

implementing laws or applied the principle of ‘equal pay for work of equal value’ in law and in practice.²²

Some governments have also implemented measures to enhance **pay transparency** in recent years, which make it easier for workers to identify gender disparities in pay, as well as making it easier for governments to identify where violations of equal pay legislation exist (some recent country case examples are highlighted below). In 2023, an EU Directive on Pay Transparency was adopted, under the pay transparency directive, which will require EU companies to share information about how much they pay women and men for work of equal value and take action if their gender pay gap exceeds five per cent.²³

Measures to **tackle gender segregation in occupations** are also important. In this respect, education policy can play a role in removing the gender bias in curricula and raising awareness of the likely consequences of male and female choices of fields of study in their careers and earnings. Deliberate policies to recruit and retrain women in underrepresented fields such as STEM can also be helpful, as well as policies that encourage men to move into female-dominated occupations.

Policies to address **women’s underrepresentation in management positions** can also have significant effects. Some governments have introduced gender quotas in this respect, including Norway, France, and Belgium.²⁴ Rwanda has also introduced a 30 per cent quota for women in public decision-making bodies, which has contributed to it having the highest levels of women in leadership in the world (see country-case example

below). Moreover, setting **gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems** can also help to address indirect discrimination in the promotion and pay of women.²⁵

Work-life balance policies can help to reduce gender disparities in employment and, therefore, earnings. They can reduce gaps in women’s careers due to care and prevent them from being forced to leave the labour market altogether. Improving access to affordable childcare services and care services for elderly/dependent relatives have been shown to be essential tools in boosting women’s participation in the labour market after having children.²⁶ Promoting a more gender-balanced use of family leave has also been shown to promote women’s faster return to the labour market after having children, reduce employers’ discrimination among women of childbearing age, and supports women’s improved career prospects and higher pay.²⁷ It also helps challenge social norms around women’s roles, as men are encouraged to share caring responsibilities.

Raising minimum wages has also been shown to be effective in reducing pay disparities between women and men – particularly for low-income workers.²⁸ As women tend to be overly represented in low-wage work compared to men, increasing the minimum wage can help to boost their wages relative to men’s. Raising the minimum wage is also, more generally, an effective tool in reducing in-work poverty and ensuring decent livelihoods for all workers, both women and men.²⁹ Adequate universal social protection systems in line with ILO Convention 102 and Recommendation 202 are also essential in this regard.

²² ILO (2016) *Closing the gender pay gap: A review of the issues, policy mechanisms and international evidence*

²³ For more information, see Council of the EU press release on the Pay Transparency Directive (2023)

²⁴ European Commission (2016) *Gender balance on corporate boards: Europe is cracking the glass ceiling*

²⁵ See UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (2014) *Gender-Neutral Job Evaluation Schemes: An Introductory Guide*

²⁶ See for instance ITUC reports on *investing in the care economy*

²⁷ See for instance OECD (2017) *Paid Parental Leave, where are the fathers?*

²⁸ ILO Global Wage Report 2016/2017; Rubery and Grimshaw (2011) *Gender and the minimum wage in regulating for decent work.*

²⁹ See L20 policy brief (2018) *The case for wage-led growth*

Finally, ensuring that workers have freedom of association, the **right to organise and bargain collectively**, as well as the ability to collectively raise grievances have all been shown to reduce the gender wage gap. Evidence shows that collective bargaining contributes positively to reducing pay inequalities between women and men.³⁰ By setting clear pay standards, collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) reduce the amount of discretion employers have to pay workers. Evidence also shows that labour

markets with coordinated and centralised bargaining structures have by and large delivered more egalitarian wage structures which favour more gender equality.³¹ However, many governments have taken measures to weaken trade unions³² and reduce collective bargaining coverage in recent years³³, which has had a devastating impact on workers' rights and is contributing to increased wage inequality.³⁴

Trade union action in closing the gender pay gap around the world

Equal pay for work of equal value is at the core of the trade union call for a **New Social Contract**. This entails the creation of quality jobs, including in the care economy, respect for fundamental labour rights, adequate wages, universal social protection, and greater equality and inclusion.³⁵

Equal pay for equal work is more likely to be achieved within inclusive and egalitarian labour markets. Trade unions and adequate gender-inclusive policies and regulations are central to both the development of inclusive labour markets and to the pursuit of gender pay equality.³⁶

This section presents some examples of how trade unions around the world have campaigned to tackle gender pay gaps through social dialogue towards the

adoption of conducive legislation, workplace policies and collective agreements, as well as through promoting campaigns and other tools and initiatives.

CHILE

In 2022, an agreement between the Government of Chile, the Central Organization of Chilean Workers (CUT) and 16 trade union federations in the public sector that includes a number of initiatives to address the gender pay gap in the public sector was concluded. As part of the agreement a bipartite committee, comprised of government and trade union representatives, was tasked to review and analyse existing data on the gender pay gap in the public sector in 2023 and to run pilot projects in three public institutions using the ILO's gender-neutral job evaluation methodology in 2023-2025 aimed at identifying the gender pay gaps in the selected institutions

³⁰ See for instance ILO ACTRAV (2019) [Closing the Gender Pay Gap: What Role for Trade Unions?](#); Pillinger and Wintour (2019) [Collective Bargaining and Gender Equality](#)

³¹ See ILO (2016) [Closing the Gender Pay Gap](#) and Rubery and Grimshaw (2011) [Gender and the minimum wage in regulating for decent work](#).

³² See [ITUC global rights index 2018](#)

³³ See L20 policy brief (2018) [The case for wage-led growth](#)

³⁴ See for instance Economic Policy Institute (2021) [The enormous impact of eroded collective bargaining on wages](#).

³⁵ See ITUC, [A New Social Contract, Congress statement, 2022](#)

³⁶ [Closing the Gender Pay Gap: What Role for Trade Unions](#), ILO ACTRAV Working Paper, April 2019

and initiate social dialogue and collective bargaining processes for addressing these gaps. The latter is a continuation of the successful first pilots that were completed in 2017, following a protocol signed between the Government of Chile and the ANEP (National Association of Public Employees).

ISRAEL

Na'amat, the largest women's movement in Israel and a member of the Histadrut-General Federation of Labour played a key role in the **amendment of the Male and Female Workers Equal Pay Law which determined a reporting obligation for the segmentation of wage gaps on a gender basis for companies with more than 518 employees, detailing the average wages gaps between men and women in percentages for each group of workers in the workplace**. Companies are now required to produce two reports annually: one for the internal organisation, and one for the public, to be published on the company's website while maintaining workers' right to privacy.

JAPAN

In Japan there is a 25.7 per cent gender gap in wages, which is much larger compared to other countries. If the ratio of men and women in management positions were to be equal, the gap would be reduced by 9 percentage points, and if the length of service were to be equal between men and women, the gap would be reduced by 4.4 percentage points, which would be a significant improvement. Positive progress has been introduced by the government with the support of workers' organisations through the amendment of the Ministerial Ordinance of the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace which requires companies with 301 or more employees to identify and disclose wage differences between men and women. The

Japanese trade union organisation, RENGO, is working on initiatives for the effective implementation of the law. These include initiatives to encourage RENGO's affiliated organisations to conduct union-initiated wage gap-checking activities, and to demand that their employers develop action plans to tackle wage disparities. The obligation to formulate an employer action plan and publish information was extended to employers with 101 or more employees from 1 April 2022.

MAURITIUS

In Mauritius, CTSP (Confédération des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé) focused its campaigns on the poor wages of Cleaners and Export Processing Zone workers, mainly composed by women and migrants (up to 2017 they were paid monthly wages of US\$50 and US\$150 respectively). CTSP organised mobilisations, demonstrations and campaigns demanding wage increases and, in October 2017, a 10-day hunger strike for decent wages for all was organised. Finally on 1 January 2018 the Government introduced the **National Minimum Wage** and established a **National Minimum Wage Council** where CTSP has a seat and assesses and upgrades the Minimum Wage annually. As a result of the continuous negotiation, in 2023 **the national minimum wage for the lowest categories of workers started at Rs12,075 (US\$257), for 45 hours of work per week**.

NEW ZEALAND

The Public Service Association (PSA) has been working on Pay Equity claims since 2018. In 2020, in response to legal action by the trade union movement, **New Zealand's equal pay legislation** was amended to include processes for raising and settling pay equity claims outside of collective bargaining processes. The amendments have made a significant difference

to the trade unions' ability to pursue equal pay for work of equal value and has meant significant progress for women. Unions are also using this as an opportunity to organise everyone covered by the claim and address pay equity.

To date there are **28 Pay Equity claims across the public and private sectors** covering tens of thousands of workers, including those comprising large workforces, such as teaching, nursing, care and support workers, and administration workers. Six claims have been settled to date in the public and community services which are bringing substantial pay rises (30-40 per cent) to workforces where women were predominantly represented, along with a range of improved terms and conditions of employment. The first claim and settlement for a Māori Workforce was even higher, with average pay increases of 79 per cent achieved.

In addition, *Te Kawa Mataaho*, New Zealand's public service commission, is working in partnership with the PSA to address pay gaps in the public service. *Kia Toipoto, the public service pay gaps action plan*, seeks to address all drivers of pay inequity besides undervaluation, which is being addressed through the pay equity claims process. These plans require agencies to address both **gender and ethnic pay gaps**. This is a significant step forward, as previous plans had only required agencies to address ethnic pay gaps.

The combination of *Kia Toipoto* and Pay Equity settlements has had a significant impact on pay gaps in the public sector. The Māori pay gap has decreased from 11.2 per cent to 6.5 per cent since 2018 and the gender pay gap has decreased from 12.2 per cent to 7.7 per cent.

PERU

As a response to the continued lobby and engagement of the Autonomous Confederation

of Workers of Peru (CATP), together with the ILO, the Peruvian Government committed to modify the Domestic Workers Law. The Government issued **Domestic Workers Law no. 31047 in 2020 and its Regulations in 2021**, guaranteeing domestic workers the right to minimum legal remuneration, the right to holidays with pay, full gratuities, compensation for time of service, limitations on maximum working hours, overtime pay, and wage surcharge for working on a holiday. This was achieved within the framework of the implementation of ILO Convention 189 and in line with Convention No. 111 and, as such, applies to all workers without distinction, ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment in all aspects related to employment, including **access to employment, promotion, job security, remuneration and working conditions** in relation to other workers.

UNITED KINGDOM

Major advances have made in the public sector, notably the National Health Service (NHS), due to pressure from the trade unions. Thanks to the engagement of **UNISON, the public service union, the NHS Agenda for Change pay system incorporates equal pay for work of equal value**; as does the NJC for Local Government Services (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland), which covers the largest group of employees for collective bargaining purposes in the UK economy and possibly Europe.

UNITE Construction has succeeded to get support for equal pay for all in construction jobs across the sector. This includes an agreement to receive the annual pay review which includes information about race, gender, and age. Such information can highlight the discrimination around pay system, including performance related to pay as well as grading.³⁷

³⁷ See **NEW FRONTIERS FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, ETUC 2023**

ICELAND

In **Iceland** over the past decade, social partners, with the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) in the forefront, have developed an equal pay management system called “**The Equal Pay Standard**” meant to help employers prevent salary discrimination. In 2018, legislation was passed mandating companies and institutions with 25 or more employees to implement the Equal Pay Standard. This included that they undergo an audit and receive certification that they offer equal pay for work of equal value. Employers are also expected to renew their equal pay certification every three years. However, the Equal Pay Standard had its limitation as it compared salaries within the same job category within the same company/unit but did not tackle the systematic cultural and historical problem of women’s work being valued less. Hence, the emphasis is now moving towards the **unadjusted pay gap**

(**re-evaluation of women’s work**). This entails government, in cooperation with social partners, heading a Re-evaluation project, focused on **correcting the systemic undervaluation of professions where women are predominant**.

The Re-Evaluation project covers what the Equal Pay standard is unable to do, by looking at differences between unrelated professions and comparing similar jobs across sectors.

IRELAND

Building upon the 2022 introduction of the Gender Pay Gap Information Act, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has produced a resource guide for trade unions “**Gender Pay Gap Reporting**” on closing the gender pay gap and bringing the issue into collective bargaining, focusing on measures promoting pay transparency and against wage discrimination.

Recommendations

The urgency and commitment to close the gender wage gap has never been more important and it is at the core of the trade union call for a New Social Contract. As the **4th ITUC World Women’s Conference** Outcome Document states, trade unions are calling for:

1. The creation of **575 million new decent jobs by 2030**, including **in the care economy** and other strategic sectors that benefit people and the planet, **as well as the formalisation of one billion informal workers**, the majority of whom are women.
2. **Equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation, with effective implementation** and access to remedy, in line with international labour standards such as ILO Conventions 100 and 111, to ensure equal treatment to excluded groups of workers, such as migrant and Indigenous women, women of colour and disabled women – groups among whom pay gaps are higher.
3. **Pay transparency** legislation along with measures and accessible data on wage levels for all categories of employment disaggregated by gender.

4. **Quotas and/or targeted initiatives** to train, recruit and retain women in underrepresented sectors and jobs (such as STEM)³⁸ to tackle both horizontal and vertical gender-based occupational segregation across sectors and job categories.
5. Elimination of gender-based violence and harassment at work and the **ratification and effective implementation of ILO C190 and R206**.
6. Increased **public investments in the care sector** and adoption of **family-friendly policies** to support the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.
7. **Minimum living wages**, established through statutory processes or collective bargaining, as set out in the ILO Centenary Declaration.
8. Adequate **universal social protection systems and floors** in line with ILO Convention 102 and Recommendation 202.
9. The centrality of **collective bargaining and social dialogue** to put an end to the gender pay gap.

³⁷ Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

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