



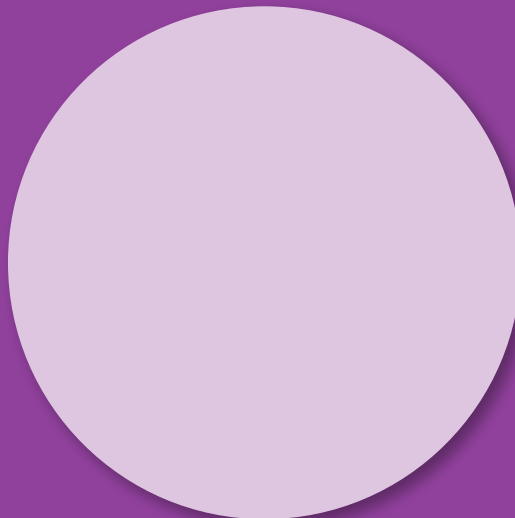
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WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

GOOD PRACTICES IN EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNTRIES

EU4 **GENDEREQUALITY**
REFORM HELPDESK

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[**The project does not provide support to the Government of Belarus; it only supports the EU Delegation and civil society].

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INTRODUCTION

Women's economic empowerment is vital to advance women's rights and gender equality, economic growth and development, as well as enterprise productivity, competitiveness and value creation.

The aim of the European Union's (EU) Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) is to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, including women's economic empowerment. According to the Joint Staff Working Document, "Recovery, resilience and reform: Post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities", 40% of all loans for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be earmarked for women-led companies, and almost all EU investments will have an important gender equality objective.

Narrowing the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education is especially crucial, both for women's economic empowerment, and for sustainable development and economic growth. A study by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) estimates that narrowing the gender gap in STEM education could create up to 1.2 million more jobs and increase long-term gross domestic product (GDP) by up to USD 960 billion by 2050.²

¹ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – an Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. European Commission, Brussels, 25 November 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017&from=EN>

² European Institute for Gender Equality, Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU: how gender equality in STEM education leads to economic growth, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality/stem>; UN Women, Women's Economic Empowerment in Armenia and their Greater Integration in into Labor Markets and the Digital Economy, 2021. <https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/%28ENG%29%20HANDBOOK%20on%20WEE%20and%20the%20DIGITAL%20ECONOMY.pdf>

This **brief presents good practices** on advancing women's economic empowerment in six Eastern Neighbourhood countries, across diverse sectors. These include promoting women's involvement in information and communication technologies (Armenia and Belarus), fostering women's entrepreneurship (Azerbaijan and Georgia), introducing paternal leave (Moldova) and reducing the gender pay gap (Ukraine).

"Women and men in all their diversity should have equal opportunities, equal access to employment, decent work, equal pay for equal work in order to be economically independent. In addition, women and girls also need to have access to enabling conditions, such as access to safe, affordable and accessible public transport and other mobility options, both in rural and urban areas.

Empowering women economically is key to reducing poverty and to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth under the 2030 Agenda".

– EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III¹

WOMEN INNOVATING IN ICT IN ARMENIA



Photo source: EU Neighbours East Flickr database

CONTEXT

Information and communications technology (ICT) is one of the fastest growing sectors in Armenia. Women's involvement in Armenia's ICT sector stands at 40%, twice the global average of 20%.³

According to the 2021 Women Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia, relatively few gender stereotypes exist in the ICT sector due to an open and gender-sensitive work environment, young staff in key positions, and opportunities for remote work.⁴ Women are employed not only in business and marketing departments, but also as game developers, programmers and engineers.

Despite this favourable environment, only 11% of leaders in Armenia's ICT sector are women.⁵ A considerable gender pay gap (40%) also exists between women's and men's earnings in the sector.⁶ Although it does not specifically focus on ICT, the Government of Armenia's Gender Strategy reflects its commitment to increasing women's representation in decision-making and narrowing the pay gap.

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

SafeYOU is one of many examples of successful **ICT start-ups** developed by women and girls in Armenia.

³ National Statistical Service of Armenia, Women and Men in Armenia, 2023. <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2610>

⁴ International Finance Corporation, UK Aid and British Embassy Yerevan, Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia, IFC, Washington, DC, 2021. https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE_Diagnostic_Report_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j

⁵ EU4Digital, 'How to ensure rapid development in the Armenian IT sector? EU4Digital highlights women as the key to growth', 14 August 2020. <https://eufordigital.eu/how-to-ensure-rapid-development-in-the-it-sector-eu4digital-highlights-women-as-the-key-to-growth>

⁶ National Statistical Service of Armenia, Women and Men in Armenia, 2023. <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2610>

Supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the EU, the application has become a global platform for the protection, prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence. SafeYOU provides access to knowledge resources on sexual health and women's rights, existing support services, community support, and consultations with different organisations and professionals.

The app also allows users to send a free emergency message which shares their location with three close family members or friends, the local police and other service providers. SafeYOU currently has over 19,000 users. As its reach continues to grow, the platform is helping empower more women through technology and supporting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality. Its popularity is growing in a range of countries, with including Armenia, Georgia and Iraq, and plans are afoot to expand its use to African and Arab countries. Audio recordings gathered using SafeYOU are accepted by courts as important admissible evidence. In 2022, SafeYOU won the Joint Innovation Challenge, among the competition's 300 submissions.

GirloPolis is another start-up that brings together and motivates girls to get involved ICT. It encourages girls whose families are against them exploring the field to talk to their parents and explain the many advantages of working in the industry.

A key **lesson learned** from these initiatives is the importance of encouraging girls to enter the STEM and ICT fields as early as possible, for example through spaces such as **TUMO**, which is a centre for creative technology. It also important to do more to increase women's representation in the management of STEM and ICT, to address the gender pay gap in these fields, and to reach out to girls among the most vulnerable populations.

LEARN MORE ABOUT WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN ICT IN ARMENIA

- How to ensure rapid development in the Armenian IT sector? EU4Digital highlights women as the key to growth: <https://eufordigital.eu/how-to-ensure-rapid-development-in-the-it-sector-eu4digital-highlights-women-as-the-key-to-growth/>
- Armenia's women tech trailblazers are forging new horizons: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackieabramian/2020/08/06/armenias-women-tech-trailblazers-are-forging-new-horizons/?sh=69e5dda39d59>
- How Armenian women are shaping tech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVTiaszOmyA>
- IT is Armenia – Women in Tech: <https://itis.am/womenintech/eng>

ADVANCING EMPOWERMENT WITH THE WOMEN IN TECH PROGRAMME IN BELARUS



Photo source: Women in Tech Belarus

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

Women in Tech is an infrastructure, educational and research project aimed at supporting women who work, or aspire to work, in the information technology (IT) sector. It fosters research at the intersection of technology and feminism, and promotes gender equality in the field of high technologies. Above all, it provides a supportive environment, created by women for women who are looking to develop careers in IT. Implemented by the Centre for Gender Studies at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, Lithuania,⁷ with the financial support of the EU, Women in Tech is an opportunity for women to achieve breakthroughs in their careers with the assistance of mentors and a community of like-minded women.

⁷ The European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius is a private, non-profit liberal arts university founded in Minsk, Belarus, in 1992. Following its forced closure by the Belarusian authorities in 2004, EHU relocated to Vilnius, Lithuania, and thus continues its operations as a private university. <https://en.ehu.lt/about/history>

The project's main features and achievements include:

- Login to Tech**

This initiative provides three months of training, featuring 21 video lectures by IT experts about professions, opportunities and ways of entering the IT sector. IT experts not only inspire participants to enter the IT sector, but also help them build clear career paths. Human resource specialists and representatives of major IT companies help participants navigate the IT world and learn to use basic job-finding tools. Working with a career guidance counsellor, women and girls write their first IT curriculum vitae (CV), fill out their LinkedIn profiles, and learn about the intricacies of successfully passing an interview. Participants can also get a human resource review and receive feedback from professional recruiters.

To date, three cycles of the Login to Tech programme have been delivered, benefitting over 1,200 participants.

- **Mentoring programme**

This programme supports women working in IT to achieve breakthroughs in their careers with the support of a professional mentor – from companies like Google, EPAM, PandaDoc, and others – and a community of like-minded women in the private sector. Most participants are from Belarus, although others are from a diverse range of countries, such as Lithuania, Israel and Türkiye. The programme's focus areas are also diverse, including project management, software development, human resources, quality assurance and business analysis. To date, three cycles of the mentoring programme have been provided, engaging over 150 mentors and benefitting 242 participants.

- **Women in Tech Academic**

This scientific research programme on gender inequality in the field of IT in Belarus brings together experts and researchers to investigate gender equality, women's leadership and digital solidarity, among other issues. To date, six women have been supported to conduct research with the programme's support, and [three research publications](#) have been published on barriers to and within IT, women's representation in Belarus' IT media, and the employment of women with children in the field.

- **Conferences**

Events on ways to address gender discrimination in IT have drawn together representatives of IT businesses, NGOs and hundreds of Belarusian women from all over the world – both face-to-face in Vilnius, and online.

At the Women's Forum in September 2022 and the Conference on Women's Leadership in IT in October 2023, participants discussed women's leadership and careers, explored how to improve their skills related to LinkedIn and resumes, highlighted the inspirational stories of girls in IT, and gained new contacts in the IT field. Recordings are available on [YouTube](#).

One of the main **lessons learned** from the Women in Tech programme is the importance of having a community of mutual support to enable the exchange of experiences and networking. The diversity of participants is also vital – the project has brought together over 2,000 people, including project participants, IT professionals, lecturers, mentors and representatives of NGOs.⁸

LEARN MORE ABOUT WOMEN IN TECH

- Women in Tech's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/euwintech>
- An atmosphere of support and the feeling that you can do anything – the Women in Tech project sums up the year: <https://en.ehu.lt/news/women-in-tech-project-sums-up-the-year>

⁸ European Humanities University, Women in Tech Sums Up the Year, 9 January 2023. <https://en.ehu.lt/news/women-in-tech-project-sums-up-the-year>

GOOD PRACTICE

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRES IN AZERBAIJAN: EMPOWERING WOMEN, FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES



Photo source: Bilasuvur Women's Resource Centre, Azerbaijan

CONTEXT

Azerbaijan is a signatory of several international commitments on gender equality and has passed a Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men (2006) that aims “to guarantee the equal rights status for women and men in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres, to ensure equal opportunities in enjoyment of the above listed rights and to prevent gender-based discrimination.”⁹

Nevertheless, women are underrepresented as entrepreneurs and business owners. Approximately 25% of registered businesses in Azerbaijan are owned by women, and women account for 21% of small enterprise owners, according to the National Statistics Authority.

⁹ See: <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=14452>

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

Women's Resource Centres in Azerbaijan have emerged as powerful platforms for empowering women, fostering entrepreneurship, enhancing skills and creating economic opportunities for women and youth in rural and urban areas. First set up in 2011, the centres are the fruit of collaboration between the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the donor community. The centres have received funding and support from the EU-funded project, “Enabling civil society to play a greater role in advancing gender equality and women's rights”, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),¹⁰ alongside

¹⁰ Stronger Women — Stronger Azerbaijan. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-10/factsheet_eu_support_to_gender_equality_azerbaijan.pdf

other organisations.¹¹ Spread across 17 districts in Azerbaijan, Women's Resource Centres serve as vital technical bodies offering a range of services to economically active women in rural and district settlements. These services include counselling, mentoring, networking opportunities, safe spaces and advocacy. The centres also support women affected by conflict, such as the Women's Resource Centre in Barda, which provides psychological aid and assistance to conflict-affected women.¹²

By offering support for preparing business plans and facilitating access to resources and equipment, the centres have enabled aspiring women entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into viable businesses. This support has resulted in the creation of several successful small businesses and start-ups, contributing to economic growth and job creation in rural areas. In 2022 alone, 287 new small businesses (83% of which are led by women) have been set up with the support of Women's Resource Centres. Over 1,000 new members have been reached since the centres expanded their operations to three new districts to further advance women's entrepreneurship and employment.

Since women account for a significant portion of Azerbaijan's agricultural labour force, the Women's Resource Centres, in collaboration with the United Nations (UN), also target rural livelihood improvement. Over 250 women from 12 districts have received agricultural equipment and tools for beekeeping, dairy

farming, poultry and horticulture, enabling them to enhance their agricultural productivity and incomes. Moreover, 194 families in conflict-affected communities in the Fuzuli and Tartar districts have received support to engage in animal husbandry, thereby strengthening their livelihoods.

Despite Women's Resource Centres' many achievements, consistent financing remains a challenge. To address this, some centres have transformed into non-governmental organisations (NGOs), allowing them to secure funding from the Government and various international or local organisations.¹³ Sustained financial support from governments, international organisations and local stakeholders remains critical to ensure the centres' continued operation and expansion.

Lessons learned include the importance of being flexible. For example, in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Women's Resource Centres demonstrated their adaptability by swiftly transitioning to online training programmes.

LEARN MORE ABOUT WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRES IN AZERBAIJAN

- Stronger Women — Stronger Azerbaijan: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-10/factsheet_eu_support_to_gender_equality_azerbaijan.pdf
- How Women's Resource Centres support rural women in Azerbaijan: <https://www.undp.org/wrc>
- Women's Resource Centres at the forefront of women's economic empowerment in Azerbaijan: <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/womens-resource-centers-at-the-forefront-of>

¹¹ The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Government of the Netherlands, and the Coca Cola Foundation. See: <https://azerbaijan-undp.medium.com/solidarity-in-action-874c16b671d4>

¹² United Nations Azerbaijan, UNDP, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, and UK Government open new Women's Resource Centre in Barda, 23 May 2022. <https://azerbaijan.un.org/en/183110-undp-state-committee-family-women-and-children-affairs-and-uk-government-open-new-women%E2%80%99s>

¹³ See: <https://caliber.az/en/post/159516/>

ADVANCING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH GEORGIA'S SME DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021–2025



Photo source: EU Neighbours East Flickr database

CONTEXT

The Government of Georgia recognises women's rights, knowledge and potential for developing small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the challenge of women's and men's unequal access to business opportunities. Women's entrepreneurship is held back by gender stereotypes and other barriers, such as a lack of digital skills, which limit women's ability to access state support programmes for entrepreneurs. This is especially problematic for women living in Georgia's regions.

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

The **Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Development Strategy 2021–2025** and Action Plan of Georgia address these challenges. One of the strategy's priority directions is the "Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship Development", which facilitates coordinated activities to support women's economic

empowerment at the strategic and policy levels. This direction follows the GAP III priority areas for EU interventions: "Supporting women entrepreneurship and women-led businesses, including social entrepreneurship, and their access to finance by providing innovative investments schemes."¹⁴ This priority direction defines objectives to be achieved, including promoting the Women's Empowerment Principles,¹⁵ encouraging women's participation in state programmes, improving gender statistics

¹⁴ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – an Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. European Commission, Brussels, 25 November 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017&from=EN>

¹⁵ Jointly developed by UN Women and United Nations Global Compact, the Women's Empowerment Principles are a set of seven principles offering businesses guidance on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. See: <https://www.weeps.org/>

in state programmes, strengthening the digital skills of women entrepreneurs, and the capacity development of state institutions to enable gender-responsive approaches.

Georgia's Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development coordinated the strategy's development, with the extensive involvement of relevant state institutions and the private sector, as well as the support of the EU, the Government of Germany, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The existing platform for strengthening public-private dialogue, the Private Sector Development Advisory Council (PSDAC), and PSDAC's Sub-committee on Women's Economic Empowerment, also played an active part in the strategy's development process.

The implementation of Georgia's SME Development Strategy 2021–2025 contributes towards important achievements. For example, on the OECD's SME Policy Index 2024,¹⁶ Georgia scores highest in 11 out of 12 dimensions, including women's entrepreneurship, and is recognised as a leader among Eastern Partnership countries. [Georgia's performance on the index](#) reflects the standard of gender-responsiveness in economic policy, including a focus on women's economic empowerment.

In terms of **lessons learned**, despite women's high levels of participation in state support programmes, more needs to be done to advance women's economic empowerment including by:

- Raising awareness of available support programmes for women entrepreneurs.

- Strengthening data collection on, and the monitoring and evaluation of, efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship and gender equality.
- Enhancing women's skills related to electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digitalisation.
- Working with the private sector to encourage the provision of credit and loans for women entrepreneurs.

LEARN MORE ABOUT GEORGIA'S SME DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- SME Development Strategy 2021 –2025 and Action Plan: <https://www.economy.ge/?page=ecopolitic&s=45&lang=en>
- The new EU SME strategy: 50 actions to make it work: https://www.businesseurope.eu/sites/buseur/files/media/position_papers/smes/the_new_eu_sme_strategy_-_50_actions_to_make_it_work.pdf
- SME Policy Index Eastern Partner Countries 2024 – building resilience in challenging times: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/3197420e-enpdf?expires=1706885951&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=C3605B6879B1014C46FE37AC004FC132>

¹⁶ SME Policy Index Eastern Partner Countries 2024. Building Resilience in Challenging Times: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/3197420e-enpdf?expires=1706885951&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=C3605B6879B1014C46FE37AC004FC132>

PATERNAL LEAVE PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY IN MOLDOVA



Photo source: EU Neighbours East Flickr database

CONTEXT

The EU Gender Action Plan III promotes efforts geared towards “challenging gender norms within the household and the labour market, recognising men and boys’ responsibilities and fostering legislative developments, such as the introduction of paid paternity leave.”¹⁷ Paternity leave is an employment-protected leave of absence for employed fathers at, or shortly after, childbirth.¹⁸

¹⁷ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – an Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. European Commission, Brussels, 25 November 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017&from=EN>

¹⁸ As defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which also notes that “Paternity leave is not stipulated by international convention. In general, periods of paternity leave are much shorter than periods of maternity leave. Because of their short length, workers on paternity leave often continue to receive full wage payments. In some countries (e.g. Iceland), father-specific leave entitlements are part of the parental leave scheme, rather than a separate right.” See: https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf

In Moldova, the Labour Code adopted on 28 March 2003 offered mothers postnatal maternity leave of 56 calendar days, but did not offer any days of paternity leave.

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

In 2016, Moldova made a first but significant step to address challenges by introducing paternity leave – thereby supporting men’s involvement in childcare, work-life balance and the economic empowerment of women, especially those with young children. The Moldovan Parliament introduced amendments to the Labour Code on 14 April 2016, adding a provision for 14 days of paid paternity leave.¹⁹

Fourteen days of paternity leave is a short time – potentially too short to transform gender norms – but it is a good start.

¹⁹ Article 1241 of the Labour Code. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=92833&lang=ro

Introducing paternity leave has led to a number of positive results. The number of men benefitting from paternity leave has risen significantly – from 60 fathers in 2016 to 4,608 in 2021,²⁰ and 4,522 in 2022.²¹ In the first three years after the amendment entered into force, the labour force participation rate of women with children of pre-school age rose by about 2%.²²

Studies in Moldova demonstrate important **lessons learned** – that paternity leave can contribute to reducing the gap in labour force participation between women and men, bridging gender discrepancies in employment,²³ changing stereotypes about women's exclusive responsibility for childcare, promoting the equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities, improving work-life balance, and strengthening family relationships.²⁴

For instance, all of the fathers who participated in one study reported positive effects of paternity leave on themselves and their families – from feelings of joy, to creating strong emotional bonds with their children, developing and strengthening confidence in men's childcare skills, changing attitudes towards childcare and housework, increasing men's involvement in their children's lives, and improving family relationships.²⁵

²⁰ Factori determinanți și bariere în utilizarea concediului paternal din Republica Moldova. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/198-204_15.pdf (for the years 2017-2021).

²¹ Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection for 2022.

²² See: https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/50%20Statistica%20gender/50%20Statistica%20gender__GEN01/GEN010590mun_rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=9a62a0d7-86c4-45da-b7e4-fecc26003802

²³ Inga Chistruga-Sinchevici. Paternity leave: first results of introduction in Moldova. https://es.ince.md/index.php/Economy_and_Sociology/article/view/141/134

²⁴ Inga Chistruga-Sinchevici. Factori determinanți și bariere în utilizarea concediului paternal din Republica Moldova. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/198-204_15.pdf

²⁵ Inga Chistruga-Sinchevici. Paternity leave: first results of introduction in Moldova. https://es.ince.md/index.php/Economy_and_Sociology/article/view/141/134

Nevertheless, fathers in Moldova face challenges to taking paternity leave, such as:


- Social and cultural obstacles, including gender stereotypes, a lack of role models, the fear of stigmatisation, deviating from expectations that the “ideal worker” should prioritise work above all, a lack of knowledge about the right to paternity leave, and the short duration of this leave.
- Professional obstacles, such as the difficulties of replacing highly qualified specialists, the rigidity of the labour market, and some employers' negative attitudes.
- Financial obstacles, such as fear of a reduction in family income (since men earn more on average than women), informal work that is not covered by social protection, and high levels of competition due to the lack of jobs in small towns and rural areas.²⁶

Balancing work and family life is becoming increasingly difficult for parents in Moldova, particularly due to the lack of childcare infrastructure and the unequal division of care work between men and women. The uptake of paternity leave and father-specific parental leave can help overcome these challenges, paired with other gender equality policies and measures, such as childcare services.

Lessons learned to increase the impact of paternity leave include:

- Extending paternity leave to enable fathers to engage more in childcare.
- Respecting the legislative provision on 100% salary compensation during paternity leave, at least during the first weeks.

²⁶ Ibid.

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- Maintaining the existing wording of “paternity leave” to dispel any confusion about who is entitled to this leave, and emphasising that it is non-transferable and exclusively for fathers.
 - Considering the introduction of a legislative provision requiring state institutions to encourage employees to take paternity leave.
 - Taking action to advance women’s economic empowerment by developing affordable childcare services, addressing gender stereotypes and sexual harassment in society, and raising awareness of paternity leave among fathers.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PATERNITY LEAVE IN MOLDOVA

- Family-friendly workplace policies help parents in Moldova reconcile work and family duties: <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/news/family-friendly-workplace-policies-help-parents-moldova-reconcile-work-and-family-duties>
- Fathers matter: <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/stories/fathers-matter>

BRIDGING THE PAY GAP: UKRAINE'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR REDUCING THE GENDER PAY GAP 2023–2030



Photo source: EU Neighbours East Flickr database

CONTEXT

The gender pay gap remains a major challenge to women's economic empowerment worldwide. The right to equal pay between women and men for equal work, or work of equal value, is a basic value of the EU. Decent work, equal pay and labour rights are also among priorities of the EU Gender Action Plan III, and gender pay transparency is promoted in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025.²⁷ In Ukraine, the gender pay gap has long been a critical factor affecting women's position in the labour market and slowing national economic development. Reducing this gap has been a central objective of national gender policies since 2012. In 2020, Ukraine joined the Biarritz Partnership and the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) – two frameworks that provide for addressing the gender pay gap as a key priority.

²⁷ A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

The Government of Ukraine has developed the **National Strategy for Reducing the Gender Pay Gap 2023–2030**, which was endorsed and launched on 15 September 2023. The impetus for the strategy lies in collaboration between a range of stakeholders, grounded on an inclusive approach bringing together the Government, social partners – such as trade unions and employers' associations – civil society, academia and international development partners operating across Ukraine. Through three comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultations, participants meticulously reviewed statistical data, identified root causes of the gender pay gap, and formulated a theory of change.

The Ukrainian Government's commitment is underscored by its target to narrow the wage gap from 18.6% to 13.6% by 2030, setting the stage for transformative change. The strategy revolves around three core goals: enhancing legislation

on equal pay, dismantling gender stereotypes and discrimination, and creating conducive conditions for the comfortable balance of family and professional responsibilities. Important achievements of the strategy include:

- **Legal modernisation:** The strategy will propel the modernisation of labour legislation, with the proposed revision of the Labour Law incorporating the principle of equal pay for equal work, and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of sex with regard to all aspects and conditions of remuneration for the same work, or for work of equal value. This shift is expected to bolster legal protection with the introduction of inspections by the State Labour Service in response to complaints of gender-based pay discrimination.
- **Tackling stereotypes and discrimination:** Initiatives to combat gender stereotypes and discrimination are underway. The Sure You Can campaign, jointly planned with UN Women, will empower women by dispelling notions that limit their earning potential. Educational initiatives are raising awareness of women's rights and opportunities, encouraging the pursuit of in-demand and highly paid professions (most of which are currently male-dominated), including in STEM fields. The introduction of gender audits and the exchange of best practices further reinforce the commitment to fostering gender equality in the world of work.
- **Work-life balance:** The strategy addresses the challenge of reconciling family and professional life. Proposed measures include promoting state and private kindergartens, supporting organisations that cater to older children, and refining labour legislation to ensure the equal treatment of men and women with family responsibilities. This includes promoting fathers' engagement in childcare through parental leave and other measures.

Complementary training programmes for employers aim to facilitate the harmonisation of professional and family duties.

Lessons learned from the strategy's development include the importance of:

- **Inclusive collaboration:** The strategy's success is rooted in its collaborative origins. Multi-stakeholder consultations reflect the importance of engaging diverse perspectives, fostering collective ownership, and ensuring that the strategy resonates with the realities faced by different stakeholders.
- **Continuous education and awareness:** Ongoing efforts to challenge and change gender stereotypes highlight the need for sustained educational campaigns.
- **International collaboration:** Collaboration with international partners – such as the Equal Pay International Coalition, UN Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the OECD – showcases the power of leveraging global expertise and resources. The Government's application to join the OECD Council's Recommendation further solidifies its commitment to aligning national frameworks with international standards.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STRATEGY

- The Government has approved the national strategy for bridging the gender pay gap: <https://me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=en-GB&id=dec4c65b-0e93-4380-9787->
- Government plans to reduce the gender pay gap from 18.6% to 13.6% by 2030: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/uriad-planuie-do-2030-roku-skorotyty-hendernyi-rozryv-v-oplati-pratsi-z-186-do-136>
- Despite the war Ukraine keeps up the reform process: https://www.ilo.org/budapest/whats-new/WCMS_885044/lang--en/index.htm



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