

► Policy Brief



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Advancing Gender Equality in Portugal's Labour Market

Key messages

- **Portugal has made significant progress in advancing gender equality in the world of work**, reflected in high female labour force participation, women's rising educational attainment and a comprehensive legislative and institutional framework. These advances, however, have not fully translated into equal labour market outcomes, with persistent inequalities between women and men in pay, job quality, career progression and leadership.
- **Gender-based occupational segregation remains a central driver of unequal labour market outcomes.** Women remain concentrated in lower paid sectors and occupations and underrepresented in senior leadership positions. Although the gender pay gap narrowed between 2006 and 2022, ILO's factor-weighted estimates reveal that it remains significant, at 17.6 per cent based on average monthly earnings. Moreover, analysis reveals that observable characteristics alone do not fully explain pay differences.
- **Persistent structural barriers—unequal unpaid care responsibilities, insufficiently gender-responsive approaches active labour market policies, and violence and harassment at work—continue to impact women's labour market opportunities.** Addressing them requires looking beyond aggregate indicators that mask disparities affecting specific groups and is essential to ensure a more inclusive, productive and resilient labour market. This is particularly relevant considering the challenges posed by demographic change and the green and digital transitions.
- **Continued attention to effective policy implementation would help Portugal fully realize the potential of its legislative and policy frameworks.** Greater legal clarity in selected areas, stronger institutional capacity, cooperation and coordination, improved data integration and analysis, alongside outcome-oriented monitoring would further strengthen the practical application of gender equality and work life balance policies and legislation.
- **Portugal's institutional framework provides a strong foundation for advancing work-life balance as a condition for equality between women and men.** Strengthening coordination among labour administration authorities, equality bodies and the social partners, alongside leveraging institutional capacity to promote gender mainstreaming across policy enforcement, monitoring and social dialogue mechanisms, would improve the implementation and effectiveness of existing legislation and policies.

Beneficiary authorities:

Gender equality in Portugal's labour market: progress and challenges

Work-life balance and gender equality are essential to achieving decent work, inclusive growth and sustainable economic development. As labour markets are reshaped by demographic, digital and environmental transitions, ensuring that women and men benefit equally from the opportunities offered by these transformations is increasingly important for productivity, enterprise sustainability and social justice (ILO, 2026).

Portugal stands out in Europe for its relatively high female labour force participation and employment rates. Nevertheless, important gender gaps persist. In 2024, the activity rate of women aged 20-64 remained 5 percentage points below that of men within the same age bracket (81.2 per cent compared with 86.5 per cent), while the gender employment gap (age group 20-64) stood at approximately 5.7 percentage points (75.7 per cent for women and 81.4 per cent for men). Women also continue to record higher inactivity and labour underutilisation rates than men (INE).

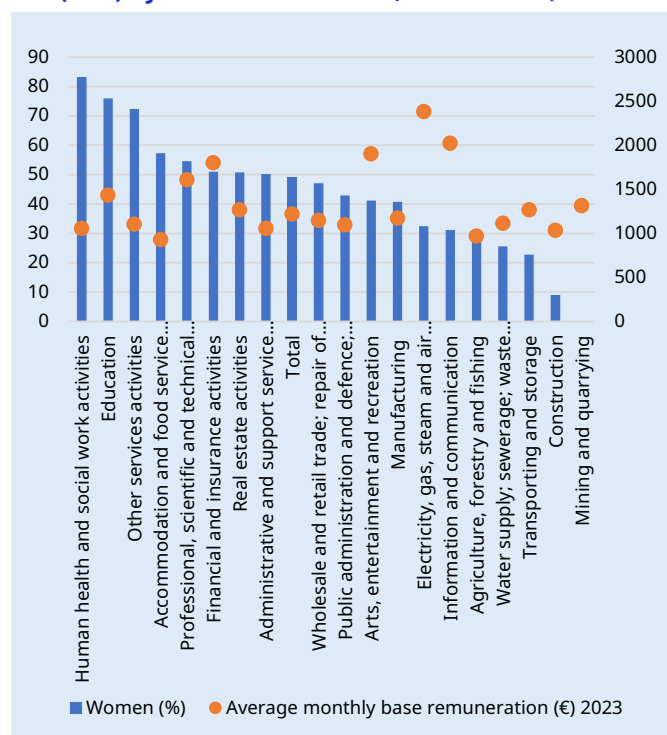
Importantly, aggregate indicators mask pronounced disparities affecting specific groups, including young people, migrants and persons with disabilities, for whom unemployment rates are substantially higher, often affecting women disproportionately. For instance, in 2024 13.4 per cent of young women not in employment, education or training (NEET) identified care responsibilities as the main reason for their inactivity (INE, 2024). This suggests that there is scope to further increase women's participation in employment if public policies are targeted at those whose labour market participation is constrained by care responsibilities. This can be supported particularly through the integration of gender equality perspective into active labour market policies (ALMPs), as well as strengthening the promotion of working time arrangements and forms of work organisation that support work-life balance.

One of the most significant transformations in the Portuguese society and labour market in recent decades has been the steady rise in women's educational attainment. Between 2014 and 2024, the proportion of women in the workforce with higher education increased from 29.7 per cent to 39.7 per cent, compared with an increase from 18.2 per cent to 27 per cent among men

(INE). However, this progress has not translated into equal labour market outcomes in earnings, job quality or career progression, suggesting that structural barriers continue to shape labour market outcomes.

Gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation stands out as a key structural feature contributing to inequalities between women and men in the Portuguese labour market. As shown below (figure 1), sectors with remunerations below the overall average have a highly feminized workforce, such as human health and social work, accommodation and food services and other services and activities, whereas sectors with higher average remunerations tend to be male-dominated, such as information, communication and technology (ICT). Women are highly concentrated not only lower paying sectors, but also in lower paying occupations. In 2024, 41.2 per cent of employed women were concentrated in four sectors: human health and social work, other service activities, accommodation and food services and wholesale retail –, while 48.3 per cent were employed in elementary occupations, and as service and sales workers or clerical support workers. All of those sectors and occupation groups recorded in 2024 average remunerations below the total economy average (INE and GEP-MTSSS). All of these factors contribute to the gender pay gap (GPG) observed.

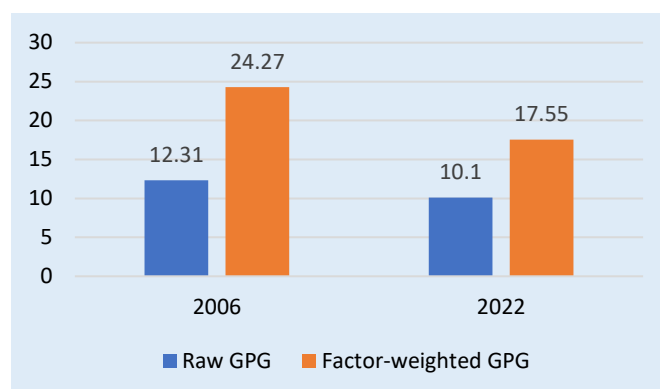
► **Figure 1: Proportion of women in the employed population (%) and average monthly remuneration (EUR) by economic activities, NACE Rev. 3, 2024**



Source: INE, Labour Force Survey and GEP-MTSS, Quadros de Pessoal (accessed in December 2025).

The most recent ILO estimates for Portugal confirm a clear reduction in the gender pay gap. Between 2006 and 2022, the raw and factor weighted gender pay gap declined (from 12.3 to 10.1 per cent and from 24.2 to 17.5 per cent respectively) based on average monthly earnings. Yet, the factor-weighted gender pay gap remain significant (figure 2).¹

► **Figure 2: Raw and factor-weighted GPG (%), average estimates based on monthly earnings, 2006 and 2022**



Source: ILO calculations based on SES-Eurostat.

The persistent GPG reflects women's disproportionate concentration in lower-paid employment and underrepresentation among top earners with occupational segregation continuing to shape pay outcomes across occupational categories. The decomposition analysis further shows that the unexplained component of the GPG remains the largest contributor to the gender pay gap across the wage distribution, revealing that observable characteristics, such as education, occupation, or sector, do not fully explain gender pay disparities.

Additionally, the unequal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities between women and men remains one of the key factors constraining women's labour market opportunities. According to the last available data, in 2015, women spent on average 4 hours and 17 minutes per day on unpaid care work compared with 2 hours and 37 minutes for men, which is a difference of 1 hour and 40 minutes per day (Perista et al, 2016).

Such inequalities, as well as social norms that continue to shape expectations regarding women's and men's roles in the labour market, continue to limit women's occupational choices and opportunities to enter and progress in the labour market, shaping women's employment outcomes. This is also reflected in evidence suggesting that women have been accounting for the vast majority of workers

¹ Factor-weighting consists of grouping women and men wage workers into more homogeneous subgroups based on factors such as education, age, sector of employment (public/private), and working time arrangement (full-time/part-time). By controlling for clustering effects and comparing women and men with similar characteristics, the resulting factor-weighted GPG captures differences in earnings that are independent of

the unequal distribution of workers across these characteristics, suggesting that composition characteristics only partially account for the gap, and reinforcing the structural nature of the factors driving these gaps (ILO, 2018b).

requesting working time arrangements and forms of work organization that support the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, as well as making use of leave entitlements for childcare and informal caregiver status (CITE, multiple years).

Occupational safety and health (OSH) also reveal gendered patterns of inequality. While men account for most occupational accidents, women account for approximately twice as many recognized occupational diseases (ACT, 2024).

Global evidence suggests that psychosocial risks, burnout and exposure to violence and harassment (V&H) remain insufficiently recognized within existing OSH approaches, namely on the recognition of conditions associated with these risks as occupational diseases, despite their greater prevalence in many female-dominated sectors characterized by high emotional demands and frequent interaction with clients, patients and service users (ILO and IOSS, 2025). Although the information available on these phenomena remains limited in Portugal, CITE's data show that the majority of complaints submitted to the Commission concerning workplace harassment are filed by women (CITE, 2023). Monitoring the evolution of these risks, including their differential impacts on women and men, would contribute to a stronger evidence base for public policies aimed at their prevention and mitigation.

According to ILO's data (2022) for Europe and Central Asia, women were particularly exposed to sexual violence and harassment at work. The data demonstrates significant gender differences (9.1 per cent of women compared to 2.5 per cent of men). However, talking about personal experiences of V&H, including sexual harassment, can be difficult and many factors might prevent people from doing so, including fear of stigmatization, lack of knowledge of reporting, amongst others (ILO, 2018a). Additionally, the major reported barriers to disclosing V&H at work were "being a waste of time", "fear for their reputation" and "unclear procedures at work". Therefore, increasing awareness and knowledge is a step towards changing the perceptions and attitudes that perpetuate or condone V&H, particularly gender-based violence, while maintaining a zero-tolerance approach to workplace violence and harassment.

Women's disproportionate care responsibilities, when combined with paid work, also creates a double burden

that may contribute to fatigue, exhaustion, time poverty and psychosocial strain, factors that increase risks to occupational safety and health (ILO and SIDA, 2013).

These challenges are becoming increasingly important as Portugal faces population ageing, labour shortages and digital and environmental transitions which may impact women and men differently. These structural changes create opportunities for greater focus on increasing productivity, fostering innovation and creating decent jobs, but they also risk reinforcing existing inequalities if unequal access to decent jobs, skills and lifelong learning, occupational segregation, and unequal care responsibilities continue to shape women's and men's labour market opportunities differently.

Gender-responsive macroeconomic, sectoral and active and passive labour market policies that ensure decent employment opportunities for both women and men and also integrate gender equality, particularly in emerging sectors, will contribute to more inclusive and resilient labour market outcomes (ILO, 2025).

The legal and institutional framework on gender equality in the labour market

Portugal has a robust legal and policy framework for promoting gender equality in the labour market and supporting work-life balance. This architecture encompasses constitutional and labour law provisions that prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex and affords enhanced protection to workers with family responsibilities. It also includes a relatively advanced framework regarding parental leave entitlements and mechanisms to encourage the sharing of leave between mothers and fathers, as well as provisions allowing workers to request working time arrangements and forms of work organization that better support work-life balance (Carvalho, 2022).

Portugal has also adopted specific legislation on equal pay and pay transparency (Law No. 60/2018), as well as on the balanced representation of women and men in decision-making positions (Law No. 62/2017). This framework is also shaped by Portugal's ratification of all key ILO Conventions on gender equality and non-discrimination² and alignment of its national legislation with a number of

² Ratifications of ILO conventions: Ratifications for Portugal

EU directives related to gender equality and non-discrimination in employment and occupation³.

A key feature of the Portuguese institutional structure are two equality bodies – *Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género* (CIG) and *Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego* (CITE) - which, through their differentiated mandates and competences, contribute to the promotion of gender equality. With dedicated expertise in the areas of labour and employment, and a tripartite composition, bringing together representatives of government, workers and employers, CITE plays a fundamental role in promoting gender equality in the world of work in Portugal. On the other hand, CIG coordinates the [National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), the implementation of which involves a range of labour and social protection authorities, and has the responsibility for promoting gender mainstreaming across public policies.

However, in spite of a strong legal and institutional foundation, gender inequalities in the labour market persist. Understanding the implementation gaps and outstanding challenges driving these outcomes, including through improved monitoring mechanisms, is therefore essential to improving the effectiveness of existing legislation and policies.

Policy design, legal clarity and implementation gaps

Despite the robustness of the legal, institutional and policy framework, a number of legal provisions, particularly those relating to parental and care-related rights and equal remuneration for work of equal value, would benefit from greater clarity and coherence to support consistent interpretation for more effective implementation and enforcement.

In relation to equal remuneration for work of equal value, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), has noted that the pay equity framework is not yet fully aligned with the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value set out in the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).⁴

While Law No. 60/2018 has strengthened the legal framework, existing pay transparency mechanisms continue to offer workers' and their representatives' insufficient access to pay information as, in practice, company-level disclosure does not take place, despite being provided for under Article 4(1b) of the aforementioned legislation. Additionally, the requirement to identify opposite-sex comparators within the same enterprise in gender-based pay discrimination cases may be constrained, if access to the information necessary to assess pay differences is not fully ensured. This requirement can be particularly constraining in female-dominated sectors, where a comparator of the opposite sex may simply not exist.

Work-life balance legislation has also significantly expanded rights for parents and caregivers. However, implementation has not yet fully addressed persistent gendered patterns in the uptake of care related rights (CITE, multiple years). Therefore, further efforts are needed to promote a more equal sharing of care responsibilities in line with the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), improve access to flexible working arrangements without adverse career consequences, and ensure effective protection against parental related discrimination.

There has been positive progress towards a more balanced representation of women and men on the boards of listed and state-owned enterprises, encompassing the adoption of regulatory measures requiring certain categories of companies to meet minimum thresholds for balanced representation, while also establishing a sanctioning framework applicable in cases of non-compliance within the framework of the Law No.62/2017. Yet, women remain underrepresented in executive leadership positions (CIG, 2023). Strengthening the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of company equality plans established under this law - including through the introduction of sanction mechanisms applicable in cases of non-compliance-, together with greater institutional coordination, would enhance their contribution towards equal pay, career progression, work-life balance and women's representation in leadership positions.

³ This includes the EU Work-life Balance Directive (2019/1158/EU), EU Pay Transparency Directive (Directive (EU) 2023/970), EU Women on Boards Directive (Directive (EU) 2022/2381)

⁴ [Direct Request \(CEACR\) - adopted 2025, published 114th ILC session \(2026\)](#).

Public employment services and active labour market policies have an important role to play in addressing employment segregation and promoting women's access to higher-paid and high-productivity sectors through targeted training, career guidance and affirmative action measures, while improving working conditions in feminized sectors (Sansonetti and Davern, 2020). At the same time, passive labour market policies, such as unemployment benefits, should continue to provide adequate income security and facilitate transition back into employment, particularly for groups facing multiple barriers to labour market participation. Integrating gender equality objectives across employment, skills, industrial, digital and green transition strategies would further support more inclusive, productive and resilient labour market outcomes (ILO, 2025).

Institutional capacity, coordination and enforcement

Portugal's labour market institutional architecture provides a robust foundation for gender mainstreaming by bringing together specialised labour administration authorities, social protection institutions, equality bodies and public employment services with complementary responsibilities for implementing and enforcing gender equality and work-life balance policies and legislation. This reflects the principles set out in the ILO Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150).

Building on this institutional architecture, effective implementation of this framework depends on ensuring that the institutions involved have the human, technical and financial resources, analytical capacity and operational guidance required to effectively implement, monitor and where relevant, enforce gender equality and work-life balance legislation and policies and carry out their mandates effectively.

Gender equality policies, labour legislation and authorities' institutional mandates themselves provide a clear basis for cooperation among labour administration authorities, equality bodies and other relevant public institutions. These include formal mechanisms for institutional coordination, such as joint monitoring committees or shared responsibilities in the implementation of legislative measures, for example those provided for under Laws No. 60/2018 and No. 62/2017. However, the degree to which these mechanisms are systematically used to ensure coherent and coordinated approaches was reported by stakeholders to

be overly reliant on personal initiative or on ad hoc, one-off arrangements, compromising their full potential. Greater use of these formal structures and procedures would enhance a shared understanding of workplace gender-based discrimination and work-life balance rights, strategies for addressing them, as well as the role played by each of these institutions in advancing gender equality in the labour market from a broader strategic perspective.

Data, monitoring and evaluation

Portugal has a robust statistical system that produces official statistics on the labour market, social protection, income and living conditions and gender equality, amongst other thematic areas, systematically disaggregated by sex. This statistical system is aligned with international and European standards. In addition, Portugal maintains an extensive body of administrative employment data, of which Quadros de Pessoal (Employment Records) is a particularly noteworthy example.

Furthermore, the data collected is frequently used to produce monitoring reports, namely, the Annual Report on the Progress on Equality Between Women And Men in Labour, Employment and Vocational Training (under Law No. 10/2001), while also informing a range of other transparency, monitoring and reporting instruments anchored both in the labour law and in equality legislation.

However, there is scope to further leverage this data for analytical purposes, promoting a shift away from predominantly descriptive, activity-focused reporting (Fernandes et al, 2025) towards a more outcome-oriented perspective. The integration of statistical and administrative data, alongside more systematic policy feedback mechanisms, would contribute to further strengthening assessments of policy effectiveness and analysis of the relationship between the objectives of specific measures and outcomes. This would maximize the potential for evidence-informed policymaking in these areas.

In Portugal, administrative data (Quadros de Pessoal) is also used to inform and prompt labour inspection interventions in companies where gender pay gaps above a predefined threshold are detected, within Law No. 60/2018 framework. However, the significant time lag between data collection and subsequent inspection action - which can go up to two and a half years - may compromise the effectiveness of this mechanism.

Therefore, the implementation of this provision could benefit from the use of other sources of administrative data available at the Social Security system, allowing for a more up-to-date information. Moreover, maximizing the use of platforms that enable data interoperability – such as Equalork and iAP – alongside the harmonization of concepts and indicators, would strengthen the effectiveness of data use across different institutions for policy implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation purposes.

Despite the well-established data ecosystem, important data gaps persist. For instance, the uptake of working time and organization arrangements within the framework of parental and care rights (articles 54, 55 and 56 of the Labour Code) is not currently monitored thereby reducing the scope for assessing their use across women and men, economic sectors, occupations and other employment characteristics. The systematic collection and dissemination of data on time use, particularly in relation to unpaid care and domestic work, as well as intersectional forms of inequality would further strengthen the evidence base for analysing gender and other intersecting and overlapping dimensions of inequality in the Portuguese labour market.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender equality is recognized as a cross-cutting objective throughout policy, legislation and strategic frameworks and specialized equality bodies have the expertise to undertake gender analysis; however, there is potential to further strengthen its integration across labour administration areas such as labour inspection, public employment services and vocational training.

Strengthening the linkages between equality bodies and other labour administration authorities could support a more comprehensive understanding of indirect and structural forms of discrimination and enhance the capacity of labour market policies and interventions to address persistent gender inequalities more effectively.

Importantly, leveraging the overall institutional understanding of how gender equality relates to the core mandates of different labour authorities and their day-to-day activities would contribute to a more effective implementation of such policies, by enabling the systematic integration of gender perspectives into policy design, implementation, service delivery and monitoring, while avoiding the perception that such objectives

constitute additional or externally imposed responsibilities.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining

Social dialogue and collective bargaining remain important mechanisms for the promotion and realization of gender equality. Collective bargaining can be particularly effective in improving working conditions beyond the statutory minimum regarding equal pay, work-life balance provisions and job quality negotiated and adjusted to sector-specific circumstances.

Integrating gender equality considerations across core collective bargaining domains, such as wages, working time and pay structures - the issues most frequently addressed through collective bargaining in Portugal (CRL, 2024) - can contribute to more substantive equality outcomes. Thus, recognizing these issues as core labour market concerns, rather than as separate gender-related ones, helps ensure that equality objectives are mainstreamed within collective bargaining processes and reflected in negotiated outcomes (ILO, 2019; 2016).

Portugal's institutional architecture provides important, although still underutilized, opportunities to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the world of work beyond traditional social dialogue fora such as the Comissão Permanente de Concertação Social (CPCS). CITE, through its tripartite composition and its responsibilities to support social partners on matters of equal opportunities and treatment and to raise awareness among trade union and employer negotiators, is particularly well placed to promote and strengthen gender sensitive collective bargaining.

In addition, other tripartite composition bodies linked to labour authorities, including the Governing Body of Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP, public employment service), the Advisory Committee on Health and Safety at Work of Autoridade para as Condições de Trabalho (ACT, labour inspection), the Advisory Committee of Instituto da Segurança Social (ISS, Social Security Institute), and Centro de Relações Laborais (CRL) as a collegial body, further broaden the institutional spaces through which gender equality and work-life balance issues can be addressed, while providing an important opportunity to integrate gender equality considerations more systematically into the core mandate of such authorities. This entails facilitating their integration from the outset of the policy design, implementation,

monitoring and evaluation of labour market, employment, social security and OSH policies.

What can be learned from international good practices?

International experience can offer valuable insights into how the practical implementation of the institutional and legal framework on gender equality in the labour market and work-life balance can be further strengthened. Drawing on their alignment with the key challenges identified in Portugal, these international experiences illustrate specific mechanisms for policy implementation, institutional cooperation and coordination; for the integration of gender perspectives across different areas of labour administration; as well as the role of social dialogue in promoting the recognition and value of work predominantly carried out by women, thereby contributing to improved gender equality outcomes.

Addressing occupational segregation and the undervaluation of feminized work

Australia has tackled the undervaluation of care work through its industrial relations system by enabling wage-setting institutions to reassess the value of work performed in female-dominated sectors and increase wages where work had been historically undervalued, based on the skills, responsibilities, effort and working conditions of those involved (AWGEA, 2026 and 2025; AFWC, 2015 and 2025; Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2024; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Act 202; Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022). **Germany** has addressed the same challenge through a coordinated package of reforms combining sectoral wage-setting, public funding, accredited training and social dialogue to improve wages, working conditions and career progression (Bosch and Evans-Borchers, 2026; Schuß, 2020).

From legal frameworks to effective implementation and enforcement

Australia has combined equal pay legislation with employer-level pay transparency by requiring large companies (with at least 100 employees) to report and publish gender pay gaps (AWGEA, 2026 and 2025; AFWC,

2015 and 2025; Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2024; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Act 202; Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022). **Canada** has complemented this approach by introducing proactive pay equity obligations, requiring employers to assess the value of different jobs, identify unjustified pay differences and develop pay equity plans to better address these inequalities (Pay Equity Act, 2018; Government of Canada, Employment and Social Development, 2025; CHRC, 2025). In both countries, employers are supported through practical guidance, gender-neutral job evaluation tools and dedicated oversight bodies to facilitate implementation.

Building coordinated and gender-responsive labour market institutions

France and Sweden have taken a broader whole-of-government approach by embedding responsibility for gender equality across ministries through gender mainstreaming programmes, senior equality officials and institutional networks, making gender equality part of routine policymaking rather than the sole responsibility of specialized equality bodies (EIGE; SGEA; *Journal officiel de la République française*, 2025; Sterner and Biller, 2007).

Costa Rica has operationalized gender mainstreaming within labour inspection by introducing gender-responsive inspection protocols, specialized interview techniques, standardized procedures for detecting discrimination and violence and harassment, and monitoring systems that support more proactive enforcement (Peinador Roldán, 2025; INAMU and MTSS, 2023). **Spain** has integrated gender equality into the governance and day-to-day operation of its public employment services by embedding it into employment services, staff training, performance monitoring and service delivery, supported by dedicated coordination structures and an integrated monitoring platform (SEPE – Gobierno de España, 2023).

Strengthening data, monitoring, evaluation and policy learning systems

In **Australia**, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency publishes employer-level gender pay gaps, making inequalities visible and encouraging employers to monitor progress and take corrective action (AWGEA, 2026 and 2025; AFWC, 2015 and 2025; Commonwealth of Australia,

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2024; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Act 202; Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022). **Canada** complements this approach through the Equi'Vision platform, which publicly reports employer-level information on workforce representation and pay while linking reporting obligations to institutional oversight and compliance mechanisms (Pay Equity Act, 2018; Government of Canada, Employment and Social Development, 2025; CHRC, 2025). **Spain** has established an integrated monitoring platform that tracks the implementation of gender mainstreaming measures across public employment services, enabling institutions to assess progress and adjust policies in real time (SEPE – Gobierno de España, 2023). These experiences demonstrate that the value of data lies in their integration into monitoring, enforcement and policy adjustment.

Embedding gender equality within social dialogue and collective bargaining

Australia has complemented collective bargaining by empowering wage-setting institutions to reassess and increase wages in female-dominated sectors where work had been historically undervalued, supported by better evidence, technical guidance and gender-sensitive bargaining tools (AWGEA, 2026 and 2025; AFWC, 2015 and 2025; Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2024; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025; Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Act 202; Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022). **Germany** has brought together government, employers, trade unions and care providers through sector-specific coordination mechanisms to improve wages, training, working conditions and workforce planning in the care sector, while linking these reforms to public financing (Bosch and Evans-Borchers, 2026; Schuß, 2020).

Way forward for Portugal

Building on Portugal's strong legislative and institutional foundations on gender equality and work-life balance, the focus of the following recommendations lies on its targeted strengthening, and more considerably, in its effective implementation in practice, ensuring that the

overall institutional architecture delivers more consistent and equitable labour market outcomes.

Therefore, the recommendations aim to strengthen implementation, improve institutional effectiveness through coordination and cooperation and address the structural drivers of gender inequality.

Recommendations

Legal and policy gaps and potential to extend the scope of the existing national framework

1. **Strengthen the implementation and enforcement of work-life balance provisions to ensure their effective enforcement by:**
 - a. promoting information on parental leave highlighting that periods of complementary parental leave, irrespective of whether they confer a social security allowance, count as contributory records.
 - b. Improving the efficiency of the monitoring of the provisions related to work-life balance.
2. **Address legal and policy gaps in equal pay by:**
 - a. enabling the use of hypothetical comparators in pay discrimination cases.
 - b. operationalising the full principle of equal pay for work of equal value as enshrined in the ILO Convention No.100 and in line with CEACR's comments.
3. **Enhance the evidence base on psychosocial risks and workplace violence** through further research and systematic data collection, with a view to informing gender-responsive occupational safety and health policies.
4. **Strengthen awareness-raising and prevention initiatives on workplace violence and sexual harassment in the workplace.**
5. **Systematically apply gender impact assessments across labour and employment policies**, including within the Public Employment Service (IEFP), Social Security (ISS) and the Labour Inspection Authority (ACT), to strengthen gender-responsive policymaking and enforcement outcomes.

6. **Ensure that employment and skills policies continue to integrate a gender perspective**, with particular attention to labour market transitions.

Implementation, coordination and interinstitutional cooperation

7. **Optimise existing institutional resources and mechanisms** through:
 - a. strengthening the role of the interministerial network of Equality Advisors.
 - b. stronger and more consistent engagement of equality bodies in the technical support for policy design and across policy domains.
 - c. strengthening the cooperation between CITE and labour inspection in workplace inspections.
 - d. leveraging the role of the CITE in assessing discriminatory clauses in collective agreements, including through adequate resourcing.
 - e. enhancing mechanisms enabling workers and their representatives to access company-level pay information, within limits of the legal frameworks.
 - f. maximise the use of public procurement as a tool to promote gender equality.
8. **Establish mechanisms** across the entities under the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS) to further strengthen gender mainstreaming, coordination, knowledge-sharing, and institutional capacity across departments.

Data, monitoring and evaluation

9. **Enhance the analytical value of existing reporting instruments** by reviewing and refining indicators to better capture and assess gender equality and labour market outcomes.
10. **Optimise the use of existing tools**, such as the Equal@Work and iAP platforms, to support monitoring of public policy implementation and compliance with legal instruments.
11. **Consider the use of alternative administrative data**, available at the Social Security system, for the operationalization of Article 3(1) of Law No. 60/2018.

12. **Regularly update time-use data** to monitor, among other aspects, how paid and unpaid working time is distributed between women and men; and reinforce periodic monitoring of the uptake of working time and work organization arrangements within the framework of parental and care rights.

13. **Institutionalize systematic gender impact monitoring and evaluation across all policies**, including regular ex-post assessments to identify unintended effects and support policy adjustments.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining

14. **Create an enabling environment to address gender equality more systematically in social dialogue and collective bargaining** by prioritizing issues such as equal pay, working time, work organisation, work-life balance and prevention of violence and harassment at work.
15. **Mainstream gender equality on the existing social dialogue structures** within the management boards and advisory councils of various institutions under the MTSSS.
16. **Enhance CITE's ability to perform its role in supporting the integration of gender equality in collective bargaining** through adequate resourcing and technical capacity.
17. **Make available to all social dialogue actors' awareness-raising and training instruments** including on gender-responsive bargaining, pay transparency and the application of the "work of equal value" principle, particularly in female-dominated and low-wage sectors.

Conclusion

Portugal has established a strong legislative, policy and institutional foundation for advancing gender equality in the labour market. The findings of this brief show that the priority is ensuring that existing commitments translate into more equal labour market outcomes through stronger implementation, institutional coordination, evidence-based policymaking and social dialogue.

The recommendations presented in this brief are closely aligned with the priorities set out in the [ILO Resolution VI concerning the ILO transformative agenda for gender equality](#), adopted by the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2026. The Resolution recognises that achieving substantive gender equality requires coordinated action to address structural labour market inequalities, including occupational segregation, the undervaluation of feminised work, unequal care responsibilities, pay inequality, gender-responsive occupational safety and health, and the gendered impacts of demographic, digital and environmental transitions. It also emphasises the importance of equipped institutions,

gender mainstreaming, social dialogue, data and accountability in translating legal rights into practice.

Portugal and the European Union played an important role in shaping this international agenda. The priorities identified through this project are therefore consistent with the direction agreed by ILO constituents and provide a practical pathway for strengthening the implementation of existing legislation and policies. By building on its current institutional framework and embedding gender equality across labour market, employment and economic policies, Portugal is well positioned to advance towards more inclusive, productive and resilient labour market outcomes for women and men.

About the project

This policy brief is prepared in the context of the project “Assessment on the Effectiveness of Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality Policies in the Labour Market” (2025-2026). The project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by ILO, in cooperation with the European Commission, the *Direção-Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho (DGERT)* and *Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego (CITE)*. Its aim is to strengthen knowledge, evidence, and policy dialogue to achieve improved efficiency and effectiveness of legislation and policies on gender equality and work-life balance in the Portuguese labour market.

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