



# Gendering the Covid-19 crisis

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## Outline



- 1 • Gender-based violence
- 2 Gendered impacts on employment and work-life balance
- 3 • Gender balance in decision making
- 4 • Conclusions

Presentation based on: Birte Böök, Franka van Hoof, Linda Senden and Alexandra Timmer, 'Gendering the COVID-19 crisis: a mapping of its impact and call for action in light of EU gender equality law and policy', *European Equality Law Review* 2020/2, p.22-44 (available at <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5300-european-equality-law-review-2-2020-pdf-1-446-kb>).



# 1. Covid and gender-based violence



## Increase in domestic violence during COVID-19 crisis

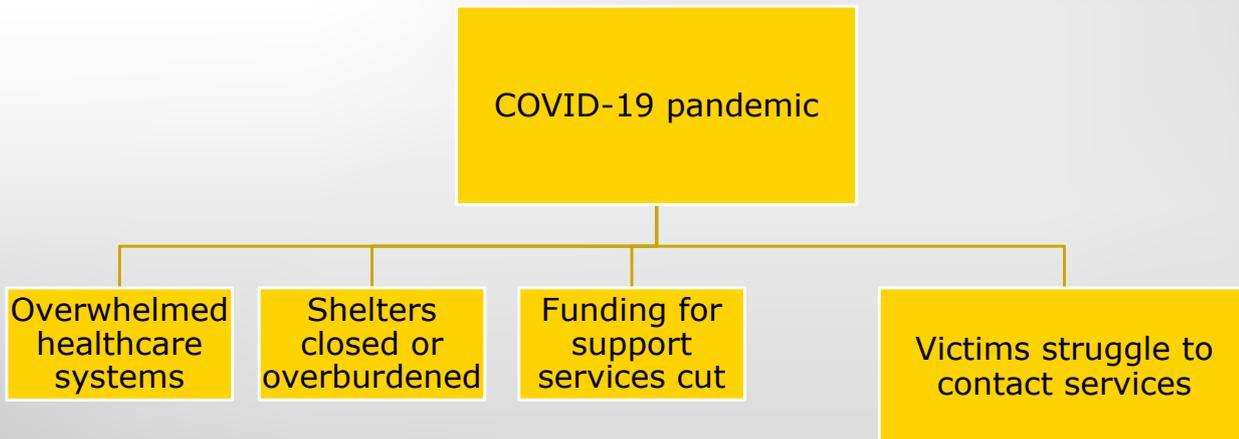
France: 32 % increase of cases in just one week of lockdown

Lithuania: 20 % more cases in 3 weeks of lockdown

Spain, Germany, UK: increase in demand for shelters  
– requests for help doubled in Spain – online consultations increased by 733 %

Croatia: 228 % increase in rape cases in first 5 months of 2020, 175 % increase in attempted rape cases





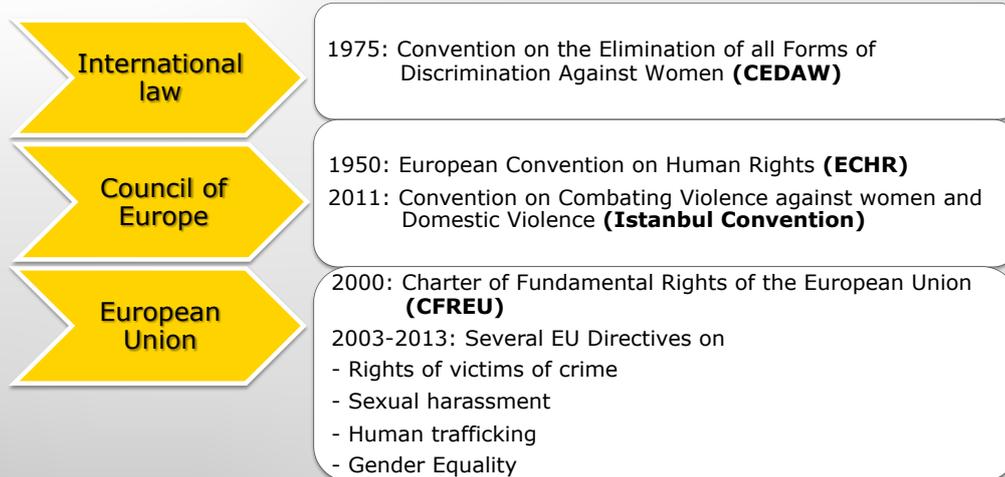
**Increase of violence not limited to domestic violence**

**Education and work largely moved online**



**Higher risk of online violence for women and girls**

## Legal framework to address violence against women



No comprehensive legal instrument on violence against women at EU level



No common definition or uniform protection

Problematic:

- 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since age of 15
- COVID-19 crisis exacerbates this further

## Looking forward: practical measures for the short-term

Women should be free to seek help during crisis

Health care and support services as essential services

Emergency relief, economic support

Training first responders to provide support

Continuity of justice services and police protection

Special support for most vulnerable groups

## Measures for the long-term

EU legislation on violence against women

VAW should be part of all general policies on crisis

Additional resource allocation

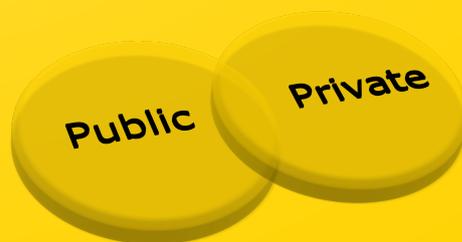
Long-term plans to address effects of crisis

Collection of comprehensive data

Adoption of crisis response plans with VAW as key factor

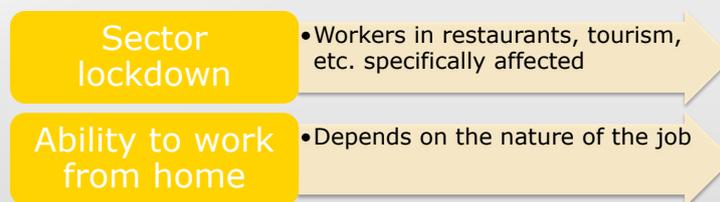


## 2. Gendered impacts on employment and work-life balance



### Job losses

Degree of job loss depends on two main factors:



As a result, in this crisis women experience more job losses than men.

## Horizontal segregation

Horizontal sex segregation = the concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs.

Caused by material and ideological separation between productive and reproductive activities:

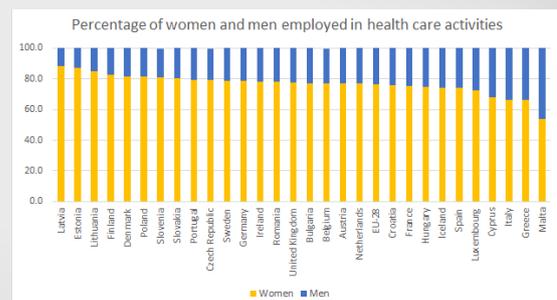


This separation is **gendered as well as raced**.

## Care workers



- Horizontal segregation in the labour market leads to different levels of exposure to Covid-19 for women and men.
- Healthcare workers are 3x more likely to get infected with the virus & report high levels of stress.
- Care workers disproportionately work in precarious jobs
- E.g domestic workers: estimated that 70% is performed under informal arrangements often by migrants. These workers are at particular risk to lose their jobs.



Source: EIGE  
<https://eige.europa.eu/covid-19-and-gender-equality/frontline-workers>

## Government responses?

### Mixed findings

- Difficult to get a complete overview, but available data suggests that government responses are mixed and partial.
- Good practices:
  - Spain: specific subsidy for domestic workers who are registered in the social security system.
  - Ireland: self-employed persons and persons in atypical employment relationships qualified to receive unemployment payments if they had lost their income due the pandemic.

## Teleworking



### Statistics:

- EU average from 5% to 39%
- No great m/f difference
- But significant variations depending on education, geography and type of household. Only 28% of single parents (85% are women) working from home.



Advantages from a gender perspective



No European 'right to telework', but a right to request flexible working arrangements (art 9 Work-Life Balance Directive)



**Zooming in**

## The gender gap in unpaid care work and work-life balance

- Pandemic created increase in unpaid care work.
- Women pick up greater part of extra care work, but statistics vary. This also includes the mental load.
- Government responses varied widely across Europe:
  - Several countries extended/introduced periods of paid parental leave (e.g. Belgium; Italy; Latvia).
  - Several experts of the European Equality Law Network ([www.equalitylaw.eu](http://www.equalitylaw.eu)) reported that measures aimed at ensuring gender equality were only adopted in second instance.

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## Looking forward



- Creating a sound legal basis for teleworking



- Supporting the most vulnerable workers



- Fundamentally:

This pandemic has once again shown that gender is not marginal to the labour market and nor is race. Most of the care workers who are now revealed to be 'essential' are women. In fact, the labour market is deeply gendered and, moving forward, all social and economic policies should take this into account.

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### 3. Women in leadership and decision making



How does the pandemic impact women in leadership and decision making?

- Female scientists experienced a significant decline in time devoted to research  
→ affects advancement of women in academia
- Lack of women in formulation of policy responses

## Female political leaders in Europe

### Heads of government

Denmark  
Finland  
Germany  
Slovakia



### Equal share of women in Parliament

>45 %: Only Sweden and Finland

40-45 %: Belgium, Spain, France, Portugal

EU average: 32.7 %

## Gender balance in COVID-19 task forces and committees

- 74 % of national-level committees have less than 1/3 women
- Women made up 24 % of committees on average
- Good practice: Finland's high-profile group for strengthening of wellbeing and equality in aftermath of crisis = 50/50 women and men

## Under-representation of women in other domains

- Lack of inclusion of women's organisations
  - Under-representation of female scientists in COVID-19 research papers
  - Under-representation of women reporting on COVID-19 in media
- 
- Effect on gender equality as it hinders participation and women's voices being heard

## Effect of underrepresentation during COVID-19 crisis



## Gender-balance of measures taken during COVID-19

340 social protection and labour market measures in total, but only 21% gender-sensitive

233 fiscal and economic measures to help businesses – less than 5 % geared towards feminised sectors

## Looking forward: what is key for promoting gender-sensitive policy responses?

Include women of all backgrounds in conversations about crisis responses.

Commission's proposed directive on gender-balanced company boards and other initiatives to enhance participation.

Effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.

## Gender mainstreaming

- Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality of July 2020: crisis is exacerbating existing inequalities; calls for gender mainstreaming.
- Gender mainstreaming is often not actively or effectively applied in practice  

- Important to put into place toolkit developed by EIGE: including gender impact assessments, institutional transformation, training, auditing, evaluation and budgeting.
- COVID-19 = window of opportunity for positive change.



## 4. Conclusions

## Conclusions

- We need gender-sensitive policies, which also take an intersectional view.
- Gender mainstreaming is still a weak tool so we need solid gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment tools.
- Gender equality should remain high on the agenda in policy responses, so that we can take advantage of the momentum created by the crisis.



# Thank you!

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Full article at: <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5300-european-equality-law-review-2-2020-pdf-1-446-kb>