

# Gender, skills and precarious work in the EU

Research note



This research note was prepared by the research team of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE): Davide Barbieri, Hedvika Janeckova, Dr Marre Karu, Diletta Luminari, Zuzana Madarova, Merle Paats and Dr Jolanta Reingardė. A particular thank you goes to colleagues at EIGE for consultations, editing and administrative support.

The collection of the background information was commissioned by EIGE and carried out by Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale. The project was coordinated by Zuzana Madarova (EIGE).

Neither EIGE nor any person acting on its behalf can be held responsible for the use made of the information contained within this publication. The opinions expressed in this independent publication are the authors' own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of either the European Commission or of the Member States.

***Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers  
to your questions about the European Union.***

**Freephone number (\*):  
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

(\*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

---

EN (print) MH-02-17-250-EN-C ISBN 978-92-9493-755-1 doi:10.2839/529405  
EN (web) MH-02-17-250-EN-N ISBN 978-92-9493-756-8 doi:10.2839/62350

© European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017  
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Gedimino pr. 16  
LT-01103 Vilnius  
LITHUANIA

Tel. +370 52157444  
Email: [eige.sec@eige.europa.eu](mailto:eige.sec@eige.europa.eu)  
<http://www.eige.europa.eu>  
<http://www.twitter.com/eurogender>  
<http://www.facebook.com/eige.europa.eu>  
<http://www.youtube.com/eurogender>



# **Gender, skills and precarious work in the EU**

Research note



# Foreword

Since the start of the economic crisis in 2008, the share of employed women and men who are facing the risk of poverty has increased. Income inequalities have deepened and upward mobility into higher paid, more secure jobs has stagnated. It is not just access to the labour market but also fair working conditions for all women and men that are now more important than ever before. Education and investment in skills have found an important place in Europe's strategy to overcome the crisis.

Fairness and social justice are a priority for the European Union. The European Pillar of Social Rights is one of the opportunities for the EU to design and implement sustainable and effective policies that benefit women and men equally. Gender-specific targets can facilitate the closing of gender gaps and the boosting of growth and the economy.

EIGE's research confirmed that throughout their course of life women are more likely to work fewer hours, in low-paid and insecure jobs. People with a non-EU migrant background are more often engaged in precarious work compared to those born in the EU. However, women living in their country of birth work in precarious jobs more often than men, including men born outside of the EU. Low educational attainment is a particular risk factor — almost every second woman and every fifth man with low qualifications work in a precarious job, with 36 % of women and 16 % of men with low levels of education receiving the lowest income (below the first quintile). Women with low educational attainment tend to work more often in occupations which offer fewer training opportunities. Close to half of women with low levels of qualifications in precarious jobs work in elementary occupations (such as cleaners and domestic workers) and only a few of them have received training in the last year. To ensure equal access to education and training, learning opportunities at work across all sectors and occupations are crucial, in particular for those most in need of upscaling their skills.

EIGE believes that adopting a gendered and intersectional perspective can make the identification, assessment and certification of skills planned in the New Skills Agenda for Europe more responsive to the present needs. Recognition of skills at an individual level is as relevant as a fair evaluation of work across sectors and occupations. For this to happen, skills traditionally considered feminine or masculine need to be valued and rewarded equally.

This research note is part of EIGE's work on monitoring EU progress towards gender equality and supporting the presidencies of the Council of the European Union. I would like to thank all the institutions and experts who contributed to this publication and in particular acknowledge the Maltese government, Eurofound, Cedefop and EIGE's team. The purpose of this research is to offer solid and useful evidence to address the unresolved challenges to achieving gender equality and social justice in Europe today and in the future.

**Virginija Langbakk**



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Country abbreviations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1. EU policy framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>
1.1 Education and training .....	12
1.2 Gender equality.....	12
1.3 Employment and working conditions.....	13
<b>2. Gender, skills and education</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.1 Skills assessment from a gender perspective .....	15
2.2 Skills and educational attainment .....	15
2.3 Who has a low qualification level? .....	16
2.4 Low qualifications and detachment from the labour market.....	17
<b>3. Gender, precarious employment and education</b> .....	<b>21</b>
3.1 Dimensions of precarious employment .....	21
3.2 Who works in precarious jobs? .....	22
3.3 People with low levels of qualifications in precarious jobs .....	23
<b>4. Training for women and men with low levels of qualifications</b> .....	<b>25</b>
4.1 Participation in training .....	25
4.2 Benefits of training .....	26
4.3 Barriers to participation in training .....	27
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Annex</b> .....	<b>37</b>

# List of figures

Figure 1: Share of the population with low educational attainment, by gender and age (EU-28, 2015).....	16
Figure 2: Labour market status by gender and educational attainment (15-64, 2014).....	17
Figure 3: Previous working experience by gender and educational attainment (20-64, EU-28, 2014).....	18
Figure 4: People with low educational attainment who have never been employed, by gender and age (EU-28, 2014) .....	18
Figure 5: Dimensions of precarious employment by gender (15-64, employees, 2014).....	21
Figure 6: Proportion of employees in precarious jobs by gender, educational attainment and age (EU-28, 2014).....	22
Figure 7: Dimensions of precariousness by gender and educational attainment (15-64, EU-28, 2014).....	23
Figure 8: Employees who attended at least one training during past 12 months by gender, educational attainment and quality of work (15-64, 2015) .....	25
Figure 9: Work-related changes during past 12 months among training participants by gender, educational attainment and quality of work (15-64, 2015) .....	26



# Country abbreviations

<b>AT</b>	Austria
<b>BE</b>	Belgium
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus
<b>CZ</b>	Czech Republic
<b>DE</b>	Germany
<b>DK</b>	Denmark
<b>EE</b>	Estonia
<b>EL</b>	Greece
<b>ES</b>	Spain
<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>FR</b>	France
<b>HR</b>	Croatia
<b>HU</b>	Hungary
<b>IE</b>	Ireland
<b>IT</b>	Italy
<b>LT</b>	Lithuania
<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg
<b>LV</b>	Latvia
<b>MT</b>	Malta
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>EU-28</b>	28 EU Member States

# Introduction



# Introduction

Globalisation, technological change, information and communication advances have led to important changes in the employment structure and skills content of jobs. Skills have a strategic importance for growth, innovation and social cohesion. Relevant skills form a basis for employability and adaptability in the labour market. The complexity of jobs is increasing across all sectors and occupations and there is inflation in relative skills demand, even for low-skilled jobs. Many low-skilled jobs now require greater literacy, numeracy and other basic skills. Even low-skilled jobs within the service sector increasingly include more demanding non-routine tasks (EC, 2016b). A number of already existing labour market challenges further intensified during the recent economic downturn. Education and investment in skills have now become a corner stone of Europe's strategy to overcome the crisis and boost growth and jobs.

By 2025, 49 % of all job openings (including both new and replacement jobs) in the EU will require high qualifications, 40 % medium qualifications and only 11 % low or no qualifications (Cedefop, forthcoming in EC, 2016b). Currently, almost 23 % of the population aged 20-64 have a low level of education (less than primary, primary or lower secondary education). Low-qualified people have fewer employment opportunities; they are also more vulnerable to precarious jobs and are twice as likely as highly qualified people to experience long-term unemployment (EC, 2016a). In 2014, only 43 % of women with low levels of qualifications (aged 20-64) in the EU-28 were employed and of those, 37 % held precarious jobs. Among women aged 20-64 with low levels of education (except for students) as many as 17 % have never been employed. Limited employment and

career opportunities result in limited economic independence and poverty across the course of life, particularly in old age. Close to half of working-age women and men who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion have the lowest level of education (EIGE, 2016).

Following the request from the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU (2017), this research note, delivered by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), explores the potential for upscaling skills among women and men in the EU labour market. A gender perspective highlights important differences between women and men with low levels of qualifications in their employability, their situation in the labour market and their access to job-related training. An intersectional perspective reveals the numerous experiences of low-qualified people in precarious employment and the factors that exacerbate vulnerabilities of certain groups of people in accessing quality employment and upscaling skills.

Chapter 1 of this research note provides an overview of the EU policy framework for upscaling skills, working conditions and gender equality. Chapter 2 presents the situation of people with low levels of qualifications across the EU and the challenges they face. Chapter 3 analyses the main aspects of precarious work and the situation of different groups of women and men in low-quality employment. The opportunities to participate in training and its benefits are presented in chapter 4. This research note draws on data from Eurostat's Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), Adult Education Survey (AES), and Eurofound's European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).

# 1. EU policy framework



# 1. EU policy framework

A number of EU policies and initiatives support upskilling and employability of people. The recently launched New Skills Agenda for Europe and its initiative — Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee <sup>(1)</sup> — address the European Commission's highest political priority, 'a new boost for jobs, growth and investment'. The New Skills Agenda for Europe acknowledges that tackling the challenges with regard to the skills deficit will require significant policy efforts and systemic reforms in education and training. While competence for the content and organisation of education and training systems lies with the Member States, the European Commission seeks a concerted effort and the shared commitment of many players (e.g. national, regional and local authorities; businesses and employers; workers; social partners and civil society actors) to improve the quality and relevance of skills formation, make skills and qualifications more visible and comparable, and to improve skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

The need for reinforced and updated skills also features prominently in the draft outline of the European Pillar of Social Rights <sup>(2)</sup> presented in March 2016, which emphasises the need to ensure that everyone has lifelong access to quality education and training that allows for the acquisition of an adequate level of basic skills and key competences for active participation in society and employment. It specifically notes that both young people and working-age adults with low skills should be encouraged to upgrade their skills.

The Europe 2020 strategy <sup>(3)</sup> sets up a twofold education target to reduce school dropout rates below 10 % and to increase the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed third level education from 31 % to at least 40 % in 2020. An agenda for

new skills and jobs is one of the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives. It seeks to create conditions for modernising labour markets to help raise employment levels and ensure the sustainability of national social models. This means empowering people through the acquisition of new skills to enable the current and future workforce to adapt to new conditions and potential career shifts, reduce unemployment and raise labour productivity (EC, 2010).

The social investment package 2020 gives guidance to the Member States on more efficient and effective social policies in response to the economic crisis and demographic changes and calls for investing in people, e.g. by providing programmes for upskilling and training and the recognition of skills and qualifications as well as promoting mobility. It calls to address the barriers that impede the participation of women and other under-represented workers in the labour market. The Commission closely monitors the performance of national social protection systems through the European semester.

The European semester provides the framework for steering and monitoring Member States' economic and social reforms in areas such as job creation, enhancing labour and skills supply, fostering social inclusion, combating poverty and promoting equal opportunities. The 2015 country specific recommendations <sup>(4)</sup> stressed that efficient, effective and forward looking vocational education and training programmes, including targeted adult learning, play a key role in improving employability. They also noted a need for public employment services to be strengthened in some Member States and active labour market measures to be more efficiently targeted to those furthest from the labour market (EC, 2016c).

A number of EU financial mechanisms support upskilling, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds and, in particular, the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF and the European Regional Development Fund alone will inject over EUR 30 billion to support skills development in the period 2014-2020

<sup>(1)</sup> Commission's Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee, COM(2016) 382 final, <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-382-EN-F1-1.PDF>

<sup>(2)</sup> The Pillar should build on, and complement, the EU social *acquis* in order to guide policies in a number of fields essential for well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. Once established, the Pillar should become the reference framework to screen the employment and social performance of participating Member States, to drive reforms at national level and, more specifically, to serve as a compass for the renewed process of convergence within the euro area.

<sup>(3)</sup> Commission communication on the EUROPE 2020 — A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM(2010) 2020 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC2020&from=en>

<sup>(4)</sup> Council Recommendations on the National Reform Programmes, OJ 215/C 272 of 18 August 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2015%3A272%3ATOC>

and the Erasmus+ programme will support skills development in education and training with nearly EUR 15 billion.

## 1.1 Education and training

Specifically in education and training, the 2015 joint report on progress in the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) <sup>(5)</sup> sets out revised priorities, inclusive of those identified by the European Agenda for Adult Learning. It stressed the importance of covering the full range of key competences and recognition of skills and/or qualifications, including those acquired through digital, online and open learning resources, as well as non-formal and informal learning, especially for people without upper secondary education.

The 2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning calls on the Member States to establish by 2018 national arrangements for the validation (identification, documentation, assessment and certification) of non-formal and informal learning, also considering possibilities for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment to undergo a 'skills audit' to identify their skills. The arrangements put in place for validation and skills assessment will play a key role in the delivery of the Skills Guarantee.

The 2008 European Parliament and Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning established a reference framework of qualification levels defined through learning outcomes. It provides that each level can be achieved through various routes of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

## 1.2 Gender equality

In the 2015 ET 2020, the Commission and the Member States agreed on a priority of 'tackling the gender gap in education and promoting more gender balanced choices in education' <sup>(6)</sup>. The gender equality dimension is integrated in the relevant European funding programmes, in particular Erasmus+ and the EU funding programme for education, training, youth and sport. In the Paris Declaration of March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, EU education ministers and the European commissioner for education agreed to strengthen their actions in education to promote, among other issues, gender equality. In this context, promoting gender equality is embedded within a wider framework of promoting fundamental values, tolerance and citizenship. These two policy-steering documents provide a new mandate to the Commission for action in the area of education and training.

The European Commission's strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2020 seeks to promote gender equality in all levels and types of education, including in relation to gendered subject choices and careers, in line with the priorities set out in the ET 2020 framework. This is seen as one of the key actions to reduce potential gender gaps in income and poverty among women.

The close link between education and the labour market is also addressed in the European Pact for gender equality 2010-2020, which aims to 'eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender equality at all levels of education and training, as well as in working life, in order to reduce gender segregation in the labour market' (Council of the European Union, 2011).

In September 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on empowering girls through education in the EU <sup>(7)</sup>. It highlights the fact that although significant progress has been achieved in terms of equal attainment and access to education, differences between girls and boys persist. It is important to implement specific strategies that address school curricula. Focus is also placed on discrimination against women and girls with disabilities and with special educational needs and on the significance of informal education.

<sup>(5)</sup> Commission communication on the new priorities for European cooperation in education and training, COM(2015) 408 final, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015_en.pdf)

<sup>(6)</sup> Commission communication on the new priorities for European cooperation in education and training, COM(2015) 408 final, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015_en.pdf)

<sup>(7)</sup> For more detailed information see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2015-0312+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

### 1.3 Employment and working conditions

Flexible forms of work have been on the political agenda since the end of the 1970s. The main aim has been to reconcile the flexible working arrangements and protection of employees. The approach adopted at the EU level has been twofold. On the one hand, a number of directives on non-standard forms of work (including part-time, fixed-term, temporary and posted work) were adopted. On the other hand, EU institutions also launched policy strategies to support the adoption of labour market reforms combining flexibility and security as well as supporting the quality of work. Flexicurity is explicitly acknowledged as a key element of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Commission's communication on Europe 2020 calls for the implementation of flexicurity principles, while enabling workers 'to acquire new skills to adapt to new conditions and potential career shifts' (EC, 2010). In its 2007 communication 'Towards common principles of flexicurity' <sup>(8)</sup>, the Commission adopted a comprehensive definition comprising four fundamental components:

- flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, both from the point of view of employers and employees;
- comprehensive lifelong learning strategies to ensure the adaptability of workers, particularly the most vulnerable;
- effective active labour market policies, to reduce unemployment spells and ease transitions into new jobs;
- modern social security systems, providing adequate income support and facilitating labour market mobility.

The Commission's communication proposed a set of common principles of flexicurity and a number of model pathways for their implementation endorsed by the December 2007 European Council <sup>(9)</sup>. Flexicurity is also intended to support gender equality in access to employment and reconciliation of work and family life.

<sup>(8)</sup> Commission communication, 'Towards common principles of flexicurity: more and better jobs through flexibility and security', COM(2007) 359 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52007DC0359>

<sup>(9)</sup> Council conclusions, 'Towards common principles of flexicurity' of 5/6 December 2007 (16201/07), <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2016201%202007%20INIT>

## 2. Gender, skills and education



## 2. Gender, skills and education

### 2.1 Skills assessment from a gender perspective

While educational attainment defines the level of completed education, a skill is a more dynamic concept indicating how education, work experience or lifelong learning influence what people know, understand and are capable of doing (EC, 2015a). Skills form the basis for employability, career advancement and earnings progression. Nevertheless, assessing skills and their value is not always clearly defined. In general, abilities associated with work that is traditionally carried out by women are valued less than those associated with work which is traditionally carried out by men, or are not considered skills at all (Rigby and Sanchis, 2006). For instance, caring abilities have been broadly understood as women's inner characteristics rather than skills that need to be acquired. As a result, care work is often considered low-skilled and is socially and financially undervalued or even unpaid. Studies of job evaluation systems have revealed bias in privileging the value of skills found in occupations considered masculine in contrast to jobs taken up predominantly by women (Acker, 1989; Oppenheimer, 1970; Rigby and Sanchis, 2006). Even though the relevance of social and transversal skills<sup>(10)</sup> for the labour market has been recognised, they are overlooked in many current policy discussions (OECD, 2014, 2015) and the focus is mostly given to cognitive skills.

The definition of skill, as closely associated with the labour market, is also a matter of discussion between employees and employers. Yet, the influence of gender hierarchies on the workplace organisation and professional or union activities has limited both women's access to skilled work and the attainment of skilled status for jobs where women are overrepresented (Steinberg, 1990; Phillips and Taylor, 1986). Moreover, in precarious employment, trade unions tend to be either weak or non-existent. As a result, the voice of workers in these jobs, taken up predominantly by women, is also weak in defining and assessing skills.

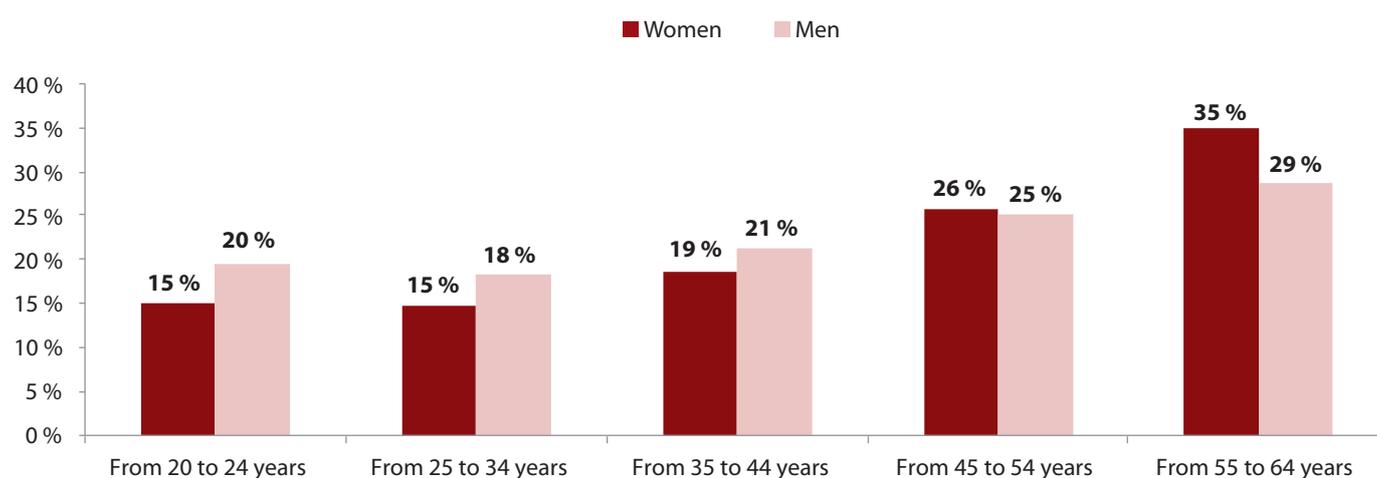
<sup>(10)</sup> Transversal skills can be defined as skills that are learned in one context in daily life, study or work and can be transferred to another context. They concern the ways of thinking (creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, learning to learn, metacognition), ways of working (communication, collaboration), tools for working (information literacy, digital literacy), living in the world (citizenship, life and career, personal and social responsibility) (EC, 2016b).

### 2.2 Skills and educational attainment

Most knowledge and skills are acquired through formal education and training, although people also learn in settings outside formal education — at work, online, through professional courses, social activities or volunteering (EC, 2016a). The Survey of Adult Skills (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, PIAAC) shows a connection between the level of educational achievement and literacy, numeracy skills and problem solving in technology-rich environments (OECD, 2016). Adults with higher proficiency in basic cognitive skills are more likely to participate in higher levels of education and, at the same time, longer periods of study provide an opportunity to develop higher proficiency levels in information-processing skills (EC, 2016b).

This research note focuses on the situation of people with low levels of qualifications who are working in precarious employment in the EU and their opportunities to upscale their skills. According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), people who have only received early childhood education, primary education and lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2) are considered to be low-qualified. Low levels of qualifications usually do not provide the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for a particular occupation. As indicated in the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee, European Qualification Framework (EQF) level 4 (upper secondary education) is increasingly becoming a threshold for getting better access to the labour market and for continuing education and training. The employment rate for people who have not attained this level is 25 percentage points lower than the rate for those who have and the number of jobs suitable for people without an upper secondary education is rapidly decreasing<sup>(11)</sup>.

<sup>(11)</sup> Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, COM/2016/0383 final — 2016/0180 (NLE), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0383>

**Figure 1: Share of the population with low educational attainment, by gender and age (EU-28, 2015)**

NB: People with low levels of qualifications have completed primary education, lower secondary education or less.

Source: Eurostat, LFS (edat\_lfse\_03).

### 2.3 Who has a low qualification level?

In general, overall educational attainment has increased in recent years among the young generation, and the share of the population without secondary education has significantly declined among both women and men in the EU. In 2015, the EU average rate of early school leaving (18-24 age group) was close to the Europe 2020 headline target of 10 % (12 % of men and 10 % of women) with wide variations across Member States. Nevertheless, there were still 64 million people with low levels of qualifications aged 25 to 64, half of them women.

Early school leaving can be associated with the socio-economic background of the students or limited access to quality education, which may be more characteristic of rural areas. It may be triggered by health, personal or emotional difficulties or a cumulative process of disengagement, but it could also be a result of structural inequality, an unhealthy school climate, bullying or poor relationships between pupils and teachers (EC, 2013).

The proportion of people with low levels of qualifications is decreasing with new generations. Among current young people (20-24 years old) 15 % of women and 20 % of men have low educational attainment (27 % of them are still studying); in the older age cohort (55-64 years old) it is almost double (35 % of women and 29 % of men). Among young people, the proportion of low-qualified men is higher than the proportion of low-qualified women, the gender gap is reversed in the older population.

At the EU level, the lower educational attainment is more prevalent among women and men aged 25-64 born outside the EU (both 36 %) than among the native born (both 22 %). Of EU-born women who currently live in another EU country,

23 % have low education (compared to 24 % of men). Out of all low-qualified people aged 25-64 in the EU, around 10 % were born in a non-EU country. However, there are significant differences in the educational level of the migrant population across Member States. In Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, and the United Kingdom the share of people with low levels of qualifications is lower among non-EU born people than native born.

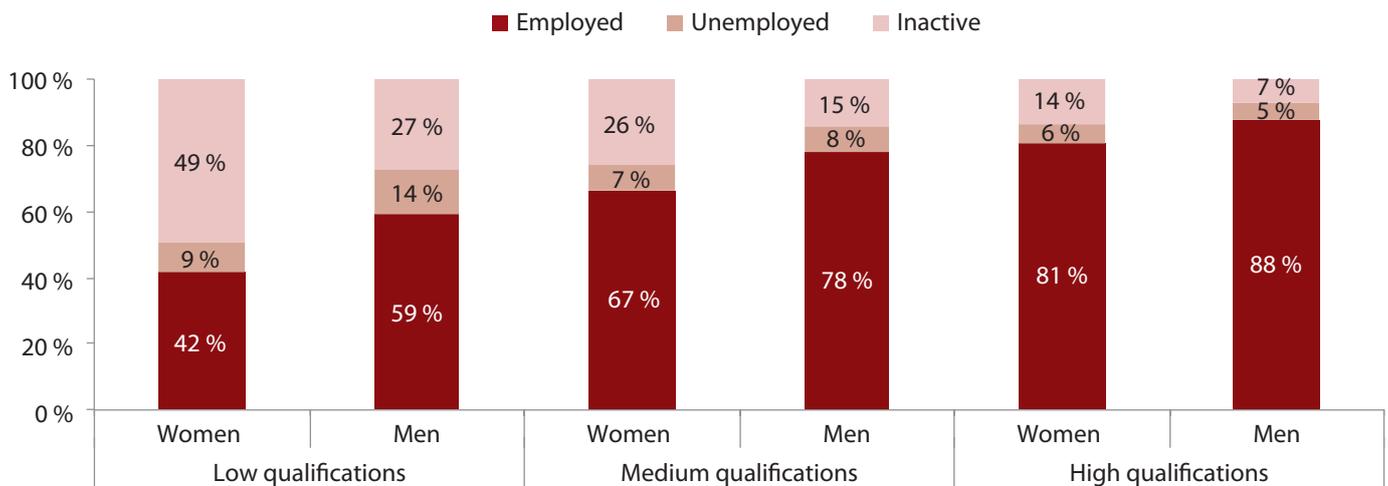
The level of education has a significant impact on the labour market participation. The employment of women and men <sup>(12)</sup> with low levels of qualifications is much lower than among people with medium and high educational attainment. The gender gap of low-qualified people who are in employment is 17 percentage points to the disadvantage of women.

Employees with a low level of education are almost five times more likely to earn two thirds or less of the national median gross hourly earnings than high-qualified people (6 % compared to 29 % in 2010) <sup>(13)</sup>. The relationship between education, labour market participation and wages varies considerably among countries (EC, 2016b).

The persistent occupational segregation by gender disadvantages women. Almost a quarter of employed women with low levels of qualifications worked as domestic, hotel or office cleaners and helpers (22 %) in 2014 in the EU-28. Women with a low qualification level also worked as sales workers (13 %), did clerical support jobs, e.g. secretarial work (10 %), provided personal services (e.g. waitresses, cooks, hairdressers) (9 %) and worked

<sup>(12)</sup> 11 % of people aged 15-64 say that their main activity is being in education (except DE and UK due to data availability). Therefore they are not included in the study as their final educational level is not yet clear and they cannot be regarded as a risk group in the labour market on the grounds of their education.

<sup>(13)</sup> Eurostat, Earnings by Level of Education, 2010.

**Figure 2: Labour market status by gender and educational attainment (15-64, 2014)**


NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except for DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

in elementary occupations such as food preparation assistants, manufacturing and transportation labourers (8 %).

Men with low levels of qualifications were mainly working in elementary occupations such as transport, storage, manufacturing, mining, construction, etc. (17 %). They also worked as car, truck and bus drivers (8 %), metal, machinery and related trades workers (8 %), building and related trades workers (11 %). Of men with low educational attainment, 13 % were services and sales workers, such as waiters and bartenders, shop salesperson or protective services workers.

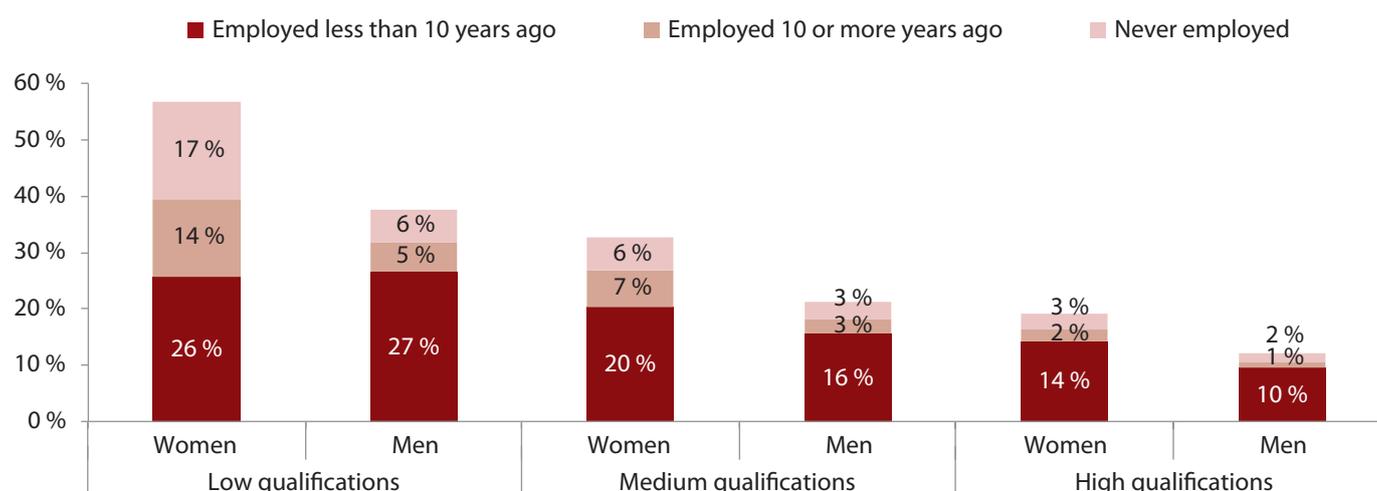
## 2.4 Low qualifications and detachment from the labour market

Entering the labour market or coming back to employment after long breaks may be particularly challenging for people with low educational attainment. Over 6 million women (17 %) and 2 million men (6 %) with low levels of qualifications across the EU have never been employed (aged 20-64, whose main status is not a student) (Annex, Table 2). Of all low-qualified women, 14 % have been out of the labour market for 10 or more years (5 % of men).

Although lifelong economic inactivity is prevalent in all age groups, it is most common among the youngest and the oldest population. There are 2 million young (15-19) women and 2 million men with low levels of qualifications (whose main status is not a student) who have never been employed and who are facing challenges with their first entrance to the labour market.

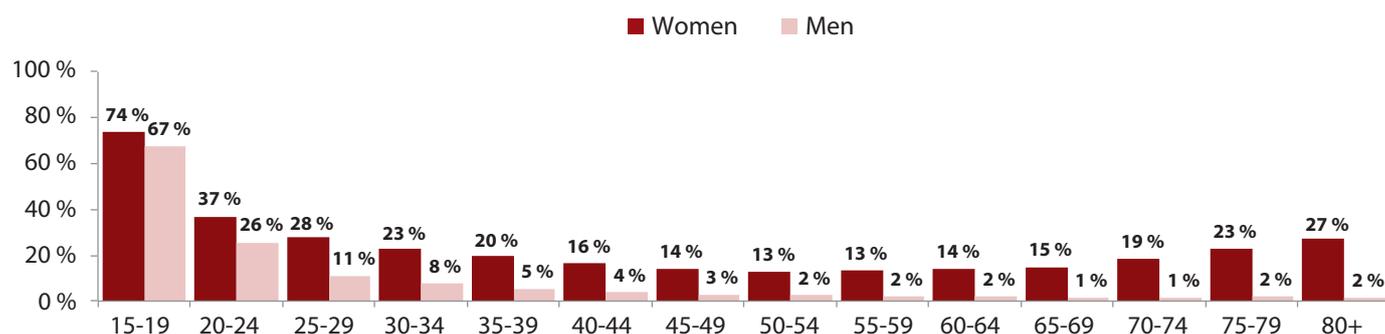
The majority of low-qualified people aged 20-64 (whose main status is not a student) who have never been employed are not searching for a job. Over 80 % of them do not want to have a job and 43 % of women and 4 % of men are not searching for a job because of care and family responsibilities. People's willingness to work can be impacted by institutional settings and the availability of quality jobs (Duell et al., 2016). The motivation of low-qualified women and men to enter the labour market may be related to the costs of taking up a job. While a large share of women with low levels of qualifications are engaged in precarious low-paid jobs, the potential gain of that employment (i.e. salary) may not exceed potential costs such as childcare services, commuting costs, etc.

Over one third of the people with low educational attainment who currently do not have a job (40 % of women and 32 % of men aged 20-64, whose main status is not a student) have been employed before. Of these, 32 % of men and 29 % of women became jobless due to the precarious nature of their previous job e.g. the end of a temporary contract. The second most common reason for current inactivity is dismissal (29 % of men and 23 % of women), while care or family reasons are mentioned by 9 % of women and 1 % of men with low levels of qualifications.

**Figure 3: Previous working experience by gender and educational attainment (20-64, EU-28, 2014)**

NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except for DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

**Figure 4: People with low educational attainment who have never been employed, by gender and age (EU-28, 2014)**

NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except for DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

### Potential reasons keeping women with low educational attainment out of the labour market

Women with low levels of qualifications are more likely to take up precarious jobs with short contracts, low working hours and very low pay. This may impact their decision to work, particularly if searching for a job or taking it up brings along extra expenses, such as transportation or childcare costs. Additional costs may have a bigger impact on the employability of secondary earners and main carers, especially if there is more than one child. Childcare availability and prices significantly impede mothers' labour market behaviour (Kimmel, 1998; Wrohlich, 2004; EC, 2014). Cipollone et al. (2014) found that family-friendly policies, such as childcare subsidies and parental leave have a positive effect on the decision of women with children to participate in the labour market. Moreover, women in precarious jobs such as those with a limited work contract also have limited social protection. In many European countries, for instance, there are eligibility rules for job-protected parental leave and related benefits, which means that people in fragmented and non-continuous employment may have limited or non-existing rights to parental leave and benefits if they have a child (Koslowski et al., 2016). Therefore, as a result of the need to take care of a child people may lose their job.



### 3. Gender, precarious employment and education



# 3. Gender, precarious employment and education

## 3.1 Dimensions of precarious employment

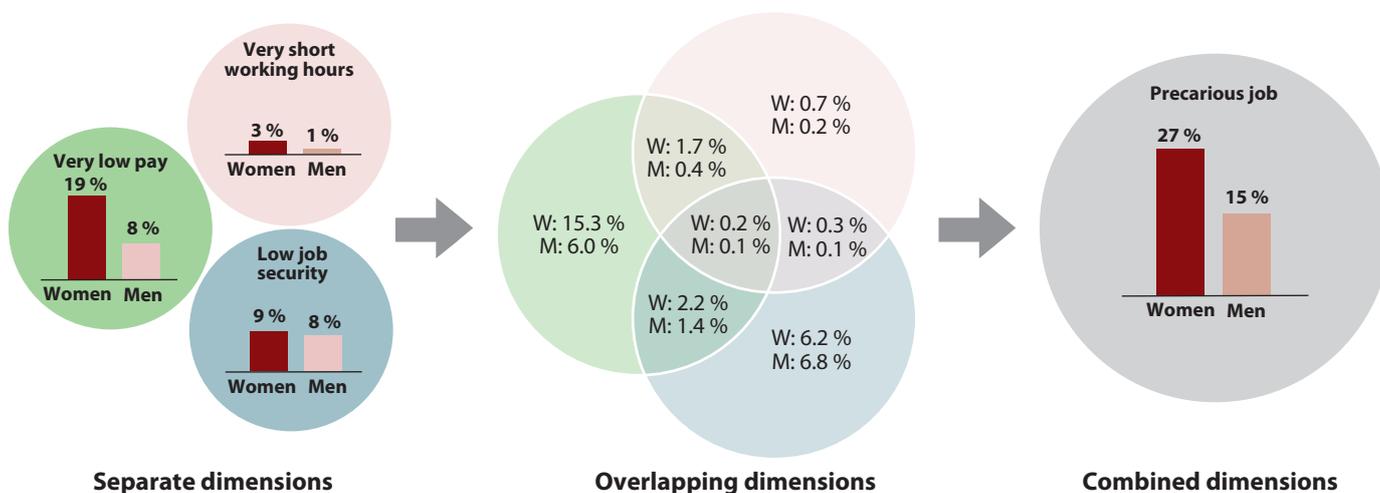
The concept of precariousness has been used widely to grasp the complexity of insecure and low-quality employment. It usually covers several dimensions, concerning wages, work intensity, the presence of a union or statutory protection, job stability, and access to social benefits (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989). More recent studies also connect precariousness with protection against discrimination and opportunities for training and career progression (EU-OSHA, 2013). Precarious work has been referred to as low-quality employment, which can include dead-end jobs and low pay/low productivity jobs (Duell, 2004), such as temporary, seasonal, short part-time, on-call work, day hire, casual or short-term contracts. Precarious employment can also be considered as a continuum ranging from high to low precariousness, depending on wage and regulatory protection across statuses, including full-time, part-time or temporary positions (Cranford et al., 2003; Young, 2010).

There are several major difficulties in measuring precarious work because it includes different aspects of employment relations and characteristics of jobs and working conditions. Statistical categories such as part-time work, temporary work, fixed-term contracts and self-employment are related to precarious work but cannot be simply equated with it — not all non-standard jobs are precarious and what is considered to be standard employment differs among the Member States. Some aspects of precariousness are difficult to measure and are not included in the EU data sets, such as undeclared work, own-account workers, irregular schedules, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish who is an employer, an employee or self-employed (EC, 2004).

In this research note, precarious employment is connected with at least one of these three working conditions.

1. Very low pay: take-home pay from the main job is below the first quintile.

Figure 5: Dimensions of precarious employment by gender (15-64, employees, 2014)



NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except for DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

2. Very short working hours: fewer than 10 hours of employment per week (also referred to as mini-jobs).
3. Low job security which might entail that employees have:
  - (a) a temporary contract which covers 12 months or less; or
  - (b) a permanent contract, but are looking for another job due to the risk or certainty of loss or termination of present job.

If a person has a job with at least one of these characteristics, they are considered to be in precarious employment. Out of all employees aged 15-64, 27 % of women and 15 % of men across the EU work in precarious jobs (Annex, Table 1) <sup>(14)</sup>.

Looking at different dimensions of precariousness, the largest gender difference can be seen in pay. Among employees, almost every fifth woman and every twelfth man receive very low pay. The gender gap (as high as 11 percentage points) reflects the persisting inequalities in the gender distribution of economic and financial resources that have placed women at a disadvantage relative to men in terms of their ability to participate in the broader processes of economic development (EIGE, 2014). Low pay is a barrier to achieving the economic independence of women and men and can lead to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion (EIGE, 2016).

The gender gap in the take up of mini-jobs is not large, although the reasons for working only a few hours per week are different for women and men. Of women who work fewer than 10 hours per week, 30 % state that this is because of personal or family reasons and caring responsibilities while this is true for

only 7 % of men. More than a quarter of people have mini-jobs because they could not find a full-time job (28 % of women and 27 % of men).

Nearly one in ten employees in the EU (8 % of men and 9 % of women) is engaged in insecure employment. For almost three quarters of women and men (74 %) with contracts lasting 12 months or less, temporary employment is involuntary — they cannot find a permanent job. Insecure employment can eventually result in exit from the labour market.

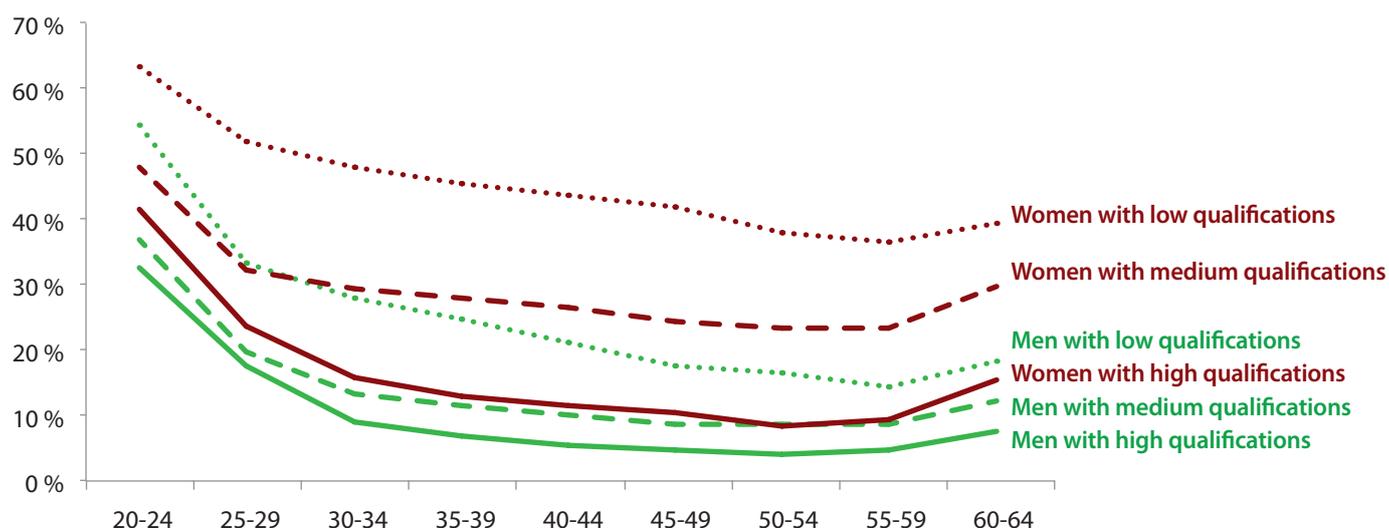
### 3.2 Who works in precarious jobs?

Precarious employment is most common among young people, particularly those who left school early. Almost half of women and 39 % of men aged 20-24 work in precarious jobs.

In general, young people — if employed — are less likely to have full-time permanent contracts than older people. They tend to be employed on the basis of apprenticeship or training contracts and to be engaged in part-time and fixed-term work (European Parliament, 2016). Young women and men in precarious work are often newcomers to the labour market and lacking in experience or qualifications; however, they also tend to be overqualified for the available jobs (McKay et al., 2012).

The share of people in precarious employment decreases with age, up to 55-59 years. Nevertheless, women with low and medium qualifications are at high risk of precariousness throughout their working lives (see Figure 6).

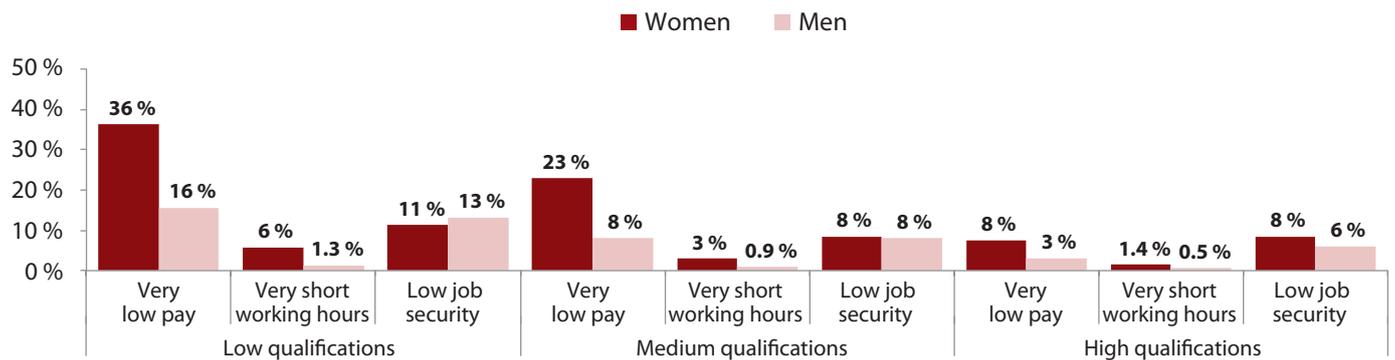
**Figure 6: Proportion of employees in precarious jobs by gender, educational attainment and age (EU-28, 2014)**



NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except for DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

<sup>(14)</sup> If not indicated otherwise, data based on LFS, EWCS and AES are calculated for the group of employees aged 15-64. Self-employed people and all those whose main status is a student (except DE and UK due to data availability) are not included.

**Figure 7: Dimensions of precariousness by gender and educational attainment (15-64, EU-28, 2014)**


NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except for DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

Low educational attainment increases the risk of precarious employment for both women and men. Almost every second (45 %) woman with low qualifications works in precarious employment compared to 26 % of men. The gender gap among low-qualified people is the largest and it narrows down with increasing educational attainment. Overall, women are more likely than men to be in precarious employment throughout their lives regardless of educational level. The gender gap of people with low levels of qualifications in the age group 20-24 is nine percentage points and it increases up to 21 percentage points in pre-retirement age (60-64). In addition, in the pre-retirement age group, women with a high level of qualifications face a similar risk of precariousness to men with low educational attainment (16 % of high-educated women compared with 18 % of low-educated men aged 60-64).

Country of birth is an important factor in precarious working conditions. Nearly one in three non-EU born women (35 %) and one in four men (24 %) work in precarious jobs<sup>(15)</sup>. Women who live in their country of birth (native born) work in precarious employment more often than any other group of men, including non-EU born (25 % native born women compared with 14 % of native born men, 16 % of EU born men or 24 % of non-EU born men). Migrant women may be disadvantaged due to their migrant background (e.g. some jobs are regarded as less suitable for migrants or have higher language requirements) and they also may be subjected to gender discrimination or face difficulties of work-life balance derived from traditional gender roles (Makkonen, 2002).

### 3.3 People with low levels of qualifications in precarious jobs

Women and men with low levels of qualifications are less likely to be employed compared to people with higher educational attainment and they are also disproportionately affected by

long-term unemployment. Low-qualified women are the most vulnerable group: the majority of them do not have a paid job and if they do, half of them have very low pay, a mini-job or an insecure job. Most of the precariousness of low-educated women stems from the very low pay they receive from their main job (36 % of women and 16 % of men with low levels of qualifications receive very low pay).

Furthermore, women with low levels of qualifications are more likely than men to be engaged in mini-jobs because they are not able to find a full-time job (38 % and 33 % respectively) or because they are engaged in caring and family-related activities at home (25 % and 6 %).

In general, the lower the qualification, the larger the gender gap regarding the number of hours worked. Women with low educational attainment spend, on average, only 30 hours in paid work while men with low education work 38 hours per week. In precarious employment, women with low levels of qualifications work on average only 25 hours per week.

Low-qualified women who have a precarious job are working either in elementary occupations (46 %), such as domestic, hotel and office cleaners and helpers, or services and sales workers (31 %) such as shop salespersons, personal care workers, waitresses and childcare workers. Of all low-qualified men who have precarious jobs, 31 % are also in elementary occupations, mainly as transport, storage, agriculture or fishery labourers, but also drivers and cleaners. Precarious jobs for men include craft related occupations (e.g. construction), services and the sales field (Annex, Table 3).

Most of the low-qualified women working in precarious employment (62 %) consider their skills to correspond to the job requirements, whereas 50 % of men tend to do so. At the same time, more men relative to women (36 % and 29 %) claim that they would be able to cope with more demanding duties.

<sup>(15)</sup> Data for EU born and non-EU born are missing for Germany, data for non-EU born are missing for Malta.

## 4. Training for women and men with low levels of qualifications



# 4. Training for women and men with low levels of qualifications

## 4.1 Participation in training

Job-related training raises knowledge and helps people to acquire skills they need either to enter the labour market or, when employed, to keep up with increasing skills demands. The role of training and lifelong learning can be particularly important for the employability of those who have left initial education early without completing upper secondary education or equivalent <sup>(16)</sup>.

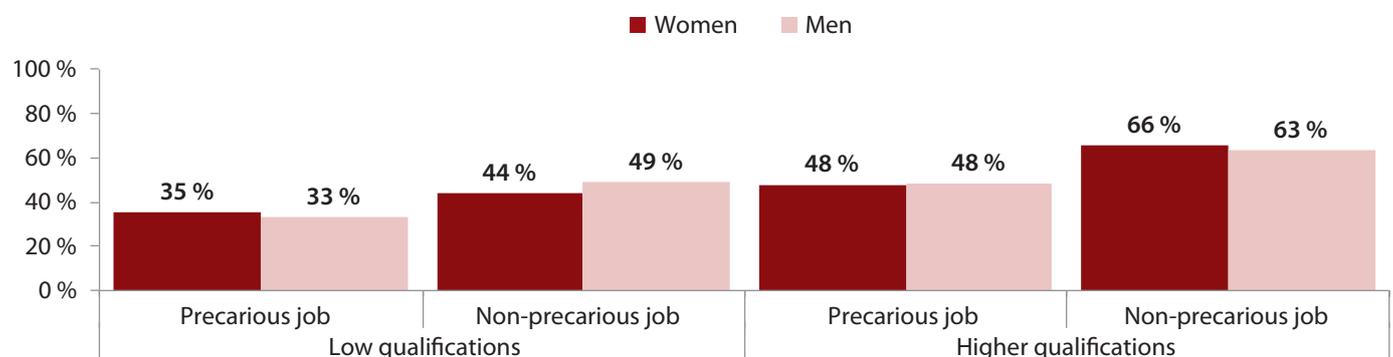
People with low levels of qualifications and skills are less likely to participate in education and training and that can result in a 'low-skills trap' (EC, 2015b). They tend to be employed in jobs that offer no learning opportunities and they receive less employer-organised training. As a result, they are short of opportunities to up-scale the skills necessary to keep up with the changing demands of their job and to avoid skills loss. In 2015, 44 % of women and 49 % of men with low levels of qualifications, who are employees aged 15-64 <sup>(17)</sup> had attended at least one training during the past

12 months (66 % of women and 63 % of men with higher levels of education). The opportunities to attend training are even more limited among those people with low levels of qualifications who work in precarious jobs (Figure 8).

Just 16 % of low-qualified men in precarious jobs and 20 % of women in the same situation attended training paid for or provided by their employer in the past year, which is much less than the participation of people with low qualifications who work in non-precarious jobs (29 % of women and 35 % of men) or people with a higher level of education who are in precarious jobs (29 % of women and 27 % of men).

Even though women with low levels of qualifications in precarious jobs tend to participate in training provided by employers slightly more often than men (20 % and 16 %), their training tends to be shorter. Of all low-qualified women in precarious jobs, 34 % (and 32 % of men in the same situation) attended training that lasted only a day or less (on average 15 % of all

**Figure 8: Employees who attended at least one training during past 12 months by gender, educational attainment and quality of work (15-64, 2015)**



NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student.

Source: EWCS, calculations based on 2015 microdata.

<sup>(16)</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-382-EN-F1-1.PDF>

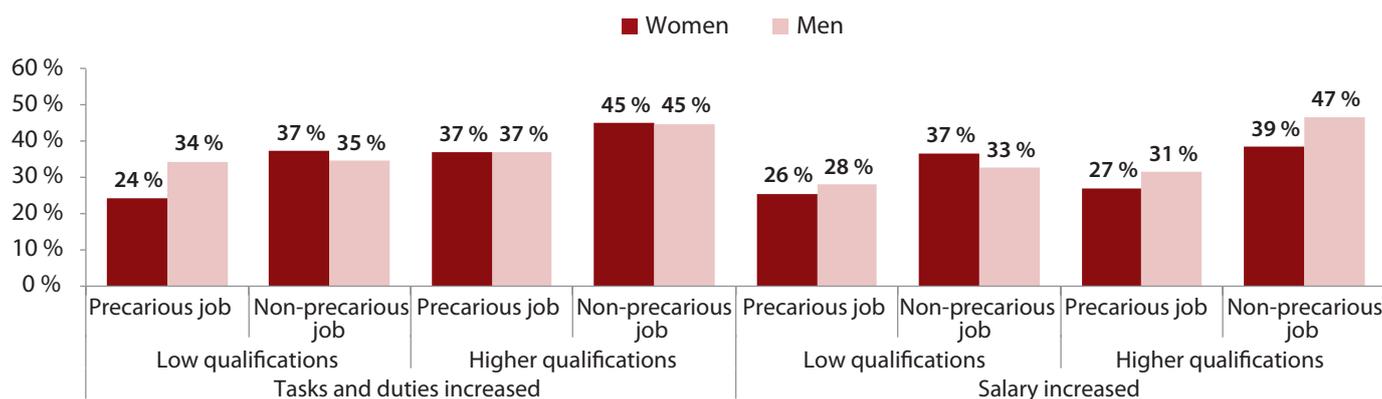
<sup>(17)</sup> Calculations in this chapter are based on microdata from the European Labour Force Survey (2014), Adult Education Survey (2011) and the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (2015). The age group is 15-64, those who indicated that their main status is a student are excluded.

employed women and 12 % of employed men had a training course of this length in the EU-28). Only a very small share of women who have low levels of qualifications and work in precarious jobs (3 % of those who got any training) spent 20 days or more in training, compared to 16 % of men.

Training overall is more common among employees in certain occupations such as managers and professionals. People with a low level of qualifications, however, tend to work more often in occupations where training opportunities are lower. For instance, close to half of low-qualified women in precarious jobs are in elementary occupations (such as cleaners and home helpers) and only 18 % of them have received training in the last 12 months (the figure is 29 % for men in elementary jobs such as drivers and agricultural workers). Among workers with low qualifications who are in precarious jobs in services and sales, 48 % of women and 32 % of men have attended some training (see more in Annex, Table 3).

Besides the fact that people in precarious jobs receive training less frequently than those who are not, they also have poorer career perspectives. Among employees in precarious work who participated in training in the last 12 months, 24 % of women state that their tasks and duties increased and 26 % had received an increase in salary in the reference period. However, the pay rise was not very substantial and only 2 % of women and 4 % of men who had low educational attainment and worked in a precarious job benefited from a significant salary increase. Of women with low levels of qualifications in non-precarious jobs, 37 % had a salary increase, which was similar to higher educated women in non-precarious jobs. In other words, for women who have attended training, the nature of their job (precarious or not) is more important than educational level in determining an increase in salary.

**Figure 9: Work-related changes during past 12 months among training participants by gender, educational attainment and quality of work (15-64, 2015)**



NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student.  
 Source: EWCS, calculations based on 2015 microdata.

## 4.2 Benefits of training

While the direct impact of training is difficult to measure, people tend to feel that training helps to improve their skills and career prospects. In 2015, most people with a low level of qualifications who were in precarious work across the EU found employer-provided training beneficial and said that it helped them improve the way they work (81 % of both women and men). At the same time, 69 % of women and 67 % of men with low qualifications who work in precarious jobs feel that training increased their job security.

The impact of training also depends on the type and the format of training. While non-formal and formal education both help to improve the performance of the employees in their current job, participation in formal education has a stronger impact on get-

ting a new job, a promotion and a higher salary. Identification and validation of skills acquired in non-formal education could increase the benefits of work-related training.

In the EU, 78 % of companies provide training to raise awareness of health and safety issues and 89 % do so to improve and extend the skills of their employees (Eurofound, 2015b). Job-related training offered to employees tends to be non-formal and often cannot provide the proof of participation or acquired qualification. While on average only a small share of low-qualified employees in precarious jobs participate in training, they mainly attend on-the-job training (70 % of women and 72 % of men who attended some training). Therefore, in comparison to the employees with higher qualifications, those with low educational attainment are less likely to attend training in the form of courses that are more likely to provide evidence of acquired skills.

### Gender mainstreaming and validation of skills

Skills relevant for the labour market can be acquired in a variety of ways, therefore the validation of non-formal and informal learning could strengthen the employability of different groups of women and men, particularly those with low qualification levels. Member States have agreed to put in place by 2018 arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning that would enable individuals to obtain a qualification on the basis of their experience<sup>(18)</sup>. Gender should be mainstreamed in the arrangements to avoid gender bias in skill assessment. Social skills should be acknowledged as a relevant part of the labour market and validated as such.

Even when skills are fully recognised and referenced by qualifications, their validation in the labour market might face challenges (EC), such as discrimination on the grounds of gender, age or migration background. For instance, although stereotypes regarding productivity of older people are not confirmed, older employees are often perceived as less motivated, skilled and competent at work. The evidence shows that cognitive functions vary greatly among people and are closely related to years of education and not all deteriorate with age (WHO, 2015). Women also tend to be disadvantaged when evaluating their skills and competences (Rigby and Sanchis, 2006). This undervaluation contributes to the gender pay gap and gender segregation in the labour market. Measures on recognition, validation and upscaling skills should, therefore, also tackle structural inequalities in the labour market and beyond.

### 4.3 Barriers to participation in training

Equal access to affordable and good quality training is key for increasing life chances and employability, particularly among people with low levels of qualifications. However, training is not provided by all employers and not to all employees. European Company Survey shows that in 2013 in the EU-28, 73 % of companies provided on-the-job training, 71 % provided paid time off for training and only 13 % of companies did not provide any training. Only 20 % of workplaces provided on-the-job training to their entire workforce and time off to participate in training was also available to specific jobs and employees only (Eurofound, 2015b). Of employees with low levels of qualifications, 15 % of women and 16 % of men say that lack of employer support or public services is the main reason why they do not attend any training, although they would like to do so. Among employees with low educational attainment, 19 % of women and 17 % of men are not able to take up training due to the high cost.

In 2011, three out of four low-qualified employees aged 15-64 did not want to participate in (further) training. Almost half of them stated it's because they do not need training (44 % of women and 43 % of men)<sup>(19)</sup>. Women considerably more often than men tend to report that family or household-related barriers limit their participation in adult education and training (Desjardins et al., 2006). For 22 % of women with low levels of qualifications (13 % of men) family responsibilities are the main reason why they do not participate in education and training even though they would like to. Conflict with work schedule or training organised at an inconvenient time prevented 14 % of women and 23 % of men from participating.

<sup>(18)</sup> Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ 2012/C 398/01 of 20 December 2012, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN)

<sup>(19)</sup> Reasons for not wanting to participate in education and training and barriers preventing the participation concern both formal and informal education and training.

# Conclusions



# Conclusions

The European Union and its Member States' policies to reduce early school leaving are effective in bringing the EU closer to achieving the Europe 2020 headline target of the school dropout rate to below 10 %. Despite this, in 2015 over 64 million women and men aged 25-64 across the EU had low levels of qualifications (up to lower secondary education). The OECD Survey of Adult Skills shows that similar shares of adults aged 16-65 performed at the lowest level of proficiency in 17 Member States. In today's society, upper secondary education is increasingly becoming a threshold for getting better access to the labour market and for continuing education and training. The employment rate among people who have not attained this level is 25 percentage points lower than the rate of those who have, and the number of jobs suitable for people without an upper secondary education is rapidly decreasing.

In recent years the educational attainment of women is rising and among the young generation men are more likely to have lower qualifications than women (20 % of men and 15 % of women aged 20-24 have a low level of education). However, the gender gap is reversed in the older population. Over one third of women in pre-retirement age have a low qualification level (35 % of women compared to 29 % of men aged 55-64). They also face a higher risk of poverty as a result of gender inequalities over the life course (EIGE, 2016). Older women with low levels of qualifications would therefore particularly benefit from tailor-made education and training as anticipated in the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee. The measures must assure that the skills acquired over the life course through non-formal and informal learning are recognised and validated, that people have access to appropriate learning settings, and that learning outcomes are documented and validated.

In 2014, more than one third of women and men born outside the EU had low educational attainment and they were more likely than EU nationals to have low levels of basic skills. In general, non-EU born people face a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion; their participation in the labour market is limited, particularly among women (EIGE, 2016), and low qualification levels can reinforce this disadvantage. Moreover, migrant

women and men tend to encounter difficulties in accessing the EU labour market and quality work due to the under-developed system of recognition of non-EU qualifications. As part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe, the European Commission will work with national authorities to support recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications, including those of refugees, and promote and support the sharing of information and good practices on the understanding and recognising of skills and qualifications.

People with low educational attainment face a higher risk of detachment from the labour market, poverty and social exclusion. Due to the structural inequalities and persisting gender stereotypes, women with low levels of qualifications face additional challenges. Half of low-qualified women aged 15-64 <sup>(20)</sup> in the EU-28 are out of the labour market (in a situation of economic inactivity) compared to 27 % of low-qualified men. Additionally, 14 % of men and 9 % of women with low levels of education are unemployed. Adults with low educational attainment are at particular risk of lifelong detachment from the labour market — over 6 million low-qualified women and 2 million low-qualified men across the EU have never had a job and the majority of them are not searching for a job. Close to half of the working-age women and men in poverty have the lowest level of education. Restricted employment opportunities for people with low levels of qualifications may impact their decision on whether to enter the labour market, particularly if searching for a job or accepting a job brings along extra expenses, such as transport or childcare costs. Active labour market policies together with social protection systems outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights should reflect the specific situation of women and men with low levels of qualifications who are detached from the labour market in order to provide adequate and targeted support for (re)entering the labour market as well as measures to develop skills, qualifications and work experience to enable entry to new occupations.

<sup>(20)</sup> Excluding those who indicated that their main status is a student (except DE and UK due to data availability).

Women and men with low educational attainment are also more likely to work in precarious jobs. Almost every second woman (45 %) and every fifth man (26 %) with low qualifications work in a precarious job. Of people with low levels of education, 36 % of women and 16 % of men receive the lowest income. Nearly half of low-qualified women (46 %) and a third of low-qualified men (31 %) who have a precarious job are working in elementary occupations. At the same time, a third of women (32 %) who have low levels of qualifications and a precarious job work in women-dominated elementary occupations, such as domestic, hotel and office cleaners and helpers. Almost a fifth of low-qualified men (19 %) in precarious work take up so-called masculine elementary occupations (mainly as transport, storage, agriculture or fishery labourers, but also as drivers and cleaners). Upscaling skills among women and men in precarious employment connects strongly to the aspects of sustainable work (Eurofound, 2016) understood as an interaction between the characteristics of the job and the work environment (earnings, prospects, gender segregation, intrinsic job quality including training and working time) and the characteristics and circumstances of the individual (gender, health, skills and employability, care responsibilities and work experience). Political focus on training opportunities and outcomes should go hand in hand with increasing the quality of work for all groups of women and men.

Overall women face a higher risk of precariousness throughout their lives: 27 % of women and 15 % of men are either very low paid, work very few hours per week or have low job security. The biggest gender difference can be seen in pay — one in five women and one in ten men belong to the lowest wage group. Women and men in young and pre-retirement age, as well as people with a migrant background face a higher risk of working in precarious jobs. Yet, native born women work in precarious jobs more often than any other group of men, including those born outside the EU. Policy domains and principles set in the European Pillar for Social Rights as part of the fair working conditions should therefore address the gendered character of precarious work in a broader context of gender segregation in the labour market and gender pay gap.

The employability and career prospects of people with low levels of qualifications can be addressed by upskilling — supporting them in acquiring the skills they need either to enter the labour market, or, when employed, to keep up with increasing skills demands and move to better jobs. A significant share of working-age women and men, whether in employment or not, lacks the basic skills needed to take part in vocational training. They might also lack the guidance and information on the benefits of upskilling and of the available training opportunities. In addition, training opportunities are less available to women and men with low educational attainment, particularly if they work in precarious jobs. Only about a third of women (35 %) and men (33 %) with low levels of qualifications and with precarious jobs have had training during the past 12 months and only a small share

of them has received a training course by the employer. This is partially because they work in occupations where training is less available. For instance, close to half of women with low levels of qualifications who are in precarious jobs are in elementary occupations (such as cleaners and home helpers) and only 18 % of them have received training.

Women and men with low qualifications very often feel they do not need training and those who would like to participate face different barriers. While more women than men face pressures of work–life balance, fitting the training into the daily schedule may pose difficulties for both women and men. To assure equal access to education and training, support of learning environments at work as set out in the New Skills Agenda for Europe should be provided across all labour market sectors and occupations, with a focus on those that are mostly in need of upscaling skills. At the same time, barriers to participation that women and men face need to be addressed. One of the key flexicurity principles calls for comprehensive lifelong learning to ensure the adaptability of all workers to new working conditions and potential career shifts, regardless of their educational level. Increasing the qualifications and employability of the most vulnerable population is a shared responsibility of employees and employers, as well as the public sector.

In addition to training at work, there is a need for training opportunities that would allow people to acquire an entirely new vocation or qualifications that would open new job opportunities, particularly for those who are out of the labour market or in precarious jobs with very little career prospects. Such provisions can and should be used to reduce occupational segregation, especially in low-skilled jobs. The career counselling, service provision and activation measures should encourage women and men to choose any occupation and not reproduce the traditional divide of occupations by gender.

Women and men with low levels of qualifications, who are in precarious jobs most commonly receive non-formal on-the-job training, which does not provide any proof of participation or qualification. Improvement of identification and validation of skills acquired in non-formal education envisioned in the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee could therefore increase the benefits of work-related training, particularly among women and men with low levels of qualifications. Integrated policies and mainstreaming of gender are needed so the measures on recognition, validation and upscaling skills also tackle structural inequalities in the labour market and beyond.



# References



# References

- Acker, J., 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations', *Gender and Society*, Vol. 4, No 2, 1989, pp. 139-158.
- Attanasio, O., Low, H., and Sánchez-Marcos, V., 'Explaining changes in female labor supply in a life-cycle model', *American Economic Review*, Vol. 98, No 4, 2008, pp. 1517-1552.
- Cedefop, *Unequal access to job-related learning: evidence from the Adult education survey*, Cedefop research paper No 52, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.
- Cipollone, A., Patacchini, E., and Vallanti, G., 'Female labour market participation in Europe: novel evidence on trends and shaping factors', *IZA Journal of European Labor Studies*, 2014.
- Cockburn, C., *Brothers: Male dominance and technological change*, Pluto Press, London, 1983.
- Council of the European Union, Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 on European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), 2011/C 155/02, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2011, C 155/10, available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52011XG0525\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52011XG0525(01)), accessed 12 September 2016.
- Cranford, C., Vosko, L., and Zukewich, N., 'The Gender of Precarious Employment in Canada', *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 58, No 3, 2003, pp. 454-482.
- Desjardins, R., Rubenson, K., and Milana, M., *Unequal chances to participate in lifelong learning: International perspectives*, Unesco: International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris, 2006.
- Duell, E., *Defining and assessing precarious employment in Europe: a review of main studies and surveys*, Discussion paper — ESOPE Project, Economix, Munich, 2004.
- Duell, N., Thureau L., and Vetter, T., *Long-term Unemployment in the EU: Trends and Policies Economics*, Research & Consulting, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016, available at: [https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user\\_upload/Studie\\_NW\\_Long-term\\_unemployment.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user_upload/Studie_NW_Long-term_unemployment.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- EU-OSHA — European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Priorities for occupational safety and health research in Europe: 2013-2020*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2013.
- Eurofound (2015a), *Sustainable work over the life-course: Concept paper*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurofound (2015b), *Third European Company Survey — Overview report: Workplace practices — Patterns, performance and well-being*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at: [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1502en\\_0.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1502en_0.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- Eurofound, *Sustainable work throughout the life course: National policies and strategies*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016.
- European Commission, *EU Research on Social Sciences and Humanities — Precarious Employment in Europe: A Comparative Study of Labour Market related Risks in Flexible Economies — ESOPE*, Directorate General for Research, 2004, available at: [https://cordis.europa.eu/pub/citizens/docs/kina21250ens\\_final\\_esope.pdf](https://cordis.europa.eu/pub/citizens/docs/kina21250ens_final_esope.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission, *New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and Matching Labour Market and Skills Needs*, COM(2008) 868 final of 16 December 2008, Brussels, 2008, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008DC0868&from=EN>, accessed 12 September 2016.

- European Commission, Communication From The Commission Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM(2010) 2020 final, 2010, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission, *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving*, 2013, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission, *Use of childcare in the EU Member States and progress towards the Barcelona targets*, Short statistical report No 1, 2014, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140502\\_gender\\_equality\\_workforce\\_ssr1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140502_gender_equality_workforce_ssr1_en.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission (2015a), *Skills beyond Education. An analysis of cognitive skill evolution and its implications for employment chances*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2015b), *Education and Training Monitor 2015*, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor15\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor15_en.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission (2016a), *New Skills Agenda for Europe. Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness*, COM(2016)381/2 of 10 June 2016, Brussels, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission (2016b), *Analytical underpinning for a New Skills Agenda for Europe. Accompanying document*, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15691&langId=en>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission (2016c), *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee*, COM(2016) 382/2, available at: <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/system/files/documents/3546/proposal-council-recommendation-establishing-skills-guarantee.pdf>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities*, Eurydice Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.
- European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender equality and economic independence: part-time work and self-employment. Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0414228ENC.pdf>
- European Institute for Gender Equality, *Poverty, gender and intersecting inequalities in the EU. Review of the implementation of Area A: Women and Poverty of the Beijing Platform for Action*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016, available at: [http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/ti\\_pubpdf\\_mh0416244enn\\_pdfweb\\_20161208181320.pdf](http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/ti_pubpdf_mh0416244enn_pdfweb_20161208181320.pdf)
- European Parliament, *Precarious Employment in Europe. Part 1: Patterns, Trends and Policy Strategy*, 2016, available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587285/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)587285\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587285/IPOL_STU(2016)587285_EN.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- Kimmel, J., 'Child Care Costs as a Barrier to Employment for Single and Married Mothers', *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 80, No 2, 1998, pp. 287-299.
- Koslowski, A., Blum, S., and Moss, P., *12<sup>th</sup> International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2016*, International Network on Leave Policies and Research, 2016, available at: [http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual\\_reviews/2016\\_Full\\_draft\\_20\\_July.pdf](http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual_reviews/2016_Full_draft_20_July.pdf), accessed 12 September 2016.
- Makkonen, T., *Multiple, Compound and Intersectional Discrimination: Bringing The Experiences Of The Most Marginalized To The Fore*, Institute for Human rights, Abo Akademi University, 2002, available at: <http://old.ilga-europe.org/content/download/24688/157174/version/1/file/multiple,+compound+and+intersectional+discrimination.pdf>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- McKay, S., Jefferys, S., Paraksevopoulou, A., and Keles, J., *Study on precarious work and social rights*, London Metropolitan University, London, 2012.
- OECD, *Fostering and Measuring Skills: Improving Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills to Promote Lifetime Success*, 2014, available at: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/fostering-and-measuring-skills\\_5jxr7vr78f7-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/fostering-and-measuring-skills_5jxr7vr78f7-en), accessed 12 September 2016.
- OECD, *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2015. Policies for Self-employment and Entrepreneurship*, 2015, available at: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/the-missing-entrepreneurs-2015\\_9789264226418-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/the-missing-entrepreneurs-2015_9789264226418-en), accessed 12 September 2016.

- OECD, *Skills Matter. Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, 2016, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/skills/skills-matter-9789264258051-en.htm>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- Oppenheimer, V., *The Female Labor Force in the United States: Demographic and Economic Factors Governing its Growth and Changing Composition*, University of California, Berkeley, 1970.
- Phillips, A., and Taylor, B., 'Sex and Skill', in Feminist Review (ed.), *Waged Work: A Reader*, Virago, London, 1986, pp. 54-66.
- Rodgers, G. and Rodgers, J., *Precarious Jobs in Labour Market Regulation: The Growth of Atypical Employment in Western Europe*, International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva, 1989.
- Rigby, M. and Sanchis, E., 'The concept of skill and its social construction', *European journal of vocational training*, Vol. 1, No 37, 2006, pp. 449-482.
- Rubenson, K., and Desjardins R., 'The Impact of Welfare State Regimes on Barriers to Participation in Adult Education: A Bounded Agency Model', *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No 3, January 2009, 2009.
- Steinberg, R. J., 'Social Construction of Skill: Gender, Power, and Comparable Worth', *An International Sociological Journal*, Vol. 17, No 4, 1990, pp. 449-82.
- World Health Organisation, *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, Luxembourg, 2015, available at: [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/186463/1/9789240694811\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/186463/1/9789240694811_eng.pdf?ua=1), accessed 12 September 2016.
- Wrohlich, K., *Child Care Costs and Mothers' Labor Supply: An Empirical Analysis for Germany*, German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin), 2004, available at: <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~vsteiner/forschung/childcare.pdf>, accessed 12 September 2016.
- Young, M., 'Gender Differences in Precarious Work Settings', *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 65, No 1, 2010, pp. 74-97.

# Annex



# Annex

**Table 1: Employment rate and proportion of employees in precarious jobs by gender and educational attainment (15-64, 2014)**

Member States	All qualification levels				Low qualification levels			
	Employment rate (%)		Employees having a precarious job (%)		Employment rate (%)		Employees having a precarious job (%)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
BE	66.4	75.1	33.7	11.7	38.1	55.4	63.5	18.3
BG	64.1	70.2	25.4	16.4	30.8	43.5	69.1	42.4
CZ	68.2	86.1	5.8	4.6	35.7	52.1	11.0	14.0
DK	75.4	82.9	16.0	14.5	54.8	71.1	27.4	26.2
DE	69.5	78.1	33.3	15.4	41.6	51.0	63.3	46.1
EE	73.1	81.2	26.9	12.1	51.2	66.1	47.9	19.2
IE	63.4	75.9	12.1	4.8	31.5	56.9	25.9	7.9
EL	46.2	65.1	30.7	21.0	33.9	57.9	52.6	33.0
ES	55.0	65.4	24.2	22.2	39.4	55.2	27.1	29.0
FR	67.9	75.3	28.1	15.9	46.4	58.9	47.3	24.1
HR	57.0	66.2	26.4	19.6	32.5	45.7	52.1	34.0
IT	52.7	72.3	35.4	17.9	33.6	62.5	53.3	22.7
CY	65.8	73.7	40.5	21.5	49.8	59.5	73.8	33.5
LV	71.0	75.2	26.1	18.2	39.5	58.2	56.7	32.5
LT	73.8	75.9	16.8	12.1	35.7	47.7	38.4	31.5
LU	69.7	82.8	28.9	12.0	54.1	70.1	62.5	29.7
HU	62.6	76.4	14.4	12.8	36.6	53.4	34.2	35.7
MT	53.3	82.1	33.6	16.0	31.6	74.5	57.1	21.8
NL	70.9	82.9	21.6	12.1	47.8	70.8	35.1	18.2
AT	71.9	80.8	7.8	4.3	52.2	64.3	8.6	6.2
PL	61.9	76.0	22.4	19.1	28.6	49.1	43.6	41.3
PT	66.6	74.3	35.1	23.4	56.1	68.6	48.0	26.1
RO	59.6	76.6	28.5	18.2	44.6	66.6	57.6	34.0
SI	66.3	74.3	28.4	19.4	41.8	54.3	44.8	32.0
SK	62.0	76.2	19.3	11.3	28.0	36.7	60.6	47.5
FI	74.8	76.6	30.1	17.0	46.6	55.4	52.1	28.0
SE	81.6	85.6	10.0	8.3	56.9	70.9	13.8	12.8
UK	67.0	76.7	23.9	9.3	48.7	64.2	36.6	12.2
EU-28	64.1	75.3	26.5	15.1	41.6	59.2	44.6	26.4

NB: Excluding those whose main status is a student (except DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

**Table 2: Proportion of people who have never worked by gender and educational attainment (20-64, 2014)**

Member States	All qualification levels (%)		Low qualification levels (%)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
BE	10.4	5.1	24.1	9.9
BG	6.8	5.3	22.0	14.5
CZ	2.5	1.4	12.4	14.3
DK	3.3	2.1	8.2	5.0
DE	5.9	3.4	18.9	8.5
EE	2.0	2.0	12.6	7.7
IE	8.2	4.1	22.3	8.3
EL	22.7	5.2	36.4	4.6
ES	6.1	2.5	9.7	2.8
FR	5.0	2.0	13.5	4.5
HR	9.9	4.0	23.6	8.4
IT	17.0	5.1	27.1	5.6
CY	5.0	3.1	7.3	4.5
LV	2.9	2.7	11.6	8.4
LT	2.7	2.7	19.0	13.7
LU	3.2	1.1	4.5	:
HU	4.3	2.7	12.2	8.7
MT	9.0	1.6	14.8	2.5
NL	4.1	1.7	9.5	3.5
AT	3.2	1.0	9.8	4.1
PL	5.3	3.0	17.7	12.7
PT	4.2	2.4	5.9	2.5
RO	16.6	4.7	28.4	9.2
SI	4.3	2.4	11.2	7.1
SK	5.7	3.6	23.3	20.3
FI	1.8	1.6	7.4	5.3
SE	3.6	2.6	12.4	7.0
UK	6.1	3.9	11.8	6.1
EU-28	7.7	3.3	17.2	5.8

NB: ':' indicates data were not available; excluding those whose main status is a student (except DE and UK due to data availability).

Source: LFS, calculations based on 2014 microdata.

**Table 3: Employees with low levels of qualifications by gender, occupation and participation in at least one training in the past year (EU-28, 15-64)**

	All low-qualified employees (%)		Low-qualified in precarious work (%)		Participation in training among low-qualified in precarious work (%)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Managers	1.1	1.8	:	:	47.6	38.8
Professionals	1.3	1.8	:	:	70.9	37.2
Technicians and associate professionals	7.2	7.1	5.1	4.1	62.4	51.3
Clerical support workers	10.8	5.7	6.6	4.1	72.4	54.6
Services and sales workers	31.0	12.9	31.0	15.1	48.2	32.0
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	0.7	3.1	1.0	4.7	26.0	16.8
Craft and related trades workers	4.8	25.7	4.0	26.3	16.7	33.9
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	6.8	20.6	5.0	13.6	40.8	36.3
Elementary occupations	36.3	20.5	46.1	30.6	18.4	28.8

NB: ':' indicates data were not available; excluding those whose main status is a student.

Source: LFS (2014) and EWCS (2015), calculations based on microdata.



## HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

### Free publications:

- one copy:  
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:  
from the European Union's representations ([http://ec.europa.eu/represent\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm));  
from the delegations in non-EU countries ([http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm));  
by contacting the Europe Direct service ([http://europa.eu/europedirect/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm)) or  
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (\*).

(\* ) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

### Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).



<http://eige.europa.eu>

MH-02-17-250-EN-N



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-9493-756-8