Pay in sectors dominated by women

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EPSU Report: Tackling low pay in sectors dominated by women

Key focus: Health and social care sector

1. Statistical data on pay and employment

2. Reasons behind low pay in these sectors

3. Trade union strategies to improve pay in these sectors?
Data Source

- **Statistical data** on employment and pay based on the European Labour Force Survey

- **Available data covers** two occupational groups: **skilled** (nurses and midwives) and **assistant occupations** (health and care assistants and personal care workers).
## Occupations covered in the study

### Table 1
**Definition of health and social care professions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISCO 08 – Code</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Range of tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>222/322</td>
<td>Nursing and Midwifery (Associate) Professionals</td>
<td>Clinical nurse consultants, Head nurses, Professional nurses, Professional midwives</td>
<td>Planning, management and evaluation of the care of patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>532</td>
<td>Personal Care Workers in Health Services</td>
<td>Health Care Assistants, Birth assistants, Nursing aides, Patient care assistants, Home care aides</td>
<td>Provision of personal care and assistance with mobility and activities of daily living</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own compilation based on information from the International Labour Organization (ILO).
Proportion of workers in nursing and care occupations at total workforce (2016)

Source: EU LFS 2016, weighted averages, own calculations.
Proportion of women in health and social care

- **Lithuania**: 99.8%
- **Estonia**: 99.7%
- **Czech Republic**: 98.6%
- **Latvia**: 97.2%
- **Slovakia**: 96.2%
- **Finland**: 94.2%
- **Ireland**: 91.1%
- **Romania**: 90.3%
- **Hungary**: 89.4%
- **Switzerland**: 88.6%
- **Netherlands**: 86.8%
- **Belgium**: 86.3%
- **Austria**: 85.6%
- **Germany**: 85.0%
- **France**: 83.9%
- **Spain**: 81.4%
- **Greece**: 81.2%
- **Cyprus**: 80.7%
- **Portugal**: 78.9%
- **Luxembourg**: 77.1%
- **Italy**: 75.6%

Source: EU-LFS 2016.
Average hourly wages of h&s workers compared to the economy as a whole

Note: hourly wages in Euros, NACE R2: Human health and social work activities, 10 employees or more.
Relative income of nursing and care workers in the overall income distribution
Relationship between proportion of women in health and care and their average relative income
Explaining low pay in health and social care

Three strands of explanation:

- **Economic**: structural underfinancing social work
- **Industrial Relations**: weaker bargaining position due to “prisoner of love dilemma” and low unionization rate
- **Sociological**: labour market discrimination based on cultural devaluation of female work

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Structural underfinancing of social work

- Market-induced spending deficit due to increased privatization and commodification of provision of services
- Austerity measures: state no longer willing and able to step in – instead consolidation of budgets through: cuts in budget, wages and employment
Weak **bargaining position** due to “prisoner of love dilemma”

- **dependency** of care recipients
- **trust and empathy** as integral part of care work

Result: **well-being of clients** more important than collective pursuit of their own interests in terms of higher wages and better working conditions

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Labour market discrimination based on cultural devaluation of female work

- Perception of jobs predominantly performed by women as inferior to ‘male-dominated’ jobs
- Gender-stereotyped perception of care work as “typical female”

Result: Devaluation gets entrenched in evaluation schemes informing pay structures
Trade union action

Based on questionnaire:

- More short-term measures to raise wages within existing pay structure: CB strategy and legal measures
- More long-term measures to address how work is valued: changes to pay systems and fight undervaluation
- Measures aimed at state: minimum wage, wage transparency and reversal of austerity policy
Short-term measures to raise wages within existing pay structure

CB strategy:
- Above-average pay increases for low-wage groups and areas in which women predominate
- Flat-rate wage increases in combination with percentage increases
- Comparing female and male dominated jobs / professions in other sectors

Legal measures:
- Equal pay claims in national and European courts
Long-term measures to address how work is valued

Changes to pay systems:

- Abolishing lowest pay grade
- Introduction of new pay systems placing more emphasis on prior experience and content of work
- Gender-neutral job classifications and evaluation systems: transparent evaluation criteria
Long-term measures to address how work is valued

Fight undervaluation through broader campaigns

Important additional element: change of public perception and raising awareness of importance of care work

Examples: „Revaluation campaign“ by Ver.di in Germany and „Equal pay project“ by FOA in Denmark

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Measures aimed at state

- Fight for minimum wage increases and extension of collective agreements
- Push governments to end austerity policies: „scrap the cap“ (UK)
- Legal framework to improve pay transparency: wage transparency laws
Key for success: Multi-dimensional approach

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Short-term measures...</th>
<th>Long-term measures...</th>
<th>State-aimed measures...</th>
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<td>... to improve the position of low-paid workers in the currently existing wage structure</td>
<td>... to address how work in female-dominated sectors is valued</td>
<td>... to support the unions’ short-term and long-term measures</td>
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**Collective bargaining strategies:**
- Above-average pay increases for low-paid workers.
- Flat-rate pay increases in combination with percentage increases.
- Comparison of wages in female- and male-dominated sectors and occupations.

**Training** to improve women’s career prospects and their chances to move up the pay scale.

**Legal measures** by bringing equal pay claims before court.

**Changes to pay structure:**
- Abolishing lowest pay grade.
- Changing the criteria on which pay is based by developing gender-neutral job evaluation schemes.

**Addressing undervaluation of female work** by specific revaluation campaigns which aim at changing the public perception of female work.

**Pushing for Increases in statutory minimum wage.**

**Pushing for end of austerity-induced pay freezes.**

**Pushing for more supportive regulation on the extension of collective agreements.**

**Pushing for stronger regulation and enforcement of wage transparency rules.**
Thank you very much for your attention!!!

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