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# Beyond pink-collar jobs for women and the social economy

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OECD Global Action Promoting  
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# **Beyond pink-collar jobs for women and the social economy**

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# Table of contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>6</b>
Women’s participation in the social and solidarity economy: pink-collar jobs and beyond	6
However, it is not all rosy for women’s employment in the social and solidarity economy	7
Policy makers can help advance gender equality in and through the social and solidarity economy	8
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
The social and solidarity economy provides jobs for women and can help promote gender equality more widely	11
Women are drawn to the social and solidarity economy in different roles	12
The high presence of women has occurred at the same time as advances in gender equality	13
Challenges to gender equality in the social and solidarity economy	13
<b>1 Women’s participation in the social and solidarity economy: pink-collar jobs and beyond</b>	<b>15</b>
The social and solidarity economy is an important source of employment across different sectors of activity	15
Women represent a high share of the social and solidarity economy labour force	17
Social and solidarity economy entities show smaller gender gaps in leadership and pay	20
Women constitute a high share of social and solidarity economy volunteers	25
Women are among the priority target beneficiaries of social and solidarity economy entities	27
<b>2 It is not all rosy</b>	<b>28</b>
Women in the social and solidarity economy remain specialised in pink-collar jobs	28
Working conditions in the social and solidarity economy show room for improvement, in particular for women	32
Persisting gender stereotypes can prevent women in the social and solidarity economy from accessing more leadership, skills and finance	34
<b>3 Advancing gender equality in and through the social economy</b>	<b>37</b>
Increase awareness around gender issues and women’s roles in the social and solidarity economy	39
Improve the evidence base on the social and solidarity economy to be able to better transfer learnings to the wider economy	42
Reinforce the social and solidarity economy’s capacity to support work-life balance and integration of women into the labour force more generally	44
Improve job quality and reduce gender gaps further in leadership and pay in the social and solidarity economy	47
Foster men’s participation in health, care, education and social services	49

Diversify the social and solidarity economy and women's participation into green and digital sectors	50
Increase access to finance and tailored training for women social entrepreneurs	54
<b>References</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Annex A. Social economy employment data sources used</b>	<b>76</b>

## FIGURES

Figure 1. Women's roles in the SSE	13
Figure 2. European social enterprises are most concentrated in health, education and other services	16
Figure 3. Women typically represent a larger share of the SSE than of the total labour force	18
Figure 4. Women typically represent a larger share of managers in SSE enterprises than in the wider economy	21
Figure 5. Women represent a larger share of social entrepreneurs than of commercial entrepreneurs in most regions of the world	22
Figure 6. Glass ceiling effects for women appear lower in SSE enterprises in most countries	23
Figure 7. Women constitute a high share of volunteers across countries	26
Figure 8. Across countries, women are often more concentrated within the services sector	29
Figure 9. Share of women among employees in wholesale, education, and health and social work	30
Figure 10. In France and Italy, women constitute a higher share of the labour force across most sectors	31
Figure 11. Distribution of total, female and SSE labour force across sectors (France)	32
Figure 12. Perception of women in social entrepreneurship (pay and leadership)	34

## TABLES

Table 1. Policy recommendations to advance gender equality in and through the social and solidarity economy	37
Table 2. The SSE represents a notable share of employment in many countries	76

## BOXES

Box 1. Typical entities of the social and solidarity economy	12
Box 2. Worker-owned co-operatives to empower minority women (United States)	19
Box 3. Mainstreaming gender equality into SSE legal and policy frameworks (Colombia, France, Spain)	40
Box 4. Supporting indigenous women through the SSE (Canada)	41
Box 5. Gender-sensitive voluntary audits of the social economy (Spain)	42
Box 6. Progress in data collection on women in the social and solidarity economy	43
Box 7. Easing the care burden through day and weekend schools (ASSEFA, India)	44
Box 8. Supporting people with care responsibilities through affordable early care services (Québec, Canada)	45
Box 9. Examples of SSE entities addressing women's health needs	46
Box 10. "Unionising" self-employed women (SEWA, India)	48
Box 11. Women's networks and grassroots movements affecting rural policy (Brazil)	49
Box 12. Improving women's participation in the renewable energy sector (Ontario, Canada)	51
Box 13. Mainstreaming gender into public procurement (Victoria, Australia)	51
Box 14. Increasing procurement from SSE entities in the circular economy (ESS2024.org, France)	53
Box 15. Knowledge sharing and capacity building on platform co-operativism (PCC, United States)	54
Box 16. Helping business support organisations better support women social entrepreneurs (Better Incubation, Europe)	55
Box 17. Dedicated financial support for women social entrepreneurs (Europe, Ireland)	56
Box 18. Capacity development, networking and visibility (Empow'Her, Europe)	57
Box 19. Digital competencies for SSE entities (EU3Digital, Europe)	57
Box 20. Programmes for women empowerment through the SSE (Greece, Mexico, United States)	58

# Executive summary

## Women's participation in the social and solidarity economy: pink-collar jobs and beyond

**Women represent a larger share of the labour force of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) relative to the share of women in the total labour force in a number of countries.** This share is estimated to exceed 60% in countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Women who work in SSE entities are mostly active in the services sector, reflecting the SSE's specialisation in social sectors, in particular in health, care services, education and social work, sectors and occupations that are often categorised as feminised and also referred to as “pink-collar jobs”. For example, in France, the share of women in SSE personal and household services occupations is almost 96%.

**Motivational factors might also explain why women are attracted to SSE entities as workers, founders and volunteers.** SSE entities have a social purpose, following practices and governance models based on principles such as solidarity, mutuality, the primacy of people over capital, and co-operation, which may also help motivate high female participation. SSE entities typically include associations and non-profits, co-operatives, mutual societies, foundations, and, more recently, social enterprises. Community-based, grassroots and spontaneous initiatives can also be part of the SSE.

**In many countries, SSE entities also offer flexible and often better working conditions, including part-time work.** These work arrangements can support a better work-life balance for all employees, particularly women, as care responsibilities in the personal sphere are often performed by women as unpaid labour. For example, in Spain, co-operatives and worker-owned companies (*sociedades laborales*) show higher levels of flexibility and job stability compared with other types of firms. More broadly, policies enabling part-time work can promote equal opportunities for men and women to contribute at home and at work by encouraging fathers to take more parental leave and do more caregiving throughout the life course. This could change societal expectations that mothers “should” be the parent who works part-time.

**Gender gaps in pay and leadership are often lower in the SSE, offering lessons for the rest of economy.** For example, in Türkiye, the share of women with managerial roles in social enterprises is reported at 65%, more than triple the rate in the total labour force (18%). In Spain, the gender gap in pay in the SSE are 8 percentage points smaller than in the private sector.

**SSE entities also support women's employment in the wider economy and the quality of employment for women.** SSE providers of care services help increase access to paid employment for women with caregiving responsibilities (for children, older individuals and others in need). For example, in the province of Québec, Canada, the vast majority of early childhood centres are run by SSE entities. In Sweden, around 10% of childcare is provided by co-operatives (Coompanion Sweden). Many SSE entities also address issues linked to women's health and employment quality, such as the provision of menstrual products (e.g. the Pad Project in the United States) or working conditions of foreign care workers (e.g. FairCare by Diakonie Württemberg, Germany).

**The SSE may hold important lessons on reducing gender pay gaps and discrimination that policy makers could leverage.** Gender gaps in pay and leadership in the SSE tend to be lower than in the wider economy. More broadly, the values of the SSE, i.e. solidarity, the primacy of people over capital, and democratic and participative governance, can be strong drivers for tackling discrimination and achieving gender equality. For example, democratic and participative governance can empower women within entities and foster their promotion to decision-making positions. Further insights into the decision-making mechanisms of SSE entities and their respective influence on gender equality outcomes in labour force participation, leadership and pay, as well as the increased visibility of “women’s” issues, can help replicate the advancements of the SSE in the wider economy.

### **However, it is not all rosy for women’s employment in the social and solidarity economy**

**“Pink-collar jobs” refer to historically feminised sectors/occupations (e.g., care, health, education), experiencing horizontal (into sectors) and vertical (into hierarchical roles) segregation.** While pink-collar roles are essential, as shown by the COVID-19 crisis, the high concentration of women in these occupations tends to propagate and/or reinforce discriminating stereotypes around the jobs themselves and people that hold them. Societal conditioning and bias play a major role in perpetuating the general assumption that women are more suited for pink-collar occupations than men (e.g., women are depicted to be more caring, therefore they are better suited to work in the care economy and education). Pink-collar jobs are often paid less, devalued and lack clear opportunities for career advancement, making them less attractive for men. Ultimately, these factors reinforce obstacles for women to enter male-dominated jobs and discourage men’s participation in female-dominated jobs.

**Salaries are lower in the SSE than in the wider economy on average for all employees, regardless of gender.** For example, in France and Spain, pay in the SSE has been reported to be 19% lower than in the wider economy. The sectors where the SSE is most active partly explain the lower salaries. Pay can also be lower because SSE entities often grapple with funding and revenue pressures. As such, salaries and long-term positions appear particularly challenging and require SSE entities to manage and balance their staffing needs with financial sustainability. There are other socio-cultural factors about expectations that the (social) services where the SSE is active should limit wages. Boundaries between employment and volunteer work within the SSE may sometimes be blurred as people may be willing to lower their expectations for pay in exchange for other non-monetary factors.

**While gender gaps in the SSE are lower, and show promising results, in particular in pay, important gender gaps remain in access to leadership positions.** A disproportionate share of part-time and temporary work affects women’s prospects in leadership and pay. Women are still under-represented at the highest level of management in particular types of SSE entities, such as associations (e.g., France) or foundations (e.g., Portugal).

**There is considerable scope for the SSE to diversify to digital and green sectors.** The digital and green transitions offer levers to increase women’s participation in traditionally male-dominated, high-growth sectors. For example, in the digital transition, emerging forms of SSE structures such as platform co-operatives could offer new opportunities for women and with greater job quality than other platforms. In the green transition, while currently only 28% of green jobs are held by women (compared with 51% of non-green jobs), research shows that including more women in decision-making and leadership positions around the environment could bring more sustainable decisions and action.



## Policy makers can help advance gender equality in and through the social and solidarity economy

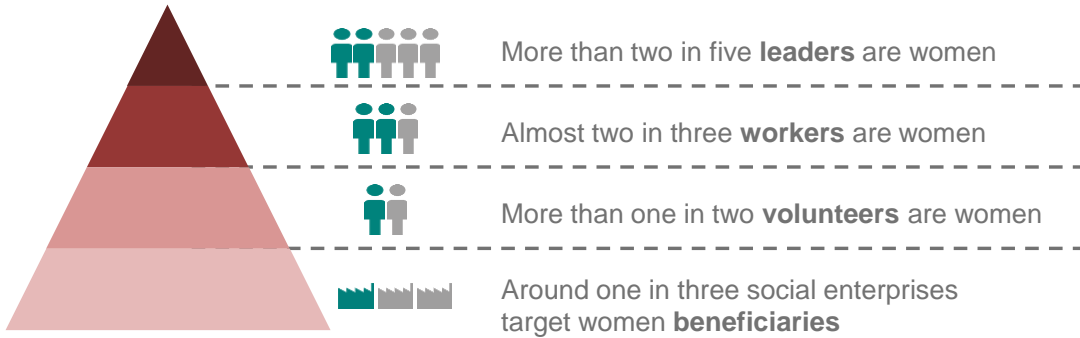
A number of actions could help drive gender equality in the SSE and beyond:

- **Increase awareness around gender issues and women's roles in the SSE**, including through improving the evidence base to measure progress. Acknowledging women's work and leadership in the SSE can reinforce women's empowerment more broadly. A first step is to mainstream gender equality into SSE policy frameworks. In France, Spain and the city of Medellín in Colombia, for example, women and gender equality considerations have been included in policy and legal frameworks.
- **Improve the evidence base on the SSE to be able to better transfer learnings to the wider economy**. Through the provision of more flexible working arrangements such as part-time or flexible working hours as well as potentially better career advancement prospects, the SSE can help increase women's participation in the labour force. Many SSE entities provide childcare services to their employees and members, for example in India and Brazil. Evidence on gender equality in the SSE can also be used to support transferable lessons to the wider economy. Many national-level initiatives in the SSE already include gender dimensions. Dedicated assessments on gender equality are being produced in some countries, e.g., France (triennial reports by the High Council on the Social and Solidarity Economy on gender equality). More internationally comparable data, for example on specific sectoral composition and job quality, could spur further progress.
- **Reinforce the SSE's capacity to support work-life balance and integration of women into the labour force more generally**, such as through the provision of care services or solutions that improve women's health. It can also serve the needs of any person with care responsibilities (including men). Public authorities can also partner with the SSE to provide more affordable childcare services, as is the case of early childcare centres in the province of Québec, Canada. Women's health is also a topic that many SSE entities try to tackle, improving labour market participation opportunities.
- **Improve job quality and reduce gender gaps further in leadership and pay in the SSE**, through increased valorisation of the essential services where they operate more generally, public procurement and data to track progress. Given the importance of the SSE as an employer, its concentration in essential sectors and the high prevalence of women in the SSE, improving the quality of work within the SSE can have wide-reaching effects, in particular on women. Policy makers can support the reduction of remaining gender gaps in employment, pay and leadership in the SSE by better understanding the drivers and barriers for gender equality. Engaging with women's self-help groups and unions can also help to improve job quality and women's bargaining power. For example, in India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the largest trade union, provides social and legal protection, local networks and support groups as well as additional support services to over 21.1 million women across 18 Indian states.
- **Foster men's participation in health, care, education and social services** to promote greater gender equality where the SSE is highly present. Many initiatives for gender equality focus on attracting women into STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) related fields; however, efforts to attract men to female-dominated jobs are less common and not well-developed. Campaigns such as those used by the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom to increase the share of male nurses can help attract more men to these jobs. Recent research into gender-specific strategies could provide insights to address gender disparities in career choices. More broadly, moving beyond categorisations such as pink and blue collar can help break invisible barriers for both men and women.

- **Diversify the SSE and women's participation into green and digital sectors**, to contribute to solutions for other social challenges and promote gender equality. Dedicated women's networks can support women's involvement in these sectors. In the province of Ontario, Canada, the Women in Renewable Energy Network runs a job board, capacity-building programmes, mentoring and meetups to increase women's participation in the sector and support the creation of more inclusive workplaces. Sectoral strategies and the promotion of women-led business in public contracting can also address the sectoral segregation of women into female-dominated jobs. The state of Victoria, in Australia, for example has mainstreamed gender equality into its procurement strategy with the explicit goal to foster women- and minority-led (social) businesses.
- **Increase access to finance and tailored training for women social entrepreneurs** to boost women's leadership as well as diversification of the SSE. Providing education and training on specific skills where women show greater gaps can help them to overcome barriers to employment and leadership, such as for increasingly important digital skills. Projects such as the EU3Digital project can help the specific needs of women in the SSE. Furthermore, capacity-building measures conducted by women social entrepreneur networks such as Empow'Her support women seeking to enter social entrepreneurship and obtain funding. The Women Entrepreneurship Initiative in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, also brings together specific incubation efforts, including access to financing and funding, tailored for women (social) entrepreneurs.

# Beyond pink-collar jobs for women and the social economy

## The social and solidarity economy holds lessons for the wider economy...



### ... but it is not all rosy

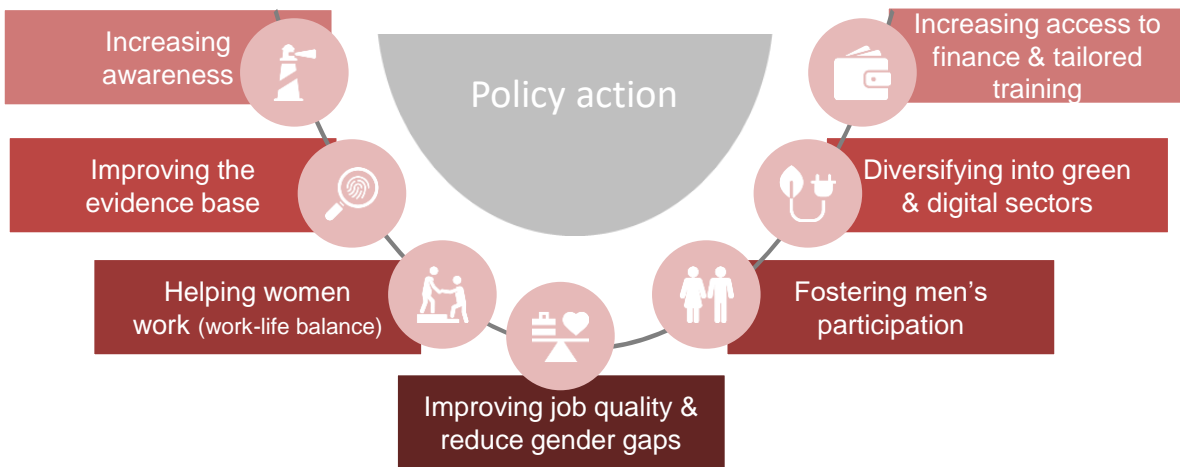
**Persisting gender gaps**  
(in SSE entities such as associations, foundations and cooperatives)

**Lower pay, job security and career prospects**  
(lower pay than in the wider economy, part-time and temporary contracts)

**A concentration into specific roles and sectors**  
(in education, care, personal and household services)

**Insufficient access to finance and training**

## Moving beyond “pink-collar” jobs requires:



# Introduction

## The social and solidarity economy provides jobs for women and can help promote gender equality more widely

**Gender equality in the workplace remains a challenge despite considerable efforts over the years to address it.** Gender inequality comes at a high cost for economies and societies. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that gender discrimination in formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices costs the global economy USD 12 trillion, 16% of global income (Ferrant and Kolev, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>). Reducing discrimination could lead to an annual average increase in global gross domestic product (GDP) of 0.3 to 0.6 percentage points by 2030 (Ferrant and Kolev, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>).

**As a vehicle for creating jobs with impact, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) can also play a major role in achieving gender equality.** Based on estimates, the SSE is already providing up to 10% of employment in many countries (e.g. Belgium, France, Spain) and **more than 60% of SSE employees are women.**<sup>1</sup> In the European Union, SSE entities employ over 13.6 million people, which is 6% of the total workforce (Monzón and Chaves, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>). In the OECD 2021 Gender Equality Questionnaire (GEQ), countries have identified making childcare more accessible, improving women's access to better-quality jobs, making it easier for women to combine paid and unpaid work, and eradicating the gender pay gap as the most important levers to increase female employment (OECD, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>). The SSE actively contributes to these objectives. In addition to providing jobs, SSE entities offer childcare in many countries (e.g. France, Italy, Spain) and show promising results in terms of lower gender gaps in leadership and pay (e.g. Spain).

**The SSE is typically made up of entities such as associations, co-operatives, foundations, mutual societies and more recently social enterprises. Grassroot and community-based initiatives can also be part of the SSE.** Many countries refer to non-profits or the third sector for parts of the SSE. It is highly diverse in terms of legal and organisational forms, size, outreach and sectors. This diversity is often the result of historical, cultural and institutional backgrounds specific to countries and sometimes regions (Box 1). SSE entities distinguish themselves in two respects: their *raison d'être*, as they primarily address social needs and pursue a social purpose, and their way of operating because they implement specific business models based on collaboration, typically at the local level (OECD, 1999<sup>[4]</sup>; OECD, 2003<sup>[5]</sup>; Noya and Clarence, 2007<sup>[6]</sup>). More recently, the notion of social enterprise has been included in this field in order to recognise entities that trade goods and services, that fulfil a social objective and whose main purpose is not the maximisation of profit for the owners but its reinvestment for the continued attainment of its social goals (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> This report examines data from the Global Action countries (EU countries, Brazil, Canada, India, Korea, Mexico and the United States), other OECD countries, South Africa and countries in the Asia Pacific.

### Box 1. Typical entities of the social and solidarity economy

An **association or voluntary organisation** is a self-governing, independently constituted body of people who have joined together voluntarily to take action for the benefit of the community. They are not established for financial gain (OECD, 2003<sup>[5]</sup>).

A **co-operative** is an autonomous association of persons and/or legal entities united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise (ICA, 1995<sup>[8]</sup>; ILO, 2018<sup>[9]</sup>). As defined by the International Cooperative Alliance (1995<sup>[8]</sup>), the co-operative principles include: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; co-operation among co-operatives; and concern for the community. A co-operative includes one or more kinds of users or stakeholders, leading to four main types of co-operatives, namely producer co-operatives, worker co-operatives, consumer/user co-operatives, and multi-stakeholder co-operatives (ILO, 2018<sup>[9]</sup>).

**Foundations** are philanthropic organisations, organised and operated primarily as a permanent collection of endowed funds, the earnings of which are used for the long-term benefit of a defined geographical community or non-profit sector activity. Foundations operate as grant-making institutions and also as providers of social, health and cultural services. They thus provide a significant link between the private and non-profit sectors, acting as recipients of private capital and funders of non-profit organisations. Foundations are tax-exempt, incorporated, not-for-profit and organisationally autonomous (Noya and Clarence, 2007<sup>[6]</sup>).

A **mutual society** is an organisation owned and managed by its members and that serves the interests of its members. Mutual organisations can take the form of self-help groups, friendly societies and co-operatives. Mutual organisations exclude shareholding as they bring together members who seek to provide a shared service from which they all benefit. They are widely represented in the insurance and health sectors (Noya and Clarence, 2007<sup>[6]</sup>).

A **social enterprise** is an entity which trades goods and services and fulfils a societal objective and whose main purpose is not the maximisation of profit for the owners but its reinvestment for the continued attainment of its societal goals. It has the capacity to bring innovative solutions to social problems such as social exclusion and unemployment. The OECD definition of a social enterprise considers it as part of the SSE and extends the scope of the SSE beyond its traditional forms (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

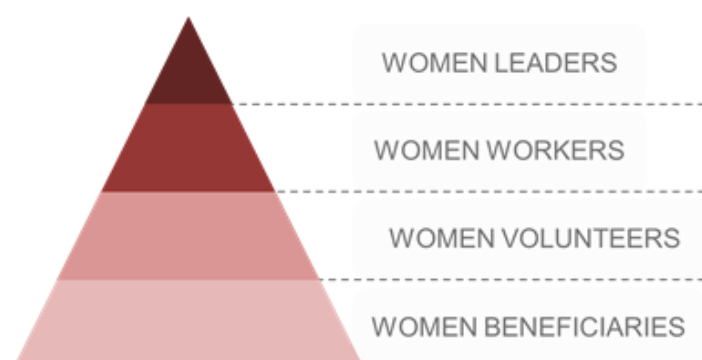
Sources: (European Commission, 2022<sup>[10]</sup>); (OECD, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>; OECD, 2018<sup>[12]</sup>); (OECD, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>); (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>); (OECD, 1999<sup>[4]</sup>)

### Women are drawn to the social and solidarity economy in different roles

**Women in the SSE take on a multitude of roles, ranging from beneficiaries to volunteers to workers and leaders** (Figure 1). They are leaders as middle managers or founders of SSE entities or members of full-time or volunteer boards. For example, women constitute more than 60% of managers in social enterprises in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Sweden and Türkiye (Euclid Network, 2022<sup>[14]</sup>). Their share in the SSE labour force is higher than in the wider economy. In Portugal, this figure is 77% in social enterprises compared with 45% of the total labour force (CASES/Statistics Portugal, 2019<sup>[15]</sup>). The SSE also engages a large number of volunteers, many of whom are women, and targets them as beneficiaries through activities geared towards their well-being and empowerment (UNTFSSSE, 2014<sup>[16]</sup>). The core values and

principles that permeate SSE entities' activities, such as better flexibility in terms of work-life balance and more generally people-centred modes of operation, might explain, at least in part, why women are drawn to the SSE. Social entrepreneurship is attractive to women, as women are 20% more likely than men to start a business because they lack opportunities in employment (OECD/European Commission, 2021<sup>[17]</sup>). SSE entities also support women in countries where a lack of welfare services prevents them from participating in labour markets (e.g. lack of childcare services, lack of access to formal employment or social protection). In Brazil and India, SSE entities provide services such as child day care. Even in countries where such services are provided publicly, such as Belgium, Canada and France, SSE entities provide childcare services, often under mandate of policy makers.

**Figure 1. Women's roles in the SSE**



Source: Authors' elaborations.

## The high presence of women has occurred at the same time as advances in gender equality

**The large presence of women and advances in gender equality in the SSE are also an attractive factor for women.** The SSE appears to be explicitly committed to gender equality and social justice (Baruah, 2023<sup>[18]</sup>). Women still largely shy away from competitive work settings (Flory, Leibbrandt and List, 2015<sup>[19]</sup>). Compared with other entities, women within SSE entities are often reported to feel more assured to speak up and bring their concerns to the table, and experience broader empowerment through the relatively higher representation and through more collective and democratic governance practices (Kalpana, 2021<sup>[20]</sup>; Ronchi, 2021<sup>[21]</sup>; Empow'Her, 2019<sup>[22]</sup>). Women-led social enterprises in particular incorporate to a greater extent participatory management practices, compared with male-led social enterprises (Huysentruyt, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>). This comes at a time where issues around gender imbalance have gained more attention, and the debate has increased the pressure to counter inequalities between women and men in the workplace and leadership positions. Tools used to improve gender equality vary from mere recommendations or mandatory rules to minimum mandatory ratios for each gender or mandatory equality. In this context, experiences from the SSE can hold lessons for the wider economy.

## Challenges to gender equality in the social and solidarity economy

**The concentration of women in specific jobs in the SSE, often low-paid, could reinforce gender-based attribution of jobs.** The SSE is often concentrated in female-dominated sectors such as health and social services, personal and household services, and education. Within these sectors, they often occupy the lower-paid jobs, e.g. cleaners instead of facility managers or teachers instead of school

directors. These jobs have often been termed “pink-collar”<sup>2</sup> jobs, in contrast to white-collar and blue-collar jobs, as they have traditionally been occupied by women (Mastracci, 2004<sup>[24]</sup>). While these may be both high- or low-skilled roles, they are frequently paid less than white-collar roles<sup>3</sup> (i.e. professional, desk, managerial or administrative work) (Barnes, 2021<sup>[25]</sup>).

**While the demand for pink-collar jobs is growing, they are still perceived to fall within the traditional realm of the house and women’s responsibility.** The perpetuation of gender stereotypes prevents the promotion of female-dominated jobs among men as they are often assumed to be more suitable for women (Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014<sup>[26]</sup>). Compared with traditionally male-dominated occupations in manufacturing that are declining, demand is growing, in particular, in sectors such as health and education (OECD, 2019<sup>[27]</sup>). In the United States, for example, the labour force for social workers is expected to grow at twice the average rate of other occupations (Delfino, 2021<sup>[28]</sup>). During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also become clear to what extent societies and economies depend on women as healthcare workers. (OECD, 2020<sup>[29]</sup>). For example, women constitute over 75% of the health and social workforce in most OECD countries but are mostly concentrated in nursing and midwifery positions (OECD, 2021<sup>[30]</sup>) (see also Figure 9).

**Compared with the wider economy, work in the SSE is often undervalued and pay is significantly lower.** In France and Spain, pay in the SSE has been reported to be 19% lower than in the wider economy. This can reduce the attractiveness of SSE jobs, in particular for men, who have been shown to be often more motivated by financial compensation than other less tangible factors (Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira, 2020<sup>[31]</sup>). Also, the high reliance of the SSE on unpaid labour carries a risk of perpetuating non-compensation or low compensation as the standard for the provision of essential services that a majority female labour force is providing.

**This report addresses these issues.** It analyses women’s employment in the SSE (Section 1) and explores how gender equality could be advanced in the SSE (Section 2). It further provides policy recommendations to recognise women’s work and leadership, as well as suggests ways to foster their participation in high-growth sectors within the SSE, such as technology-intensive and green sectors (Section 3).

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<sup>2</sup> The term “pink collar” is used for the purpose of this paper to describe historically feminised sectors/occupations experiencing horizontal segregation. It is in no way intended to propagate discriminating stereotypes of these jobs or the people that hold them. For a detailed analysis of the horizontal (into sectors) and vertical (into hierarchical roles) segregation of women in education, employment and entrepreneurship see OECD (forthcoming<sup>[211]</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> A white-collar job is typically performed in an office environment and involves clerical, administrative or managerial duties. Some examples of industries with many white-collar jobs include tech, accounting, marketing and consulting. The term “white collar” refers to the white shirts that many of these professionals traditionally wear.

# 1 Women's participation in the social and solidarity economy: pink-collar jobs and beyond

## The social and solidarity economy is an important source of employment across different sectors of activity

**The SSE represents a notable share of the economy in many countries.** While comparing the contribution to GDP is difficult due to varying frames of reference, the SSE is estimated to contribute 2-10% to national GDP depending on the OECD country (OECD, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>). In the European Union (EU), 10% of businesses are social enterprises employing 6% of the labour force (European Commission, 2023<sup>[32]</sup>). Depending on the country, the SSE represents 1% to 10% of employment in the European Union (Monzón and Chaves, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>). The estimated shares of the SSE in national labour markets are highest in Luxembourg (10%), followed by Belgium, France and Italy (9% each). Employment in different SSE entities varies across countries as well as across regions within countries (OECD, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>). The share of different types of SSE entities also varies across countries. Across EU countries, associations hold the largest share of employment (66%), followed by co-operatives (31%) and mutual societies (3%) (Monzón and Chaves, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>).

**The SSE is active in many different sectors with varying degrees.** For example, in the province of Québec (Canada), SSE entities are active in 13 main sectors,<sup>4</sup> with the highest concentrations in education, training and childcare (16.1% of entities); housing (14.8%); and health and living conditions (13.6%) (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). In France, almost all of the SSE labour force is in services (97%), while a remaining 2% are in the industry and construction sector and 1% in agriculture and forestry (INSEE/Flores, 2021<sup>[34]</sup>).

**The vast majority of the SSE labour force is concentrated in health and social services or education.** This concentration coincides with the general specialisation of the SSE in education, care and social services, among other sectors, where public welfare provision is often lacking (Noya and Clarence, 2007<sup>[6]</sup>; OECD, 2020<sup>[35]</sup>). In France, 60% of the SSE labour force is concentrated in public administration, education and human health (INSEE/Flores, 2021<sup>[34]</sup>). In the province of Québec, 27% of the SSE labour force can be found in education, childcare and social assistance, followed by 21% in finance and insurance (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). In Spain, social work activities constitute the highest share at 19%, followed by business and related services at 17.2% (Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira,

<sup>4</sup> These sectors are: education, training and childcare services, housing, health and living conditions, leisure and tourism, arts culture and media, economic development, enterprise support, mutualisation, non-financial aid, proximity and food services, finance, environment and sustainable development, employability and work integration, work, other social purposes.

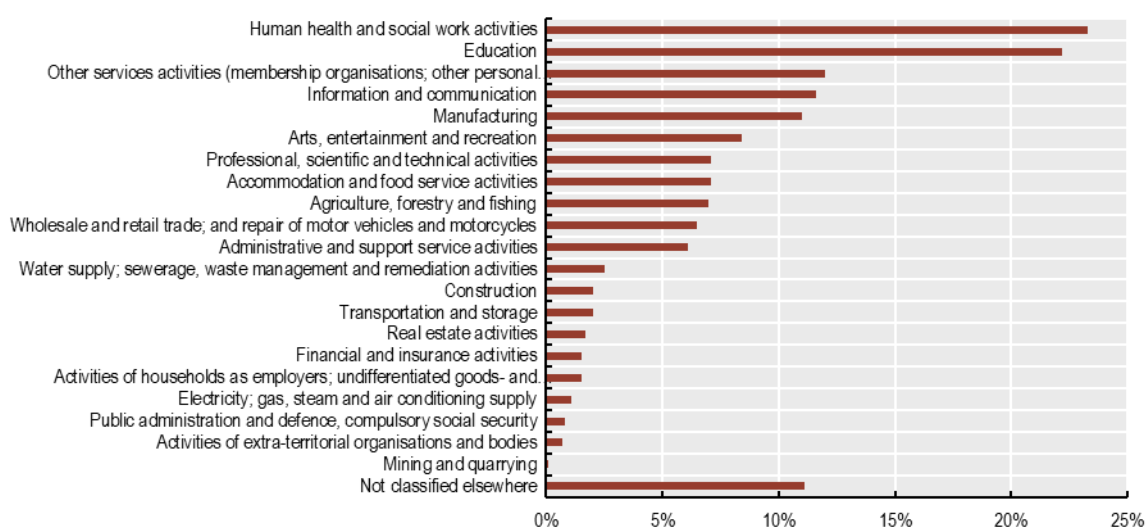


2020<sup>[31]</sup>). In Italy, health and social work (29%) and travel agency, rental and business support services (15%) are the largest sectors in SSE employment (ISTAT/EURICSE, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>).

**A similar picture holds true for social enterprises.** The top three sectors among social enterprises surveyed by Euclid Network in Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are health and social work activities (24%, among the top three in all countries apart from the United Kingdom), education (22%, among top three in all countries apart from the United Kingdom), and other service activities, such as membership organisations, and other personal services activities (13%, among top three in all countries apart from Germany and Portugal) (Figure 2).

## Figure 2. European social enterprises are most concentrated in health, education and other services

Share of organisations by main business sector, % (2022)



Notes: Question: What is your organisation's main business sector? (multiple selections possible), n=1907. "Other services activities" includes membership organisations; other personal services activities. Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use.

Source: Dupain et al. (2022<sup>[37]</sup>)

**Due to increasing social and environmental pressures as well as welfare needs (e.g. long-term care), the interest in goods and services provided by SSE entities is growing** (OECD, 2020<sup>[35]</sup>; UNTFSSSE, 2014<sup>[16]</sup>). Many co-operatives and social enterprises are active in or emerging in growth sectors such as the platform economy, child and long-term care, housing, and environmental protection (OECD, 2022<sup>[38]</sup>; ILO, 2017<sup>[39]</sup>; Schwab Foundation/World Economic Forum, 2022<sup>[40]</sup>). The need for green and circular jobs is growing across countries, and large parts of the circular economy overlap with the SSE (OECD/European Commission, 2022<sup>[41]</sup>; OECD, 2023<sup>[42]</sup>). More than one-third of social enterprises surveyed in Australia and Canada already pursue environmental goals (Elson, Hall and Wamucii, 2016<sup>[43]</sup>; Centre for Social Impact/Social Traders, 2016<sup>[44]</sup>). Among European social enterprises, responsible consumption and production (40%) and climate action (28%) are also frequently pursued (Dupain et al., 2022<sup>[37]</sup>)

**As a labour market, the SSE has promising growth prospects.** Between 2013 and 2016, total employment in the SSE increased by 8.3% compared with 5.8% in the wider economy in Portugal (CASES/Statistics Portugal, 2019<sup>[15]</sup>). In the regions of Wallonia and Brussels in Belgium, SSE employment grew by 6.1% between 2016 and 2020 while it declined by 0.14% in the wider economy (Observatoire de

l'Économie Sociale, 2022<sup>[45]</sup>). In low- and medium-income countries there is also potential for growth. Impact investment, often targeting innovative social enterprises or SSE entities, is growing by 9% annually (GIIN, 2020<sup>[46]</sup>). The Siemens Stiftung estimated the job creation potential of social enterprises between 2020 and 2030 to be above 30% in some of the 12 African countries examined (Siemens Stiftung, 2020<sup>[47]</sup>).

**Employment in the SSE can be more resilient in times of crisis than in the wider economy.** Specific features and principles of the SSE entities that set them apart from conventional enterprises have been found to positively affect their resilience (Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini, 2017<sup>[48]</sup>). Asset locks, used in many co-operatives, provide them with a financial reserve that can be used to support jobs and wages in times of crisis (Navarra, 2013<sup>[49]</sup>). During the 2008 global financial crisis, co-operative banks, in contrast to many private investor-owned banks, remained financially sound and some even saw increases in members, assets, deposits and loans (Birchall and Ketilson, 2009<sup>[50]</sup>). Due to member ownership and member funding, co-operative banks tend to be more risk averse than investor-owned banks and enjoy higher levels of trust by their members (Mullings and Otuomagie, 2023<sup>[51]</sup>). In the context of co-operatives in Spain and Portugal, this also translated into higher employment stability for workers following the 2007/8 financial crisis (Birchall and Ketilson, 2009<sup>[50]</sup>; Monzón and Chaves, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>; Parente and Martinho, 2018<sup>[52]</sup>). This also seems to hold true during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 1% of social enterprises surveyed by the British Council were forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic (British Council, 2020<sup>[53]</sup>).

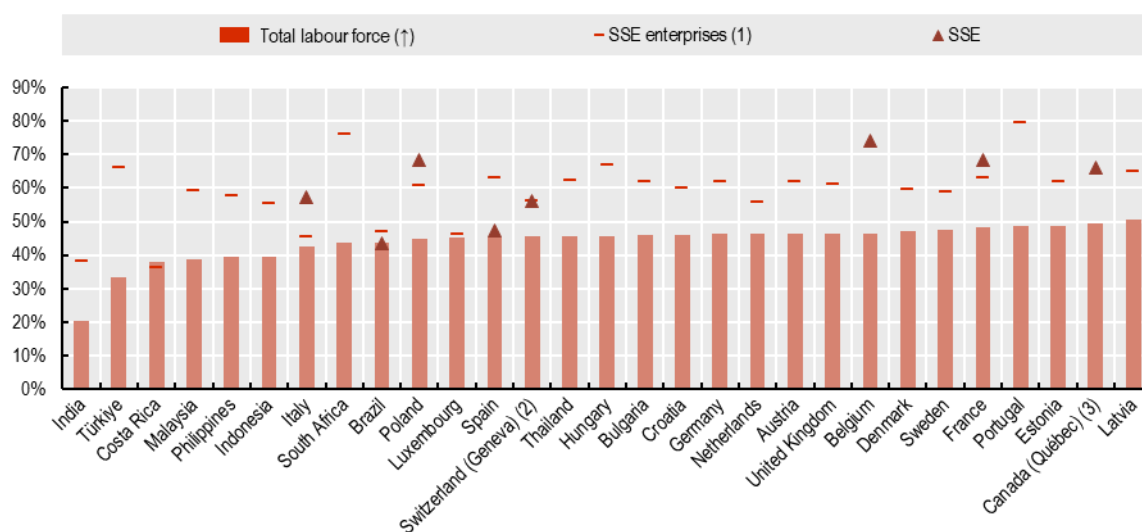
**Research suggests that diversity of personnel could play an important role in the development of organisational resilience** (Duchek, Raetzke and Scheuch, 2020<sup>[54]</sup>). Diversity, including gender diversity, positively relates to productivity and resilience of enterprises in general. Therefore, the higher shares of women in the labour force and management positions of SSE entities could be part of the reason why they have proven to be resilient in times of crises.

## Women represent a high share of the social and solidarity economy labour force

**The share of women in the SSE labour force is higher than in the wider economy in most countries and is estimated to exceed 60% in many of them** (Figure 3). According to available data, among OECD countries, the share of female employment in the SSE (including social enterprises) is highest in Belgium and Portugal. In Belgium, it is estimated that women account for 74% of the labour force in the SSE compared with 46% in the total labour force (Observatoire de l'Économie Sociale, 2015<sup>[55]</sup>). In Portugal, that figure is 77% in social enterprises compared with 45% of the total labour force (Dupain et al., 2022<sup>[37]</sup>).

**Figure 3. Women typically represent a larger share of the SSE than of the total labour force**

Women as share of the labour force, % (2022 or most recently available)



(1) Data on social enterprises where available, data for Costa Rica and Luxembourg are for co-operatives. (2) Social economy: data for Geneva. (3) Social economy: data for Québec.

Notes: Data collated from a variety of sources with high diversity in sample sizes, including surveys with relatively small convenience samples. The entities included in SSE data vary across country according to national definitions. Most official sources include the same types of entities and some local variations. On Dupain et al. (2022<sup>[37]</sup>) and British Council/Social Enterprise UK (2022<sup>[56]</sup>): country-level samples are relatively small. Data depicted here stem from special tabulations provided to the OECD by Euclid Network and British Council.

Sources: Total labour force: OECD and key partners: (OECD.Stat, 2015<sup>[57]</sup>) 2015 or most recently available; other countries: (World Bank/ILO, 2021<sup>[58]</sup>) 2019 or most recently available. Social economy: Belgium: Observatoire ES (2015<sup>[55]</sup>); Brazil: IPEA (2016<sup>[59]</sup>); Canada (Québec): Institut de la Statistique du Québec (2016<sup>[33]</sup>); France: INSEE/Flores (2021<sup>[34]</sup>); Italy: ISTAT/EURICSE (2021<sup>[36]</sup>); Poland: Statistics Poland (2020<sup>[60]</sup>); Portugal: CASES/Statistics Portugal (2019<sup>[15]</sup>); Spain: Secretaria de Estado de Empleo (2019<sup>[61]</sup>), Switzerland (Geneva): Après-GE (2015<sup>[62]</sup>). SSE enterprises: Brazil: Möller et al. (2020<sup>[63]</sup>); Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye: Dupain et al. (2022<sup>[37]</sup>); Costa Rica: INFOCO-OP/Estado de la Nación (2012<sup>[64]</sup>) [co-operatives]; India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand: British Council/Social Enterprise UK (2022<sup>[56]</sup>); Luxembourg: Hiez and Sarracino (2020<sup>[65]</sup>) [co-operatives]; United Kingdom: Social Enterprise UK (2021<sup>[66]</sup>).

**Women's share of employment varies by the type of SSE entity and is on average highest in foundations and associations.** Associations, foundations and social enterprises tend to show higher shares of women in the labour force than co-operatives and mutual societies. On average, based on estimates from Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain,<sup>5</sup> foundations are the type of SSE entities with the highest share of female employment (72% on average), followed by associations (70%), mutual societies (67%) and co-operatives (54%). According to data collected in 17 countries through the 2021-22 European Social Enterprise Monitor, 61% of the social enterprise labour force are women (Dupain et al., 2022<sup>[37]</sup>). In Korea, women make up 65% of employees of self-reliance enterprises<sup>6</sup> (UNRISD, 2018<sup>[67]</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> Data disaggregated by type of organisation: Belgium: (Observatoire de l'Économie Sociale, 2022<sup>[45]</sup>); France: (INSEE/Flores, 2021<sup>[34]</sup>); Italy: (ISTAT/EURICSE, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>); Luxembourg: (Hiez and Sarracino, 2020<sup>[65]</sup>); Portugal: (CASES/Statistics Portugal, 2019<sup>[15]</sup>); Spain: associations and foundations: (Plataforma de ONG de Acción Social, 2020<sup>[112]</sup>), co-operatives: (Secretaria de Estado de Empleo, 2019<sup>[61]</sup>). Not all datasets include the same types of SSE organisations, averages calculated for common types.

<sup>6</sup> In Korea, unemployment and working poverty increased due to the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. *Self-reliance enterprises* emerged out of the Korean National Basic Living Security Programme (NBLSP) to enable low-income households to become self-sufficient by providing them with opportunities to work. Being recognised as a self-reliance enterprise entitles an organisation to public subsidies, including to cover

**Part-time jobs are an important source of employment for women, particularly in light of their disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid labour and childcare responsibilities.** A higher share of women than men across OECD countries are in part-time employment (23% of women and 9% of men part-time employed) (OECD, 2022<sup>[68]</sup>). Women are disproportionately in charge of unpaid care work which calls for flexible working hours (OECD Development Centre, 2014<sup>[69]</sup>; Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014<sup>[26]</sup>). It particularly affects women with children, and their possibility to (re-)enter the labour force depends largely on government spending on early childhood education and care (OECD, 2021<sup>[70]</sup>). Across OECD countries, one-fourth of children up to the age of 5 rely on the informal provision of childcare services. In EU countries, up to one in four low- and middle-income households say they would need more formal childcare but cannot afford it (OECD, 2020<sup>[71]</sup>).

**The SSE often provides more flexible working conditions, such as self-employment or part-time employment.** In France, 35% of SSE employees are part-time employed, compared with 19% of employees in the remaining private sector (ESS France, 2020<sup>[72]</sup>). In Italy, 46% of SSE employees are in part-time employment, compared with 27% in other companies (ISTAT/EURICSE, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>). In Québec (Canada), 23% of SSE employees are part-time employed (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>).

**Many SSE entities also provide additional support services, allowing for a better work-life balance for SSE employees and individuals with care responsibilities beyond the SSE.** For example, in Spain, co-operatives and worker-owned companies (*sociedades laborales*)<sup>7</sup> show higher safety, inclusion, diversity, flexibility, non-discrimination and gender equality as well as reduced glass ceiling effects and higher job stability compared with other types of firms (Calderón and Calderón, 2012<sup>[73]</sup>; Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira, 2020<sup>[31]</sup>). In the United States, worker-owned co-operatives facilitate the labour market entry for women (Box 2). In Brazil and India, co-operatives and women's associations offer childcare services (Ogando and Brito, 2013<sup>[74]</sup>; Clamp and Tapley, 2023<sup>[75]</sup>). In Sweden, around 10% of childcare is provided by co-operatives (Coompanion Sweden) (Caimi, 2023<sup>[76]</sup>). In Québec (Canada), the SSE even operates most of the early childcare centres (see Box 8).

### Box 2. Worker-owned co-operatives to empower minority women (United States)

According to estimates, there are 600 to 800 worker-owned co-operatives in the United States, employing approximately 7 000 people and generating over USD 400 million annual revenues. The majority of worker-owned co-operatives in the United States are small businesses with up to 50 workers, with the exception of a few bigger ones. More than one in two worker co-operative member-owners are reported to be women and almost one in two from a minority ethnic or racial identity. In particular, female Latina business owners may go into self-employment primarily for reasons of greater work-life balance, flexible work arrangements and the inability to find employment, compared with men. The co-operative workplace can accommodate many of these motivations (fairer pay, more flexible working hours, greater work-life balance). In a 2020 study of 180 co-operatives with Latinx membership (i.e. anyone who self-identified as Latinx including all Latinx nationalities, cultures, citizenship statuses, as well as both Latinas and Latinos), Latinx co-operatives in the United States were not limited to one industry,

labour costs. In order to qualify, NBLSP recipients and near-poor individuals must make up at least one-third of its members and NBLSP recipients, at least one-fifth. The organisation must also be able to pay the minimum wage to all participants (Yoon and Lee, 2020<sup>[261]</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> Spanish *sociedades laborales* are a type of firm between conventional firms and worker co-operatives, removing the separation between owners and workers while allowing to raise capital from non-working investors (Croce, Martí and Martín-López, 2014<sup>[260]</sup>). They have been regulated by a stable legal framework since 1997 (Ley 4/1997 de Sociedades Laborales) specifying criteria for companies to qualify, such as at least 51% of shares being owned by working employees and no single shareholder holding more than 33% of the company.

membership type or region but clusters could be found in New York City and within the workers co-operative and credit union sectors.

The largest worker co-operative in the United States is Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), a home care agency based in the Bronx, New York. CHCA was founded in 1985 with the aim to provide quality home care to clients by ensuring quality jobs for direct-care workers. Having started with 12 home health aides, the co-operative now employs more than 2 000 people, most of them women from disadvantaged backgrounds. Together with PHI, a non-profit founded by CHCA in 1992, CHCA maintains an employer-based workforce development programme that provides free training for 600 low-income and unemployed women annually and serves as a significant driver of employment in the Bronx.

A growing number of municipalities, including Boston, New York City and Chicago, run support programmes for disadvantaged groups, including minority, women to create workers co-operatives. In recent years, state (Colorado, California, Washington) legislation has increased funding, financing and supportive policy for worker co-operatives. Support for worker co-operatives was also included in federal pandemic relief and rebuilding legislation.

Sources: (West and Gordon-Nembhard, 2021<sup>[77]</sup>; Stanford Graduate School of Business, 2018<sup>[78]</sup>; CHCA, 2023<sup>[79]</sup>)

**Many SSE workers and leaders are also attracted by the SSE's social missions.** These benefits can include a sense of belonging to entities that have a social purpose (Hansmann, 1980<sup>[80]</sup>; Preston, 1989<sup>[81]</sup>; Rose-Ackerman, 1996<sup>[82]</sup>). Gender stereotypes about the roles that societies have traditionally assigned to women (i.e. women “fit better” in social and care-related activities) and an ascribed higher interest in addressing social challenges (Huysentruyt, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>) can “push” women into SSE employment (Gerlach, 2021<sup>[83]</sup>). At the same time, the search for personal empowerment (from both financial and self-actualisation/well-being perspectives) and often a better work-life balance (through flexible work time arrangements, part-time roles or additional care support) can motivate (or “pull”) women to seek these roles (Empow'Her, 2019<sup>[22]</sup>; Gerlach, 2021<sup>[83]</sup>).

## Social and solidarity economy entities show smaller gender gaps in leadership and pay

**Across the OECD, only about one-third of managers are women** (OECD, 2021<sup>[70]</sup>). Lower shares in leadership affect women's access to decision-making power, their equality in organisations and often their pay.

**Barriers in reaching management positions are also linked to the unavailability of women to work long or particular hours.** These barriers include lower labour force participation, higher probability of interrupting their careers to have children and care for family, and higher likelihood of working part-time (OECD, 2017<sup>[84]</sup>). Less tangible factors also include discrimination (OECD, 2017<sup>[84]</sup>). Unpaid care responsibilities reduce women's flexibility to comply with long working hours required by many higher-paying or management roles (OECD Development Centre, 2014<sup>[69]</sup>; Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014<sup>[26]</sup>; Goldin, 2014<sup>[85]</sup>). Additionally, these hours can be incompatible with schedules of childcare or the possibilities of part-time work (Goldin, 2014<sup>[85]</sup>).

**Women's share of management positions in SSE entities is higher than in the wider economy.** According to the data available, these figures are highest in Hungary (72%), Latvia (70%), Estonia and Sweden (64% each) and lowest in Greece and Spain (33%) (Figure 4). In Türkiye, the share of women among social enterprise managers is 37 percentage points higher than in the wider economy. This higher share may also positively affect productivity. Previous OECD research demonstrates that gender diversity

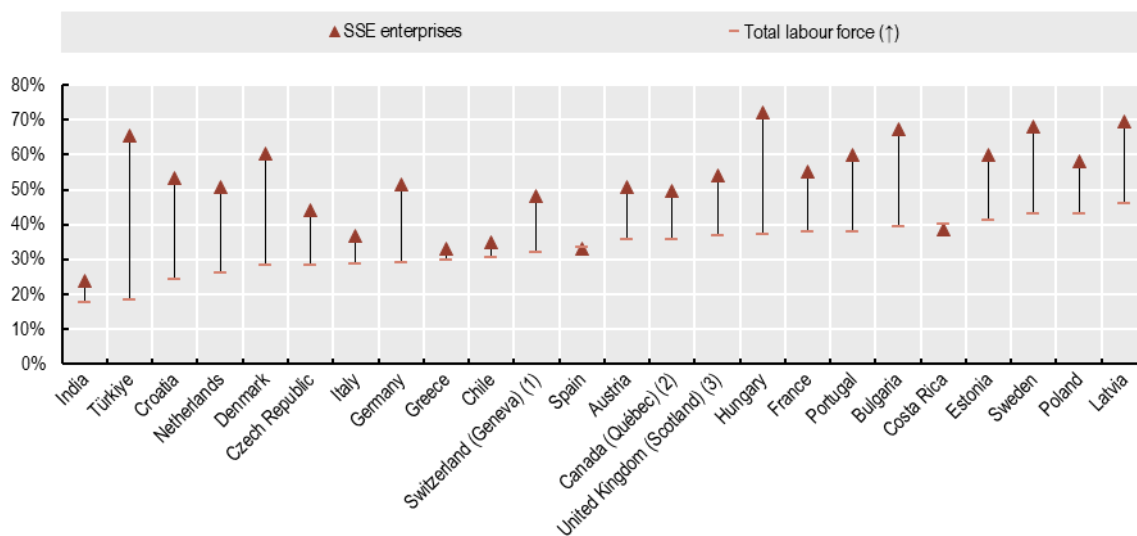
among managers and workers is associated with higher productivity on average across countries for the entire economy (OECD, n.d.<sup>[86]</sup>).

**Leadership gaps vary across and within countries, as well as across different types of SSE entities and sectors.** In Portugal, 78% of managers in Misericordias,<sup>8</sup> 63% in associations, 55% in co-operatives, 38% in mutual societies and 23% in foundations are women (CASES, 2018<sup>[87]</sup>). In French associations, women occupy almost 50% of management position (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019<sup>[88]</sup>). In Québec (Canada), women constitute 65% of managers in SSEs in education, childcare and social care, while they make up 20% of managers in transport and waste management (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>).

**However, women are still under-represented at the highest levels of management.** In French associations, women make up 36% of the presidents, compared with 50% of treasurers and 63% of secretary generals (*secrétaires générales*) (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019<sup>[88]</sup>). In Austrian and German social enterprises, women make around 51% of management teams but only 44% of the boards (Hoffmann, Scharpe and Wunsch, 2021<sup>[89]</sup>; Vandor et al., 2022<sup>[90]</sup>). In Canada, women make up more than three-quarters of the non-profit sector's workforce (Statistics Canada, 2021<sup>[91]</sup>). However, men are overrepresented in leadership roles relative to their participation in the sector's workforce (Imagine Canada, 2022<sup>[92]</sup>).

#### Figure 4. Women typically represent a larger share of managers in SSE enterprises than in the wider economy

Share of management positions held by women, % (2022 or most recently available)



(1) SSE enterprises: data for Geneva. (2) SSE enterprises: data for Québec. (3) SSE enterprises: Data for Scotland (United Kingdom).

Notes: Women's share of management positions. SSE enterprise data collated from a variety of sources with high diversity in sample sizes including surveys with relatively small convenience samples. Ascending order based on women as share of management positions in SSE entities. Except for Costa Rica (co-operatives), the share of women in management positions in SSE entities is equal to or higher than in the total labour force. On Dupain et al. (2022<sup>[37]</sup>) and British Council/Social Enterprise UK (2022<sup>[56]</sup>): country-level samples are relatively small. Data depicted here stem from special tabulations provided to the OECD by Euclid Network and British Council.

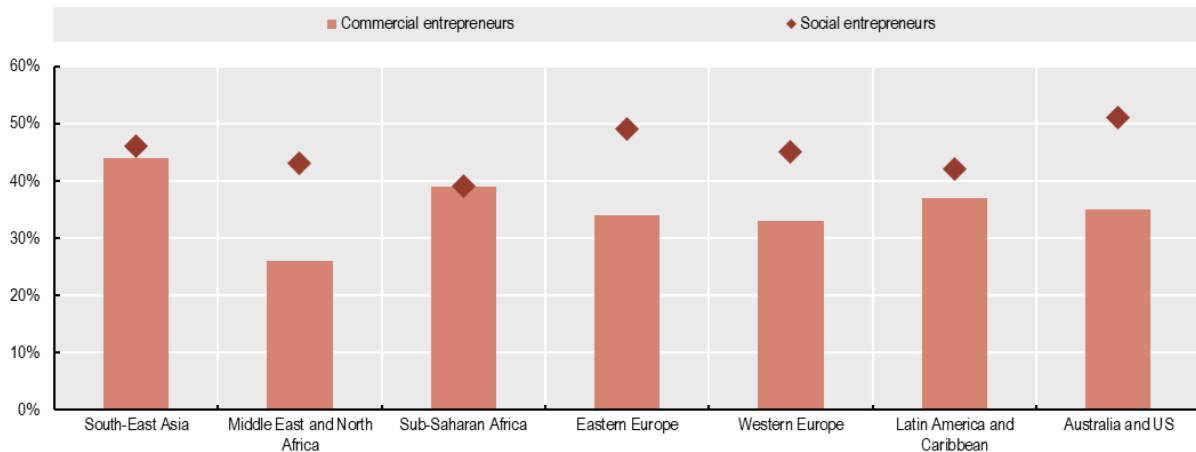
<sup>8</sup> Las Santas Casas de Misericórdias (the Holy Houses of Mercy) are institutions of social care of Portuguese origin that emerged at the end of the 15th century for the development of the so-called actions of Christian mercy, guided by a deep religious feeling (Ruano et al., 2020<sup>[262]</sup>).

Sources: Total labour force: OECD and key partners: (OECD.Stat, 2022<sup>[93]</sup>) 2021 or most recently available; other countries: (World Bank/ILOSTAT, 2021<sup>[94]</sup>) 2019 or most recently available. SSE entities: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Türkiye: Dupain et al (2022<sup>[37]</sup>); Canada (Québec): Institut de la Statistique du Québec (2016<sup>[33]</sup>); Costa Rica: INFOCO-OP/Estado de la Nación (2012<sup>[64]</sup>) [co-operatives]; Chile: Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo (2021<sup>[95]</sup>) [co-operatives]; France: ESS France (2020<sup>[72]</sup>) [social economy as a whole]; India: British Council/Social Enterprise UK (2022<sup>[56]</sup>); Spain: Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira (2020<sup>[31]</sup>) [social economy as a whole]; Switzerland (Geneva): Après-GE (2015<sup>[62]</sup>); United Kingdom (Scotland): CEIS (2019<sup>[96]</sup>).

**A higher share of women are also founders of SSE entities.** While they constitute up to 44% of commercial entrepreneurs, they represent up to 51% of social entrepreneurs in different regions of the world (Figure 5). The higher share of women among social entrepreneurs is often attributed to their preference for pursuing a social mission over maximising profit (Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>; Empow'Her, 2019<sup>[22]</sup>; Gerlach, 2021<sup>[83]</sup>). Active social entrepreneurs constitute on average 3.7% of the adult population in the 58 countries participating in the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) on social entrepreneurship (Bosma et al., 2015<sup>[98]</sup>). Among these, women account for a higher share across regions, apart from sub-Saharan Africa where the share of women among social and commercial entrepreneurship is equal (39%). In comparison in the overall economy, women are 30% less likely than men to start or manage new businesses or to be self-employed. Across OECD countries, only 9% of women are starting and managing new commercial businesses compared with 13% of men (OECD/European Commission, 2021<sup>[17]</sup>). In Greece, social enterprises have also been found to be a promising path for women into (self-)employment (Argyrou and Charitakis, 2017<sup>[99]</sup>).

**Figure 5. Women represent a larger share of social entrepreneurs than of commercial entrepreneurs in most regions of the world**

Percentage share of women within group, % (2015)



Note: Women as share of operational social and commercial entrepreneurs. In 2015, the GEM surveyed 167 793 adults in 58 economies on their entrepreneurship activity. Social entrepreneurs are defined as individuals who are currently leading any kind of activity, organisation or initiative that has a particularly social, environmental or community objective. For more details on the methodology, see source.

Source: Bosma et al. (2015<sup>[98]</sup>)

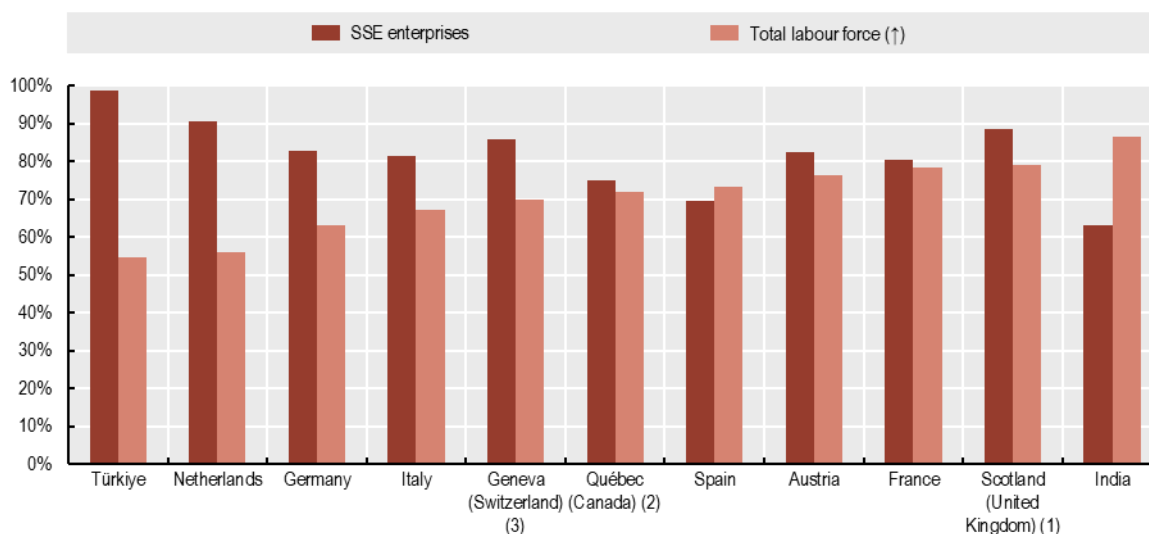
**The age and governance structure of SSE entities may have an effect on women's access to leadership roles.** Studies have found that in longer-existing non-profit entities, e.g. philanthropic foundations or associations, women are less represented in leadership than their male counterparts (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019<sup>[88]</sup>; Zimmer, Priller and Paul, 2017<sup>[100]</sup>). While they make up the vast majority of the labour force across types of SSE entities, in associations this does not seem to trickle up to leadership positions, where they constitute a relatively smaller share.

**Leadership of women in SSE entities is increasing.** In Italy, the number of women in the leadership of co-operatives increased by 9% between 2013 and 2018 (Ronchi, 2021<sup>[21]</sup>). In French associations, the share of women in different management positions increased from 39% in 2005 to almost 50% in 2017 (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019<sup>[88]</sup>).

**The higher share of women among the founders and leaders of SSE entities influences outcomes, as well as career prospects for women.** Women-led social enterprises have been reported to pursue more sustainable ways of doing business: their companies are more long-term oriented; smaller, locally embedded; innovative; and resource-efficient (Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>; Empow'Her, 2019<sup>[22]</sup>; Huysentruyt, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>). In social enterprises globally, women have been found to experience better opportunities for promotion to decision-making positions (British Council, 2017<sup>[101]</sup>). When looking at the ratio of women's share in management position and women's share of the labour force (i.e. how likely it is for women to become managers taking into account their share in the total labour force) assuming the ideal ratio would be 100%, this ratio is higher in the social economy in most countries, according to available data (Figure 6). For example, in France, the women as a share of managers divided by women as a share of the labour force is 81% in social economy enterprises, while it is 78% in the total labour force.

### Figure 6. Glass ceiling effects for women appear lower in SSE enterprises in most countries

Difference in representation of women in management vs. women in labour force, % (2022 or most recently available)



(1) SSE enterprises: Data for Québec. (2) SSE enterprises: data for Geneva. (3) SSE enterprises: data for Scotland.

Notes: The effect has been calculated as the percentage share in management positions divided by the share of labour force for each category. Ascending order by size of "glass ceiling" effect in SSE enterprises.

Sources: See sources of Figure 3 and Figure 4.



**While salaries are overall lower in the SSE than in the wider economy, in some countries, gender pay gaps in the SSE are estimated to be lower.** In France, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States,<sup>9</sup> gender pay gaps have been reported lower in the SSE (Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira, 2020<sub>[31]</sub>; Santero-Sánchez and Castro, 2016<sub>[102]</sub>; Leete, 2000<sub>[103]</sub>; Teasdale et al., 2011<sub>[104]</sub>; ESS France, 2020<sub>[72]</sub>). In France, it is estimated at 22% across jobs in the SSE (compared with 25% in the wider economy) and 15% for full-time equivalent jobs, compared with 18% in the wider economy (ESS France, 2020<sub>[72]</sub>). In Spain, this gap was reported to be 8 percentage points lower (26.4% lower wages in the SSE, compared with 34.4% in the private sector) (Santero-Sánchez and Castro, 2016<sub>[102]</sub>). In the United Kingdom, women earned 16% less than men in the third sector compared with 33% in the private sector (Teasdale et al., 2011<sub>[104]</sub>). In the United States, wage inequality in non-profit organisations has repeatedly been reported lower than in the wider economy (Leete, 2000<sub>[103]</sub>; Ben-Ner, Ren and Paulson, 2011<sub>[105]</sub>).

**A number of factors may contribute to these smaller pay gaps, such as less pervasive gender discrimination in the SSE than in the wider economy.** Gender discrimination effects on pay have been reported to be lower in the SSE than in the wider economy in France (Etienne and Narcy, 2010<sub>[106]</sub>) and in Spain (Santero-Sánchez and Castro, 2016<sub>[102]</sub>; Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira, 2020<sub>[31]</sub>). In Spain, the effect of direct gender discrimination on this wage gap was estimated at 15.3% in the SSE and 29.1% in the wider economy (Santero-Sánchez and Castro, 2016<sub>[102]</sub>).

**SSE operational structures may also lessen the impact of in-firm differences in pay – which account for about three-quarters of the gender wage gap in the wider economy** (OECD, 2022<sub>[3]</sub>). For example, in French non-profits, lower wage gaps have been attributed to lower levels of occupational segregation (i.e. vertical segregation through flatter hierarchies) (Etienne and Narcy, 2010<sub>[106]</sub>). In the wider economy, at the same skills level, in-firm wage gaps mainly reflect differences in tasks and responsibility, i.e. women more often hold operational tasks rather than management tasks. Principles of democratic control in SSE entities typically translate into increased transparency on salaries. Furthermore, the widely applied principles of equality and flatter hierarchical structures also affect these trends. In SSE entities in the Geneva region (Switzerland), for example, differences in salary within the SSE were measured as relatively low, with the highest salary within the same structure being only 1.7 times the lowest salary (Après-GE, 2015<sub>[62]</sub>). In some cases, this can also be linked to explicit salary policies inscribing a more equal treatment within organisations that can be applicable to specific legal forms or statuses in the SSE. In France, the *Entreprise solidaire d'utilité sociale* (ESUS) label, giving specific tax benefits to SSE entities, includes a limitation of the annual salary of the five highest-paid employees at seven times the French minimum wage (economie.gouv.fr, 2022<sub>[107]</sub>).

**Lower gaps may also be due in part to lower pay in the SSE more generally.** This may be partially linked to the lower availability of funds within the SSE, the notion that work in the SSE should not be performed to seek personal enrichment, and the sector of activity of SSE enterprises.

**The SSE can be a role model in proposing alternative approaches to the reconciliation of work, unpaid care and better work-life balance for employees.** Beyond the amounts of hours worked (i.e. they can be covered in part-time contracts) occupational segregation is also linked to the hours being worked at specific times (e.g. participation in meetings in the early morning or late in the evening, continuous working hours during the day). Individuals, in many cases men, who can often work longer specific hours

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<sup>9</sup> Definitions for the SSE differ across countries, and past analyses have applied varying lenses to country-level data. In this case, figures for France and the United States refer to the non-profit sector and for the United Kingdom to the third sector. While the SSE, the non-profit sector and the third sector largely overlap, there are definitional nuances that can be applied. The non-profit sector encompasses privately and state-run entities with strict non-distribution constraints on their profits, some of which do not (solely) promote a social objective. It therefore excludes co-operatives, mutuals and social enterprises. The third sector, developed as a contrast to the public and private sector, is broader and also encompasses voluntary organisations and organisations with market activity (Hulgård, 2014<sub>[263]</sub>).

often benefit from an additional value placed on those hours, in particular for management positions (Goldin, 2014<sub>[85]</sub>). As sharing roles between multiple part-time individuals increases the transaction costs of relaying information, many firms still steer away from offering more flexible schedules (Goldin, 2014<sub>[85]</sub>). The SSE could be a role model for the wider economy in these cases as it pioneers alternative models of structuring and remunerating workers and allocating such management roles collaboratively among multiple people.

**Finally, these factors can also translate into higher employment stability in some cases.** Unemployment episodes have been found shorter for women in the SSE in Spain than in the wider economy, and employment episodes longer (Castro, Santero-Sánchez and Bandeira, 2020<sub>[31]</sub>).

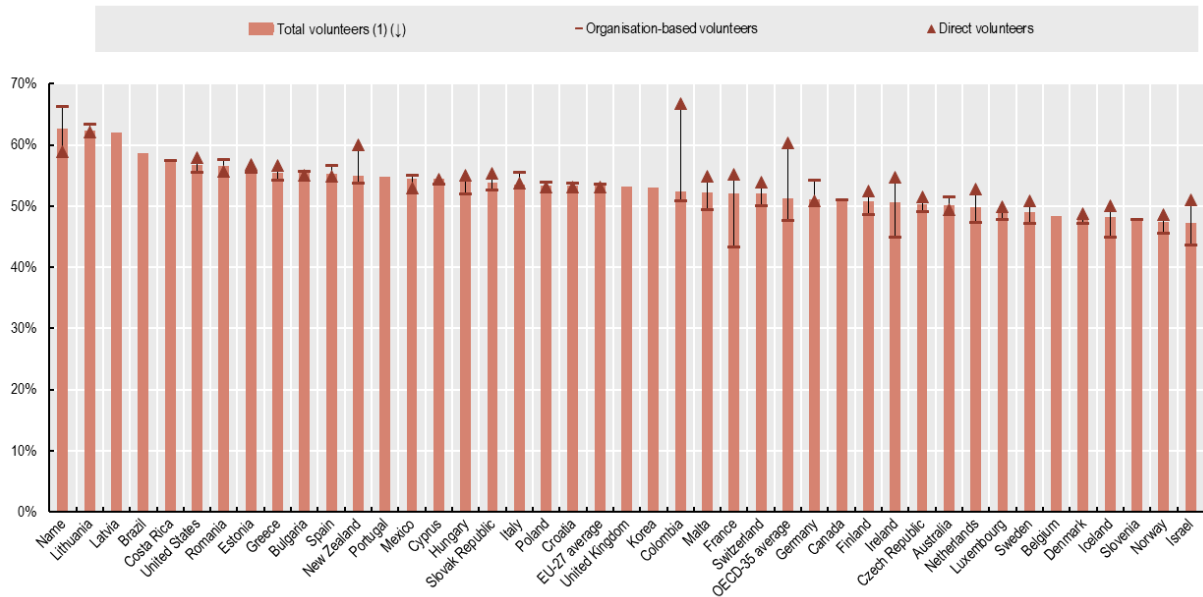
### **Women constitute a high share of social and solidarity economy volunteers**

**Volunteering, in particular in SSE entities, can contribute to societal well-being and provides opportunities to acquire skills and to (re-)enter the labour force, especially for youth and women** (UN Volunteers, 2018<sub>[108]</sub>). In many countries, more than 40% of the adult population volunteers, either formally with organisations or informally, i.e. directly in their communities and not involving specific organisations (ILOSTAT, 2022<sub>[109]</sub>). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates more than 144.3 million volunteers in EU countries (ILOSTAT, 2022<sub>[109]</sub>). Brazil counts 6.9 million volunteers, Canada 24.5 million, Mexico 1.1 million, Korea 7.4 million and the United States 77.9 million (ILOSTAT, 2022<sub>[109]</sub>). The Indian Ministry for Statistics and Programme Implementation estimates 14 million formal volunteers in industries and households (MOPSI, 2012<sub>[110]</sub>). Skills acquisition is more likely in organisation-based volunteering (UN Volunteers, 2018<sub>[108]</sub>). However, engagement in formal volunteering opportunities is less common for women, in particular in low- and medium-income contexts (UN Volunteers, 2018<sub>[108]</sub>).

**Across many countries, the majority of volunteers are women.** Globally, women take on the majority of volunteer work (57%), in particular as direct volunteers (59% of all direct volunteers are women) (UN Volunteers, 2018<sub>[108]</sub>). (Figure 7). In EU countries, women constitute a slightly higher share of organisation-based volunteers (54%) than direct volunteers (53%) (ILOSTAT, 2022<sub>[109]</sub>).

### Figure 7. Women constitute a high share of volunteers across countries

Share of volunteers that are women by volunteering mode, % (2020 or most recently available)



(1) In original dataset totals available for: Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Hungary, Israel, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland. Total calculated as organisation-based plus direct volunteers for remaining countries.

Notes: Volunteers who are women as share of all volunteers per category. There may be overlaps as respondents can be volunteering in organisations and directly. Data from different national surveys. No data for Chile, Japan, Türkiye and India.

Source: Authors' calculations based on (ILOSTAT, 2022<sup>[109]</sup>) 2020 or most recently available. Data for all available OECD and Global Action countries.

**In many countries, the SSE is composed of more than 50% of volunteers.** A study of the third sector in Europe estimated that 55% (or 16 million full-time equivalent employees) of the workforce in the third sector in Europe are volunteers (Enjolras et al., 2018<sup>[111]</sup>). In Spain, the SSE is estimated to engage 1.1 million volunteers (part-time and full-time), on average 49% of people “working” for SSE organisations (Plataforma de ONG de Acción Social, 2020<sup>[112]</sup>). Data from the province of Québec (Canada) finds that 55% of “workers” in the SSE are volunteers (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). In some reports, the numbers of volunteers associated with the SSE are even higher. The SSE Chamber of the canton of Geneva (Switzerland) estimates 5 000 employees and 12 000 volunteers (Après-GE, 2015<sup>[62]</sup>). In Italy, the SSE counts 1.5 million employees and 5.5 million volunteers (including both full-time and part-time volunteers), 5 million of them in associations (ISTAT/EURICSE, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>). Different types of SSE entities typically have very different labour force structures. Associations and foundations traditionally rely on a higher number of volunteers compared with full-time equivalent employees, while co-operatives and social enterprises traditionally rather rely on paid employees. In Italy, more than 90% of all volunteers are activated by SSE entities (ISTAT/EURICSE, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>)

**Women also constitute the majority of volunteers in the SSE in many countries.** For example, in SSE organisations, women constitute 62% of volunteers in Spain (Plataforma de ONG de Acción Social, 2020<sup>[112]</sup>) and 69% in Québec (Canada) (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). In French associations, the overall picture is less conclusive, with 69% of men among volunteers in the sports sector and 68% women among volunteers in education and 63% in health (Prouteau, 2018<sup>[113]</sup>).

## Women are among the priority target beneficiaries of social and solidarity economy entities

**SSE entities often address “women’s issues” and other gender-related concerns.** Many SSE entities address issues linked to women and gender equality or adjacent topics such as women’s health, gender violence and discrimination, in part given the representation from affected groups in their governance (UNTFSSSE, 2014<sup>[16]</sup>; Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>; Dupain et al., 2021<sup>[114]</sup>). In particular, the question of how female health affects women’s education, entry into the labour force and career development remains underexplored, although it is recognised that health is a critical labour market determinant (OECD, 2022<sup>[115]</sup>) and that women and men have different healthcare needs (UN Women, 2022<sup>[116]</sup>). SSE entities are particularly active in these areas and can help improve women’s labour market outcomes through the provision of essential services such as menstrual hygiene products or the provision of health services in rural areas but also the provision of tailored education and training and employment support services for girls and women (OECD, 2023<sup>[117]</sup>).

For example, disadvantaged women are the third-most-important target group of Australian social enterprises (27.5%), after people with disabilities and young people (Centre for Social Impact/Social Traders, 2016<sup>[44]</sup>). In Canada, women constitute the fourth-most-cited population group served by social enterprises (37%) (Elson, Hall and Wamucii, 2016<sup>[43]</sup>). In a European study, 88% of women social entrepreneurs feel that they are contributing to gender equality with their social entrepreneurship activity (Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>). This contribution is especially important in developing countries where SSE entities improve women’s opportunities to generate income, access land management (related to farming decisions and land property), change the division of work by gender and gain awareness of their value as members of a productive community, as in the case of Brazil (Hillenkamp and Dos Santos, 2019<sup>[118]</sup>; Machado, 2019<sup>[119]</sup>) or India (Pineda, 2019<sup>[120]</sup>).

## 2 It is not all rosy

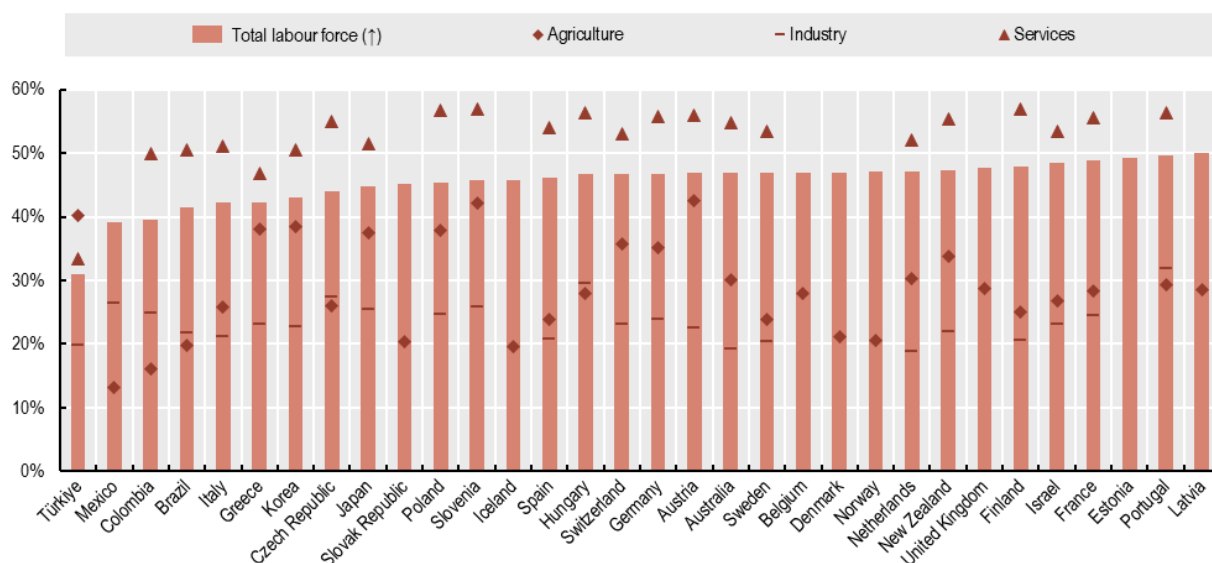
### Women in the social and solidarity economy remain specialised in pink-collar jobs

**The large mobilisation of women through the SSE is often in pink-collar jobs.** Women experience higher levels of occupational segregation than men and are restricted in the jobs they “choose” to go into by a variety of factors, including educational background and gendered socialisation (OECD, 2017<sup>[84]</sup>). Across countries, women are most concentrated in the services sector (Box 15). The sectors and roles women are most dominant in often offer lower pay and are not as visible to society. In turn, these are less attractive to men, and may also limit mobilisation to increase pay and visibility. This segregation of women into social occupations can therefore mutually reinforce the invisibilisation of women’s work and the possible stagnation or worsening of working conditions.

**The SSE’s specialisation in social sectors parallels the general specialisation of women in pink-collar jobs.** The biggest shares of the services sector across countries are represented by employees in the economic activities of wholesale and retail trade, health and social work, and education, areas where women are typically over-represented (OECD, 2022<sup>[121]</sup>). While there is more variation within wholesale and trade, women typically constitute more than 75% of employees in health and social work and more than 70% in education (Figure 8 and Figure 9). Across economic activities, women employees and self-employed women are most frequently in occupations such as services and sales workers or professionals (OECD/European Commission, 2021<sup>[17]</sup>).

**Figure 8. Across countries, women are often more concentrated within the services sector**

Women's share of total labour force by sector, % (2021 or most recently available)

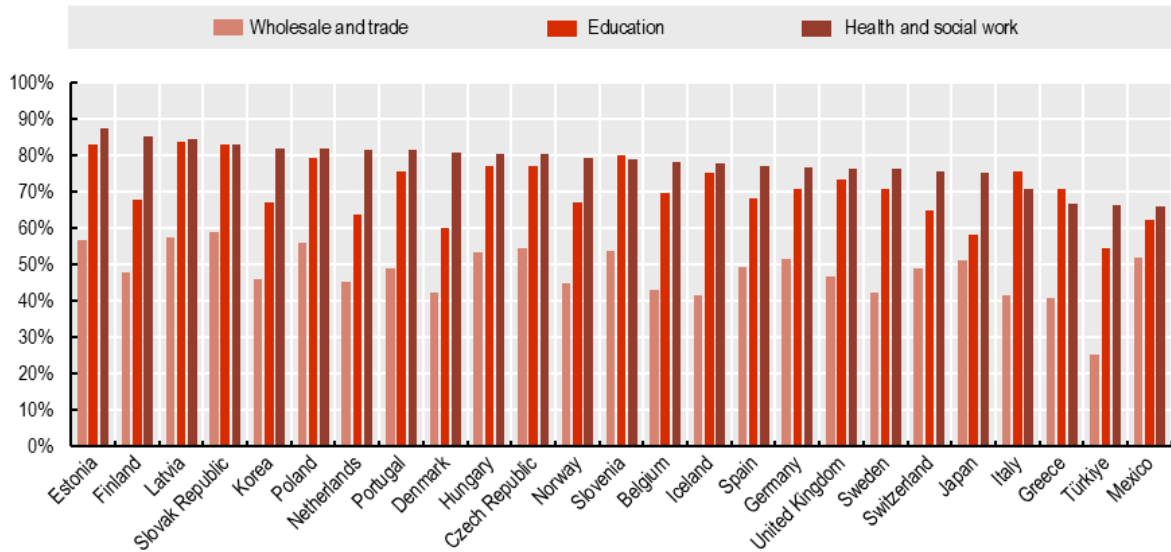


Notes: Agriculture: employment in agriculture, hunting and forestry (ISIC rev4, A). Industry: employment in industry (ISIC rev4, B-F), including mining and quarrying (B), manufacturing (C), electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply (D), water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E), and construction (F). Services: employment in services (ISIC rev.4, G-U), including wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), transportation and storage (H), accommodation and food service activities (I), information and communication (J), financial and insurance activities (K), real estate activities (L), professional, scientific and technical activities (M), administrative and support service activities (N), public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O), education (P), human health and social work activities (Q), arts, entertainment and recreation (R), other service activities (S), activities of households as employers undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use (T), activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U). Median: total labour force: 47%, agriculture: 28%, industry: 23%, services: 54%.

Source: OECD (2022<sub>[121]</sub>), 2021 or earliest available. For Australia, data is from 2018. For Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Türkiye and United Kingdom and Russia, data is for 2020.

**Figure 9. Share of women among employees in wholesale, education, and health and social work**

Women’s share of total labour force by economic activity, % (2021 or most recently available)

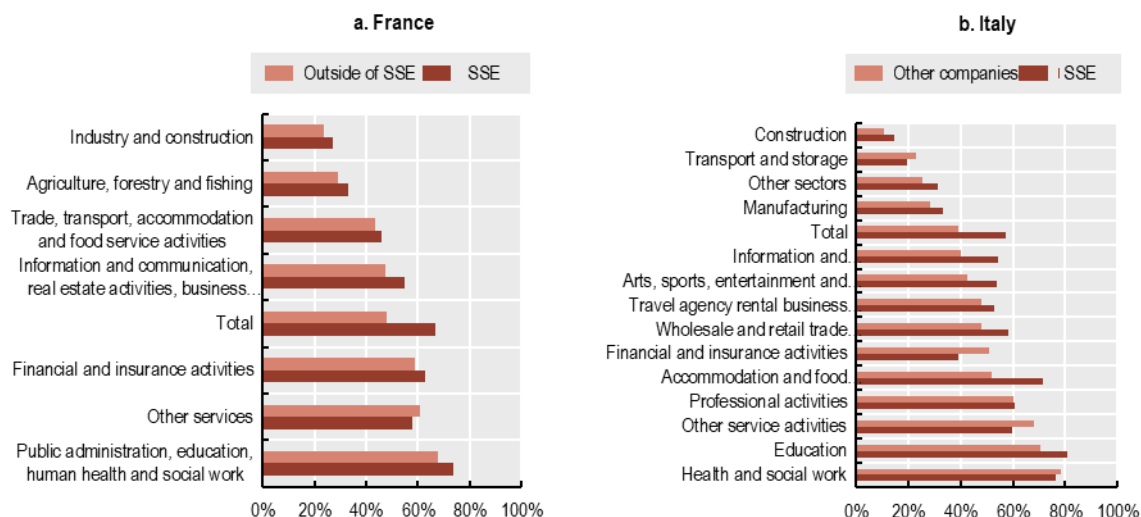


Notes: Wholesale and trade: wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G); Education: education (P); Health and social work: human health and social work activities (Q). Median: wholesale and trade: 49%, education: 71%, health and social work: 79%. Source: See Figure 8.

**Across most sectors, women have a greater representation in the SSE relative to those same sectors in the wider economy.** The sectoral concentration of the SSE and women within it vary by country due to local conditions. In France and Italy, for example, women are more prevalent in the SSE across most sectors than in the wider economy in the same sectors (Figure 10). Further data and analysis are needed to fully understand the differences in female labour force participation in the SSE versus the wider economy by sector. Also, women-led social enterprises in many European countries operate mainly in human health and social work sectors (Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>).

**Figure 10. In France and Italy, women constitute a higher share of the labour force across most sectors**

Women as share of the labour force by category, %



Notes: Sector aggregations and categories differ for France and Italy.

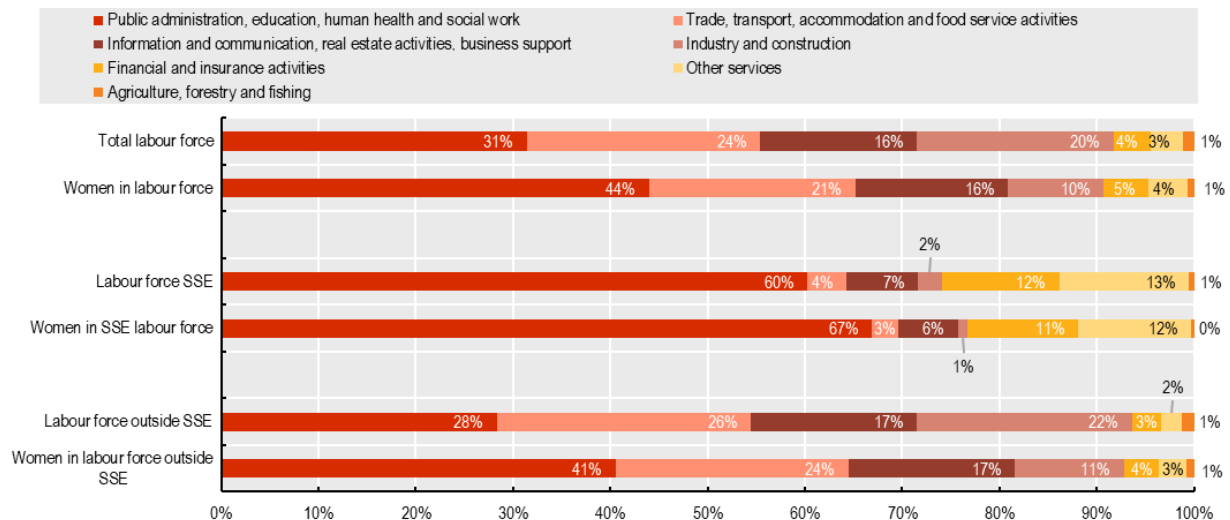
Source: France: INSEE/Flores (2021<sup>[34]</sup>); Italy: ISTAT/EURICSE (2021<sup>[36]</sup>).

**Within the SSE, women are largely concentrated in the same sectors and occupations they hold in the total labour force.** The SSE in France is more concentrated in female-dominated sectors, such as public administration, education, health and social work. In this specific sector, concentration is particularly visible as 31% of the total labour force can be found in it, 44% of women in the labour force but 60% of the SSE labour force and 67% of women in the SSE labour force. The gap between the total SSE labour force and women's SSE labour force is smaller than in the total labour force or the labour force outside of the SSE (Figure 11). Similar observations can be made for Québec (Canada), Belgium, Italy and Spain.



**Figure 11. Distribution of total, female and SSE labour force across sectors (France)**

Share of total labour force by sector, % (2018)

Source: INSEE/Flores (2021<sup>[34]</sup>)

**Women’s specialisation into specific sectors and occupations within the SSE also converges towards feminised sectors.** In France, the share of women by occupation in the SSE is highest in personal and household services (*aides à domicile, aides ménagères, travailleuses familiales*) at almost 96% (ESS France, 2020<sup>[72]</sup>). In Italy, these figures are highest in education (81% of the labour force are women) as well as health and social work (76%). In the province of Québec (Canada), the leading sector is education, childcare and social services (*Enseignement, services de garde et assistance sociale*) with a share of 84% women. In Switzerland, women are the vast majority of workers in associations in the healthcare sector (around 80%), the social sector (around 70%) and environmental and nature protection (more than 60%) (Helmig, Lichtsteiner and Gmür, 2009<sup>[122]</sup>).

### Working conditions in the social and solidarity economy show room for improvement, in particular for women

**The high reliance of the SSE on unpaid (volunteering) or low-paid labour carries a risk of perpetuating non-compensation or low compensation as the standard for the provision of essential services that a majority female labour force is providing.** In the province of Québec (Canada), 49% of SSE entities rely at least to some extent on volunteers and some organisations are solely run by volunteers (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). Around 59% of these volunteers are women (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). The share of SSE organisations with volunteers is highest in arts, culture and media (65%) and leisure and tourism (60%) (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2016<sup>[33]</sup>). Among associations in France, 46% of volunteers can be found in sports, culture and leisure activities (ESS France, 2022<sup>[123]</sup>). Combined with low and irregular funding through public and private service contracts, the SSE is sometimes less able to pay (full-time) salaries. However, when this translates into a disproportionate number of unpaid, part-time, temporary or lower-paid contracts from the norm, it disproportionately affects the high number of women present in the SSE.

**Pay in the SSE is often lower than in the wider economy, in part due to sectoral composition and also due to the nature of the SSE approach.** In France and Spain, salaries in the SSE have been reported to be on average 19% lower than those outside of the SSE (ESS France, 2022<sup>[123]</sup>; CEPES/Abay Analystas, 2019<sup>[124]</sup>). It is often argued that employment in the SSE brings a social value/recognition that compensates for the relatively low remuneration (Preston, 1989<sup>[81]</sup>; Rose-Ackerman, 1996<sup>[82]</sup>) and that the logics and values of the SSE may even go against what could be thought of as profitable modes of operation (Guérin, Hillenkamp and Verschuur, 2021<sup>[125]</sup>). There can be legal requirements capping profits and redistribution, and sometimes it is even seen as shameful when SSE entities strive to pursue profit or break-even and this pressure is transferred onto employees.

**While more flexible and part-time employment may sometimes be desirable for better work-life balance, there are also downsides.** While women more often voluntarily work part-time than men, women also are more likely to work part-time involuntarily (i.e. because they cannot find full-time work after career breaks, due to lower levels of educational attainment) (Pech, Klainot-Hess and Norris, 2020<sup>[126]</sup>). Involuntary part-time work leaves workers economically vulnerable as they earn lower wages and have lower job security. The SSE's high reliance on part-time work more often affects women. An unequal distribution of part-time work can prevent men and women from having equal opportunities to contribute at home and at work (OECD, 2019<sup>[127]</sup>). Self-employment also comes with job-security concerns, limited possibilities for career advancement and often limited access to benefits, including retirement savings and paid time off.

**Temporary employment further decreases job security and access to leadership positions.** From prior studies on the wider economy, it is clear that a large share of temporary employees, in particular women, are in this role involuntarily. In most OECD countries, women more frequently hold a temporary or fixed-term job contract than men. On average, 13% of women across OECD countries hold temporary contracts compared with 11% of men (OECD, 2021<sup>[128]</sup>). Across EU countries, more than 50% of employees work on temporary contracts because they cannot find a permanent job (Weber et al., 2020<sup>[129]</sup>). The share of women involuntarily working on temporary contracts is again higher than that of men (Eurofund, 2021<sup>[130]</sup>).

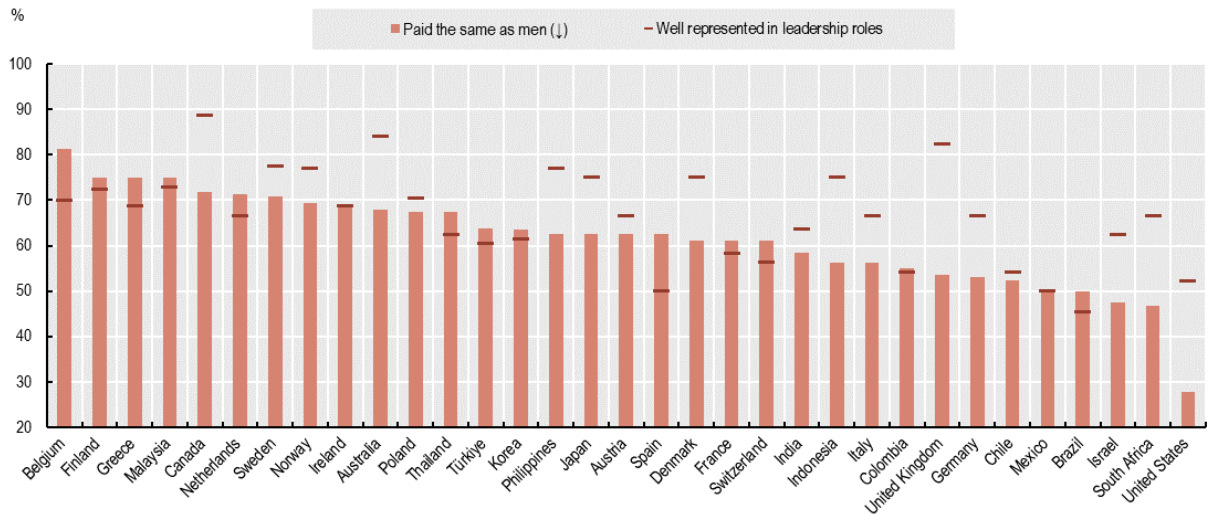
**Temporary employment is more common in the SSE, and women hold a slightly larger share of temporary or fixed-term contracts within the SSE.** In Spain, for example, CEPES estimates around 71% of women and 72% of men to be in permanent contracts in the SSE, compared with 73% and 74% in the wider economy control groups (CEPES/Abay Analystas, 2019<sup>[124]</sup>). The difference between the wider economy and the SSE appears slightly larger in France and Italy (ESS France, 2020<sup>[72]</sup>; ISTAT/EURICSE, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>). In France, temporary employment also affects women to a much larger share than men as 75% of temporary employees in the SSE are women (ESS France, 2020<sup>[72]</sup>).

**Part-time work and temporary contracts affect women's overall job security and well-being as well as render them more vulnerable in times of crises.** Part-time and temporary employment affect women's career prospects, their salaries and their retirement prospects (OECD, 2021<sup>[131]</sup>). They are also more vulnerable to external shocks and economic downturn than full-time and permanent employment. The tendency for more part-time or short-term employment can further be influenced by entities' reliance on government contracts and public tendering procedures (OECD, 2013<sup>[132]</sup>).

**It also seems that the perception of achieving equality in the SSE is higher than the evidence actually suggests.** Apart from Brazil, Mexico and the United States, more than 50% of respondents in a 2019 Thompson Reuters Survey on social enterprises agree that women are paid as well as men (Figure 12). Agreement that women were well-represented in leadership roles in the SSE was in the majority of countries higher than 50%, with the exception of Brazil (45.5%). Some of this may be attributed to the high share of women in the SSE in many countries and the advancements made in leadership and pay equality.

**Figure 12. Perception of women in social entrepreneurship (pay and leadership)**

Share of respondents that agree, % (2019)



Notes: Selection of 27 relevant countries, out of 43 surveyed. In descending order on agreement to “Paid the same as men”. Paid the same as men: Women leading social enterprises are paid the same as men; Well represented in leadership: Women are well represented in leadership roles in social enterprises.

Source: Thompson Reuters Foundation (2019<sub>[133]</sub>)

## Persisting gender stereotypes can prevent women in the social and solidarity economy from accessing more leadership, skills and finance

Participation in STEM: **Women’s careers are still often steered into feminised jobs due to societal norms affecting educational pathways and career choice.** The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found that 15-year-olds’ career expectations vary by gender with a significantly larger share of young women seeking to become health professionals while young men are more likely to expect to become science and engineering professionals or information and communications technology (ICT) professionals (OECD, 2019<sub>[134]</sub>). This also translates into women’s choices of higher education programmes, where only 31% of entrants into undergraduate programmes in STEM are women (OECD, 2022<sub>[135]</sub>). Consequently, adult women have often been reported to have higher skills gaps in STEM subjects. According to the OECD’s Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), men outperform women in mathematics across countries, and gaps are highest in Chile, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Türkiye, (OECD, 2016<sub>[136]</sub>). These effects are even stronger for older men and women but the gap has been decreasing over past years. Throughout the past decades numerous initiatives have been launched to improve the integration of women into STEM careers but progress remains slow (Koch, Polnick and Irby, 2014<sub>[137]</sub>). With an increasing need to grow the workforce of the green and digital sectors, the need to improve women’s participation is becoming increasingly pressing. Today, only 28% of green jobs are held by women (compared with 51% of non-green jobs) (OECD, 2023<sub>[42]</sub>).

Digital skills: **The SSE reports important skills gaps on digital skills, an area where women are particularly lagging across countries.** Digital skills are more and more relevant including in the social economy, where digital skills gaps have been reported as severe. In Italy, digital skills have been identified as one of the most important hurdles for the productivity of co-operatives (OECD, 2021<sub>[138]</sub>). In particular during the COVID-19 crisis, the lack of digital skills in the SSE became an important hurdle to maintain

business activity (Cooperatives Europe, 2020<sup>[139]</sup>; Social Economy Europe, 2020<sup>[140]</sup>). Women also often score badly on digital skills (OECD, 2019<sup>[141]</sup>) and their general usage of digital tools and platforms remains lower than that of men in many OECD countries (OECD, 2023<sup>[142]</sup>).

**Enterprise creation: Female enterprise creation is also steered primarily into feminised fields that can have lower growth prospects.** Self-employed women are more likely to work in personal and household services and work on average three hours less per week than their male counterparts (OECD/European Commission, 2021<sup>[17]</sup>). Only few operate in technology-heavy sectors (OECD, 2021<sup>[143]</sup>). Women-led businesses less frequently employ others, and have smaller growth ambitions and growth-oriented business strategies (e.g. export) (OECD/European Commission, 2019<sup>[144]</sup>; OECD/European Commission, 2021<sup>[17]</sup>). This coincides with perceptions of women's entrepreneurship. Women and femininity are considered best for micro-enterprises, limited-scale, slow-growth and socially-oriented ventures, while rapid growth, scalability, high regard and well-resourced firms remain the male domain (Muntean and Ozkazank-Pan, 2016<sup>[145]</sup>). Social entrepreneurship may therefore "involuntarily ghettoise" women entrepreneurs to lower status, lower pay, in smaller organisations with slow growth in feminised and undervalued sectors (Muntean and Ozkazank-Pan, 2016<sup>[145]</sup>; Teasdale et al., 2011<sup>[104]</sup>). Women's direction and self-selection into these may be reinforced by removing barriers to social entrepreneurship for women (Gerlach, 2021<sup>[83]</sup>).

**Access to finance: Women-led SSE entities are also struggling to access finance** (FEMM, 2015<sup>[146]</sup>). They experience a double (or sometimes even triple) bind due to their founders'/owners' gender and the fact that social enterprises are still not very common (OECD, 2022<sup>[38]</sup>). Women entrepreneurs face greater barriers to access in funding, largely due to structural issues in institutions and markets on the supply and demand side (e.g. lower financial literacy levels, lower opportunity recognition, fewer women funders) (OECD/EU, 2022<sup>[147]</sup>). Women-led businesses also receive significantly less funding than men-led businesses. In 2020, women received only 2% of venture capital funding, a share that had dropped since 2018 (Teare, 2020<sup>[148]</sup>). At the same time, research suggests, that women are more likely to obtain funding when they emphasise their social mission (Lee and Huang, 2018<sup>[149]</sup>). Female entrepreneurs who have been funded by female venture capital face difficulties obtaining future funds due to a stigma of incompetence associated with women seed funders (Snellman and Solal, 2022<sup>[150]</sup>). This can harm ongoing activities of gender lens impact investing and female angel investors. Both the public and private sectors can play an important role in helping women overcome these obstacles, including through addressing bias in the entrepreneurship framework conditions as well as diversifying approaches to increase access to finance (OECD, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>; OECD, 2021<sup>[143]</sup>). For example, fintech, including crowdfunding platforms, can be leveraged for closing gender gaps in finance, as research to date suggests that women entrepreneurs are more successful than men in many of these alternative markets (OECD/EU, 2022<sup>[147]</sup>).

**Parity and working conditions: Some initiatives have been conducted to combat a fragmentation of SSE labour markets into "men's" and "women's" roles but they are not always successful.** Initiatives encompassing the economy more broadly, such as Brazil's Bolsa Familia, Mexico's Prospera programme, and India's basic income pilot are working to tackle structural inequality constraints in income and social protection (Baruah, 2023<sup>[18]</sup>). Co-operatives and social enterprises are also working towards setting up women-led businesses in more skilled non-traditional sectors including construction, energy and transport services (Baruah, 2010<sup>[151]</sup>; IRENA, 2019<sup>[152]</sup>; Baruah, 2021<sup>[153]</sup>). Nonetheless, these kinds of initiatives can also be related to negative situations in terms of financial insecurity and stress, as reported by 63% of women, compared with 37% of men (British Council, 2017<sup>[101]</sup>), and women still face prejudices in institution and business environments (Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>). In cases even where SSE entities foster women's entrance into not traditionally female occupations and sectors, such as transportation, waste management or agriculture, women often still experience precarious employment conditions, deep-rooted social prejudice, struggles to balance work and family responsibilities, and a lack of community or peers in such programmes. This has for example been reported by women trained by SSE organisations as commercial drivers in India (Baruah, 2023<sup>[18]</sup>).

**This perpetuation of gender stereotypes also translates into the SSE experiencing limits in advancing gender equality.** Evidence shows that without appropriate safeguards SSE initiatives aiming to improve gender equality through economic empowerment, such as social finance programmes, can easily be used to realise outcomes that do not foster or even go against gender equality (Baruah, 2023<sup>[18]</sup>). A commonly cited example are microcredit programmes in India, which have reportedly been used to pay women's dowries instead of allowing them to fund their businesses (Baruah, 2010<sup>[154]</sup>). Some gender empowerment initiatives in the SSE have also been criticised for their apolitical stand on empowering women, e.g. through employment and income generation programmes, rather than broader demands for changes in male-biased inheritance laws or property rights affecting society at large beyond labour markets (Baruah, 2023<sup>[18]</sup>; Agarwal, 2003<sup>[155]</sup>). Employment and income generation programmes often face less resistance by male heads of households as they are considered a win-win compared with other changes but do not generate more equal employment practices (Agarwal, 2003<sup>[155]</sup>). Conceptions of business success as well as innovation more broadly are still often gender biased (i.e. high growth, competitiveness, visibility and rapid technological innovation). More traditionally feminised attributes such as community development, collaboration and social innovation of varying speed often find less resonance (De Laat and Hellstern, 2020<sup>[156]</sup>; BMO for Women, 2018<sup>[157]</sup>).

**Disadvantages and discrimination based on gender can intersect with other forms of disadvantages.** Multiple forms of disadvantages and discriminations (e.g. race, sexual orientation) have been found to be intersecting and aggravating the prospects of disadvantaged individuals (Di Lorenzo and Scarlatta, 2019<sup>[158]</sup>). As the SSE strives for inclusivity, social justice and equality, there is a need to take these concerns into account and frame its equality objectives beyond a mere male-female divide (Baruah, 2023<sup>[18]</sup>).

# 3 Advancing gender equality in and through the social economy

**The social and solidarity economy has many opportunities to advance gender equality within itself and in the wider economy.** Such actions can include valorising women's roles as well as the essential services where the SSE commonly operates. Improving job quality and reducing gender gaps in pay and leadership would advance gender equality but also serve to attract men to these sectors where they are under-represented. The SSE can also diversify more into sectors that are actively contributing to the green and digital transitions, helping to make these transitions more just while also promoting greater gender equality and women's leadership in the SSE. Different public policies, from awareness campaigns to data collection to procurement and support for female social entrepreneurs, can all contribute to these goals.

**Table 1. Policy recommendations to advance gender equality in and through the social and solidarity economy**

Policy recommendation	Concrete measures and examples
Increase awareness around gender issues and women's roles in the SSE.	<b>Mainstream gender equality into SSE frameworks.</b> The city of Medellín in Colombia, France and Spain have mainstreamed gender equality and the central role of women in the SSE ecosystem into their SSE policy or legal frameworks.
	<b>Create dedicated professional women's networks to support (disadvantaged) women.</b> Women's professional networks such as the Native Women's Association of Canada provide safe spaces for women to develop competencies and self-employment support services, among others.
Improve the evidence base on the SSE to be able to better transfer learnings to the wider economy.	<b>Implement audits and reporting to track gender-related issues.</b> The Spanish Network of Alternative and Solidarity Economy Networks (REAS) has been running a gender-sensitive voluntary audit of SSE entities for eight consecutive years.
	<b>Systematically collect data on the SSE disaggregated by gender.</b> Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain are collecting data on the SSE disaggregated by gender and other demographic characteristics. Euclid Network and the British Council are generating an increasing international evidence base on social enterprises. With its forthcoming Country Fact Sheets the OECD is pursuing efforts to gather internationally comparable data on the SSE.

Policy recommendation	Concrete measures and examples
<p><b>Reinforce the SSE's capacity to support work-life balance and integration of women into the labour force more generally</b>, such as through the provision of care services or solutions that improve women's health.</p>	<p><b>Support SSE entities in the provision of low-cost, high-quality care services for their members and/or a wider public.</b> The Association for Sava Seva Farms in India provides low-cost childcare services for its worker-members. In the province of Québec, Canada, a large share of early childcare services is provided through SSE entities commissioned by the government.</p> <p><b>Support SSE entities in addressing other barriers for women's participation in labour markets.</b> SSE entities in, Germany, India and the United States support women's health and access to the labour market.</p>
<p><b>Improve job quality and reduce gender gaps further in leadership and pay in the SSE</b>, through valorisation of essential services, where a large share of the SSE operates.</p>	<p><b>Boost job quality in feminised jobs and the SSE by supporting women's self-help groups or "unions" for self-employed women.</b> In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) unionises more than 2.1 million self-employed women, improving their working conditions and social protection.</p> <p><b>Further reduce gender gaps in the SSE in leadership and pay.</b> In Brazil, women-focused SSE entities were instrumental in adapting agricultural policy to better support the allocation of funds towards women.</p>
<p><b>Foster men's participation in health, care, education and social services</b>, to promote greater gender equality in sectors where the SSE is highly present.</p>	<p><b>Promote awareness about employment opportunities in these sectors to men.</b> Campaigns such as those run by the NHS to increase the number of male nurses in 2018 and 2019 can hold important lessons.</p> <p><b>Gather further evidence on deterrents for men's labour market entrance into these sectors.</b> The evidence base on what deters men from or attracts men to the health, care, education and social services sectors needs to be further improved.</p>
<p><b>Diversify the SSE and women's participation into green and digital sectors</b>, to contribute to solutions for social challenges and promote gender equality.</p>	<p><b>Promote the labour market entrance of women in the green and digital economy through awards or professional networks.</b> In Australia, the Women in Circular Economy Leadership Award provides direct funding and mentoring to (aspiring) women leaders in the field. In the province of Ontario, Canada, the Women in Renewable Energy Network promotes women's entrance into this labour market.</p> <p><b>Include gender and SSE considerations in public procurement efforts.</b> In the state of Victoria, Australia, social business and gender considerations are in parallel being mainstreamed into public procurement policies.</p> <p><b>Further promote the SSE's participation in the green economy</b>, e.g. by increasing the SSE's participation in the circular economy. The city of Paris (France) is promoting SSE entities active in the circular economy as part of its procurement efforts around the 2024 Olympic Games.</p> <p><b>Promote platform co-operatives as a vehicle to increase the quality of work in the platform economy as well as women's participation.</b> The New School's (New York, United States) Platform Co-Op Development Toolkit co-ordinates the resource sharing of learning materials, open-source tools and networks among aspiring platform co-operative entrepreneurs.</p>

Policy recommendation	Concrete measures and examples
<p><b>Increase access to finance and tailored training for women social entrepreneurs,</b> to boost women's leadership as well as diversification of the SSE.</p>	<p><b>Stimulate the use of existing entrepreneurship support and financial infrastructures to target women social entrepreneurs.</b> Learnings from, trainings and toolkits developed by the Better Incubation project run by European Venture Philanthropy Association, EVPA, European Business and Innovation Centre Network, EBN and Impact Hub in 2022 can be used by existing business support organisations to improve their services to better meet the needs of women social entrepreneurs. Funds like the European Social Fund, ESF+ and Rethink Ireland can directly support the access to funds for women social entrepreneurs.</p> <p><b>Remove further barriers for women's social entrepreneurship through tailored education and training,</b> as well as incubation programmes and financial support for aspiring women (social) entrepreneurs. Tailored training on digital skills for SSE employees and entrepreneurs can build on the learnings of the EU3 Digital project, which developed a competency framework and related toolkit. Empow'Her, based in France, is a women social entrepreneurship network that provides networking, mentoring, training and other peer-driven support services. Tailored incubation programmes such as the municipally founded Women Entrepreneurship Initiative in Atlanta, Georgia, the United States, can boost women's (social) entrepreneurship.</p>

## Increase awareness around gender issues and women's roles in the social and solidarity economy

**Public policy and the SSE community can more actively recognise the value of women's work and leadership in the SSE, contributing to women's empowerment.** Women's participation in the SSE can support their social and economic empowerment more broadly, especially in emerging economies. In Brazil (Hillenkamp and Dos Santos, 2019<sup>[118]</sup>; Machado, 2019<sup>[119]</sup>) and India (Pineda, 2019<sup>[120]</sup>), SSE entities have shown to improve women's options to generate income, own and manage land, and, more generally, become members of productive communities. Awareness raising initiatives such as Euclid Network's Top 100 Women in Social Enterprise list (Euclid Network, 2023<sup>[159]</sup>) or *Trophées des Femmes de l'ESS* (Women in the SSE Awards) award issued by the French government (associations.gouv.fr, 2023<sup>[160]</sup>) are bringing women's contribution to the SSE into the limelight. The ILO suggests to foresee participatory gender auditing (i.e. examining how the gender dimension and diversity issues are integrated in the work of organisations in a participatory manner) or gender-responsive budgeting (i.e. including and monitoring commitments towards gender equality in public or private budgets) as methods to be used by policy makers and SSE entities (ILO, 2022<sup>[161]</sup>).

**By emphasising the value of this work, the move beyond a categorisation of work into pink- or blue-collar jobs could be accelerated.** Many currently feminised occupations are urgently needed in green and digital sectors such as human resources, communications and marketing (Desjardin and Agopsowicz, 2019<sup>[162]</sup>) and barriers need to be removed for men to enter those more freely. The same applies for the socio-cultural valuation of competencies and attributes that are often associated with women (i.e. collaboration, empathy, caring) (Desjardin and Agopsowicz, 2019<sup>[162]</sup>). It can also increase the value placed on this work, which in turn could translate into better wages and better working conditions also attracting more men. There are current structural advantages that men in feminised roles and sectors experience. Past research has found that men encounter even more emphasised structural advantages in these occupations which can in turn help advance their careers (Williams, 1992<sup>[163]</sup>; Budig, 2002<sup>[164]</sup>). However, men also often still face challenges to their masculine identities when they take up traditionally feminised roles or roles in traditionally feminised sectors (Cross and Bagilhole, 2002<sup>[165]</sup>).



**Mainstreaming gender into SSE policies could help close gaps in leadership and pay.** Countries are integrating gender aspects into public policies for the SSE. For example, France and Spain have enshrined in their respective framework laws and strategies for the SSE the need for tailored support to increase women's participation in leadership positions in SSE entities (Box 3). In 2021, Spain adopted general guidelines for its future Sustainable Development Strategy. These guidelines highlight that the SSE has great potential of advancing women into managerial positions, thus supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (gender equality) (CEPES, 2021<sup>[166]</sup>). In Colombia, the City Council of Medellín included gender equality in its Social and Solidarity Economy Plan (PESS) for Medellín (Box 3). The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life (OECD, 2015<sup>[167]</sup>) and the 2022 OECD Recommendation on the Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Innovation (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>) provide policy frameworks that can advance gender equality and expand the SSE advances, including on gender.

### **Box 3. Mainstreaming gender equality into SSE legal and policy frameworks (Colombia, France, Spain)**

#### ***Medellín, Colombia***

The City Council of Medellín, in partnership with the International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP), developed the 2016-2025 Social and Solidarity Economy Plan for Medellín. The plan is built around several pillars, one of them focusing on gender equality. It highlights the importance of the social and solidarity economy for economic and social inclusion of women. It also acknowledges that social and solidarity economy business models support women's economic empowerment and recognises the right of women to equal treatment and access to goods and services. However, the plan also recognises the disadvantages women face and questions the unequal power relations between women and men. In response, it proposes actions that aim to include and promote SSE concepts in basic and higher education in Medellín and develop the competencies of members and workers of the SSE.

#### ***France***

The French Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy was adopted in 2014, providing an enabling regulatory framework to better support traditional SSE organisations and newly emerging social enterprises. Among other objectives, it seeks to consider the status of gender equality in the workplace and the dissemination of SSE principles among young people.

Article 4-V of the 2014 law stipulates that the Higher Council of the SSE (CSESS) is responsible for delivering a report on gender equality in the SSE every three years and for formulating concrete measures for more work in this area. The first triennial report on gender equality and parity in SSE was adopted by CSESS in 2017 and included 11 action proposals such as achieving a balanced representation of women and men in elected management bodies of SSE entities (at least 40% of the seats for each gender). The second triannual report of 2021 found that this objective was not achieved. For the period of 2021-24, several of the previous propositions were therefore repeated, alongside newer ones related to gender-related challenges arising from the health crisis.

#### ***Spain***

In 2011, Spain adopted the Law on Social Economy. While establishing the guiding principles of SSE entities, the law explicitly recognises the SSE's contribution to promoting equal opportunities between men and women. Furthermore, the law stipulates that public authorities shall facilitate the engagement

of SSE entities in active employment policies, in particular for groups that are more affected by unemployment, such as women, young people and long-term unemployed individuals.

The Spanish Strategy for Promotion of SSE 2021-2027 also aims to create innovative mechanisms to broaden the set of sectors in which the SSE can be more active, such as the circular economy and activities related to the digital transition. With 11 specific objectives, the strategy also promotes the participation of women in the labour market, better work-life balance, access to childcare services, a healthy work environment adapted against health risks and the adaptability to healthy ageing.

Source: (OECD, 2017<sup>[168]</sup>; Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, (unpublished manuscript)<sup>[169]</sup>; CEPES, 2011<sup>[170]</sup>; Conseil supérieur de l'économie sociale et solidaire, 2021<sup>[171]</sup>)

**Professional women's networks within and beyond the SSE can also further support women's empowerment, leadership and social entrepreneurship.** They offer fora to share experiences and advice on how to overcome challenges typically encountered by women (OECD, 2021<sup>[172]</sup>). Such peer-learning activities can improve entrepreneurial attitudes and business performance, as evidence suggests (OECD, 2023<sup>[117]</sup>). Many professional networks are themselves SSE entities. While some specifically focus on SSE markets, others focus on broader industries, in particular those in which women are under-represented (e.g. technology, energy, infrastructure). In Latin America and India for example, women's networks haven been pivotal for women to recognise themselves as workers and producers of social value, and therefore worthy of public recognition and support (Guérin, Hillenkamp and Verschuur, 2021<sup>[125]</sup>). The Native Women's Association of Canada is a network for Indigenous women in particular (Box 4). In Brazil, networks of women farmers have grown as a result of the federal government's technical assistance policy implemented by Sempreviva Organização Feminista, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in São Paulo, as well as public procurement of family farming's agricultural products (Guérin, Hillenkamp and Verschuur, 2021<sup>[125]</sup>). In Arequipa, Peru, the network Asociación de Mujeres Ecosolidarias operates a recycling centre which has improved the income and living conditions of 50 women waste pickers working with private households, companies and their families (OECD/European Commission, 2022<sup>[41]</sup>).

#### **Box 4. Supporting indigenous women through the SSE (Canada)**

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), founded in 1974, represents Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people with the aim to enhance their social, economic, cultural and political well-being. NWAC seeks to preserve Indigenous culture in Canada by performing advocacy and policy and legislative analysis, covering topics such as employment, labour and business, health, violence prevention and safety, justice and human rights, environment, early learning childcare, and international affairs. NWAC is active across Canada through its provincial and territorial member associations that offer programmes, services and advocacy supports tailored to the needs of the specific province or territory.

One of these programmes is the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program (ISET) which is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Through NWAC's ISET agreement with ESDC, skills training and employment programmes and services are made available to support Indigenous women and gender-diverse people with their long-term employment goals. For example, the Self-Employment Benefits programme provides financial support to those pursuing self-employment or entrepreneurship. The Government of Canada's Apprenticeship Service programme funds the NWAC's National Apprenticeship Program. This project provides financial supports and online training

and resources to small and medium-sized employers across Canada to help them participate in the apprenticeship system, and increase diversity in the skilled trades by hiring Indigenous women, Two Spirit and gender-diverse people that seek to build skills and explore new career opportunities.

Source: (NWAC, 2023<sup>[173]</sup>; IWWT, 2023<sup>[174]</sup>)

## Improve the evidence base on the social and solidarity economy to be able to better transfer learnings to the wider economy

**The SSE holds important lessons on reducing gender gaps and discrimination for the wider economy, but more evidence is needed to effectively transfer those lessons.** A broader and deeper evidence base on the SSE and its effects on inclusion, equality and societal cohesion can improve the understanding of the mechanisms advancing gender equality within it, and where eventual barriers lie, and how those principles can be better transferred to other areas of the economy.

**Some countries have put in place audits and reports on tracking gender issues in the SSE.** For example, the Spanish annual social audit of numerous SSE organisations through the initiative Enseña Su Corazón (Show Your Heart) looks into the equality of SSE entities, the quality of work and the fair distribution of income (Economía Solidaria, 2022<sup>[175]</sup>) (Box 5). The French High Council of the Social and Solidarity Economy runs a similar project in a more top-down approach, producing triennial reports on the state of gender equality in the SSE (Conseil supérieur de l'économie sociale et solidaire, 2021<sup>[171]</sup>) (Box 5).

### Box 5. Gender-sensitive voluntary audits of the social economy (Spain)

In 2022, the Spanish Network of Alternative and Solidarity Economy Networks (Red de Redes de Economía Alternativa y Solidaria [REAS]) carried out its eighth annual Social Audit of SSE entities under the theme *La Economía Social y Solidaria enseña el corazón* (The social and solidarity economy shows its heart). The audit is performed in a participatory process with the goal to inform individual strategies to improve their performance in the social and environmental fields and give them additional visibility.

The 2022 report presents data from more than 600 entities, most of which are associated and linked to the different territorial and sectorial networks of REAS (co-operatives, insertion companies, associations, etc.) and some are entities of the social economy not directly linked to the network. These entities represent 18 000 employees (2021), 63% of whom are women. The report includes a dedicated section on women and gender equality, providing a deep dive into questions such as salaries, gender equality plans and protocols, as well as sexual harassment prevention. For example, across organisations the highest wages come to 1.75 times the lowest wages. About 65% of people in leadership positions are women. About 75% of SSE entities also go beyond legal requirements for addressing work-life balance. Particular attention is also paid to inclusive language and well-being, e.g. 97% of entities use gender-sensitive language.

Source: (Economía Solidaria, 2022<sup>[175]</sup>).

**The systematic collection of data in the SSE by gender, including types of jobs, contracts and sectors, can serve to raise awareness and track progress over time.** It could facilitate more in-depth work to determine where reinforcing male participation in the SSE could be necessary to reduce segregation and dual labour market dynamics. However, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data in general, as is evident in the review of UN SDG 5 (i.e. gender equality) (High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 2017<sup>[176]</sup>; Criado-Perez, 2019<sup>[177]</sup>) and a recent report on the implementation of the OECD gender recommendations (OECD, 2022<sup>[31]</sup>). Nevertheless, some data collection initiatives on the SSE at both the international and national levels take place with disaggregation by gender (Box 6).

### **Box 6. Progress in data collection on women in the social and solidarity economy**

**Internationally comparable data on women in the SSE are still scarce and differ in reliability.** The majority of research has so far focused on **women in social entrepreneurship or women in social enterprise**. Internationally, only a handful of studies are available: The largest assessment and the sole one with a demographically representative sampling approach is the [Global Entrepreneurship Monitor \(GEM\)](#)'s two rounds of representative data collection that focused on social entrepreneurship in 2009 and 2015 across 58 countries. Euclid Network's second [European Social Enterprise Monitor \(ESEM\)](#) included small samples from 17 European countries and the British Council's pan-national analysis included 25. Other past EU-level projects such as [Social Entrepreneurs as Lead Users for Service Innovation \(SELUSI\)](#) (also used in an OECD working paper: (Huysentruyt, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>)), [Social Enterprise as Force for More Inclusive and Innovative Societies \(SEFORIS\)](#) and [Enabling the Flourishing and Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship for Innovative and Inclusive Societies \(EFESEIS\)](#) have also collected gender-disaggregated data but at a relatively small scale. Supplementing these studies, smaller more qualitative studies such as those by Empow'Her (2019<sup>[22]</sup>) and the European Women's Lobby (Usher Shrair, 2015<sup>[97]</sup>) have looked into women's experiences and attitudes towards social or co-operative entrepreneurship in a handful of countries. A brief summary of these studies is provided in Gerlach (2021<sup>[83]</sup>).

**International comparisons of the SSE** more broadly, such as the European Commission's [Mapping study on social enterprise ecosystems in the European Union](#) or one by CIRIEC (Monzón and Chaves, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>), **have mostly disregarded the SSE's gender dimension**. This also applies to data that have been collected on the non-profit sector: Between 1991 and 2017 Johns Hopkins University ran a [Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project](#) that mapped non-profit data from across 46 countries. While some national sources used here include a gender dimension, the international comparison tables and discussions such as Enjolras et al. (2018<sup>[111]</sup>) do not make mention of it. The OECD is currently working on Country Fact Sheets to improve on the availability of internationally available data on the SSE, including a disaggregation by socio-demographic criteria, where available.

**On the national level, data collection on the SSE is advancing but still infrequently disaggregates by gender.** Research from Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Québec (Canada) and Spain appears to be among the most comprehensive. For further national-level data sources see Figure 3 and Figure 4. Subnational-level data are also available, for example in Belgium, France and Spain. INSEE/Flores (2021<sup>[34]</sup>) and ESS France (2020<sup>[72]</sup>; 2018<sup>[178]</sup>) show a particularly detailed disaggregation of regional data for France. Data from national satellite accounts on the non-profit sector, such as those operated in Australia and Canada, for example, could also be explored to gain further insights. Due to heterogeneous definitions and aggregation rules, the comparability national and subnational level data are limited.

## Reinforce the social and solidarity economy's capacity to support work-life balance and integration of women into the labour force more generally

**Many SSE entities are themselves providing care services for their members.** As a result, caretakers are better able to engage in formal work and increase household income. For example, in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), the Asmare Waste Pickers Cooperative opened a community childcare centre to fulfil its members' needs for childcare in collaboration with local governments (Ogando and Brito, 2013<sup>[74]</sup>). In India, SEWA (Box 10) offers childcare services to its members in a decentralised and affordable way, de facto creating self-employment opportunities for women. Another example from India is the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA), which provides day and weekend care for young children, allowing their mothers to take up full-time paid employment (Box 7).

### Box 7. Easing the care burden through day and weekend schools (ASSEFA, India)

Founded in 1969, the Association for Sava Seva Farms (ASSEFA) works in eight states to implement diverse socio-economic welfare programmes, some of which specifically target families or women, with the aim to increase the self-reliance of rural communities. ASSEFA is among the most important NGOs in India, covering 11 000 villages, about 1 million families and 5 million people, with their activities. ASSEFA runs day schools in rural areas with no school facilities with the aim of improving access to and equality in education, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2020, 15 598 children and 474 educators had benefited from ASSEFA's programmes. Since September 2020, ASSEFA has operated two weekend schools in Myjudi and Kottapati, where over 300 children aged 6 to 12 can be cared for on the weekends, allowing their parents to pursue paid employment.

Sources: (Clamp and Tapley, 2023<sup>[75]</sup>; Poirier and Loganathan, 2019<sup>[179]</sup>)

**The SSE is also a major provider of affordable care services for caregivers in the wider economy** (Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini, 2017<sup>[48]</sup>). Measures that help achieve affordable children's day care as well as long-term care services generate many positive benefits for society, including women's labour force participation, as they are disproportionately responsible for such care duties. In many countries, women's employment rates drop after they have children (OECD, 2022<sup>[180]</sup>). Similarly, women are less likely to participate in social entrepreneurship training if childcare services are not provided (OECD/European Commission, 2023<sup>[181]</sup>; Stamatiou Nichols et al., 2021<sup>[182]</sup>) and many women cannot engage in employment or entrepreneurship at all when this is the case. The creation of day care centres run by SSE entities, was, for example, suggested in Korea and in Poland as a means to address this issue (Mendell, 2014<sup>[183]</sup>). In Australia, the government helps families with childcare fees through the Child Care Subsidy, which is paid to approved care providers (many of which are SSE entities) to pass on as a fee reduction to individuals (Australian Government, 2022<sup>[184]</sup>). In the region of Flanders in Belgium, the Local Services Economy (*Lokale Diensteneconomie*) provides tailored training, guidance and on-the-job support to people with a certain distance to the labour market within the local services economy (LDE, 2023<sup>[185]</sup>). Many of its projects provide childcare or at-home care. In this way, these SSE initiatives can play a role in supporting work-life balance and the integration of women into the labour force more generally. In France, associations constitute almost one-third of establishments for early childhood care (ESS France, 2022<sup>[123]</sup>). In the province of Québec in Canada, the vast majority of early childhood centres are run by SSE entities (Mendell, 2014<sup>[183]</sup>) (Box 8).

### Box 8. Supporting people with care responsibilities through affordable early care services (Québec, Canada)

With the Educational Childcare Act in 1997, the province of Québec adopted a new family policy and introduced a low-fee childcare programme through non-profit *centres de la petite enfance* (early childhood centres). An initial budget of CAD 230 million (Canadian dollars) annually allowed parents to have quality educational day care at CAD 5 per day. The *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, a network of networks that represents the SSE in Québec, was tasked with the implementation through SSE entities. Despite the introduction of private for-profit day care (*garderies*) in 2004, the vast majority of childcare services (200 000 places in 1 000 non-profit early childhood centres) continued to be offered at CAD 5 (per day and child) to parents across Québec through the SSE for many years, and stands at CAD 8.50 in 2023. Parents participate on a volunteer basis on the board of directors of these centres. In 2021, there were 307 000 low-fee childcare spaces available, covering nearly 70% of the total provincial population of children four years old and under.

Provincial statistics indicate that labour force participation among mothers of preschool-age children has increased significantly over the past ten years and has surpassed the percentage of mothers' labour force participation observed in the rest of Canada by 4.2 percentage points. Additionally, a new study found that high fees for childcare were a decisive factor in how likely parents are to stop using childcare. The low-fee early childhood centres displayed little to no loss in enrolment, even during the pandemic-related economic downturn. Moreover, early childhood centres are generally reported to offer better quality services than for-profit day-cares in a study by the Institut de la Statistique du Québec that reported a higher share of respondents noting the non-profit centres were "good or excellent" for children.

Sources: (Mendell, 2014<sup>[183]</sup>; Japel, 2009<sup>[186]</sup>; Bloomberg, 2021<sup>[187]</sup>)

**SSE entities are actively addressing other areas that can be barriers for women's labour force participation more broadly, such as women's health.** This can be a particularly important issue in the developing world, but is of course very applicable in OECD countries. For example, Spain recently passed a law providing women with the right to take paid menstrual leave. In 2021, the United Kingdom became the latest country to abolish valued added tax (VAT) on sanitary menstruation products, following other countries such as Canada and Australia. A study of social enterprises in the Netherlands showed that women are more often active in social enterprise that have adopted sustainability objectives and promote the improvement of women's lives (Argyrou, Diepeveen and Lambooy, 2018<sup>[188]</sup>). Strategies for cost-effective access to sanitary products are often promoted by the social economy, whether bulk buying or innovations for low-cost production (Box 9). Other examples include the provision of public toilets, the creation of knowledge bases, and trainings around menopause and the workplace.

### Box 9. Examples of SSE entities addressing women's health needs

In India, the social enterprise 3S was founded in 2017 with the aim to **provide toilets** and toilet-cleaning services to underserved communities across the whole country. The availability of public toilets is essential for women's full and safe participation in societies and economies (Criado-Perez, 2019<sup>[177]</sup>). The public provision of toilets in India is often scarce. 3S developed the so-called "toilet integration" model to provide women with hygienic and accessible public restrooms by refurbishing old and disused buses and turning them into clean and accessible toilets for women.

The United States non-profit organisation The Pad Project takes a multipronged approach to **achieving menstrual equity** by partnering with grassroots organisations in the United States and around the world to establish pad-making enterprises, distribute menstrual products and implement menstrual health education programmes. Internationally, The Pad Project has placed 12 pad-making machines in 5 countries (Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Nepal, Sri Lanka), supported 8 washable pad-making programmes in 7 countries (Bahamas, Ghana, Guatemala, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda), and funded 2 menstrual cup programmes in 2 countries (Pakistan, Uganda). Beyond providing distribution points for menstrual hygiene products, these programmes also employ women to run their own businesses of making and selling menstrual pads. Consequently, a micro-economy for women has developed fostering their economic and social agency.

According to a study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the United Kingdom's professional body for HR and personnel development, 59% of British women consider **menopause** to be a transition period that harms their way of working. To date, it is unclear what exactly these effects are and how they affect women in the workforce as the topic is rarely talked about or addressed. The Argentinian-Brazilian NGO No Pausa (No Pause) seeks to break societal taboos around menopausal transition. The NGO creates awareness around the topic via its ecosystem, which includes a website, newsletters and social media accounts, a community, and diverse initiatives including research projects and social programmes. It gathers and disseminates free informational content, reviewed by its panel of experts, and brings together over 100 000 people (including peers, health professionals, corporates and diverse actors in society). No Pausa offers trainings and consultancies for companies, public administrations and the general public. Most recently No Pausa launched its MenoCheck webapp, where women can identify where they are in their menopausal journey and get tips on how to manage it, as well as the possibility to review the results with a health professional from their broad network of experts.

In Germany, the social enterprise Discovering Hands trains blind and visually impaired women to become Medical Tactile Examiners (MTUs), who are used in the **early detection of breast cancer**. The sharpened sense of touch of visually impaired women is considered to be particularly successful in the detection of breast cancer, since MTUs detect about 30% more tissue changes than doctors. Training MTUs not only fills a large screening gap, but at the same time creates meaningful jobs for people with disabilities. The discovering hands training initiative is supported by the SKala initiative and PHINEO, a non-profit analysis and consulting company that supports organisations that demonstrate major and sustainable social impact.

Sources: (The Pad Project, 2023<sup>[189]</sup>; Raines et al., 2017<sup>[190]</sup>; 3SIndia, 2023<sup>[191]</sup>; Discovering Hands, 2023<sup>[192]</sup>; Estarque, 2020<sup>[193]</sup>; No Pausa, 2023<sup>[194]</sup>)

## Improve job quality and reduce gender gaps further in leadership and pay in the social and solidarity economy

**Boosting job quality in feminised sectors more generally as well as in the SSE could improve conditions for women and attract more men.** Feminised jobs are essential and the need for them is growing (Delfino, 2021<sup>[28]</sup>). With the increased emphasis on social impact and sustainable development (OECD/European Commission, 2015<sup>[195]</sup>; OECD, 2021<sup>[196]</sup>) as well as support for the SSE (European Commission, 2021<sup>[197]</sup>; OECD, 2020<sup>[35]</sup>), its professions and practices are being recognised as viable alternative options of working and doing business. Efforts within and beyond the SSE to address job quality, including remuneration, particularly in the education, care and social services sectors, will make increasing gender diversity in those sectors easier.

**Women's self-help groups, SSE entities and unions can help to improve women's bargaining power to improve job quality in these sectors.** Self-help groups, other SSE entities and unions provide a forum for collective organisation, access to social benefits and protections, capacity-building measures, and basic financial literacy training for women.

**India has numerous examples of the SSE supporting women to improve their job quality and working conditions.** For example, in the city of Pune (India), waste pickers formed a union and secured local government support by showcasing the funds the municipality was saving on waste treatment through their work, calculated as USD 330 000 based on an estimate of USD 5 per month as the cost equivalent of the free labour provided by the waste pickers (Narayan and Chikarmane, 2013<sup>[198]</sup>). In the state of Tamil Nadu (India), the Women Workers Union (Penn Thozilalar Sangam), Movement for Women's Rights (Pennurimai Iyakkam) and Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Panchayat Union (Kattida Thozhilalar Panchayat Sangam [KTPS]) successfully mobilised the state government to create 34 industry- or occupation-specific welfare boards for self-employed workers throughout the 1990s and 2000s, including a Domestic Workers Welfare Board (since 2007) (Kalpana, 2021<sup>[20]</sup>). The three organisations are working closely with women domestic workers, self-employed women workers and women construction workers to facilitate their mobilisation for collective bargaining and help them secure various types of financial assistance from the diverse welfare boards (Kalpana, 2021<sup>[20]</sup>). SEWA brings together 2.1 million self-employed women across 18 Indian states and promotes the voice, visibility and validation of women to achieve better working conditions (Box 10).

**Similar initiatives exist in numerous other countries.** With the aim to combat the poor working conditions of foreign live-in care workers (often from Eastern Europe), in rural areas in Germany Diakonie Württemberg in co-operation with the Association for International Youth Work, Diakonie Poland and AIDRom, set up a placement programme for caregivers from Eastern Europe (Caimi, 2023<sup>[76]</sup>). Contrary to common practice, the placement programme FairCare ensures that workers obtain contracts in accordance with German labour law standards, benefiting from occupational and health protection. The services multilingual team also offers counselling and advice to users who need to be cared for at home, to their families, and to the caregivers. In Belgium and France, social vouchers were introduced to improve the working conditions of self-employed providers of personal and household services, many of whom are women (OECD, 2021<sup>[199]</sup>; 2021<sup>[199]</sup>).



### Box 10. “Unionising” self-employed women (SEWA, India)

The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) is a national trade union, the largest such organisation in India, with 2.5 million members across 18 states of the country. It is also a movement of 150 membership-based organisations, mainly co-operatives, but also 181 rural producers’ groups, 15 state-level federations, 7 social service organisations, 1 national federation and 5 capacity development and research centres. Established as a union in 1972, it has now become a movement of solidarity organisations promoting decentralised, inclusive and equitable growth. Women workers are organised through the joint action of union and co-operatives and collectives. All of these are solidarity organisations.

The organisations of the SEWA movement organise women for work and income security, food security, and social security or social protection. SEWA has learned that this leads to their self-reliance and to strengthening solidarity. Through their own organisations, they build a secure and sustainable organisation and strengthen the local and also national economies. Their autonomy and decision making is also enhanced. The main activities that lead to solidarity are 1) collective action and co-operative solutions for livelihoods; 2) capacity building so that women at the grassroots lead and manage their own organisations and movement; 3) capitalisation and asset building, and in women’s name; 4) voice and representation of the workers themselves for advocacy to promote policies and reforms in Indian labour laws; and 5) alliances with informal workers movements and networks nationally and internationally to strengthen solidarity globally.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the union and co-operatives provided members with health education, emergency health kits, food kits and micro-insurance. A study showed that 71% of the women in the SEWA co-operatives said they sought and obtained support from their co-operative during the pandemic. In 2021, SEWA launched the National Dialogue on Women, Work and Food Systems: Voices from Grassroots, a platform for informally employed women in the Indian food system. This platform offers voice and visibility to these women constrained by lack of land ownership and access to agricultural support systems. More than half of SEWA’s members live in rural areas and 55% of their members are marginal farmers. In international discussions, SEWA is often cited as the prime example of a grassroots movement to organise women into their own collectives and to support self-employed workers to obtain the benefits leading to economic and social security or social protection.

Sources: (Self Employed Women’s Association, 2023<sup>[200]</sup>; ILO, 2018<sup>[201]</sup>; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2021<sup>[202]</sup>)

**While gender gaps in pay in the SSE are reported in many countries to be lower than in the wider economy, they still exist and need to be addressed.** In order to do so, first push and pull factors attracting and steering women into the SSE need to be further addressed. Pull factors (e.g. social impact, better work-life balance and lower gender gaps) can render work in the SSE more attractive for women if push factors (e.g. stereotypical gender roles that lead to a [self-]selection of women into specific sectors such as care and into lower-level jobs) are addressed. Capitalising on pull factors of SSE practices (e.g. incentivising firms to provide flexible work time arrangements, more democratic governance models or childcare services) can improve job quality, not only for women. An initial step is the collection of data on the topic which then need to be translated into concrete policy measures. Policy makers can further explore these “push and pull” factors in dedicated working groups and/or regular exchange with SSE networks. For example, the French National Observatory of the SSE operates a working group on the topic of gender equality in the SSE (ESS France, 2020<sup>[72]</sup>). Another example is the establishment of the Directorate of Policy for Rural Women in Brazil following the efforts of the National Agroecology Coalition, a group comprising rural movements and NGOs (Box 11).

### Box 11. Women's networks and grassroots movements affecting rural policy (Brazil)

In Brazil, women's networks and grassroots movements have been instrumental in promoting gender equality in public policy strategies. In 2003, the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM) was created to co-ordinate activities across ministries and federal bodies to guarantee women's participation in the public debate. First in 2003 and then in 2007, two National Plans of Policies for Women (PNPM) were implemented aiming at fostering a public dialogue among social movements, academics and public institutions. An example of such commitment was the establishment of the Directorate of Policy for Rural Women (DPMR) by the Brazilian Ministry of Agricultural Development (MDA) in 2003. The directorate was allocated for the period of 2003 to 2013 a distinct team and budget of BRL 300 million (Brazilian reais) (USD 93 million). This development is often partially attributed to the efforts of the National Agroecology Coalition, a lobby group comprising rural movements, international organisations and SSE entities.

In 2001, the MDA promoted a programme to address minorities in rural areas, which was then expanded in 2003 to also promote gender and ethnic-racial equality, in order to reinforce social justice in those areas. The rural policy agenda has three main areas of action: gender mainstreaming policies within the national agricultural development strategies, promoting a participatory approach to women-specific policies and focus on rural women's movements, and lastly promoting gender-based interventions in inter-ministerial programmes. The National Policy of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (PNATER) was set out by the MDA in partnership with social movements in 2003. To mainstream gender equality a minimum quota on policies to be targeted towards women was established. For example, 50% of the beneficiaries of different action plans and 30% of technicians must be women and 30% of all resources must be allocated to women. Between 2004 and 2013, the PNATER women policy benefited 56 400 women and had a budget of BRL 32.3 million (about USD 10 million).

Sources: (Hillenkamp and Nobre, 2022<sup>[203]</sup>; Butto et al., 2014<sup>[204]</sup>; Valerio, 2018<sup>[205]</sup>)

## Foster men's participation in health, care, education and social services

**Promoting awareness of and employment in these sectors for men supports gender equality in general and has a strong impact on the SSE that is highly present in these sectors.** These jobs are essential, the need for them is growing, and most roles are essential for our future and low-carbon economies (Delfino, 2021<sup>[28]</sup>). Policy efforts can promote professions that are not traditionally perceived as "men's work" (i.e. in, manufacturing, ICT, financial services) though less financially or reputationally rewarding (OECD, 2021<sup>[206]</sup>).

**Public awareness raising is being used to attract men to these professions more generally and is more critical as they are currently experiencing labour shortages.** Campaigns in Oregon (United States) and the United Kingdom have worked to increase the share of male nurses, for example. The Oregon Center for Nursing launched a campaign with the slogan "Are you man enough to be a nurse?" in 2002 (Gaskell, 2022<sup>[207]</sup>). A campaign by the United Kingdom's NHS focused on the portrayal of male nurses and has been reported to result in a 9% increase in men's enrolment in nursing school between 2018 and 2019 (News, 2019<sup>[208]</sup>). Nonetheless, merely focusing on a depiction of men in such campaigns might be insufficient. Research has found that male applicants may be more encouraged by additional information about these roles (Delfino, 2021<sup>[28]</sup>).

**More evidence is also needed to understand why men are often less present in the SSE, even in traditionally more gender-equal sectors.** Some researchers have compared men's motivation to

volunteer and to become social entrepreneurs but with varying results, which suggests other contextual factors such as personality may also be at play (Bernardino, Freitas Santos and Cadima Ribeiro, 2018<sup>[209]</sup>). Factors such as a desire for higher prestige and pay as well as less collaborative attitudes may play a role but have not yet been fully explored. Research has found that women are more attracted by social purpose and are pushed into the SSE due to their need for more flexible work time arrangements as well as stereotyped roles (Huysentruyt, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>; Hechevarría et al., 2012<sup>[210]</sup>). Studies have also found that women entrepreneurs are more likely to qualify for funding emphasising their social mission (Lee and Huang, 2018<sup>[149]</sup>). A recent study by Impact Hub and INCAE Business School found that gender differences need to be considered in acceleration programmes. Those differences include education gaps in STEM subjects and different business sectors; effects of gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence; lack of access to resources; lack of confidence and imposter syndrome; and the need to balance entrepreneurship and motherhood (Stamatiou Nichols et al., 2021<sup>[182]</sup>).

## Diversify the social and solidarity economy and women's participation into green and digital sectors

**A range of strategies can be taken to diversify women's participation in the SSE beyond feminised sectors.** Occupational segregation within the SSE is linked to gender inequalities in the workplace more generally. Policy measures that tackle gender stereotypes, harassment and workplace violence against women as well as increasing women's occupational safety are all helpful. Public policy efforts are also increasingly used to embed gender considerations into budgets, legislation, public policy and planning that could have implications for female employment (OECD, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>; forthcoming<sup>[211]</sup>; 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). There are some efforts directly addressing organisations active in these sectors through hard factors such as quotas or softer factors such as gender lens approaches to awareness raising, recruitment and retention. Initiatives to increase gender equality in the SSE are largely directed towards expanding the SSE beyond traditionally "feminised" sectors and occupations (Delfino, 2021<sup>[28]</sup>; Koch, Polnick and Irby, 2014<sup>[137]</sup>). The Government of Canada's 50-30 Challenge is an initiative promoted by the Government of Canada, Canadian businesses and diversity organisations, including SSE entities, to increase the representation and inclusion of diverse groups, including women within their workplaces, while highlighting the benefits of giving all Canadians a seat at the table. The 50-30 Challenge asks that organisations aspire to gender parity (50% women and/or non-binary people) and significant representation (30%) of members of other equity-deserving groups on Canadian boards and/or senior management (Government of Canada, 2023<sup>[212]</sup>). Awards and dedicated funding opportunities can also support women's entrance into those labour markets. With the Women in Circular Economy Leadership Award, the state government of South Australia provides financial assistance of up to AUD 5 000 (Australian dollars) and mentoring to emerging and aspiring women leaders in local waste and resource recovery industries (Green Industries SA, 2022<sup>[213]</sup>).

**Dedicated women's networks can help boost women's involvement in sectors where women in the SSE, or women in general, are less visible.** An example is the Women in Renewable Energy Network in Ontario, Canada (Box 12). Gender equality could also be prioritised in policies on infrastructure or urban development, energy, research, and innovation in sustainable consumption (OECD, 2022<sup>[214]</sup>). The construction sector is one that requires greening and has an under-representation of female workers. For example, in Victoria, Australia, the Women in Construction Strategy was launched to achieve greater representation of women in the construction sector (Government of Victoria, 2022<sup>[215]</sup>). Learnings from programmes such as those run in low- and medium-income countries to promote women's participation in traditionally male-dominated jobs shows that they continue to face discrimination. More detailed studies on the effects of tailored trainings for women social and co-operative entrepreneurs and women self-help groups can supply further insights to improve such programmes.

### Box 12. Improving women's participation in the renewable energy sector (Ontario, Canada)

According to the International Energy Agency, women hold just 22% of jobs in energy production and distribution and 32% in renewable energy companies. The Women in Renewable Energy Network (WiRE) in Ontario, Canada, is a forum aiming to advance the role and recognition of women and under-represented groups working in the energy sector. Launched in 2013, the network is a professional development group which collaborates with government agencies, a spectrum of renewable energy associations and related professional networks. It has national and international chapters, from Africa to South America, as well as student chapters. WiRE programmes include capacity-building field trips, monthly networking meetups, an awards recognition programme, speed mentoring and interviewing, spotlights, conferences, and workshops. WiRE's objective is to promote inclusive work environments in the renewable energy and clean energy businesses. It also operates a dedicated job board, designed to help match potential candidates with employers. One of the key supporters and sponsors of the network is the Canadian government's natural resources department.

Source: (Women in Renewable Energy, 2022<sup>[216]</sup>)

**Gender considerations through public procurement could also encourage women in sectors more linked to the digital and green transition.** Public procurement is increasingly recognised as a strategic instrument for achieving various policy objectives, including gender equality (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[217]</sup>; 2021<sup>[218]</sup>). Gender-related considerations are included in the public procurement frameworks of more than half of the 28 responding countries to the OECD Survey on Leveraging Responsible Business Conduct through Public Procurement (OECD, 2020<sup>[219]</sup>). However, in most cases, these only apply to direct government contractors and not further down the supply chains, and application is voluntary. Integrating a gender perspective into public procurement can ensure equitable access to public contracts and provide benefits by diversifying the supply chain (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021<sup>[220]</sup>). Moreover, by purchasing from SSE entities, public procurement can also generate employment opportunities for women and other groups, improve social cohesion and support the overall development of the SSE (OECD/European Union, 2017<sup>[221]</sup>). Victoria in Australia for example is already pioneering the adaptation of social and sustainable procurement policy initiatives, that target women and social enterprises (Box 13).

### Box 13. Mainstreaming gender into public procurement (Victoria, Australia)

In April 2018, the Victorian government released a Social Procurement Framework that aims to ensure that value-for-money considerations are not exclusively focused on price, but encompass opportunities to deliver social and sustainable outcomes, including gender equality. The framework is mandatory for all departments and agencies that are subject to the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance, meaning approximately 275 agencies.

Women's equality and safety is one of seven social procurement objectives included in the Social Procurement Framework, and two social outcomes corresponding to this objective were identified: 1) adoption of family violence leave by Victorian government suppliers; and 2) gender equality within Victorian government suppliers.

For each, a set of actions is recommended for government buyers. For example, government buyers can ask suppliers to demonstrate gender-equitable employment practices in weighted framework criteria or include performance standards on labour hours performed by women.

To deliver on this objective, government buyers are provided with a model approach to including gender considerations into procurement processes. Furthermore, the Office for Prevention and Women's Equality aims to help government buyers understanding the concept of gender equality and considerations relevant to evaluating tenders. Several key achievements are reported in the context of Victoria's road and rail projects. For example, between 2017 and 2020, 37 women were employed as part of the delivery team in a regional rail upgrade project in roles including engineering, finance, safety, traffic management and construction.

Sources: (Buying for Victoria, 2023<sup>[222]</sup>; The State of Victoria, 2018<sup>[223]</sup>; Buying for Victoria, 2020<sup>[224]</sup>)

**Women's participation in the green transition, including through the SSE, could accelerate the path to sustainability.** Evidence from various research shows that including more women in decision-making and leadership positions around the environment could bring about more sustainable decisions and actions (Strumskyte, Ramos Magaña and Bendig, 2022<sup>[225]</sup>). Given the SSE has a high prevalence of women and is already increasingly active in the circular economy and environmental protection, increasing these efforts could increase the participation of women in this field. At the same time, many feminised jobs are low-carbon by nature and essential for the transmission of sustainable practices to future generations (e.g. early childhood education and care workers, teachers). They also contribute to further the development of practices focused on the primacy of social and environmental impact, including gender equality, over profit (Borzaga and Depedri, 2013<sup>[226]</sup>; Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini, 2017<sup>[48]</sup>; Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand, 2018<sup>[227]</sup>).

**The SSE is particularly active in the circular economy** (OECD/European Commission, 2022<sup>[41]</sup>). In France, in 2017, 35% of the structures (and 63% of the full-time equivalent employment) active in the reuse and reutilisation of household goods came out of the SSE (ESS France, 2020<sup>[72]</sup>). In this context, the city of Paris specifically is promoting SSE entities active in the circular economy as part of its procurement efforts around the 2024 Olympic Games (Box 14). Another example is the European Social Business Initiative, which has been promoting social business to positively impact society, the environment and local communities since 2011 (European Commission, 2011<sup>[228]</sup>). It has since worked on giving more visibility to social enterprises (e.g. through specialised Erasmus+ programmes), optimised the legal environment across EU countries (e.g. through the public procurement legal reform package of 2014) and improved access to finance (e.g. through the European Social Entrepreneurship Fund) (European Commission, 2021<sup>[229]</sup>).

### Box 14. Increasing procurement from SSE entities in the circular economy (ESS2024.org, France)

In a joint effort to promote more sustainable Olympic Games, Paris 2024, SOLIDEO and the Paris City Council, with the Yunus Centre and the not-for-profit organisation Les Canaux, have put in place the ESS2024.org platform that informs circular as well as social and solidarity economy actors about upcoming calls for tenders. The objective is to allow SSE organisations to use public tenders to get involved with the Paris 2024 Olympics and thereby ensure work opportunities for disadvantaged people and facilitate the emergence of innovative and sustainable solutions. The platform provides information and coaching for SSE organisations that intend to participate in public tenders as well as for tender issuers to help them formulate their call in a way that fits better with the specific features of SSE organisations. The first examples of the success of these efforts can be found in the headquarters of Paris 2024, where the lot for office furniture was attributed to a group of social economy organisations active in the design of furniture from upcycled materials, most of them being also active in work integration for vulnerable individuals. Between 2019 and 2020, the platform contributed to awarding 95 SSE organisations with contracts directly or as part of a consortium, in a wide range of areas, such as food, waste management, reception etc. The platform is intended to operate beyond 2024.

Sources: (OECD/European Commission, 2022<sup>[41]</sup>; Paris2024, 2022<sup>[230]</sup>)

**Digital platforms can help to open opportunities for women, but also risk reproducing “offline” gender inequalities.** With advancing digitalisation, the gig economy is expanding to online marketplaces and platforms. Based on varying estimates, between 0.5% and 3% of labour forces across countries are already engaged in the platform economy (OECD, 2021<sup>[231]</sup>). More than a quarter of workers in the United States participate in the gig economy in some capacity and more than one in ten of them rely on gig work for their primary income (ILR School/The Aspen Institute, 2020<sup>[232]</sup>). At the same time, offline labour markets for the provision of transport services, food delivery and other sectors are increasingly shifting online.

**Patterns of participation in digital platforms differ across genders:** women are more likely to participate in the platform economy to supplement income and work part time, while men are more likely to rely on this non-traditional work full time (ILR School/The Aspen Institute, 2020<sup>[232]</sup>). Platform work can allow for more flexibility in locations and times for work as well as increased autonomy for people working through them (OECD, 2021<sup>[231]</sup>). However, it also raises a number of issues linked to lower worker protection and the ways in which proprietary algorithms collect and treat the data of workers and users alike (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[233]</sup>). While efforts to regulate platform work are ongoing (e.g. the European Commission has proposed a directive on working conditions of in platform work (Consilium Europa, 2022<sup>[234]</sup>)), emerging forms of SSE entities such as platform co-operatives can help to address issues raised around platform work such as unclear employment status for workers, no systematic guarantee for social protections or employee rights, little investment in skills development of users, and a lack of traceability and transparency of user and employee data collected (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[233]</sup>).

**Platform co-operatives are therefore one tool for boosting women’s participation in the digital transition through the SSE.** Digitalisation and technological advancements have also been found to contribute specifically to the visibility of women’s co-operatives and their access to private markets (European Commission, 2021<sup>[229]</sup>). Platform co-operatives are emerging as an intersection of open-source technology development, digital commons and co-operative business models and governance structures.

They are owned and governed by co-operative principles such as democratic ownership and governance with the aim to fight inequality and ensure a more democratic digital economy. Members of platform co-operatives collectively control the technological tools and make decisions on production processes, terms of use and job structures. A consortium headed by the New School in New York developed the Platform Co-op Development Kit with the aim to offer essential tools and a digital blueprint for the creation of platform co-operatives (Box 15). Rethink Co-op is one of them and was working to bring together refugee women to establish their co-operatives in care services in the city of Hamburg (Germany) (Rethink Coop, 2018<sup>[235]</sup>; Constantini and Sebillio, 2022<sup>[236]</sup>).<sup>10</sup>

### Box 15. Knowledge sharing and capacity building on platform co-operativism (PCC, United States)

The Platform Cooperativism Consortium (PCC) is an international hub for research, community building and advocacy based at The New School in New York City. The PCC is working to advance co-operative principles in the digital economy. It has partner organisations in 60 countries and counts 550 active digital co-operative projects across 49 countries. The consortium hosts annual international conferences, with a total of roughly 7 800 in-person participants since 2015 and an additional 36 000 participants online. It also has a research fellowship programme with 29 research fellows since 2019. The consortium maintains a directory of projects in this sector and a Resource Library with over 1 800 articles, papers, op-eds, and research reports. In 2023, the Platform Co-op School, convened by PCC, brings together 45 organisations from 24 countries to educate, raise awareness and disseminate research.

Source: (PCC, 2023<sup>[237]</sup>)

## Increase access to finance and tailored training for women social entrepreneurs

**Existing entrepreneurship support infrastructures could be further capitalised on to support women as social entrepreneurs.** In many countries, SSE entities provide tailored training and act as intermediaries in funding and financing to support women's entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship (OECD/European Commission, 2023<sup>[181]</sup>). Mainstreaming gender (and social entrepreneurship) considerations into existing business support structures such as incubators and accelerators can help tailor the support women receive when entering into social entrepreneurship (Stamatiou Nichols et al., 2021<sup>[182]</sup>; OECD/European Commission, 2017<sup>[238]</sup>). The creation of good practices and their continued testing and adaptation are essential to ensure these programmes are effective (Stamatiou Nichols et al., 2021<sup>[182]</sup>). For example, a 2021/22 programme run by EBN, Impact Hub and EVPA gathered evidence and piloted good practices to mainstream gender-sensitive support into existing business support structures and practices (Box 16). Capacity building programmes such as Social Enterprises and Gender Empowerment run by Social Enterprise UK and the University of Westminster (which also developed a Gender Empowerment Guide for social enterprises) can further support these efforts (Social Enterprise UK, 2021<sup>[239]</sup>). In many countries, SSE entities provide tailored training and act as intermediaries in funding and financing to support women's entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship (OECD/European Commission, 2023<sup>[181]</sup>). Another example is the École des

<sup>10</sup> Despite a promising launch phase, the project struggled with the implementation (attributed by the founders to large systemic and cultural barriers). However, the materials created during the inception and launch phase remain available for future replication under potentially different conditions.

entrepreneurs du Québec (EEQ) in Canada, a non-profit organisation funded by the Province of Québec and the Government of Canada, that provides dedicated support for women entrepreneurs, including courses transmitting digital skills (e.g. to set up an online shop), where skills gaps for women have been found to be particularly broad (Ecole des Entrepreneurs du Québec, 2021<sup>[240]</sup>; OECD/European Commission, 2023<sup>[181]</sup>).

### Box 16. Helping business support organisations better support women social entrepreneurs (Better Incubation, Europe)

The two-year Better Incubation initiative run by the European Business Innovation Centre Network (EBN), Impact Hub and European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) was funded by the European Commission. It formed five thematic communities of practice (CoPs) to support under-represented groups in entrepreneurship: women, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, young people, and seniors. The communities identified a series of inclusive incubation good practices which were then piloted by 21 existing business support organisations in 14 countries. Outcomes have been captured in the Better Incubation Insights Paper. The project developed a collection of best practices, a toolkit, three online training courses (social entrepreneurship, social impact measurement, inclusive entrepreneurship), a methodological guide for mainstream business support organisations willing to experiment or expand their inclusive incubation practices, and a policy roadmap. The work also built on the assessment of the CoPs' findings and of 15 local/regional ecosystems using the OECD-European Commission Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool, which allows for the self-assessment of local, regional and national ecosystems for inclusive and social entrepreneurship through self-reported questionnaires and provides guidance materials and case studies to improve policy.

Pilots around women's (social) entrepreneurship were run with 40 women in incubators (European Business Innovation Centres [EU|BIC] and Impact Hubs) in Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands. In Munich, Germany, for example, the programme supported 19 mothers on their path into entrepreneurship and self-employment through workshops, mentorship and peer-to-peer community building. The programme provided on-site childcare to reduce this key barrier to access. Across all locations, participants were queried on their intentions, entrepreneurial preconceptions, skills, access to personal support structures, access to networks and access to finance at the beginning and the end of the programme. Most – 85% – of the women intended to create social and environmental impact and the sectors of their (intended) activity were in wholesale and retail (24%), health and social work (18%), education (12%), and arts, entertainment and recreation (12%). The women reported in particular an increase in confidence in their ability to start a venture, in key business and impact skills such as pitching, product/service development and prototyping, operations and negotiation skills as a result of the programmes.

Sources: (Better Incubation, 2023<sup>[241]</sup>; OECD/European Commission, 2023<sup>[242]</sup>; EBN/Impact Hub/EVPA, 2022<sup>[243]</sup>)

**Expanding the gender angle of funding and financing can further boost women's social entrepreneurship.** Many financial instruments supporting social entrepreneurs already include a gender dimension. The European Union facilitates access to finance and supports countries and regions' similar efforts through initiatives such as the European Investment Fund (EIF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Many national-level programmes also directly target women social entrepreneurs. Les Déterminées, a French association, provides support and funding to disadvantaged young people and women social entrepreneurs in the suburbs (Gabriel, 2020<sup>[244]</sup>). Rethink Ireland provides funding and support for social enterprises, with some initiatives specifically targeting women (Box 17). India's National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in India offers funding to women who have no access to commercial banks (Morais, Dash and Bacic, 2016<sup>[245]</sup>).



### Box 17. Dedicated financial support for women social entrepreneurs (Europe, Ireland)

#### **Supranational level example: ESF+**

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) was created to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights through contributions to the EU's employment, social, education and skills policies, including structural reforms in these areas. It brings together four funding instruments that were separate in the programming period 2014-20: the European Social Fund (ESF), the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD), the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). It has a EUR 99.3 billion budget for the period 2021-27.

Almost EUR 85 billion from the ESF+ investments 2021-27 planned by the member states will contribute to gender equality through gender mainstreaming or specific measures. Member states have programmed EUR 4.3 billion from the ESF+ to support gender-balanced labour market participation. This funding will allow member states to develop work-life balance policies, including in the workplace, ensure gender-sensitive policies, increase the labour market participation of women, provide access to affordable and accessible care services for children, older persons or persons with disabilities, and tackle gender stereotypes.

#### **National-level example: Rethink Ireland**

Launched in 2013, Rethink Ireland (formerly known as the Social Innovation Fund) aims to foster social innovation. It operates multiple social enterprise funds for social enterprises focused on social, societal or environmental change. Since its founding, it has provided EUR 9 million in cash grants and business support to 71 social enterprises. It also funds programmes outside of Ireland.

The annual Social Enterprise Development fund was launched in 2018 in partnership with Local Authorities Ireland and funded by IPB Insurance and the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Dormant Accounts Fund. It provides EUR 4.4 million of seed funding to start-up social enterprises and elevated funding for social enterprises at growth stages, and offers business courses across all Local Authority regions in Ireland.

Rethink Ireland has a strong focus on supporting women social entrepreneurs, as these are often under-represented and face barriers to accessing finance. It provides tailored mentoring and networks, among others. It is also committed to achieving gender balance in its own staff and management. Many women-led initiatives have been supported since the fund was launched, including FoodCloud, a women-founded social enterprise connecting businesses with food surplus with local community groups and charities to distribute to people in need, and ReCreate Ireland, which collects discarded materials from businesses and turns those into arts and craft supplies for creative activities for children.

Sources: (Rethink Ireland, 2023<sup>[246]</sup>; Rethink Ireland, 2021<sup>[247]</sup>; ReCreate Ireland, 2023<sup>[248]</sup>; European Commission, 2023<sup>[249]</sup>; European Commission, 2023<sup>[250]</sup>)

**Further efforts could be made to remove barriers for women to set up social enterprises individually or jointly through dedicated social entrepreneurship programmes.** According to Empow'Her, a network for women social entrepreneurs, 82% of women have already envisaged becoming entrepreneurs; however, 10% say they lack the confidence in their capacities to develop projects and 70% would be more likely to actually become social entrepreneurs in the next five years if they benefitted from development support (Empow'Her, 2019<sup>[22]</sup>). The Empow'Her network runs various activities to increase visibility and (peer) support for women social entrepreneurs (Box 18).

### Box 18. Capacity development, networking and visibility (Empow'Her, Europe)

In 2012, Empow'Her was established in the context of a study on entrepreneurship as a lever of empowerment for women. It is an international network of organisations dedicated to women's social and economic empowerment. The aim is to strengthen women's freedom and entrepreneurial capacity by developing their capabilities and leadership skills, raising awareness within their communities, and developing partnerships with relevant public and private stakeholders.

Empow'Her runs four support programmes in Europe and in several African countries, such as Niger and Côte d'Ivoire. All of these programmes provide a valuable network for women in different stages of entrepreneurship, from the launch of a project to its consolidation. For example, the ten-month Women Act capacity-building and support programmes have supported 200 women from 12 countries to date. Empow'Her runs various activities to increase the visibility and capacity of female social entrepreneurs, including through an annual festival in France.

Sources: (Empow'Her, 2022<sup>[251]</sup>; Empow'Her, 2023<sup>[252]</sup>)

**Digital skills gaps are a concern for women, especially in the SSE.** According to OECD research, only 30% of young adults (16 and 24) that can program are women and only 14% of ICT (information and communication technology) task intensive jobs are held by women (OECD, 2023<sup>[253]</sup>). Digital skills gaps are particularly reinforced in the SSE, since SSE entities themselves face hurdles in acquiring digital skills. In response to that, the EU3Digital project strives to develop a framework for digital competences for SSE organisations (Box 19).

### Box 19. Digital competencies for SSE entities (EU3Digital, Europe)

Between November 2020 and April 2023, the EU3Digital project has set out to develop a framework for digital competences for SSE organisations. A policy paper on how to develop digital support for social impact, a toolkit on digital skills, and a curriculum and training materials were launched between April 2022 and March 2023. The project was conducted by a consortium composed of the Portuguese Social Enterprise Network ESLIDER, the University of Porto, the Open University (United Kingdom), Bienestar y Desarrollo Association (ABD) (a Spanish NGO defending the rights of socially disadvantaged people), Dkolektiv (a Croatian non-profit organisation for the promotion of social development), and Euclid Network (a European network of national social enterprise networks and civil society organisations). Within EU3Digital they are responsible for the development of the project's outputs as well as for the assessment of the developed training and on digital skills at the Learning, Teaching, Training Activities for leaders of SSE organisations in Porto, Barcelona and Croatia.

In May 2022, the project consortium released a toolkit on digital skills to support SSE organisations with going digital. The toolkit is a guide covering the basics of harmonising digital tools and their application in data collection, cybersecurity, finances, graphic design, community management etc. The toolkit provides users with guidance on how to access tools, resources and services that can enable them to choose the right software and adapt dynamically in their online presence. A framework inspired by the European Commission's Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) was released in June 2022. It describes the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to operate digital tools, establish operational effectiveness, develop organisational culture and leadership, apply ethical practices, and ensure participation and connection with peers. The project is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme.

Source: (EU3Digital, 2022<sup>[254]</sup>)

**Direct programmes to target women entrepreneurs are found in many countries and could be expanded.** For example, the Barcelona City Council, through the municipal economic development agency Barcelona Activa, promotes the programme Camí de la Solidesa (Road to Solidity) to strengthen social and solidarity economy organisations run and led by women or with a commitment to train women for leadership positions. The programme offers training on strategic planning, marketing and communication, economic and financial management, operational management, and the development of managerial and leadership skills (Barcelona Activa, 2022<sup>[255]</sup>). Other initiatives such as the SEWAC project in Greece, the WEI project in Atlanta, United States, and Mujeres Moviendo in Mexico offer tailored support services to women social entrepreneurs (Box 20). In these cases, public institutions also partnered with SSE entities for the design or delivery of these services, a good practice recommended in this field (OECD/European Commission, 2023<sup>[181]</sup>).

### **Box 20. Programmes for women empowerment through the SSE (Greece, Mexico, United States)**

#### **SEWAC: Partnerships across countries to support the role of women in the social economy (Greece, Lithuania, Poland)**

As part of its 2020 Entrepreneurship Action Plan and Lifelong Learning Programme, the European Commission, together with partner organisations from Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, developed a pan-European programme called Social Entrepreneurship as a Women Way to the Active Citizenship (SEWAC). The programme focused on building women's awareness of social entrepreneurship as a job opportunity, specifically targeting disadvantaged groups of women (e.g. the unemployed or socially excluded), by providing workshops, presentations, advisory activities and/or study visits. The projects built on many partnerships with organisations from Europe. In partnership with SEWAC, the Greek SSE entity ARSINOI established the Development Partnership to study and implement counselling, training and technical support to unemployed women through the establishment of Cooperative Social Enterprise Social Care. The project developed a map of the regional labour market status quo, with a focus on the social care service. SEWAC contributes to the third pillar of the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan launched by the European Commission, advocating for the need of European co-operation as driver for a new cross-cultural social perspective in entrepreneurship.

#### **WEI: Municipally founded incubator for women-led projects with social impact (Atlanta, Georgia/United States)**

The Women Entrepreneurship Initiative, launched in May 2016, in Atlanta (Georgia, United States) is a municipally founded incubator targeting specifically women-led entrepreneurial projects. Its primary goal is to foster an inclusive and supporting environment to the local community of aspiring business owners and entrepreneurs. WEI acts primarily as an incubator but also provides post-incubation support, technological resources, community outreach, educational workshops and mentorship engagement. In 2020, WEI presented a more structured 15-month programme aimed at 15 early-stage women entrepreneurs, built on four main areas of action (business analysis, leadership development, strategic partnership and funding opportunities) to tailor the individual needs of the cohort of participants through workshops, webinars and one-on-one mentoring sessions. In 2021, WEI launched the Women in the Workplace platform, in partnership with other agencies along with the Mayor's Office of International Affairs, to identify, mobilise and spotlight the best solutions to social, health and economic needs of Atlanta's underserved communities. Since 2016, WEI has created over 230 jobs with regular contractual positions, including in sectors displaying a low share of women in employment (e.g. manufacturing or construction).

### **Mujeres Moviendo México**

In 2014, the government of Mexico promoted *Mujeres Moviendo México* (Women Moving Mexico) as the first large-scale programme to support female entrepreneurship. It was implemented by the social enterprise *Crea Comunidades de Emprendedores Sociales, A.C.* (CREA) and funded by the *Instituto Nacional del Emprendedor* (National Institute of the Entrepreneur). *Mujeres Moviendo México* provides business training and assistance to female micro-entrepreneurs. For example, through a training programme covering business and financial literacy skills (e.g. cost analysis, marketing, management), as well as other “softer” entrepreneurial skills (e.g. proactiveness, networking skills). CREA has provided training and advice to women entrepreneurs and those from marginalised communities since 2008. To date, the organisation has worked with more than 16 000 women. According to a World Bank cost-effectiveness analysis, the cost per woman as estimated by CREA is MXN 5 000 (Mexican pesos) (approximately USD 270/EUR 245) which would be recovered after about eight months thanks to additional sales enabled through the programme. The cost per additional job created through the programme is estimated at about USD 2 200.

Sources: (World Bank, 2017<sup>[256]</sup>; CREA, 2022<sup>[257]</sup>) (Invest Atlanta, 2023<sup>[258]</sup>) (Women Social Economy EU, 2023<sup>[259]</sup>)

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## Annex A. Social economy employment data sources used

**Table 2. The SSE represents a notable share of employment in many countries**

Country	Entities	Total SSE employment (as % share of total employment)	Co-operatives and similar (as % share of SSE employment)	Mutual societies (as % share of SSE employment)	Associations and foundations (as % share of SSE employment)	Contribution to GDP in %	Year of reference	Source
Australia	20 000 (social enterprises)	State of Victoria: 60 000	180 000 (in co-operatives and mutuals)	n/a	n/a	AUD 20 billion	2016, 2021	BCCM, 2021
Austria	28 615.00	308 050 (7.6%)	70 474 (22.9%)	1 576 (0.5%)	236 000 (76.6%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Belgium	16 265.00	403 921 (9%)	23 904 (5.9%)	17 211 (4.3%)	362 806 (89.8%)	n/a	2015	IADB, 2016.
Brazil	19 000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2013	Centre for Social Impact/Social Traders, 2016; Business Victoria, 2022
Bulgaria	48 292.00	82 050 (2.8%)	53 841 (65.6%)	1 169 (1.4%)	27 040 (33%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Canada	n/a	31 000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2016	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Colombia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4%	2020	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Croatia	44 491.00	15 848 (1%)	2 744 (17.3%)	2 123 (13.4%)	10 981 (69.3%)	n/a	2015	British Council/UNESCAP, 2021
Cyprus	5 196.00	6 984	3 078	(n/a)	3 906	n/a	2015	Monzón and

		(2%)	(44.1%)	(0%)	(55.9%)			Chaves, 2016
Czech Republic	130 478.00	162 921 (3.3%)	50 310 (30.9%)	5 368 (3.3%)	107 243 (65.8%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Denmark	13 943.00	158 961 (5.9%)	49 552 (31.2%)	4 328 (2.7%)	105 081 (66.1%)	n/a	2015	Castillo, 2020
Estonia	n/a	38 036 (6.2%)	9 850 (25.9%)	186 (0.5%)	28 000 (73.6%)	n/a	n/a	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
EU	n/a	13 621 535 (6.3%)	4 198 193 (30.8%)	407 602 (3%)	9 015 740 (66.2%)	n/a	n/a	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Finland	145 788.00	182 105 (7.7%)	93 511 (51.4%)	6 594 (3.6%)	82 000 (45%)	n/a	2014	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
France	195 584.00	2 372 812 (9.1%)	308 532 (13%)	136 723 (5.8%)	1 927 557 (81.2%)	Ú 10%	2014, 2021	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Germany	113 963.00	2 635 980 (6.7%)	860 000 (32.6%)	102 119 (3.9%)	1 673 861 (63.5%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Greece	57 803.00	117 516 (3.3%)	14 983 (12.7%)	1 533 (1.3%)	101 000 (85.9%)	n/a	2011-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Hungary	64 951.00	234 747 (5.6%)	85 682 (36.5%)	6 948 (3%)	142 117 (60.5%)	n/a	2009-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
India	2 000 000 (social enterprises)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Ireland	25 457.00	95 147 (5%)	39 935 (42%)	455 (0.5%)	54 757 (57.5%)	n/a	2005	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Italy	350 356.00	1 923 745 (8.8%)	1 267 603 (65.9%)	20 531 (1.1%)	635 611 (33%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Japan	n/a	5 800 000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2016	KoSEA, 2019
Korea	19 000 (social enterprises)	110 0000 (1.4%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2019	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Latvia	19 611.00	19 341 (2.2%)	440 (2.3%)	373 (1.9%)	18 528 (95.8%)	n/a	2009-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Lithuania	22 444.00	7 332 (0.6%)	7 000 (95.5%)	332 (4.5%)	(n/a) (0%)	n/a	2007-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Luxembourg	845.00	25 345 (9.9%)	2 941 (11.6%)	406 (1.6%)	21 998 (86.8%)	n/a	2012-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Malta	749.00	2 404 (1.3%)	768 (31.9%)	209 (8.7%)	1 427 (59.4%)	n/a	2011-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016

Mexico	62 000	1 200 000 (3.2%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.2%	2022	SENAES, 2013; INEGI Mexico, 2022
Netherlands	60 194.00	798 778 (9.8%)	126 797 (15.9%)	2 860 (0.4%)	669 121 (83.8%)	n/a	2014-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Poland	109 408.00	365 900 (2.3%)	235 200 (64.3%)	1 900 (0.5%)	128 800 (35.2%)	1.8%	2014-15, 2021	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Portugal	61 268.00	215 963 (5%)	24 316 (11.3%)	4 896 (2.3%)	186 751 (86.5%)	3%	2013, 2021	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Romania	47 650.00	136 385 (1.7%)	31 573 (23.1%)	5 038 (3.7%)	99 774 (73.2%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Slovakia	44 498.00	51 611 (2.1%)	23 799 (46.1%)	2 212 (4.3%)	25 600 (49.6%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Slovenia	n/a	10 710 (1.2%)	3 059 (28.6%)	319 (3%)	7 332 (68.5%)	n/a	n/a	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Spain	189 538.00	1 358 401 (7.7%)	528 000 (38.9%)	2 360 (0.2%)	828 041 (61%)	10%	2008-15, 2021	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Sweden	70 177.00	195 832 (4.2%)	57 516 (29.4%)	13 908 (7.1%)	124 408 (63.5%)	n/a	2013-15	Monzón and Chaves, 2016
Türkiye	9 000 (social enterprises)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Elson, Hall and Wamucii, 2016
United Kingdom	876 941.00	1 694 710 (5.6%)	222 785 (13.1%)	65 925 (3.9%)	1 406 000 (83%)	n/a	2015	Monzón and Chaves, 2016

Note: Non-exhaustive collection of references from across OECD and Global Action countries

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