



TECHNICAL BRIEF

August 2013



GENDER EQUALITY IN TRIPARTITE SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Tripartite social dialogue and gender equality are both fundamental values and cross-cutting issues for the International Labour Organization (ILO). Tripartism is a recognized governance tool in promoting equality between women and men at work.²

The issue of gender equality in social dialogue may be examined from a twofold perspective:

- quantitative data on the participation of men and women in national social dialogue institutions;³ and
- qualitative data reflecting the substance of tripartite discussion on gender equality and actions taken by governments and social partners in practice.

The objective of this note is to present quantitative data on the participation of men and women in tripartite social dialogue at national and international levels for 50 countries in Europe and Central Asia (hereafter – “the ECA region”).

National social dialogue institutions have emerged in many countries which involve the tripartite social partners in decisions on social and economic policies. Although the reality of gender equality in tripartite social dialogue is multifaceted, a common feature is the persistently low level of participation by women in these forums. ILO national and comparative studies confirm this democratic deficit at all levels of tripartite social dialogue worldwide, a trend that indeed reflects women’s under-representation in government, trade unions and employers’ organizations. Such low level of participation by women may also explain the scarcity of meaningful discussion and initiatives on gender equality issues in social dialogue institutions.⁴

In 1990, the United Nations urged Member States to work towards increasing the proportion of women in decision- and policy-making bodies to a minimum target of 30 per cent. The ILO has also, on several occasions, called upon its 185 member States to promote the equal access of men and women to policy decision processes.

In the European Union (EU), the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men for 2010–2015 similarly lists among thematic priorities, the promotion of gender equality in decision-making. Several interesting initiatives have been taken at the level of governments and social partners in EU Member States.⁵

In contrast to the regular collection of information on the number of women in parliaments, there are gaps in the availability of data concerning tripartite national social dialogue institutions worldwide. To start developing harmonized and reliable sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in this

¹ The authors express sincere thanks to Jane Hodges, Youcef Ghellab, and Valérie van Goethem for their support and valuable comments and to Rita Natola for editing and publication assistance.

² Conclusions on “Gender equality at the heart of decent work”, 2009, International Labour Conference, 98th Session, Geneva.

³ The term “national institutions for social dialogue” refers to various bodies existing in different countries, such as tripartite commissions for social partnership, economic and social councils, labour advisory boards (see Table 3 for the list of institutions in Europe and Central Asia).

⁴ Briskin, L.; Muller, A. 2011. “Promoting gender equality through social dialogue: Global trends and persistent obstacles”, Working Paper No. 34, Industrial and Employment Relations Department, ILO, Geneva.

⁵ Weiler, A. 2013. “Gender equality in social dialogue in European Union”, Governance and Tripartism Department, ILO, Geneva.

field, in 2012–2013 the ILO conducted a survey among the tripartite social dialogue institutions in the ECA region.⁶

Obviously, the men-to-women ratio cannot be used as a unique reference for judging the level of mainstreaming of gender equality in national tripartite social dialogue institutions. However, such quantitative data contains important indicators for assessing the situation and measuring progress in the promotion of equality between men and women.

The results of the ILO survey in 2012–2013 are summarized in this note, focussing on two issues:

- participation of men and women in national tripartite social dialogue institutions;
- gender composition of tripartite national delegations in the International Labour Conference.

Participation of men and women in national institutions for tripartite social dialogue

The ILO survey aims to assess the gender composition of national social dialogue institutions. The structure of these institutions in the 50 countries of the ECA region varies: bipartite, bipartite-plus, tripartite or tripartite-plus. “Plus” indicates the participation of other organized groups of civil society, in addition to the ILO tripartite constituents (governments, trade unions and employers’ associations), or the bipartite structure involving representatives of trade unions and employers’ associations.

From the beginning of the analysis, it is important to note that the participation of men and women can vary from one year to the next. Another factor to be taken into account is that the appointment to a tripartite social dialogue body is linked to the positions people occupy in the participating organizations of the social dialogue body.

Allowing for possible variations, the data in Table 1 provides an overview of some trends on the participation of women in national social dialogue institutions in the ECA region. Of the 50 countries in the region, ten have no permanent social dialogue body at the national level. The remaining 40 countries with such institutions show the following trends:

- In 6 countries (15 per cent), women comprise more than 30 per cent of participants in national institutions for social dialogue. Parity is achieved only in Norway. France showed the second best result with women comprising 43 per cent of participants in the Social and Economic Council.
- In 15 countries (38 per cent), women account for 11–29 per cent of total participants.
- In 14 countries (35 per cent), women account for 2–10 per cent of total participants.
- In 5 countries (13 per cent), women are not represented at all.

Table 1. Participation of women in national social dialogue institutions in Europe and Central Asia

Participation of women (%)	Countries
0	Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Hungary, Turkey
1 – 10	Romania (2%), Albania (4%), Cyprus (7%), Denmark (8%), FYR of Macedonia (8%), Greece (8%), Slovakia (8%), Austria (9%), Czech Republic (9%), Italy (9%), Malta (9%), Montenegro (9%), Slovenia (9%), Republic of Moldova (10%)
11 – 20	Poland (11%), Belarus (12%), Luxembourg (13%), Tajikistan (13%), Ukraine (13%), Russian Federation (16%), Croatia (17%), Finland (17%), Portugal (17%), Serbia (17%), Spain (18%), Belgium (19%)
21 – 30	Netherlands (24%), Armenia (27%), Bulgaria (29%), Lithuania (30%)
31 – 40	Ireland (31%), Latvia (33%), Kazakhstan (35%)
41 – 50	France (43%), Norway (50%)

Source: ILO Survey, 2012–2013.

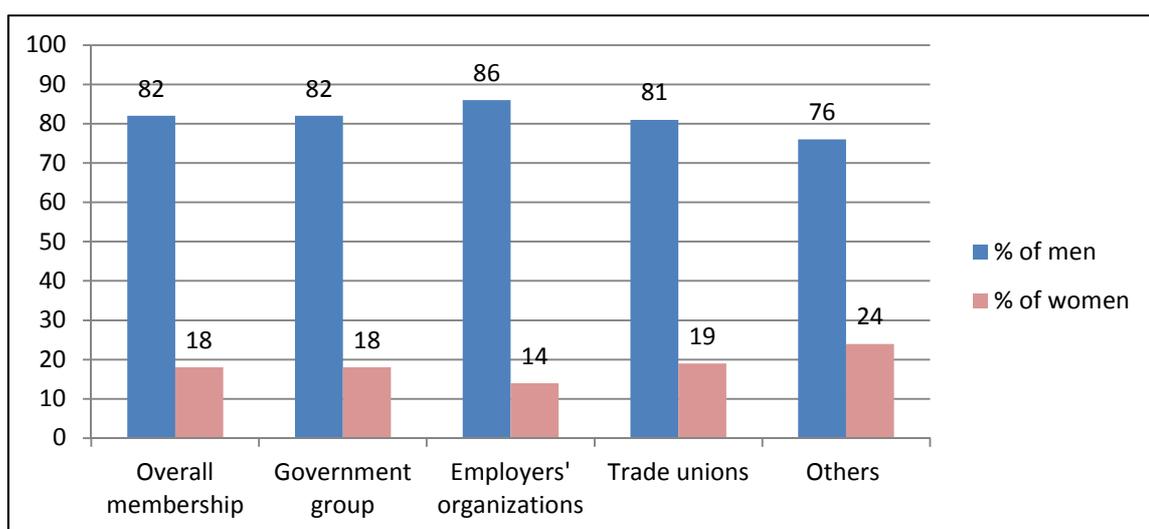
⁶ The survey was conducted by: email correspondence with ILO national coordinators and members of the respective social dialogue institutions, telephone interviews, and research on the Internet. The authors of this note express their sincere thanks to the respondents in the different countries and to ILO colleagues who provided data on national social dialogue boards.

Table 3 at the end of this note provides more detailed information (disaggregated by sex and by group) on the composition of national social dialogue institutions in the ECA region.

The data disaggregated by group show that on average women comprise 18 per cent of participants in national social dialogue bodies in the ECA region (Figure 1).

- In the workers' group, 19 per cent of the participants are women, followed by the government group with 18 per cent.
- The lowest participation level is in the employers' group, in which only 14 per cent of participants are women.
- The highest result is in the group representing civil society, in which women comprise 24 per cent of participants.

Figure 1. Participation of men and women in social dialogue institutions in Europe and Central Asia (data disaggregated by group)



Source: ILO Survey, 2012-2013.

The only baseline for comparison across regions and over time is the ILO survey of 2007 which gathered data from 48 social dialogue institutions worldwide. In that study, women accounted for an average of 15 per cent in national tripartite social dialogue institutions. Europe with 17 per cent of women showed the highest result in comparison to other regions.⁷

The data disaggregated by sub-region in the ECA region show that the average participation of women in national social dialogue is:

- 17 per cent in the EU⁸ and Norway;
- 14 per cent in CIS countries⁹ and Georgia;
- eight per cent in the group of countries of Central and South Eastern Europe.¹⁰

The analysis of figures on the participation of women in tripartite social dialogue institutions in the ECA region would suggest that further efforts should be done to improve the current situation. Figure 3 at the end of this note explicitly confirms that the target set by the United Nations of at least 30 per cent of women at decision-making level is achieved in the ECA region only in 15 per cent of national tripartite institutions.

⁷ Breneman-Pennas, T.; Rueda Catry, M. 2008. "Women's participation in social dialogue institutions at the national level", Working Paper No. 16, Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration Branch, Geneva, ILO.

⁸ This note examines data from the following countries of the European Union (EU): Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

⁹ This note examines data from Georgia and the following countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

¹⁰ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey.

Gender composition of tripartite delegations in the International Labour Conference

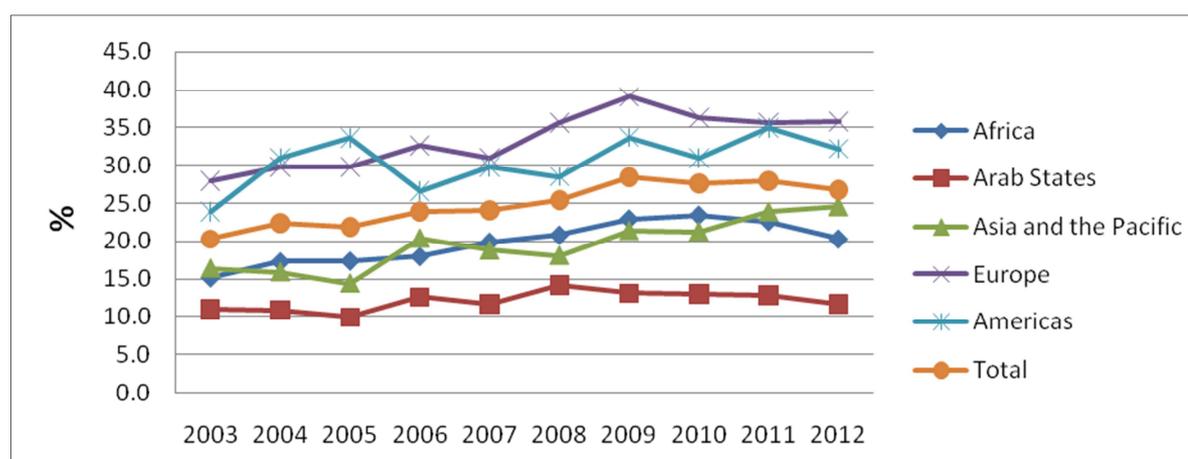
The annual International Labour Conference (ILC), which is often called a global parliament for social and economic issues, brings together tripartite delegations from ILO member States in Geneva.

In 2012, the Credentials Committee of the ILC reported that yet again the target of the United Nations set in 1990 to increase the proportion of women in decision-and policy-making bodies was not achieved. The Governing Body of the ILO has reiterated the call to member States to improve the gender balance of tripartite delegations in ILO meetings. In November 2012, the Governing Body decided on several measures to increase the proportion of women in delegations to the ILC.

The statistics available for the period 2003 to 2012¹¹ concerning the representation of women in the ILC show the following:

- During the last decade, the average total number of women participants increased from 20 to 27 per cent. However, the target of 30 per cent was never achieved; the best result was in 2009 at 28.4 per cent.
- The best result among regions is almost always that of the European delegations: the participation of women of 28 per cent in 2003 rose to 36 per cent in 2012. Since 2006, the participation of European women has been superior to 30 per cent; this peaked in 2009 at 39 per cent.
- In 2012, only two regions achieved the target of 30 per cent women in their delegations – Europe (36 per cent) and the Americas (32 per cent). The other regions were below the average of 26.8 per cent: Asia and the Pacific (25 per cent), Africa (20 per cent) and Arab States (12 per cent).

Figure 2. Participation of women in the International Labour Conference, (by region), 2003-2012



Source: Data of the ILO Gender Bureau on "Gender balance in the International Labour Conference", 2003-2012.

Encouraging figures came from the ILO European regional meeting which gathered 42 countries from the ECA region in Oslo, Norway in April 2013:

- 41 per cent of delegates were women (average of titular and suppliant delegates, and counsellors);
- 37 per cent of 17 Ministers accredited at the Conference were women;
- All the three groups exceeded the target of 30 per cent: 49 per cent for governments, 35 per cent for the employers' group and 35 per cent for the workers' group.

Table 2 reflects the gender composition of tripartite delegations of 42 countries of the ECA region as follows:

- 19 countries (45 per cent) had national delegations of which more than 30 per cent were women;
- 18 countries (43 per cent) achieved gender parity in their tripartite delegations;

¹¹ The authors express their sincere thanks to Irène Pralong and Sébastien Greget, ILO Relations, Meetings and Document Services Department, Geneva, for having provided comprehensive statistics on participation in the ILC and ILO regional conferences.

- 13 countries (31 per cent) had national delegations of which 25 per cent were women;
- 10 national delegations (24 per cent) were exclusively male.

Table 2. Percentage of women in tripartite delegations to the ILO European Regional Conference, Oslo, Norway, April 2013

Percentage	Countries
100	Finland, Hungary
75	Estonia, Italia, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia
67	United Kingdom
50	Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Denmark, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden
33	Russian Federation
25	Germany, Cyprus, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland, Ukraine
0	Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Turkey

Conclusions and recommendations

Women, who constitute half of humankind and 40 per cent of the global workforce, should have an equal voice with men at all forums and levels of decision-making on social and economic issues. They need to be fully involved in designing and assessing policies, including from a gender perspective. A better representation of women in social dialogue institutions would certainly enrich the work process and outcomes of these institutions. In 2013, the International Labour Conference concluded its discussion on social dialogue by calling to “promote gender equality, and increase and strengthen women’s participation and engagement in social dialogue mechanisms”.¹²

Data on tripartite social dialogues bodies in the ECA region confirm that despite tangible progress and several positive initiatives, women remain under-represented in such participatory forums. To help make equality between men and women a reality, policy-makers and relevant institutions need support in terms of specific actions by international organizations, governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations, specialized equality bodies and NGOs. Such actions include developing partnerships among international and regional agencies, encouraging formal commitments from tripartite social partners to promoting gender equality, and collecting gender statistics to monitor progress on this important issue.

Developing partnerships for gender equality

The cooperation of the ILO with other international agencies such as UN Women¹³ is vital to promoting gender equality at work.

In the ECA region, of particular importance for the ILO is collaboration with the European Union and its various institutions in charge of gender equality mainstreaming. The European Commission monitors and annually reports on progress in achieving equality between men and women on a range of indicators, including on the access of women to decision-making in political and economic life.

The ILO should initiate collaboration on gender equality with the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS), which counted 71 members in 2013. The Economic and Social Councils are consultative institutions regrouping the social partners and other stakeholders of civil society. Several documents of the AICESIS declared that Economic and Social Councils – by virtue of their mandate and composition – could be in an ideal position to become workshops for innovative practice and monitoring bodies, helping to fight and eradicate gender inequality.¹⁴

¹² Conclusions on the “Recurrent discussion on social dialogue” (Para. 12(8)), 2013, International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, Geneva.

¹³ UN Women and ILO. 2012. “Policy Brief on Decent work and women’s economic empowerment: Good policy and practice”.

¹⁴ <http://www.aicesis.org/>

Formalizing commitment to promote gender parity and equality

The participation of men and women on an equal footing is a primary requisite for any democratic process. Tripartite social dialogue fora and their members can consider adopting formal commitments to move towards gender parity.

Similarly, organizations and institutions which are partners in social dialogue can define targets for promoting the participation of women, without introducing mandatory quotas.

Monitoring progress through research and collection of data on gender equality

Evidence-based policy decisions must be informed by comparable and reliable information. Such data is indispensable for monitoring progress, evaluating policies and programmes and making appropriate adjustments.

Available statistics on gender equality in social dialogue is scarce in all regions of the world and the ECA region is not an exception.

Additional research is necessary to further raise awareness on the main trends and issues in ensuring the adoption of measures for mainstreaming gender equality in social dialogue. Of particular usefulness is the sharing of good practices in promoting women's leadership and participation in public and corporate economic decision-making, and in employers' and workers' organizations.

The European Union has initiated some interesting projects which, however, do not provide information on the gender composition of tripartite social dialogue institutions:

- The European Commission database on women and men in decision-making covers the gender balance in key positions in social partner organizations representing employers and employees at the European level.¹⁵
- The Gender Equality Index, to be launched by the European Institute for Gender Equality in 2013, will measure in the domain of power the gaps between women's and men's representation in the political and economic spheres, since gender equality is affected by the lack of participation and access to decision-making.

Systematic data is especially lacking for assessing trends across regions and over time. This brief is a first attempt for such data collection, and similar publications on other regions would allow comparative analysis for monitoring trends worldwide.

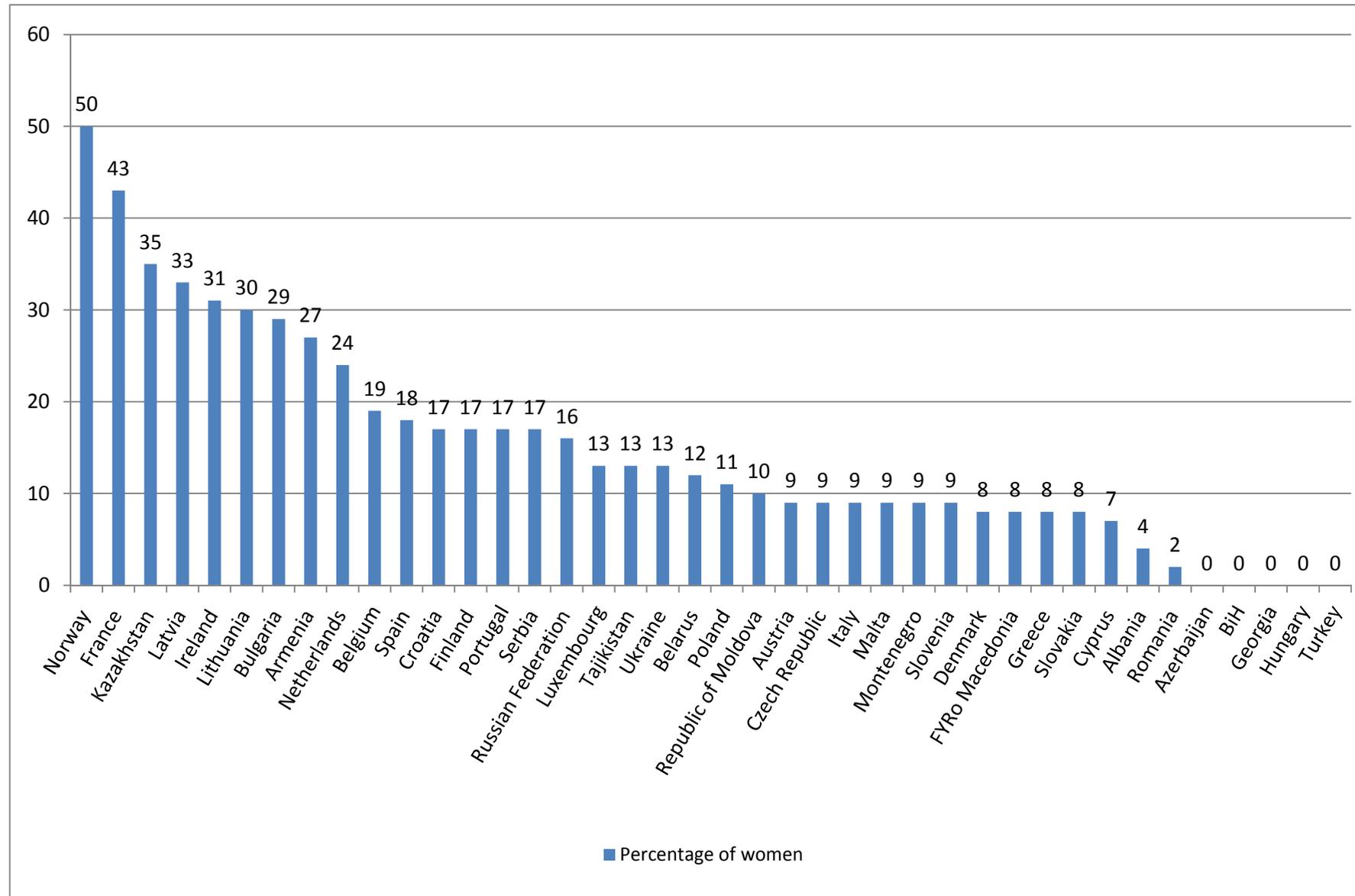
Further information

"Gender equality and social dialogue: An annotated bibliography", 2012, Social Dialogue Sector, ILO, Geneva. This resource tool provides over 130 references to ILO and academic publications on gender equality and social dialogue.

The ILO web page on "Gender equality in social dialogue and industrial relations" provides links to main ILO reports and resources: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/areas/gender.htm>

¹⁵ This database covers employers' organizations and trade unions at the EU level which engage in European social dialogue – i.e. discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions taking place between employers and trade unions at the European level, as well as between them and EU institutions. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/civil-society/social-partners/index_en.htm

Figure 3. Participation of women in national social dialogue institutions in Europe and Central Asia



Source: ILO Survey, 2012-2013.

Figure 4. Participation of women in social dialogue institutions in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

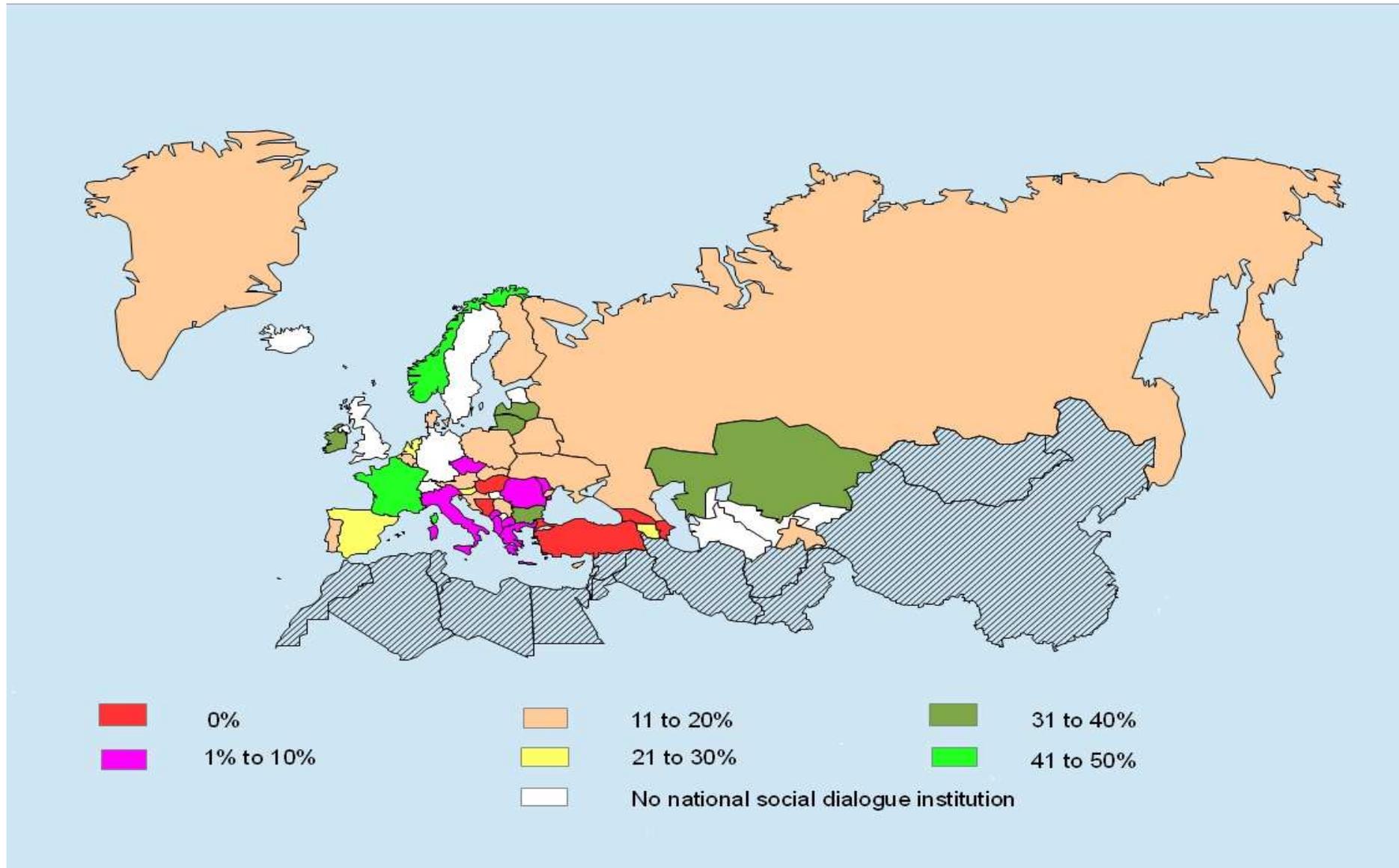


Table 3. Participation of women in tripartite national social dialogue institutions in Europe and Central Asia (as of May 2013)

Country	Title of the national social dialogue institution (date of creation, structure ¹⁶)	Total number of members / % of women	Percentage of women in different groups			
			Government	Employers	Trade unions	Others
Albania	National Labour Council (1995, tripartite)	27 members / 4%	0%	10%	0%	–
Armenia	Tripartite National Commission (2009, tripartite)	15 members / 27%	20%	20%	40%	–
Austria	Advisory Council for Economic and Social Affairs (1963, bipartite-plus)	21 members / 9%	–	0%	12%	20%
Azerbaijan	National Council on OSH (2012, tripartite)	9 members / 0%	0%	0%	0%	–
Belarus	National Council on the labour and social issues (2010, tripartite)	33 members / 12%	36%	0%	0%	–
Belgium	National Labour Council (1952, bipartite)	26 members / 19%	–	15%	31%	–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Economic and Social Council of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002, tripartite)	21 members / 0%	0%	0%	0%	–
Bulgaria	Economic and Social Council (2003, bipartite-plus)	38 members / 29%	–	33%	17%	36%
Croatia	Economic and Social Council (2002, tripartite)	18 members / 17%	30%	0%	0%	–
Cyprus	Labour Advisory Board (2006, tripartite)	14 members / 7%	100%	0%	0%	–
Czech Republic	Council of Economic and Social Agreement (1990, tripartite)	21 members / 9%	14%	0%	14%	–
Denmark¹⁷	Economic Council (1962, tripartite-plus)	25 members / 8%	0%	0%	17%	10%

¹⁶ The structure of national social dialogue bodies varies in different countries: such councils may be bipartite, bipartite-plus, tripartite or tripartite-plus.

Country	Title of the national social dialogue institution (date of creation, structure ¹⁶)	Total number of members / % of women	Percentage of women in different groups			
			Government	Employers	Trade unions	Others
Estonia ¹⁸	Estonian ILO Tripartite Council (1991, tripartite)	12 members / 92%	75%	0%	0%	–
Finland	Economic Council (1966, tripartite-plus)	18 members/ 17%	33%	0%	0%	0%
France	Economic and Social Council (1959, bipartite-plus)	225 members 43%	–	43%	47%	40%
Georgia	Tripartite Social Partnership Commission (2005, tripartite)	15 members/ 0%	0%	0%	0%	–
Germany	No national social dialogue board					
Greece	Economic and Social Committee (1994, bipartite-plus)	60 members / 8%	–	10%	10%	5%
Hungary	National Economic and Social Council (2011, bipartite-plus)	32 members / 0% women	–	0%	0%	0%
Ireland	National Economic and Social Council (1973, tripartite-plus)	32 members / 31%	25%	0%	25%	40%
Israel	No national social dialogue institution					
Italy	National Economic and Labour Council (1957, bipartite-plus)	58 members / 9%	–	0%	9%	14%
Kazakhstan	Republican (national) Tripartite Commission on Social Partnership and Regulation of Social and Labour Relations (1994, tripartite)	20 members / 35%	29%	50%	29%	–
Kyrgyzstan	As of July 2013, the new composition of the Republican Tripartite Committee had not yet been decided					
Latvia	National Tripartite Cooperation Council (1996, tripartite)	21 members / 33%	29%	29%	43%	–

¹⁷ In Denmark, the Economic Council has an informal structure and can best be described as tripartite-plus. It represents economic experts, the social partners, professional organizations, the government and the Central Bank.

¹⁸ In Estonia, there is no social dialogue institution of general competency. The existing Council deals with issues related to collaboration with the ILO.

Country	Title of the national social dialogue institution (date of creation, structure ¹⁶)	Total number of members / % of women	Percentage of women in different groups			
			Government	Employers	Trade unions	Others
Lithuania	Tripartite Council (1998, tripartite)	20 members / 30%	29%	14%	50%	–
Luxembourg	Economic and Social Council (1966, bipartite-plus)	39 members / 13%	–	5%	17%	33%
Malta	Council for Economic and Social Development (2001, tripartite-plus)	17 members / 9%	20%	0%	0%	0%
FYR Macedonia	Economic and Social Council (1996, tripartite)	12 members / 8%	0%	25%	0%	–
Republic of Moldova	National Commission for Collective Consultancy and Bargaining (2006, tripartite)	31 members / 10%	18%	10%	0%	–
Montenegro	Social Council (2007, tripartite)	33 members / 9%	0%	18%	9%	–
Netherlands	Economic and Social Council (1950, tripartite)	33 members / 24%	27%	18%	18%	–
Norway	Employment and Pension Policy Council (2004, tripartite)	12 members / 50%	67%	80%	0%	–
Poland	Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs (1994, tripartite-plus)	62 members / 11%	7%	14%	9%	0%
Portugal	Economic and Social Council (1991, tripartite-plus)	64 members / 17%	25%	0%	12%	20%
Romania	Economic and Social Council (1997, bipartite-plus)	45 members / 2%	–	0%	7%	0%
Russian Federation	Russian Tripartite Commission for Regulating Social and Labour Relations (1999, tripartite)	87 members / 16%	25%	13%	10%	–
San Marino	No national social dialogue institution					
Serbia	Economic and Social Council (2001, tripartite)	18 members / 17%	33%	0%	17%	–
Slovakia	Economic and Social Committee (1999, tripartite)	76 members / 8%	9%	7%	11%	–

Country	Title of the national social dialogue institution (date of creation, structure ¹⁶)	Total number of members / % of women	Percentage of women in different groups			
			Government	Employers	Trade unions	Others
Slovenia	Economic and Social Council (1994, tripartite)	23 members / 9%	20%	14%	0%	–
Spain	Economic and Social Council (1991, bipartite-plus)	56 members / 18%	–	5%	35%	12%
Sweden	No national social dialogue institution					
Switzerland	No national social dialogue institution					
Tajikistan	Republican Tripartite Commission for Regulation of Labour Relations (2012, tripartite)	30 members / 13%	10%	10%	20%	–
Turkey	Economic and Social Council (1995, tripartite-plus)	39 members / 0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Turkmenistan	No national social dialogue institution					
Ukraine	National Tripartite Social and Economic Council (2005, tripartite)	60 members / 13%	10%	5%	25%	–
United Kingdom	No national social dialogue institution					
Uzbekistan	No national social dialogue institution					

Source: ILO Survey, 2012–2013.

Note: These figures only include permanent representatives of the national social dialogue institutions.