

Trade Unions against Discrimination Project 3rd Learning Seminar on Gender

Event held in Madrid (Spain) on 18 & 19 September 2024

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- **Welcome words & Opening panel**

- Cristina Antoñanzas Peñalva (UGT Deputy General Secretary) opened the seminar by welcoming participants to Julián Besteiro School, a venue named after a prominent Spanish trade unionist. She highlighted that previous seminars (within the Trade Unions against Discrimination project) in this series had addressed other forms of discrimination, and now it was essential to focus on gender equality and emphasized the importance of taking a cross-sectional approach to addressing discrimination. She noted that many women face multiple layers of inequality based on their gender, disability, migration status, and socioeconomic background. Therefore, efforts to combat discrimination should be intersectional, recognizing the complexities of these overlapping issues. She shared key statistics, noting that women make up 51% of Spain's population, with significant portions facing additional discrimination based on other factors. She discussed the political climate in Spain, expressing concern about the growing influence of far-right movements which deny gender-based violence and wage inequality. She referenced a recent report showing that while 44% of men recognize gender inequality, only 33% of women do, indicating ongoing challenges. Cristina also raised the issue of hate speech on social media, particularly targeting younger people, and stressed the importance of countering this narrative. Finally, she highlighted UGT's current focus on the transposition of EU directives on wage transparency and gender-based violence, and emphasized the need for ongoing efforts to secure gender equality through both legislation and activism. She also mentioned UGT's commitment to advocating for a wage agreement and pushing for a reduction in working hours from 40 to 37 hours per week.
- Giulio Romani (ETUC Confederal Secretary) welcomed the high number of [participants](#) in the room and thanked UGT for having hosted the event but also for their collaboration in organizing it. He acknowledged the importance of the seminar series in addressing various forms of discrimination, with today's focus on gender-based discrimination against women. He noted that the seminar series had already covered topics such as racism and disabilities and would end in February 2025 with a focus on LGBTQI+ issues. He emphasized the importance of words and terminology in shaping societal attitudes and policies and expressed concern about the recent removal of terms like “employment and work” from the titles of European commissioners, as it risks reducing people to their capabilities rather than recognizing their inherent value. He also underscored the importance of a coherent political approach to protect those affected by discrimination and to influence European policies effectively.
- Aina Calvo Sastre (Spain's State Secretary for Equality and the Eradication of Violence against Women) delivered a powerful speech highlighting the importance of sorority (solidarity) among women, trade unions, and governments. She emphasized that collective action, with a shared agenda, is essential in tackling discrimination and advancing gender equality. She outlined Spain's firm commitment to gender equality, especially through its collaboration with trade unions in shaping public policies that benefit women. Notably, she discussed recent labour reforms in Spain, which have led to significant increases in women's social security contributions. She also touched on ongoing efforts to reduce working hours, stressing that these reforms must prioritize women's well-being, particularly in terms of balancing professional and family responsibilities. She highlighted Spain's focus on care services, advocating for greater male involvement in caregiving roles and supporting families with children under 16 in managing both work and family life.



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She also spoke about the Parity Law, which promotes greater representation of women in both politics and business. In addition, she outlined the country's ongoing initiatives to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. In conclusion, she reaffirmed Spain's unwavering dedication to combating gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence. She stressed the importance of continued awareness and collaboration with trade unions to implement effective measures that protect women and foster safer, more equitable environments.

- **Panel Discussion : The concept of intersectionality in EU legislation on gender equality: potentials and shortcomings**

 - Kalina Arabadjieva (ETUI Senior Researcher) opened the panel discussion by providing an overview of the anti-discrimination framework in place within the European Union. She pointed out that these laws are fragmented, often applying only to specific areas like employment, and that they operate on a single-axis model, which limits claims to one form of discrimination at a time. This approach is problematic because multiple forms of discrimination often intersect, creating compounded disadvantages for people, such as Muslim women wearing headscarves. She explained that although intersectional discrimination is a recognized issue, the legal framework does not fully address it. She highlighted the European Parliament's resolution on intersectional discrimination (2022), which calls for a more comprehensive approach. She also suggested that one way to improve this would be through a capacious interpretation, where courts recognize that individuals experience discrimination in multiple ways, depending on the intersection of their identities. However, she acknowledged recent shifts in EU directives, such as the Work-Life Balance Directive and Pay Transparency Directive, which now begin to acknowledge intersectional discrimination. For instance, the Pay Transparency Directive defines intersectional discrimination and treats it as an aggravating factor in discrimination cases. It also imposes a positive duty on public authorities to address it. Despite these advances, she noted several challenges: the narrow focus of some directives (primarily on sex and other protected characteristics), the exclusion of factors like socioeconomic status and migrant background, and the need for a broader definition in future legislation. Finally, she emphasized the importance of court interpretation in advancing the recognition of intersectional discrimination and encouraged bringing such cases to court to encourage legal change.
 - Marta Pompili (EQUINET Policy Officer) began by discussing the importance of tackling intersectional discrimination within both EU anti-discrimination law and the work of equality bodies. She explained that equality bodies, as public institutions set up across Europe, assist victims of discrimination and are tasked with addressing multiple forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. The [Spanish Institute of Women](#) was cited as an example of an equality body working on gender issues. At the European level, [Equinet](#), a network of 47 equality bodies, supports these institutions in their work. She emphasized that, by their nature, equality bodies are well-equipped to deal with intersectional discrimination, capturing the diverse experiences of victims. A 2018 study by Equinet found that 18 equality bodies in 17 countries already work on intersectional discrimination. Examples include the Belgian body [Unia](#), which has developed a diversity barometer and conducted a documentary on older migrant workers. Other examples include the [Swedish Equality Ombudsman](#) and [Fada](#) (Germany), which have also worked on intersectionality for many years. Despite this progress, she noted significant challenges. Many equality bodies still operate on a single-axis model of discrimination, which is a barrier when handling cases of intersectional discrimination. Bringing such cases to court remains difficult, and national provisions often fail to adequately address the issue.



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She highlighted the new EU directive (adopted in June 2024), which outlines standards for equality bodies, emphasizing the importance of collaboration with various stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and social partners. She also pointed to the Pay Transparency Directive as an example of how the goals of equality bodies, trade unions, and other groups working to combat gender-based discrimination and unequal pay are aligned. Lastly, she underscored that effective interdisciplinary cooperation could generate broader public impact and ensure that the voices of those most affected by discrimination are heard and incorporated into policymaking and lawmaking.

- Ana Maria Corral (UGT Head of the Migration Department) emphasised the discrimination faced by women with a migrant background. She explained that in 2022, the CJUE ruled that Spain was not complying with gender equality directives concerning domestic workers who were not paying social security fees or receiving employment benefits. She also discussed the broader issue of inequality faced by migrant women, who suffer from multiple layers of discrimination. Recent reports on pay gaps show that migrant women earn less than both migrant men and Spanish women, with the disparity being especially significant between South American women and Spanish women. She then argued that if European Directives were properly applied, the gender pay gap should be more pronounced than the gap between women of different nationalities. The situation becomes worse when migrant women gain Spanish nationality, as they are often pushed into low-wage domestic work, where salaries are the lowest in the country. Finally, she emphasized the role of equality bodies, such as the [Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination](#) which ensures equal treatment and opportunities, with a focus on ethnic backgrounds.

- Cristina Hernández Martín (Director of the Women's Institute) explained that the concepts of equality and social justice are not just abstract ideals but are supported by concrete actions taken by individuals and organizations throughout history. She attributed the formation of trade unions, political organizations, and social movements to the collective work towards these goals, which ultimately shaped the Europe we live in today. She pointed out that the Europe of today is characterized by respect for diversity and inclusion, with the exception of male chauvinism, discrimination, and prejudice against marginalized groups, such as LGBTQI+ individuals. She then discussed programs like the SARA Program, which supports vulnerable women, particularly migrants and Roma, through training. She shared that 60% of the 2,400 participants found work, though improvements are still needed. She also addressed the challenges faced by women in low-paid, often invisible jobs, such as care work and domestic cleaning. The Women's Institute provides informational resources to help these women understand their rights and is conducting research on health issues faced by hotel cleaners. Finally, she concluded by stressing that women's needs differ based on factors like migration status and class, and that an intersectional approach is essential for effective public policies. In the meantime, she reaffirmed the Institute's commitment to gender equality and social justice.



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• **Workshop 1: Experiences of women being discriminated at the workplace (intersectional approach)**

Beppe De Sario (Fondazione Giuseppe Di Vittorio Expert) summarized the content of the first panel on intersectionality as a challenge for the trade union movement and explained how the workshop aimed to stimulate reflection and discussion on the experiences of women facing discrimination in the workplace, while considering the intersectional dimension. The gender/women dimension is one of the primary and most fundamental aspects of intersectionality when discussing inequality and discrimination.

The intersectional dimension has been present in various international preambles and strategic frameworks, at least since the UN Beijing Conference. This is also reflected in European institutional initiatives, alongside gender mainstreaming. Women's employment issues (such as access to the labor market, working conditions, wages, etc.) must therefore be considered in conjunction with a range of other social and personal factors, such as migration, age, disability, and social status.

Trade union programs and actions address general issues related to the status of women in the labor market and employment, as well-established topics (occupational segregation, overqualification, gender pay gap, harassment and violence at work, work-life balance, and caregiving responsibilities, etc.). However, these issues must be understood through an intersectional lens that recognizes gender discrimination as occurring across multiple dimensions.

In this context, the background paper includes several (non-exhaustive) examples of intersections, such as:

- *Disability/Gender*
- *Migratory status/Gender*
- *Social status/Gender*

The Mentimeter application was used to ask the question, "Which workers are victims of multiple discrimination?" in order to explore the intersectional approach from the participants' perspectives and experiences. Regarding gender intersectionality, the responses were as follows:

- *Migrant women working in the service sector*
 - *Women & other people with a uterus who have to call in sick just because they are having their period with heavy pains. Men (people without a uterus) do not have to deal with this: Menstruation Leave!*
 - *Workers in insecure work (more likely to be women with intersecting characteristics - Black Women, disabled women, young women, migrant women)*
 - *La prima cosa che mi viene in mente è la discriminazione sul lavoro, anzi sull'accesso al lavoro è quella delle donne trans e ancor di più se trans e con profilo migratorio*
 - *Low paid women from minorities. Women who raise their children alone. Migrant women.*
 - *young women workers ... critical situation: violence, harassment*
 - *Salir del armario como persona no binaria en el trabajo es una realidad que no se contempla en la actualidad debido a la transfobia y la desinformación que existe sobre este tema*
 - *Health, precarity, economic situation, the fact of being migrant worker affects women differently in the world of work*
- Women in precarity are for example more exposed to violence at work*



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- *Workers who suffer different kind of discriminations: ...
The most frequent profile may be the migrant women who works in care services. But I frequently see discriminations homoparental families*
- *Domestic and care workers, Seasonal workers, Female workers explicitly stating their religion or belief (e.g. Muslim women)*
- *Migrants workers, older workers, women, homosexual workers, women in the manufacture, informal sector workers, temporary workers*
- *Profiles: Nursing and care work.
Critical Situation: Remuneration.
Needs: Appreciation of work.
Possibility to work full-time.*
- *Women+kids (gender, family situation)
Disabilities, ages discrimination applies to both genders
Women+language (in Latvia, if does not know Russian)*
- *Domestic workers are often at the intersection of gender, migrant status, race/ethnicity, social class*
- *Muslim women, trans women, disabled women, women with migration history, racialized women*
- *Migrant workers, particularly those who are not aware of their employment rights. Especially women.*
- *Black women*
- *Mujeres migrantes en trabajos precarios. Trabajadoras negras. Mujeres con discapacidad. Mujeres LGTBIQ+.*
- *Migrant women and backgorund migrant women*
- *Mujeres pero sobre toda por tenía y/o religion*
- *Migrants (both Surians , North Africans, Afgans) and LGBTQ+'s , people who are carrying out struggle for rights), sessional workers, women, unregistered workers, child workers, disabled people*
- *Se necesita más información y formación para conocer las situaciones y denunciarlas*

Reaction

Sandro Gallittu (CGIL, Italy) highlighted intersectional discrimination in relation to access to employment for trans women with a migrant background, as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly affecting sex workers. While trade unions intervene in workplaces, they do not address issues related to access to employment.

Ester Chaves (UGT, Spain) emphasized that in Spain, trade union policies are not intersectional, and workplace discrimination is often "disguised" by employers. Women face discrimination based on factors such as age (particularly young women), ethnicity, family and social status (e.g., single mothers), and sexual orientation.

Hélène Ibanez (CFDT, France) focused on the issue of inadequate data collection on discrimination.

Gita Oskaja (LBAS, Latvia) pointed out that intersectional discrimination is not on the political agenda in Latvia, but trade unions could begin to address it in their collective bargaining efforts.



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Aline Brüser (ETUC) emphasized the role of unions, which must act through bargaining to reduce the risks of intersectional discrimination.

Beppe De Sario (Fondazione Di Vittorio/CGIL) explained that in Italy, many collective agreements include anti-discrimination provisions. Discrimination tends to intersect at specific points in a person's working life, such as during access to employment, maternity, training, and career development.

- **Workshop 2 : Best trade unions practices to combat discrimination and gender inequality**

Sarrah Bentahar (ETUC) introduced the workshop, which aimed to share and discuss effective trade union practices to combat gender discrimination. The workshop began with a roundtable discussion, during which one representative from each trade union was invited to present a good practice. In particular, 2 good practices were presented by FNV and CC.OO.

Irene Hemelaar (FNV, Netherlands) explained that trade unions in the Netherlands have implemented a strategy to involve more women as active members. Currently, 37% of FNV members are women. The main areas of discrimination against women in the workplace include maternity, the gender pay gap, the type of contract (with 82% of women working part-time), and sexual harassment. She then presented slides of a communication/marketing campaign that took a sectoral approach and engaged women through a survey of approximately 13,000 participants. The campaign resulted in 70 new active members of FNV, who were trained on gender issues. See PPT [here](#).

Raquel Gómez (CC.OO., Spain) presented the Observatory against Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. The Observatory has been operational for two years and has received government funding. A specific section of the Observatory is dedicated to trade union practices (link [here](#)).

Hélène Ibanez (CFDT, France) explained that a feminist Manifesto for equality between men and women and to combat and prevent discrimination was adopted in February 2024. Feminism is linked to intersectionality, which amplifies discrimination in the workplace.

Döne Gevher (KESK, Turkey) commented on the union's internal structure, highlighting the presence of a Women's Assembly, female representation at the Secretariat level, and a quota system that ensures both a female and a male president. She emphasized the importance of quotas in representation, noting that the board of directors is renewed every three years. The union conducts training on gender equality for both men and women. However, its practices are not supported by the government, contributing to ongoing discrimination against women. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ individuals face significant challenges in securing employment. Within the union, some members specifically address these issues.

Theodora Goula (GSEE, Greece) stated that combating inequalities and discrimination against women in the workplace is a top priority for trade unions in Greece. A study on workplace harassment was conducted, and a website was created to inform workers about their rights. The website also includes a section where workers can file complaints about discrimination they have experienced.

The workshop was concluded by Cristina Antoñanzas Peñalva (UGT Spain), who emphasized the importance of trade unions strengthening their efforts against intersectional discrimination.



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Personal experience

Wendy de Los Santos shared her personal experience with the participants:

She is a migrant woman living in Madrid and working in the hotel industry, having previously worked as a hairdresser. Before arriving in Spain, she spent three years in Italy. Throughout her working life, she has faced various forms of discrimination and violence, including the theft of documents at the workplace, disregard for working hours and shifts, and difficulties in relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Although she reported these issues, they did not result in significant consequences. The lack of respect for women's rights persists among employers and colleagues, affecting not only migrant women but also native women.

- **Workshop 3: Policy recommendations to overcome intersectional discrimination at the workplace (drafting exercise)**

Building on the insights shared in the previous panels and workshops, the final workshop was moderated by Mercedes Miletti (ETUC Senior Advisor) and focused on developing and discussing a set of policy recommendations for combating intersectional discrimination.

Each participant contributed one or more recommendations for policymakers. During the reporting stage, Beppe De Sario refined and reorganized the recommendations by scope, categorizing them mainly into: legislation, institutions, and trade union action. See the PDF [here](#).

Reaction

Reentje Streuter (DGB, Germany) shared that in Germany, the trade union organizes training seminars to raise awareness among employers' representatives about discrimination against women and the need to share caregiving responsibilities.

Sonia Alvares Enríquez (UGT, Spain) emphasized that violence is a culturally rooted phenomenon, and therefore, action must be taken at the educational level from childhood onwards, involving adult men as well.

Aude Spang (UNIA – Switzerland) shared how the trade union organized the feminist strike and supported the Intersectional Manifesto movement, which had a significant impact on Swiss society. The feminist movement pushed trade unions to take action against discrimination faced by women. Awareness-raising efforts are essential, and trade unions' participation in this movement helped to give it legitimacy.

Cristina Antoñanzas Peñalva (UGT, Spain) explained that “Agents for Equality” are individuals tasked with combating discrimination in the workplace.



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- **Thematical focus : *Tackling Violence and Harassment against Women at Work***

Presentation of the ETUC report “Safe at work, safe at home, safe online”

- Aline Brüser (ETUC Advisor) presented the Women's Committee's latest work on addressing violence and harassment against women in the workplace. She introduced the new report, [Safe at Work, Safe at Home, Safe Online](#), which builds on the previous *Safe at Work, Safe at Home* report. The addition of "Safe Online" highlights the need to address cyber violence, particularly in the context of telework and its connection to gender-based violence. Aline emphasized that the report is a collective effort, with contributions from union members, external experts, and affiliates. Key findings include the escalation of third-party violence, the impact of domestic violence on workers, and new challenges posed by cyber violence. The report also explores how employers manage remote work environments and the surveillance of workers, underlining the responsibility of employers to ensure safety. She then highlighted the role of economic dependency in enabling survivors of domestic violence to leave abusive situations. She stressed that decent pay and working conditions are essential for women's independence and safety. The report also discusses the underfunding of public services, particularly those supporting survivors of gender-based violence, and calls for increased investment in these areas. The intersectional nature of gender-based violence has been also stressed, noting that women workers are affected differently based on factors such as migrant status, sexual orientation, and disability. Aline stressed that unions must continue advocating for workplace policies that protect survivors, such as relocation measures and paid leave. She finally concluded with a call to action for unions to prioritize gender-based violence and engage in the ongoing initiatives of the Women's Committee and reminded everyone of the importance of building trust in policies and ensuring that all workers, regardless of background or identity, are protected from violence and harassment. [See PPT here.](#)

Reaction

- Sonia Álvarez Enríquez (UGT Equality Secretary) addressed the need for strong protocols to prevent sexual harassment and promote gender equality in the workplace, in line with Spain's Organic Law on Equality and related legislation. These measures apply to all employees, especially those in vulnerable sectors like home care, cleaning, and workers with disabilities. She emphasized the importance of accessible protocols, training, and collective bargaining, particularly for companies with fewer than 50 employees. She noted the lack of reported sexual harassment cases, which may reflect poor communication or underreporting by employers and called for greater transparency and accountability in addressing such issues. She also highlighted the vulnerability of home care workers, who often fear job loss if they report harassment and stressed the need for protective measures to help these workers, including relocating them from the abuser and assisting with finding new jobs. Finally, she concluded by urging labour inspectors to monitor companies for harassment cases and reaffirmed UGT's commitment to supporting workers in reporting harassment and ensuring protective protocols are in place.
- Olga Elizabeth Sánchez Ortiz (Spokesperson of the Rumiñahui's Association's board of directors) thanked UGT for inviting them to the seminar, highlighting the importance of collaboration between the two organisations. She stressed the need to continue discussing sexual harassment, as silence allows such issues to persist. Founded 27 years ago, Rumiñahui's Association helps around 11,000 people



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annually, especially migrant women. While the association is not required to implement an equality plan due to its size, it prioritizes addressing sexual harassment internally and providing support to victims. Rumiñahui's Association offers resources and guidance on discrimination and harassment, particularly for migrant women working in sectors like home care, where such issues are prevalent. She also noted that despite the ratification of ILO Convention 189 to improve domestic worker conditions, many migrant workers remain underpaid and unregistered in the social security system. She then emphasized the need for an intersectional approach to support migrant women, especially those in irregular immigration situations who fear deportation if they report abuse. Rumiñahui's Association encourages participation in support networks to help migrant women escape violence and has been discussing a project aimed at empowering women in rural areas, where sexual harassment is common, through initiatives like helping them obtain a driving license. Finally, she concluded by stressing the importance of raising awareness, amplifying migrant women's voices, and providing support to help them break free from the cycle of violence.

- **Nikki Pound** (TUC Women's Policy Officer) emphasized the need for trade unions to ensure safe spaces for members and activists, both within union structures and in workplaces. Education on gender-based violence and its intersectional impacts is crucial for these efforts. Trade unions in the UK have played a key role in collecting data on domestic abuse and sexual harassment. A 2014 TUC report found that 1 in 10 women experiencing domestic abuse face it in the workplace. The TUC plans to update this report to examine the impacts of austerity and the cost of living crisis. TUC has also conducted research on sexual harassment, particularly among women, young workers, LGBT+ workers, and disabled women. Findings show that sexual harassment is widespread, with 80% of women not reporting it to employers. Research has also highlighted the need for sector-specific approaches, such as in education and retail, where harassment is prevalent. Trade unions have used this data to push for legal changes. The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act now requires employers to address domestic abuse as a workplace issue. However, migrant women with no recourse to public funds remain excluded. Additionally, the ratification of ILO Convention 190 in 2022 paved the way for the Worker Protection Act, which aims to prevent sexual harassment in all workplace settings, including during travel or events. She finally concluded by expressing hope that the new UK government will advance protections for workers, especially migrant women, and address gaps in current legislation. See PPT [here](#).

