



WP1. Joint Report and Conclusions from the Panel Debates

1. Events description

The Consortium held four panel debates in different countries, each organized by the individual partners during the months of March-April 2023.

The debates all focused on the impact of the pandemic on human rights, esp. of women, from different perspectives, taking into account the unique situations of each country and the expertise of each partner, that vary from public administrations to university faculties (i.e., of Sport) and the third sector.

1.1. TAVOLA ROTONDA-PANEL DEBATE “L’impatto della pandemia sui diritti fondamentali e la violenza sulle donne” | ROUND TABLE-PANEL DEBATE “The impact of the pandemic on fundamental rights and violence against women”

Associazione InCo-Molfetta APS
31st March 2023
Molfetta, Italy



The panel debate organised by the Italian partner, InCo-Molfetta, coordinating organisation of EnEnWomen, had a particular focus on gender discrimination and new forms of abuse that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. This was thanks to the collaboration with the local anti-violence center, CAV “Pandora”. The organization's

expertise and experience in addressing gender-based violence were critical in advancing the discussion and identifying potential solutions to the problem.

The debate also had a more international and youthful feel, as the event had the presence of international guest and included the projection of a documentary on women abuse and domestic violence from the perspective of another nation, in this case Sweden. The aim was for both panelists and participants to compare the Italian reality with other contexts mistakenly considered distant and more "advanced", providing a fresh perspective. The debate was lively, with a significant number of young people actively participating and bringing new ideas to the discussion.

1.2. “EnEnWomen : Encourager la participation des femmes en temps de pandémie” | “EnEnWomen : Encouraging women’s participation in times of pandemic” - Panel Debate

Association Jean Monnet (AJM)
15th April 2023
Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, France



The panel in France, held in the Jean Monnet House near Paris, addressed women's issues post-pandemic, particularly gender-based violence and national policies to address it. It was an impactful full-day of activities that included also an informal lunch, workshop sessions to brainstorm solutions and a visit to the House of Jean Monnet, founder of the European project.



Some of the issues that arised during the experts' interventions, that represented the Defense and Industry Sector and trade unions, among others, were EU's efforts to address this issue and highlighted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women's employment and financial stability, and gender-based violence and structures and strategies to combat it from the public and private sector, and from associations' initiatives.

The last last point of the debate was to make comparisons with national policies against gender violence and to find sustainable ways to solve those situations in European countries.

1.3. “Egalitatea de gen în mediile profesionale competitive în perioada pandemiei” | “Gender equality in professional competitive working environment during the pandemic”

National University of Physical Education and Sports (UNEFS)
20th April 2023
Bucharest, Romania



The debate in Romania focused on the difficulties faced during the pandemic in the work field by the professional females in the filed of sports and otherwise, and included a total of 5 experts mainly from the field of sports, education and coaching and social policies; area of expertise of the partner, the National University of Physical Education and Sports in Bucharest. Particularly, there were important concerns related to the



safety of the job (risks of being fired, the increase of the work load on remote, unpaid overtime, etc.).

In fact, some of the participants introduced the topic of violence and abuse in the sports field, the educational impact of the family as well as social impact upon the work environment. It was, however, highly remarkable how some of the male participants talked about the professional and hard working women that they met in the professional work environment, promoting a positive and encouraging view and valorising their skills in managing an important workload and their knowledge.

They nevertheless made present the fact that women in the country are not, in general, sufficiently encouraged to be entrepreneurs and take initiative in the professional sector.

1.4. PANEL DEBATE ALTEA: “IMPACTO DE LA COVID 19 EN LOS DERECHOS DE LAS MUJERES: PROPUESTAS DE FUTURO DESDE LAS POLÍTICAS SOCIALES LOCALES” | PANEL DEBATE ALTEA: “IMPACTO DE LA COVID 19 EN LOS DERECHOS DE LAS MUJERES: PROPUESTAS DE FUTURO DESDE LAS POLÍTICAS SOCIALES LOCALES”

Municipality of Altea
21st April 2023
Altea, Spain



The panel debate in Spain followed the same structure, focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on women's rights and proposed solutions for the future from the perspective of local social policies, as organised in the headquarters of the Municipality

of Altea. It analysed the issue from three different main topics and perspectives: Gender Violence, Employment, and Women's Social Participation, Tics and the Gender Gap.

For this, it involved representatives of entities such as Red Cross, Women's Centre 24 hours of Denia, representatives of the Association "The Kellys of Benidorm and Marina Baixa" (work field), as well as professionals from different areas of Welfare of the City Council of Altea and the Unit of Addictive Behaviour, to introduce the view of social education, social integration, psychologist, promotion of equality, social work, legal advice; as well as other departments of the City Council as the technician of the Local Development Agency, and citizens interested in participating. Every table of debate, in this sense, was composed of women representatives, both from associations and professional sector, which not only gave protagonist and voice to the affected population, but also guaranteed diversity of perspectives and legitimacy.

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Overall, these parallel events provided a platform for diverse voices to share their experiences and opinions. The panel debates aimed, in the last instance, to find a comprehensive response not only to gender-based violence, but also other forms of discrimination that have arised or, essentially, worsened with the pandemic.

These events provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration and discussion among diverse individuals and organizations, seeking to address the issue and promote solutions for a more equitable society. In fact, they have served as an important first step towards challenging inadequate collective narratives in the local community and promoting emancipation.



2. Common issues and conclusions

The panel debate on women's rights and gender inequality in various European countries shed light on the struggles faced by women, particularly during the pandemic. Among all that was discussed some common points were the following:*

- Unbalanced work load and payment between men and women (RO, FR; ESP, IT)
- Social stereotypes of women and workload related to house and family care - return to it after the pandemic (IT, ESP)
- Lack of social programmes to support women, esp. in case of job loss or incapability (ESP)
- Lack of supportive environments for female entrepreneurship (RO)
- Increase in gender-based violence and worsening situation of abused women (ESP, IT)
- Lack of education and knowledge of support programmes and other initiatives (RO), as well as of EU and women's rights (FR)

* *(Information on the country that especially highlighted the issue between brackets, expressed by the national acronym; but those were mainly shared conclusions)*

Deepening into them, in Romania, while there is a professional status and payment equity between men and women, it is not present in all sectors. The governmental institutions have a balanced payment system and differences in payment are related to hierarchy rather than gender. However, private companies show significant pay gaps between men and women. Additionally, statistics showed that women worked five hours more than men during the pandemic, further highlighting the disparities. The lack of encouragement for women to have an entrepreneurial education and initiative also adds to the existing inequalities.

As it arose within the debate, gender inequality has existed in Romania even during communist times. Women were part of the workforce, but the policies were hiding abusive decisions against women, such as unbalanced work schedules and expectations of involvement in professional, social, and political aspects. The law that



banned abortion also led to many deaths among women. Even now, there are misconceptions about the professional level of young female employees in the professional staff and parents of young athletes, so in the field of elite sports, indicating that gender inequality still exists.

During the panel, however, some of the participants brought up the issue of violence and abuse in the sports field. It is a well-known fact that violence and abuse are prevalent in sports, especially towards women. In this sense, we can see the relation with the #MeToo movement and recent revelations of abuse by high-profile athletes. In fact, as stated, it is essential to raise awareness about this problem and encourage the implementation of strict policies against abuse and harassment in sports.

Another topic that was discussed was the educational impact of the family on gender equality. The family plays a crucial role in shaping children's attitudes towards gender equality. Parents have the responsibility to teach their children about gender equality and respect for diversity. Gender stereotypes are still prevalent in our society, and it is essential to challenge them at an early age.

The social impact upon the work environment was also discussed during the debate. It is no secret that gender inequality persists in the workplace, with women often paid less and having fewer opportunities for career advancement. (This was a topic that repeated itself during all panel discussions, indeed). Women face numerous challenges in the workforce, including discrimination, harassment, and the struggle to balance work and family life. It is crucial, in this sense, to address these issues and strive for gender equality in the workplace.

In France, wage equality remains a challenge to achieve in small companies, with a 27% salary gap between women and men in some sectors. Women need to know their rights, especially in terms of reaching wage equality, which has been difficult to concretize. One important issue was, according to a expert panellist intervention, that “women and men had never paid attention to the minimum social base guaranteed by the EU”; recognising the role of the EU in the emancipation and gender equality



process. Women shall know their rights. they defended, especially in order to reach wage equality, which is really hard to concretize in small companies.

On the other hand, participants in Italy remarked that, once again, women's rights have been strongly compressed both in terms of work and from an economic point of view, burdening them with the care and assistance of the family almost exclusively.

In Spain, the situation of women regarding access to public resources has not improved notably after the pandemic, and there is still a need to continue working on housing and economic resources. The pandemic aggravated the situation of many women who found themselves living with their aggressors and unable to leave their homes. However, the issue did not stop with the end of the pandemic, and even nowadays, participants highlighted, it has been more difficult for associations to contact women, as there is a certain institutional invisibility that did not exist before.

Apart from that, women who worked in the hotel and catering industry were particularly affected and found themselves at home without receiving any kind of public assistance. This happened all over the country, which forced them to reorganise and create a resistance fund to help each other and several bottom-up support initiatives to advocate for solutions, too, e.g., the Kellys. The situation of hotel housekeepers has also become more precarious during the pandemic, and migrant women, especially undocumented ones, faced difficulties in terms of participation and aid access due to language barriers.

An important intervention was that of Councillor for Employment in the Municipality of Altea, who explained that the official data recognises the gap of more than three points between the employment of women and men, that women occupy the least responsible and therefore lowest paid positions, as well as hourly or short-time contracts, and that this is because women continue to take on unpaid care work in the home. The pandemic meant that many women had to return to care work and once the pandemic was over, they were unable to re-enter the labour market.



In conclusion, while the pandemic has certainly aggravated the existing gender inequalities, these issues have existed before the pandemic. Patriarchy has been the root cause of the greatest inequalities and discrimination against women, not just the pandemics, as stated by a panellist within the panel debate organised by the Municipality of Altea. Addressing these issues requires a sustained effort from society and government to create a more equitable future for everyone.

Nevertheless, participants in the debates identify several urgent needs to be satisfied to be able to mitigate the effects in the short and long run:

Firstly, in order to provide immediate relief to women who have been forced to leave their homes due to abusive situations, there is a pressing need for an **urgent housing response**. It is crucial to prevent abusive fathers from being granted visitation or shared custody, which could exacerbate the trauma of the women and children involved.

In addition to the immediate housing response and prevention of abusive behaviour, it is crucial to **address the root causes of domestic violence and gender inequality**. This includes promoting a higher level of awareness related to the activities of the National Agencies, e.g., the Agency for Gender Equality Between Women and Men, as well as the support programs and local centers for female victims of domestic violence supported by them, and the projects developed to facilitate this process of integration and empowerment of women to reach gender equality. Through this, women can be better informed about their rights and resources available to them in cases of domestic violence.

As ascertained within the Romanian panel debate, future projects could include collaborations with universities and other institutions to provide self-defense classes and other resources related to gender violence. Sometimes, as indicated by partners, social policies and support programmes have been launched, but with a limited coverage and impact.



It is also important to **raise awareness about European rights and how they pertain to women's rights**. This includes working with other minority groups within vulnerable communities, such as migrant women, who may face additional challenges in accessing resources and support. It could refer to fields like access to the labour market, educational resources or supportive structures to help them recover and re-integrate in society in a safe way after a gender-violence case.

In order to spread the message beyond these specific contexts, it is important to **leverage various channels of communication**. For example, at a recent panel debate in Molfetta, Italy, the presence of FGen Radio helped enliven the discussion with interviews of representatives from various organizations present at the event. These interviews and discussions can be further disseminated on social media and other platforms to reach a wider audience, including younger generations.

Overall, there is much work to be done in the fight for women's rights and gender equality, and it will take a concerted effort from individuals, organizations, and institutions at all levels to achieve meaningful change



3. Solutions and further proposals

To **reduce gender-based violence**, it is necessary to implement common solutions that aim to eradicate the root causes of this issue. In this regard, participants of the panel debates suggested harder measures must be taken to combat violence, such as pushing away from the marital home a violent husband. This approach has been successfully implemented in Italy, where a violent husband, recognized as guilty for his harassment, might leave the marital home. Similarly, in Spain, the penal sentence against sexual harassment has been extended.

Another important step is to provide financial recovery, state support to find a new job and child care to women who experience a marriage breakdown due to their husband's violence. Additionally, it is crucial to enhance the training of police officers, create specific spaces to talk about gender violence, and provide an affordable shelter to women.

However, when it comes to domestic violence, leaving the abusive partner is not always an easy option. Women often face financial insecurity due to the loss of their partner's income, making it difficult to support themselves and their children. That is why it is crucial to provide financial support to women in case of a split due to violence. This support should include training and employment assistance as well as childcare support to ensure that women can regain their financial independence.

Furthermore, it is essential to create concealed daily places that are easy to access for women to report violence. These places can provide a sense of safety and privacy for women to seek help without fear of retaliation from their abusers. Finding moments of community life to create trust, observe and allow speech can also be helpful for women who might not feel comfortable reporting violence in formal settings.

Strengthening the knowledge of the dedicated hotlines can also be an effective way to support women in need, to provide free and anonymous support to women who are victims of violence or harassment. It is crucial to ensure that women are aware of this resource and can access it when needed.



Moreover, continuing to improve complaint filing through police training and recruitment of more women in law enforcement can make a significant difference in addressing gender-based violence. Pre-complaint experimentations, such as chatbots, can also help women report violence more easily and quickly.

All these measures combined can provide women with the necessary support and resources to escape violent situations and start rebuilding their lives. By implementing these solutions, we can ensure that women are protected, and their rights are upheld.

To improve the **representation and quality of women in the field of education**, it has arisen from the debates that is necessary to increase the visibility of women role models in history and culture in schools. Additionally, the traditional roles of masculinity and responsibility in relationships must be redefined. This includes supporting men in learning about gender equality and promoting a more equal distribution of household and caregiving responsibilities between partners, that is, putting an extra effort in redefining masculinity and responsibility in relationships. Finally, according to the participants, it is important to establish compulsory sexual education classes in high schools, which can help to address issues of gender inequality and promote a more inclusive and equitable society.

On the other hand, to address the **gender disparities that women often face in their professional lives**, several solutions have been proposed. One such solution is to provide a retirement supplement for women during the time when they are attempting to resume their employment. This would help to alleviate some of the financial strain that women may experience when trying to re-enter the workforce after taking time off for caregiving responsibilities.

Another solution is to establish a listening unit within companies' buildings to raise awareness about discriminatory practices and provide a safe space for employees to discuss their experiences. This could be achieved through the use of serious games, conferences, discussion groups, and role-playing situations. By creating a more



inclusive and supportive work environment, companies can help to promote gender equality and improve the professional prospects of women.

Finally, throughout the debates, it was acknowledged that **promoting equality between men and women** is an essential step in reducing gender-based violence and achieving gender equality. One solution to promote such equality is by sharing the question of childcare leave and vacation equally between both parents, participants stated. In most countries, the responsibility of childcare falls primarily on women, which results in limiting their career progression and financial independence. When men take on an equal share of childcare responsibilities, women can pursue their career aspirations, and families can maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Nevertheless, achieving equal distribution of childcare responsibilities necessitates structural modifications, which encompasses the formulation of policies that facilitate fathers in availing themselves of parental leave. Furthermore, it is crucial for employers to promote the uptake of leave entitlements by male staff without fear of any adverse outcomes such as reduced remuneration or missed promotions. In addition, societal attitudes towards fatherhood and gender roles need to shift, too.

In general, advocating for gender equality in childcare is essential to establish a fairer and more impartial community. By guaranteeing that both parents can share the same responsibility for their children's upbringing, we can diminish gender-based violence, encourage women's autonomy, and establish a more comprehensive and welcoming environment for everyone.

Summarising, by addressing all the above-mentioned issues, implementing some of these proposed solutions or further ones, we can create a more equal and just society, where everyone's rights are respected and upheld, and especially those of women, who have been severely affected by the pandemic.

