



Ceemet
European Tech &
Industry Employers

Gender gap in the MET industries

Position paper

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Introduction

On September 3, 2025, Eurofound published its “[European Working Conditions Survey 2024](#).” The results show progress in almost all areas related to job quality since 2010, wider access to flexible working hours, an overall improvement in the quality of working time, and an increasing number of workers able to develop their skills and access training.

However, these overall improvements mask persistent difficulties, with gender disparities remaining one of the most significant challenges. This issue is also remaining within MET companies, where women continue to be underrepresented despite generally good working conditions.

This paper reviews the improvement in gender equality in the MET sector while noting the persistent underrepresentation of women in the industry. It argues that, beyond workplace improvements, action is needed at the European level to address the structural roots of this imbalance, notably by making STEM education a policy priority in Member States. It also presents various recommendations for attracting women to the MET sector that need to be supported at the EU level.

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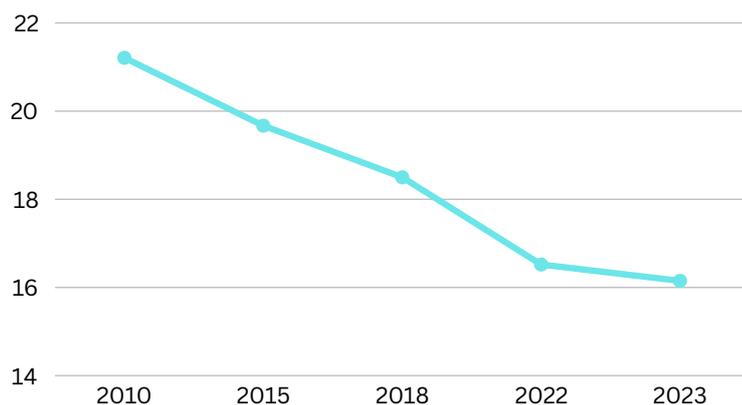


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Toward greater parity: improvements in gender equality in the MET industries

While gender pay gap statistics are often cited at EU level, interpreting these figures requires caution. Calculating a pay gap presupposes comparisons between equivalent roles, which aggregate statistics do not provide. According to EU data, the unadjusted average gender pay gap in the private sector is around 12%^[1]. In the MET industries represented by Ceemet, the unadjusted gender pay gap has narrowed over time, decreasing from 21% in 2010 to 16% in 2023.

This indicates a positive long-term trend, although further progress can still be made. Importantly, these figures reflect overall averages across the workforce and do not measure “equal pay for equal work.” They do not account for structural factors such as occupational distribution, working time patterns, seniority, career choices, or career breaks, all of which have a significant impact on aggregate outcomes.



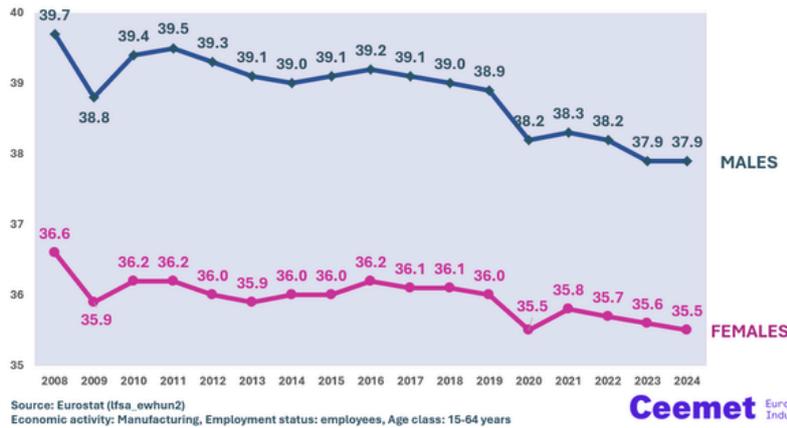
As Eurostat explains in its study on “Gender Gaps^[1],” wage gaps can also be analysed from the perspective of part-time or full-time employment. Nevertheless, in MET industries, collective agreement have always been gender neutral. Overall, the situation in the MET sector has improved in all countries, with Belgium, Portugal, and Luxembourg showing particularly significant progress. The sector in these countries shows the same improvements as those observed at the EU level in all activities.

In terms of hours worked, women still work less than men in the MET sector. In 2008, women worked 3 hours less per week than men; however, this gap has steadily narrowed, reaching 2.3 hours in 2023. The average number of hours worked per year per capita in the manufacturing sector remained stable or decreased slightly in most Ceemet countries between 2021 and 2024; at the EU-27 level, there was a slight decrease (-0.2%)^[2].

[1] Eurostat, “Gender pay gap statistics”, March 2025; NB: Statistics unadjusted for employee characteristics (e.g. seniority and qualifications)

[2] These numbers do not take into account leave, such as vacation, parental leave, and other working hours reduction schemes.

EU27 Average number of actual weekly hours of work in the main job by gender - Manufacturing 2008-2024

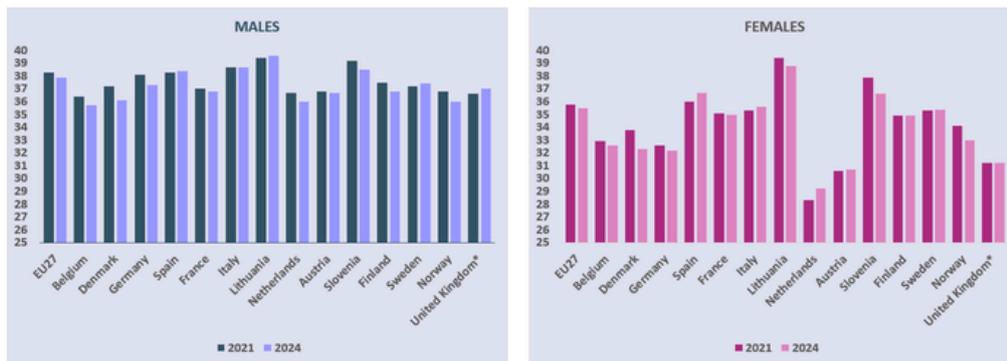


Some countries (such as Italy, Lithuania, and France) recorded a slight increase, while others (such as Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) recorded a sharp decrease in the average number of hours worked per year. Male employees consistently work longer hours than female employees.

In 2024, the average number of hours worked per week by men and women fell below 2021 levels.

In the EU, women are often relied upon more heavily for household upkeep, childcare, and similar responsibilities. This is why Ceemet continues to urge national policymakers to make urgent investments in high-quality, affordable, and accessible childcare facilities. Such measures would enhance women’s incentives to participate in the labour market and help alleviate labour shortages. At this stage, the lack of adequate infrastructure is often the primary driver of the “part-time trap”. It forces many women into reduced working hours, limiting their career progression and earnings potential compared to their full-time counterparts.

EU27 Average number of actual weekly hours of work in the main job by gender - Manufacturing



According to estimates from the European Institute for Gender Equality, women’s employment rates could reach 80%^[1] by 2050 (compared to 66% in 2024), if significant progress in gender equality is achieved. The Tech and Industry employers are convinced that high-quality, affordable, and accessible childcare facilities are undoubtedly a positive tool for encouraging women to work. Therefore, Ceemet continues to call on Member States to implement the Council Recommendation on early childhood education and care—the Barcelona targets for 2030 of 8 December 2022—as well as the Council Recommendation on access to affordable, high-quality long-term care of the same date. These measures should enable women to work as much as men and avoid interruptions in their careers.

[1] EIGE, “Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the European Union”, 2016

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Enhancing Gender Diversity in STEM: A Strategic Priority for MET Industries

It is our opinion that, in the MET industries, those measures have to be accompanied and implemented by stronger measures to attract women to our sector. Unfortunately, despite the roll-out of attraction strategies, the promotion of STEM, and several initiatives, the share of women in the sector has remained stagnant at around 23% between 2018 and 2023.

Nevertheless, in 2024, the proportion of women in MET industries stood at 24.4%. In this context, Ceemet welcomed the EU's strategic plan for STEM and the fact that it is considered a top priority in the MFF and the Autumn Forecast^[1].

We welcomed that this strategic plan targets women in order to address also the shortage of labour in Europe. Women represent 52% of the European population and constitute the majority of higher education graduates in the EU. However, only 2 in 5 scientists and engineers are women, and they represent only 18% of ICT specialists. The EU must strengthen STEM education in general, but it must also attract women to study in this field.

Ceemet recommends that the future European Skills Observatory focus on STEM data in order to identify labour shortages, unemployment in STEM professions, labour demand, and calculate the share of non-university STEM professions for the coming years. The EU must continue to support and promote communication campaigns aimed at attracting women to MET industries and combating stereotypes.

Europe needs to make its STEM strategy a reality now.

Moreover, Ceemet, as a recognised sectoral social partner, recommends^[2] that the EU promotes EU-wide cross-border consortia between training and education providers (secondary schools, apprenticeship providers, higher education and universities) and industry in order to stimulate innovation and R&D, as well as the rapid and practical implementation of new solutions in the area of STEM. This can also contribute to improving labour mobility. The EU should also support stakeholders in their funding applications and the creation of partnerships. Europe needs to make its STEM strategy a reality now.

[1] European Commission, "New economic guidance to boost EU competitiveness", 25 November 2025

[2] Ceemet, IndustriAll Europe, ECEG, "STEM Strategy Joint Statement", 2022

Ceemet reiterates the importance of working closely with social partners. They must be fully involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of European and national STEM strategies, particularly through ambitious targets for vocational training, education, retraining, and skills development.

Social dialogue is a key tool in the context of skills and women's involvement in industry. The social partners are key players that the EU must integrate into its STEM strategy if it is to achieve its goal of attracting one million female students to STEM programs by 2030.



In France, the UIMM created a campaign: "You have your place" to attract women in the MET industries. This campaign is embodied by a collective of women, all of whom are role models offering a new vision and a contemporary representation of industrial companies. The commitment to implement an action plan promoting gender diversity in our industries is a priority of the UIMM's 2022-2027 national strategic plan.



In the Netherlands, the FME has created an action program called "Women in Technology – On Track to 30% by 2030." Published in 2018, this program aims to achieve 30% representation of women in the MET sector, in both technical and non-technical roles. The "Women4Tech" label and event are part of this initiative. During this event, the first FME Women4Tech Inclusion Award is also presented to a company that has demonstrated a structural commitment to attracting, engaging, and retaining women, while actively working to create an inclusive work environment. In addition, FME also offers a "gender equal pay monitoring tool to its companies.



In Sweden, Teknikföretagen has partnered with micro-influencer Annie Koka to attract young people, particularly women, to MET industries. This initiative, entitled "Rent tekniskt" ("Technically speaking"), takes participants behind the scenes at technology and industrial companies, among other things. It used several channels such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. This project had 66% of female viewers and 74% female followers.



Conclusion



Companies in the MET sector are committed to reducing gender inequality and strive to attract women, who are essential to their competitiveness. They invest in communication campaigns aimed at combating stereotypes, are committed to fighting harassment^[1], and support the integration of women into STEM studies.

However, with the support of the EU, Member States must assume their share of responsibility and strengthen the knowledge component in vocational education programs in the STEM field, in order to facilitate retraining, continuing education, or education and enable workers to adapt at any time to the new requirements arising from the twin transition.

Reducing the gender gap would have a positive impact on both employment and GDP, as well as on women's confidence to move forward in a society where they find a role that matches their skills^[2].

The gender gap is a societal issue. It is up to all actors in society to fight against stereotypes and participate in these cultural changes. Therefore, the focus must remain on changing educational choices rather than placing the burden solely on companies.

[1] Ceemet, as an EU-OSHA partner, condemns sexual harassment at work and supports Online Interactive Risk Assessment tool on sexual harassment and third-party violence.

[2] Ceemet, IndustriAll Europe, ECEG, "[STEM Strategy Joint Statement](#)", 2022



About Ceemet

Set up in 1962, Ceemet is the European employers' organisation representing the interests of the metal, engineering and technology-based (MET) industries with a particular focus on topics in the areas of employment, social affairs, industrial relations, health & safety and education & training.

Ceemet members are national employers' federations across Europe and beyond, based in 20 countries. They represent more than 200,000 member companies, a vast majority of which are SMEs.

Ceemet members' companies in the EU provide direct employment to 16 million and indirect employment to 35 million people, and cover all products within the MET industrial sectors.

Together, these companies make up Europe's largest industrial sector, both in terms of employment levels and added value, and are therefore essential to ensuring Europe's economic prosperity.

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