



TRADE UNIONS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Date 29 April 2025 Berlin

UGT CONFEDERAL

Good morning to you all.

I would like to thank Giulio for the extraordinary support and effort of his team in bringing this project to fruition.

In this final conference of the project "Trade unions against discrimination" we address discrimination on different grounds, including gender, sexual orientation, racism and ageism, with a special focus on intersectional discrimination in the workplace.

Taking Spanish society as an example, where 51% of the population are women (more than 24.5 million according to the last census), 18% were born abroad or have foreign nationality, 10% have a disability and 22% are over 65 years of age. The diversity of personal and/or social and economic circumstances, those already mentioned and others such as illness, sexual orientation and identity, religious convictions, ethnic origin... in which women can find themselves, are a favourable territory for traditional gender discrimination to be mixed with others, creating new forms of discrimination. And this is undoubtedly one of the challenges for the future, in society and obviously at work.

While it is true that we have made progress in the fight for equality between women and men, allow me to make a small comment on an issue that Spanish colleagues are already familiar with. This year, Spain's Sociological Research Centre (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas) published a study on perceptions about equality between men and women. 44% of male respondents and, surprisingly, 33% of female respondents agreed with the statement that *"we have come so far in promoting women's equality that men are now being discriminated against"*.

And notwithstanding the fact that we can relate these results to hateful messages and speeches from certain far-right political parties, even shared by the traditional right, that deny gender violence, that

eliminate policies and measures for equality between women and men, the truth is that this is an indication that there are forces that want to deny us what has been achieved so far and what remains to be done in general, in terms of gender equality, and even more so in terms of defining and including it in the rules and regulations, The truth is that this is an indication that there are forces that want to deny us what we have achieved so far and what we still have to advance in general, in gender equality and even more in the definition, inclusion in the rules, detection and prevention of multiple discrimination when it affects women, particularly in the workplace.

And if we talk about work, we must talk about trade unions and our responsibility to ensure equality for all women whatever their circumstances. In this regard, I would like to recall that the *EUROFOUND Report on [the social partners and discrimination at work](#)*¹, pointed out that both trade unions and employers' organisations have an important role to play, among others, in raising awareness of the rights and obligations of workers and employers at work or in monitoring working practices. But the truth is that **most of the practices analysed in the report (56%) are carried out by trade union organisations without the support of the company**. The report underlines an obvious reality, that the main mission of a trade union organisation is to protect the rights of its members in the workplace, but its role extends beyond that, because improvements in employment conditions have an impact on living conditions and this also has a reflection on society as a whole.

Furthermore, the [**Council of Europe's GREVIO in its recommendation to Spain on compliance with the Convention Council on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**](#)² states that measures should be taken **to provide data,**

¹ *Eurofound (2020) [Role of social partners in tackling discrimination at work](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg*

² *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Recommendation on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence by Spain. Adopted on 15 December 2020.*

prevalence studies and research that also include those women who face intersectional discrimination, as well as to strengthen measures aimed at preventing and combating violence affecting these women. This requires taking into account their particular circumstances in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies to prevent and combat violence against women. Directive 2024/1385 of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence ³notes that **victims who experience intersectional discrimination are at greater risk of violence**.

At UGT we recognise the diversity of women, which is why we consider it essential to look at gender-based violence from an intersectional perspective.

Inequality between women and men is experienced in different ways, depending on other structures of oppression, such as ableism (discrimination or social prejudice against people with disabilities), race, ethnic origin, social class, age, religious denomination, sexual orientation, gender identity, administrative situation of residence, country of origin or marital status.

Intersectionality is a tool for analysis and policy-making, a strategy for linking the roots of discrimination to the social, economic, political and legal environment that fuels discrimination and structures experiences of oppression and privilege.

In Spain, the rate of victims of gender-based violence of migrant women resident in Spain was 3.2 per 1000, while the rate for women born in Spain was 1.2 per 1000 women. Data provided by the National Institute of Statistics verify this reality: the rate of victims of gender-based violence per 1,000 women was almost three times higher in foreign-born women than in Spanish-born women.

³ [Directive - EU - 2024/1385 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

Living in rural areas also means that women occupy a different position in the face of male violence and are more vulnerable. According to FADEMUR data, in 2021 only 20% of rural women murdered by gender violence had denounced their murderer and in 2023, of the 50 women murdered by their partners or ex-partners up to 2 October 2023, 17 had been murdered in towns of less than 20,000 inhabitants.

As revealed by the study carried out in 2020 by FADEMUR with the Ministry of Equality in compliance with the State Pact, this violence is more associated in villages with the private sphere and is therefore more invisible. The FADEMUR report also revealed that in rural areas, abusive relationships are more prolonged than in cities, and in addition to the entrenched stereotypes, this has a lot to do with the lower availability of care and support resources in the villages.

This is why UGT demands more attention and resources to eradicate male violence in rural areas, to help extend the network of safe spaces against this scourge and to raise awareness among society as a whole and in companies.

DISABILITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

As far as disability is concerned, I would like to point out that the CONCEPT OF DISABILITY has been evolving. Although the current treatment of disability is based on the perspective of human rights and non-discrimination, in line with the UN International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, traditionally the model has been based on family, social and labour invisibility.

Despite this change, there is still a lack of public policies that offer a response to the needs and demands of people with disabilities that promote their independence, equality, autonomy and decision-making capacity.

The biggest handicap lies in the difficulties to participate in the labour market, and especially in the ordinary labour market. The employment rate is 40% lower than for people without disabilities. And what is really worrying is the inactivity rate of 64.5% when for non-disabled

people of working age it was 21.5%.

This job insecurity has a direct impact on both wages and social security contributions, with a negative repercussion on the calculation of social benefits, such as retirement pensions.

The inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market must be a reality, along with the improvement of their quality of life and the full exercise of their rights.

At UGT we promote full equality for people with disabilities and our trade union action in the workplace is aimed at eliminating any difficulties that may arise in access to employment and in the development of their work activity, under the same conditions as other workers.

This discrimination especially affects women with disabilities, where job insecurity is more prevalent, with lower salaries and less qualified jobs, compared to men with disabilities. This lack of equality in the workplace prevents equality in the workplace and the prevention of possible scenarios of discrimination for being a woman and for having a disability, which acts as an impediment to their inclusion. Everyone has the right to access and maintain employment.

DISCRIMINATION AND MISTREATMENT OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

With regard to women with disabilities, this is a very heterogeneous group, with a high rate of discrimination for two reasons: being a woman and having a disability.

Women and girls with disabilities are at increased risk of disability-related violence, abuse and neglect, and mistreatment both inside and outside the home. Especially in the case of women with severe disabilities, or with learning or communication problems, it is more difficult for them to express and denounce the abuse they have suffered, making many cases of violence invisible.

I would like us to reflect on this. When we talk about violence against women with disabilities, we cannot make the mistake of thinking that disabilities are present prior to gender violence. It may be that this disability is a later and direct consequence of the abuse suffered: a physical disability, such as deafness due to blows to the ear, or an intellectual disability.

For UGT, it is essential to make disability visible, to change the social conception, and thus to make its social judgement more positive. If people with disabilities are not allowed access to employment, it is difficult to prove that they can carry out their work in the same way as other people.

DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In UGT we are aware that sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is also an intersection that prevents women from progressing in the labour market. 38% of them hide being a lesbian at work and 7 out of 10 consider it a disadvantage when looking for a job. This seminar has been another opportunity to work among trade unions for an inclusive work environment.

Our organisation has fought to make this part of state law and thanks to our efforts, companies in Spain must have measures against LGBTIphobia. We have also improved the Employment Law, to reinforce the protection of trans people, especially trans women with labour vulnerability. And to make it an issue that goes beyond political will, we include the LGBTI collective in our agreement on employment and collective bargaining with companies (AENC).

We believe in promoting joint work to transfer this good practice to European legislation. And the work of each trade union in the fight for LGBTI diversity within their organisation. Because if we change society, we change our states.

AGE DISCRIMINATION:

As far as the situation of young workers is concerned, in Spain, thanks to the Labour Reform of 2021, in conjunction with other measures to stimulate the economy and employment, we have seen how youth employment figures have been improving:

- Right now we have an unemployment rate of 19.1%, the lowest since 2008.
- The number of young people under the age of 30 affiliated to Social Security reached an all-time high in 2024 with 3.47 million.
- The temporary employment rate in our country is 20.9%, compared to 52% in 2021.
- 1 in 4 young people work part-time, although we should not forget that only 8% of them say they want a part-time contract.

In this sense, despite the fact that the Labour Reform particularly benefited the most precarious groups, among them, young people, it should not be forgotten that at European level young workers continue to experience greater job insecurity, with unemployment, temporary and part-time employment rates higher than the national average.

In addition, young people have to cope with the inadequacy of their wages. The wages of young people are still very low, there is still a wage gap of 33% between a young person and the national average.

Moreover, in addition to this wage insecurity, in recent years, the possibilities of emancipation for young people have been strongly conditioned as a result of the exorbitant increase in housing prices. The price bubble, especially in the big cities, means that most young people have to spend almost all of their wages on rent.

This situation is far from different at the European level. In less than a decade, between 2015 and 2023, house prices in the EU increased on average by 48%. The same Eurobarometer showed that renting in the EU had also risen. Between 2010 and 2022, rental prices rose by an average of 18%, partly due to an increase in short-term rental

contracts, which took houses and flats off the market.

In some countries, housing is now three times more expensive than it was 14 years ago. - In particular, house prices have tripled in Estonia and Hungary, with rises in both cases exceeding 200%; - and doubled in Austria, Portugal, Luxembourg and Bulgaria. In France, house prices have risen by 27% in the last 14 years, while in Denmark and Belgium have increased by around 54%, in Ireland by 67% and in Germany or the Netherlands by around 74%.

It is clear that throughout the European Union we are experiencing a housing emergency as a result of poor public housing policy and the perversion of a fundamental right, a basic right of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

In Spain, through social dialogue and the latest increases in the minimum wage, trade unions have slightly improved the situation of young people. Slightly, because no matter how much we in UGT and other trade unions fight to improve labour rights in an intersectional way within the workplace, all our achievements remain a dead letter if the socio-economic situation does not improve, leaving young people at a disadvantage.

The improvements and labour advances of the last few years cannot on their own cope with the upward trend of prices in the housing market. Therefore, from UGT, we demand more ambitious and courageous housing and youth emancipation policies, policies that truly rebalance housing prices and ensure that access to housing does not involve an excessive and disproportionate economic effort.