

Consultation with social partners on Gender Equality Strategy

2 July 2025

The case of the hospitality sector

HOTREC is the European Association of Hotels, restaurants and cafés in Europe. Altogether we provide 10 million jobs and represent 2 million companies (90% of which are micro-enterprises).

According with Eurostat information, we are proud that 53% of the workforce is constituted by women¹. This brings gender balance to the sector.

Nevertheless, according with information provided by HOTREC members, the challenge within the sector remains on the attribution of managerial positions, where the vast majority of the positions are filled by men. The gender pay gap for these positions can also be a challenge in some cases.

Other priorities within the sector include:

- Increasing education and training
- Reducing the gender care gap
- Facilitating inclusion of migrant/refugee women in the labour market.

Overall, we fully support that an economic sustainable strategy on **gender equality between men and women** is developed and promoted at EU level.

Action by the European Union

Gender equality is a fundamental right and a necessity for **sustainable growth**. By adopting a strong approach on the matter, the EU will strength competitiveness, democracy and social fairness across Europe.

HOTREC advises the European Union to adopt the following measures:

- Endorse a **holistic approach**: a general strategy on **gender equality** is needed across sectors. Analysing the **root causes** of the lack of gender equality between men and women is key.
- Develop **solid impact assessments**: any new piece of EU legislation or any revision of EU legislation on gender equality need to be based on analyses, data and facts. The European Parliament and the Council should also present impact assessments if a Commission proposal changes significantly.
- **Fighting gender stereotypes**:
 - Cultural changes are needed, so that **mentalities change**.
 - **Education at early age** at school is essential for students to understand the economic implications that decisions on education, occupation and labour market will have in promoting gender balance and in fighting potential remuneration gaps. This will lead to gender equality; improvement of skills; competitiveness. General **awareness raising** by governments is also key.
- **Encouraging education of men and women**, to attract and retain them to the hospitality sector:

¹ [Eurostat link](#) – period Q3 2024 (please note that both accommodation and food services should be selected).

- **Training** opportunities and the development of **apprenticeship schemes** are vital.
- The improvement of **digital and sustainability skills** should be stimulated.

Examples:

- Several HOTREC members develop the hospitality days at national level, where the schools open their doors and receive the hospitality ambassadors to promote the development of a career within the hospitality sector (e.g. Federalberghi and FIPE/Italy; UPUHH/Croatia; FIHR/Romania; EHRA/Estonia).
- In Finland, companies receive trainees who are students at upper secondary school, as part of a learning program. Online possibilities have also been made possible in recent years. [More info](#).
Members of MaRa/Finland established different regional taskforces formed by their company members and VET institution with the objective to promote the industry and retain workforce.

- **Ensure equal opportunities for men and women:**
 - **Reducing the gender care gap:** women tend to spend more hours dedicated to housework, childcare or caregiving responsibilities, when compared with men. This leads to less working hours, gender pay gap, pension gap. HOTREC calls on:
 - **Affordable, high-quality childcare** (including early childcare, full day school options and after school services).
 - **Affordable, high-quality long-term care for the elderly and individuals with chronic diseases**
 - Building necessary **infrastructures** (e.g. centres) both for childcare and long-term care people, via the EU structural funds.
 - **Encourage flexible working/training arrangements**, if there is agreement of both the employer and employee (taking into account business and family needs).
 - **Improve tax and social security systems** at national level:
 - Tax-benefit systems/policies and pensions should not create disincentives for the second earner of a household.
 - Maternity and parental leave should be balanced: too long or too short leaves might impact negatively women's employment possibilities; salary increase or the possibility of returning to the labour market.
 - **Supporting women's economic activity and entrepreneurship** (e.g. startups).

Example:

- In 2024 the Romanian Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism activated for the second year, a financing program stimulating the start-up and development of private economic structures established by women, promoting an information and training system.

- **Facilitating inclusion of migrant/refugee women in the labour market:** often migrant/refugee women are accompanied by children, which makes it more difficult to find a job, on top of language barriers. Welcoming **infrastructures** for migrant /refugee children, as well as intensive **language courses** for migrants/refugees should be provided (e.g. Ukrainian refugees).
- Allocate the **necessary EU funding** in order for the activities described above to be developed and implemented.

With regard to **violence**, it is to note that there is legislation and practices at national level that deal with violence at the workplace.

With regard to domestic violence, the State should have the **primary responsibility to tackle domestic violence** in accordance with national laws and or practices. Employers **are not responsible** for domestic violence. We understand that domestic violence can affect employment, performance, health and safety. Measures can be taken by governments, employers, worker's organisations, labour market institutions to address the impacts of domestic violence. At EU level there is, since 2007, the **Framework agreement on harassment and violence at work by social partners**. To note that the **multi-sectoral guidelines**, co-signed by different sectors (hospitality, education, hospitals, governments and municipalities), **to prevent and tackle third-party violence and harassment related to work**, published in May 2025, also address this point. Moreover, the [ILO Convention 190](#) has already been ratified by a significant number of Member States. From our perspective **no further EU legislation is needed** on the matter.

With regard to the Directive on Pay Transparency ([2023/970](#)), the deadline for Member States to apply is June 2026. Companies are now in the process of adapting.

All in all, HOTREC looks forward to cooperating with the EU institutions in developing a strategy that is meaningful, will improve equality of rights between men and women and will help achieve gender balance. But the strategy should take into account economic impacts and administrative burdens (by not increasing those to businesses); it should be economically sustainable and take SMEs into account.