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## **Strengthening the NGO network – a tool for social security**

### **Equal opportunities and access to the labour market.**

Project No. 1020370

Responsible partner: B-Creative  
Association, Sweden

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# Equal opportunities and access to the labour market in Belarus

Marina Borisova

Interakcia Foundation



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## The right to work - government policy to promote employment

- Registered unemployment as the only indicator used by the state programs;
- Significant difference between the level of registered and real unemployment:
  - Actual unemployment in 2018: 5.1% (1<sup>st</sup> quarter) to 4.7% (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter)
  - Registered unemployment in 2018: 0.5%
- Real unemployment statistics has only been published since February 2017
- Published data are disaggregated only by age, gender and geographical status (no indicators of disability, health status, ethnic and socio-economic status)



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## The right to work - prohibitions and restrictions that apply to women

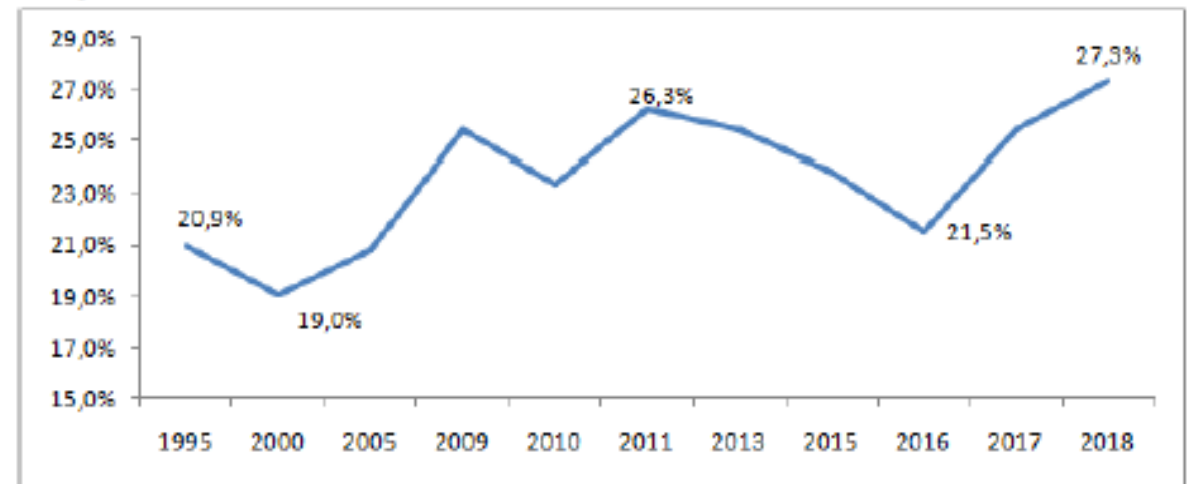


The gap between the wages of men and women is increasing and has grown by more than 30% over the past 20 years.

*Gender salary gap in Belarus, 1995-2018.*

*Source: Belstat*

*Рисунок 3. Гендерный разрыв заработной платы, 1995-2018*



*Источник: Белстат.*



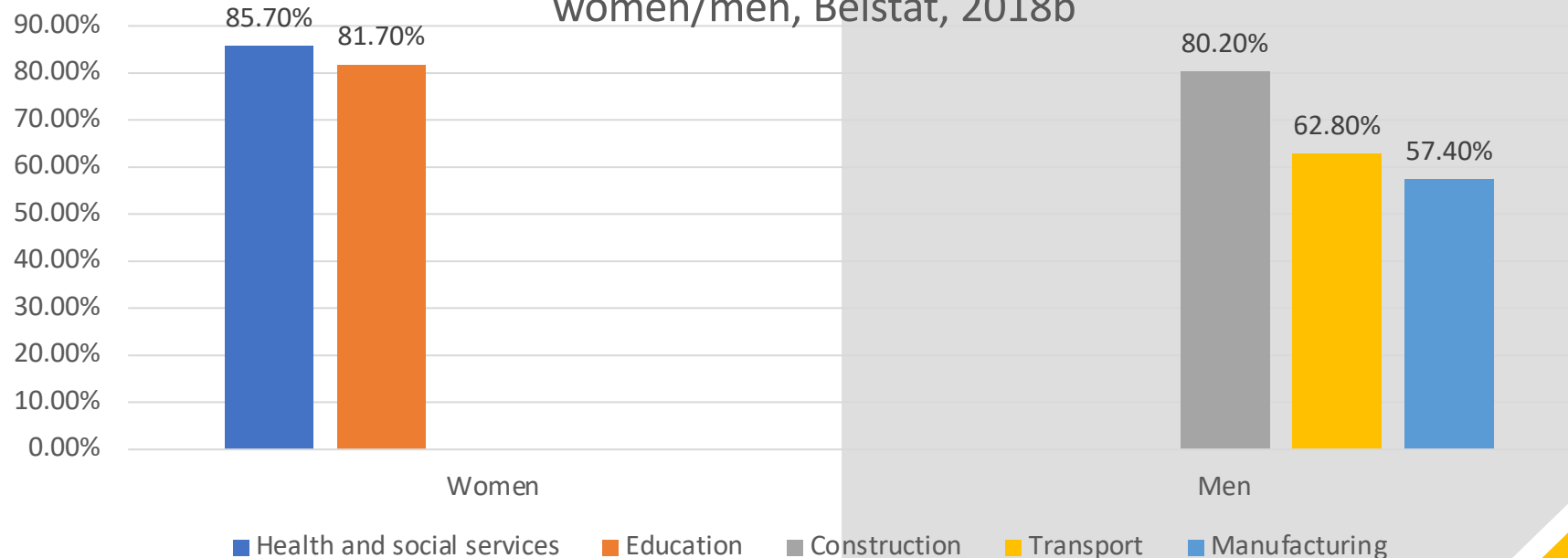
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## The right to work - prohibitions and restrictions that apply to women



Women are concentrated in the branches of the public sector where wages are significantly lower.

Share of women/men in public sector branches among all employed women/men, Belstat, 2018b





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## The right to work - prohibitions and restrictions that apply to women



- List of professions prohibited for women due to harmful or hazardous working conditions:
  - Original list: 252 prohibited professions
  - In 2013: reduced to 181 professions
- Prohibited professions:
  - Trucker
  - Glass blower
  - Firefighter
  - Diver
  - Miner
  - Etc.



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## The right to work - the right of women to equal access and return to the labor market

- Tradition division of social roles: women mainly care for children and perform household chores → “double burdens” (Bergmann, 1981)
  - Belarusian women spend about 2 hours more per day on various household chores than men
  - The right to use long (up to 3 years) parental leave is exercised exclusively by women
  - When looking for work, women are asked questions about their marital status and whether they have children
- Insufficient number of affordable kindergartens, especially daycare facilities for infants (2 months to 3 years old)
- “Maternity penalty” (maternity affecting the level of wages): 28.7% (Akulova, 2016)
- “Maternity penalty” for highly educated women: mothers earn 20% less than women without children



## The right to work of persons with disabilities

- People with disabilities need to obtain permission from the medical expert commission; not all restrictions and prohibitions are justified.
- People with mental illness are actually not allowed to work if they are registered with a dispensary
- People with disabilities, whose legal capacity has been limited in whole or even partially, are completely deprived of the right to work
- The state system of “booking” job places for people with disabilities is not effective enough (gave jobs to only 6.6% of all working people with disabilities)
- Tax benefits only apply to companies where people with disabilities make up at least 30% of the total workforce (almost impossible for most companies).
- No legal basis for the regulation of social enterprises, no specialized trade unions for workers with disabilities.
- Tripartite agreements do not contain specific provisions to protect the rights of workers with disabilities.





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## Access of people with disabilities to education and the labor market

- Legislation does not have provisions for inclusive education
- Education level of people with disabilities aged 18 and over:
  - Higher education: about 13%
  - Secondary specialized education: about 22%
  - Vocational education: about 10%
- Lack of barrier-free environment in schools and universities, and a very low level of online education
- Mobility limitations and employment opportunities:
  - 92.9% of all working people with disabilities move independently
  - 4.6% use assistive devices
  - Only 0.5% use a wheelchair



## The right to work - prohibition of forced labor

- Forced labour in relation to:
  - People suffering from alcohol or drug addiction
  - People deprived of parental rights
- Forced participation in seasonal harvesting work (employees of state organizations, military personnel, schoolchildren and students, incl. minors)
- “Subbotniks”: unpaid work on weekends. Declared voluntary, but workers are not able to refuse under the threat of sanctions





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## Right to Social Security - Availability and Adequacy of Pensions, unemployment benefits, and the right to an adequate standard of living

- Pension reform: the length of working years required to receive a pension increased from 5 to 16 years
- Those who do not reach the minimum employment record, can only receive social pension (less than 75% of the subsistence minimum budget established for pensioners)
- Unemployment benefits are very small: between 2006 and 2017, the maximum and minimum benefits did not exceed 43 and 15 percent of the subsistence level, respectively
- Short-term paid public works allow the unemployed to support themselves financially, but prevent them from searching for long-term employment
- Having no home is not considered a violation of the human right to housing; no specialized assistance to people addressed by this problem



Thank you for your attention!

### Sources:

Materials of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Pre-Session Working Group of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Belarus, prepared by the Belarus Helsinki Committee, Human Rights Protection Centre Viasna, Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities:

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi1r4XjieryAhWx8uAKHUsTCcAQFnoECA0QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbinter.net.ohchr.org%2FTreaties%2FCESCR%2FShared%2520Documents%2FBLR%2FINTCESCR\\_IC\\_SBLR\\_32545\\_R.doc&usg=AOvVaw2MapaQq-SsT1qKE2eMO7H8](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi1r4XjieryAhWx8uAKHUsTCcAQFnoECA0QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbinter.net.ohchr.org%2FTreaties%2FCESCR%2FShared%2520Documents%2FBLR%2FINTCESCR_IC_SBLR_32545_R.doc&usg=AOvVaw2MapaQq-SsT1qKE2eMO7H8)

FROGEE Policy Brief 2. The experience of Belarus. Women on the labour market: Belarus. Maria Akulova, BEROC: <https://freepolicybriefs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/frogee-policy-brief-2-belarus-rusfin.pdf>