



## KAPITEL 7 / CHAPTER 7<sup>8</sup>

### GENDER INEQUALITIES ACROSS THE REGIONS

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Although the world has recorded a significant progress in the last decades in terms of women integration in the society, including active participation in the production and social activities, still there is a significant gap registered, when it comes to women participation in labour markets as well as having an active role in the society. In some countries there even exist legal limitations for women to develop, to have access to education and other services.

Ensuring gender balance and equity is not only important because it will eliminate the discrimination and provide fair treatment for women, that is of primary importance, but decreasing the gender gap labour force participation alone is estimated to contribute to the increase of economic output by 35%, as per IMF estimations.<sup>9</sup>

An important incentive and a focused approach to achieving the goals on gender equality and reaching tangible results on the women empowerment is marked by the creation by United Nations General Assembly of the specialised institution - UN Women in July 2010. This has accelerated the work regarding achieving gender equality all over the world. The institution also is a leader in promoting and coordinating UN work on gender equality in all agreements related to 2030 Agenda.

The main focus of the UN Women is to promote and support countries in improving the legislative framework, implementation of policies and programmes that would benefit women and girls, ensuring equal participation of women and girls in all aspects of life including governance systems, providing income security with decent work and economic autonomy, proper living conditions free from any form of violence and also women and girls have a more significant impact on building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit from prevention of natural calamities, conflicts, wars and humanitarian action.<sup>10</sup>

Promoting gender equality and eliminating inequalities that unfortunately are still deeply embedded in the society all over the world, will not only contribute to the protection of a basic human right, but will significantly increase economic growth via increased productivity. Among the most spread gender inequalities are lack of access to proper work, occupational segregation and significant wage gaps between men and women. Another important problem faced by women represents the lack of access to education and healthcare, as well as violence and discrimination. Not of least importance is the underrepresentation of women in political life and correspondingly little involvement in the decision-making process.

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<sup>9</sup> Kristalina Georgieva, Antoinette Sayeh, Ratna Sahay. How to Close Gender Gaps and Grow the Global Economy. September 8, 2022. <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/09/08/how-to-close-gender-gaps-and-grow-the-global-economy>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women> (accessed on 1 December 2022)



UN Women refers to gender equality as follows: “Equality between women and men (gender equality) refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.”<sup>11</sup>

From this definition can be deduced that not all gender gaps will mandatory constitute gender inequality as per UN Women definition. Correspondingly policy makers should concentrate on eliminating gender inequality, not on reaching an equal share or completely eliminating all gender gaps.

Another important initiative on the international level represents the 2017 Buenos Aires World Trade Organization Joint Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment that was joined by 127 countries.

But if to look from the perspective of free trade agreements (FTAs), from the total 292 agreements in force, notified to the World Trade Organization (WTO), more than 25% have at least one provision that explicitly mentions gender. But if to look from the broader perspective including the gender-implicit provisions such as those relate to human rights, social aspect of sustainable development and vulnerable groups, then the number of agreements will increase up to 243. Out of 70 FTAs across 25 Commonwealth countries for example, show that only 40% mention gender and about 70% have a reduced level of gender responsiveness. Free trade agreements are able to open up opportunities in global value chains, but without tackling the gender aspects, the opportunities will remain different for women and men with a clear advantage for men.<sup>12</sup>

Among the obstacles encountered by women in their participation in trade are: regulatory, employment limitations and restrictions, lack of access to capital and resources, maternity obstacles or inappropriate market information. For example, women are prohibited to work in certain jobs, in more than 100 countries. In some countries there are imposed restrictions by the governments on the women and girls’ right to own assets.

Another important issues in terms of gender inequality, is the fact that women are mostly engaged in unpaid domestic work, and on average they spend time twice than men on domestic work, and correspondingly if these longer hours would be considered, then women work longer hours than men.<sup>13</sup>

The negative consequence when women are not included thus cannot contribute to growth and development are huge for global economy. One of the cornerstones of

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/guiding-documents> (accessed on 3 December 2022)

<sup>12</sup> International Trade Centre (ITC). *Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements*. July 2020, Geneva

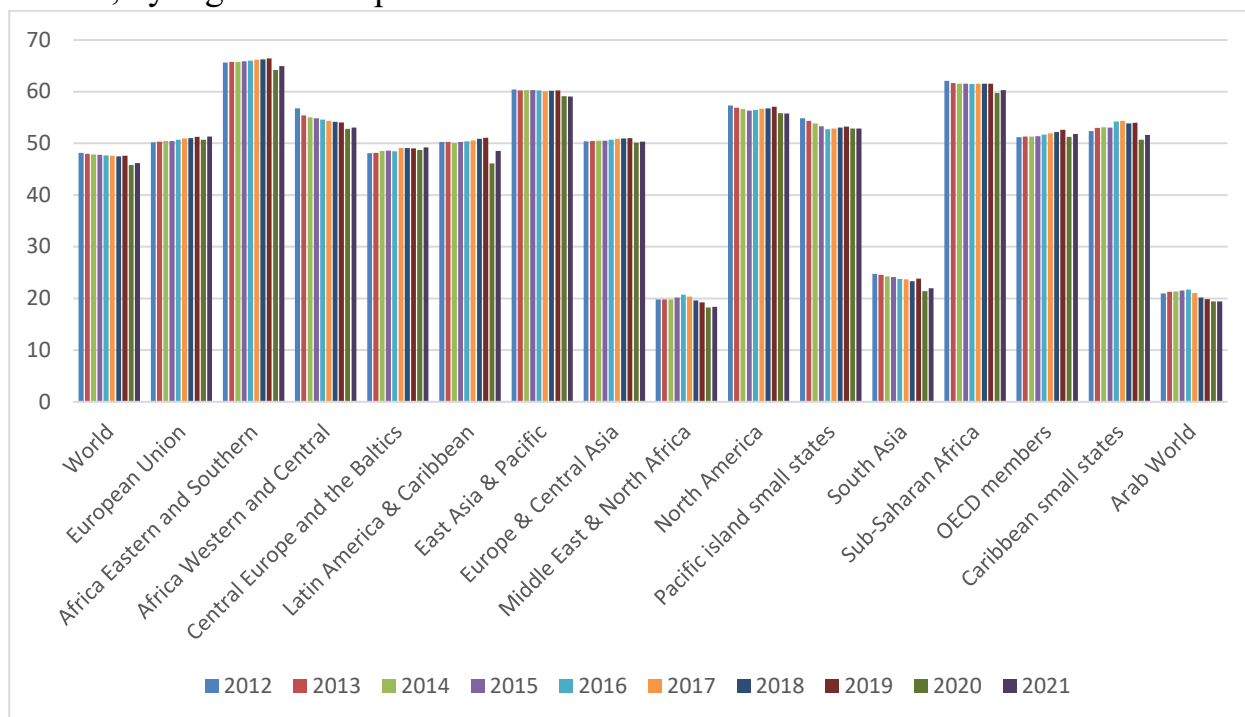
<sup>13</sup> World Bank Group (27 February 2019). ‘Women, Business and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform’ <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/702301554216687135/WBL-DECADE-OF-REFORM-2019-WEB-04-01.pdf> (accessed on 15 December 2022)



the sustainable development is the inclusive growth.<sup>14</sup>

The McKinsey Global Institute study found that if women and men played an equal role in labour markets, global gross domestic product would increase by 26% in 2025.<sup>15</sup>

In the figure below is analysed the evolution of labour force participation rate, female, by region in the period 2012-2021.



**Figure 1 - The evolution of labour force participation rate, female (% of female ages 15+) by region, 2012-2021**

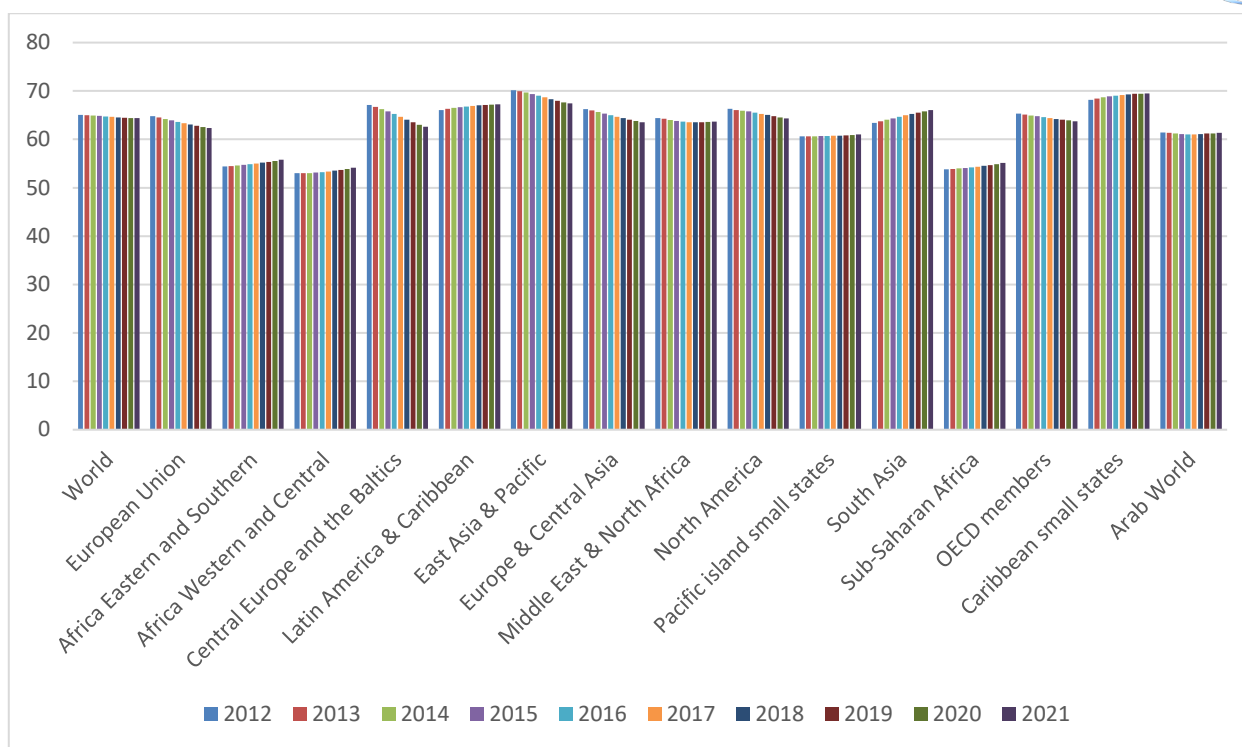
Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

The level of labour force participation rate of female aged 15+ registers a world average varying between 48% in 2012 and 46% in 2021, with declining rate in 2020 and 2021. The regions with the highest share of labour force participation rate, female are: Eastern and Southern Africa with 65%, followed Sub-Saharan Africa with 60%, East Asia and Pacific – 59% in 2021 declining from 60%. Other regions with rates above 50% are North America, Pacific island small states, Caribbean small states, OECD members, Western and Central Africa, European Union, Europe and Central Asia. On the other hand, regions that registered the lowest labour force participation rate, female are South Asia, Arab World, Middle East and North Africa with values varying between 19% and 20%.

<sup>14</sup> Alesina, A. and D. Rodrick (1994). ‘Distributive Politics and Economic Growth’ 109(2), The Quarterly Journal of Economics 465; Hausmann, Ricardo, Tyson, Laura D. and Saadia Zahidi (2010). The Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2010.pdf))

<sup>15</sup> McKinsey Global Institute (2015), ‘The power of parity: How advancing women’s equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth’.

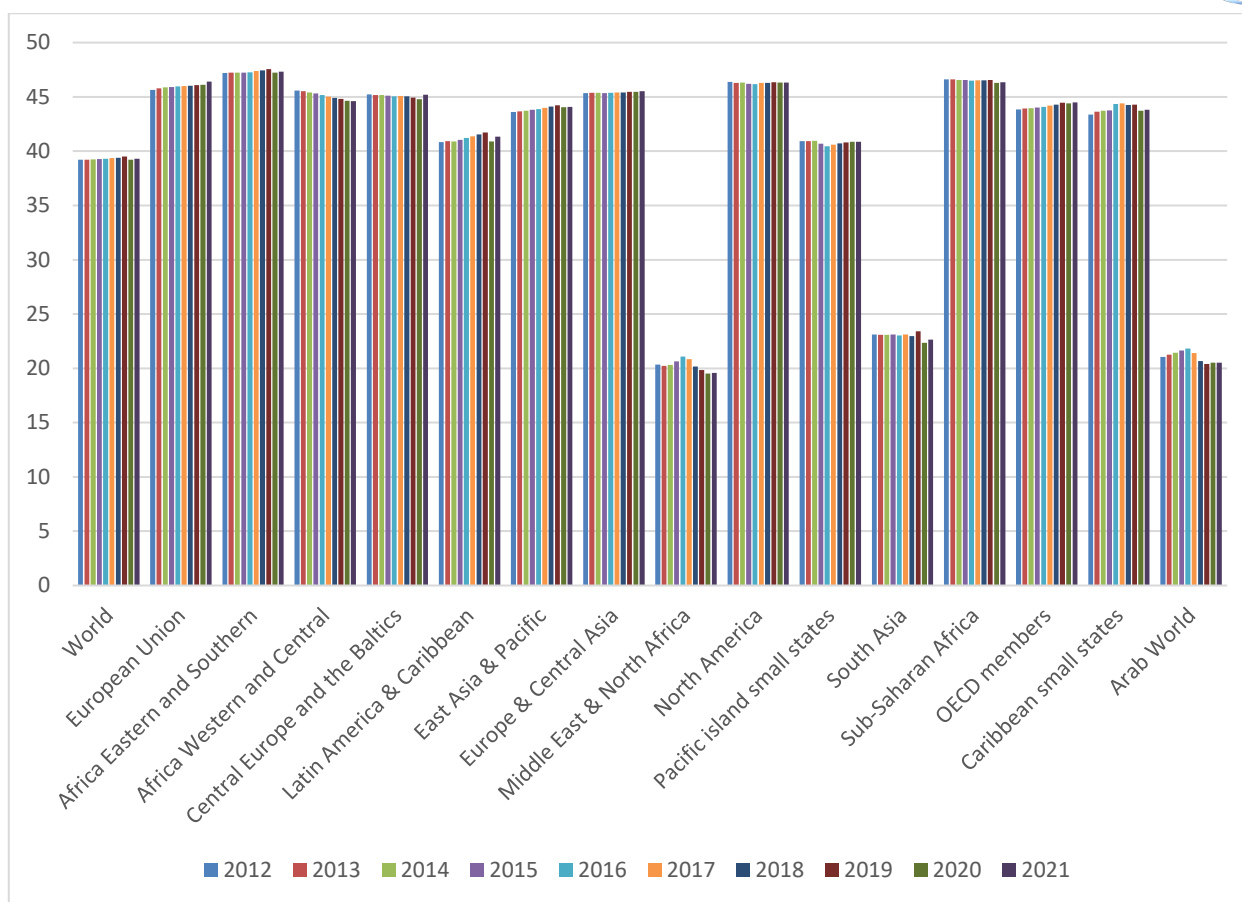


**Figure 2 - Share of female population, ages 15-64, %**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

In the period 2012-2021 on the global level there wasn't registered a significant change in the share of women in total population aged 15-64, it has decreased from 65% in 2012 till 64,4% in 2021. The regions with the share of women in total population of this age group are: Caribbean small states with a share of 69%, Latin America and Caribbean countries, East Asia and Pacific with a share higher than 67%, South Asia – 66%. The regions with levels close to the world average are: North America, Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa, OECD members, Central Europe and the Baltics and European Union – with shares varying from more than 64% till above 62%. The regions with the lowest share of women in total population aged 15-64 are Eastern and Southern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Western and Central Africa with share varying between 55% and 54%, that is caused by higher mortality rate in these regions both for men and women. The regions that have registered a decrease in the share of female population in the total in this age group in the period of 2012-2021 are: Central Europe and Baltic States, East Asia and Pacific, North America, European Union and OECD members that is to a great extent because of the increase of life expectancy of male population and women as well. On the other hand, the regions that registered an increase in the share of women in total population aged 15-64 are South Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, Latin America and Caribbean countries and Sub-Saharan Africa that is due to poor living conditions and lower life expectancy for both men and women, but slightly higher for the first group.



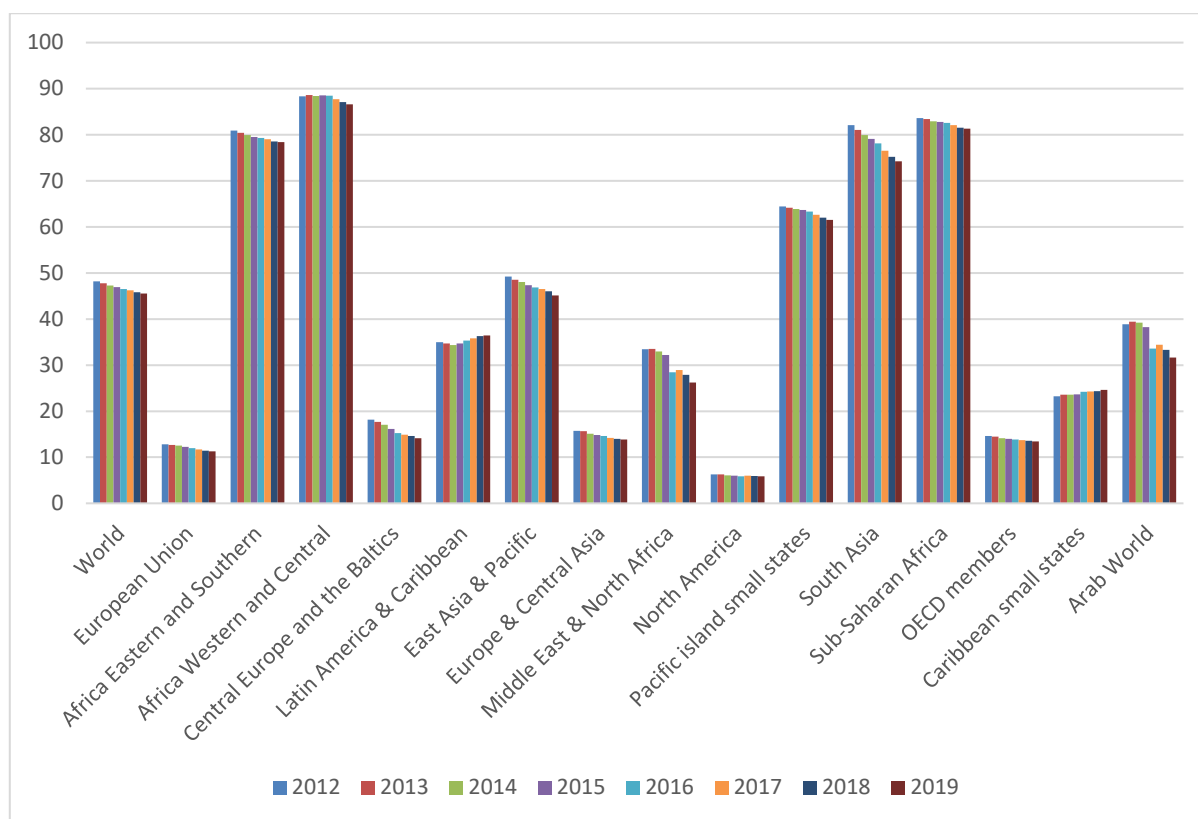
**Figure 3 - Share of female Labour force, per regions, 2012-2021, %**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

The world average of the female labour force from the total registered in the period 2012-2021 around 39%, with slight decrease in 2020, while the share of women in total population aged 15-64 was 64,4% in 2021. The regions with the highest share, above 45% are: East and South Africa (47%), North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, European Union with around 46%. Europe and Central Asia, Western and Central Africa, Central Europe and the Baltic states, OECD members, Caribbean small states register values around 45%. The regions with shares of female labour force much below the world average are: South Asia with 22%, Arab world with around 20% registering a decline in 2019-2021 and Middle East and North Africa with share lower than 20%. It could be noticed that for the last three mentioned regions the discrepancy between the share of women in total population aged 15-64 that varies between 61% and 64% is much higher in comparison with other regions – the difference being more than 40% in shares.

Analysing the share of self-employed women in total employed women, the world average in 2012-2019 registered a decline from 48 till 45%. The regions with the highest shares of self-employed women are Western and Central Africa with value of 86,6% in 2019 declining from 88% in 2012, Sub-Saharan Africa in 2019 registered



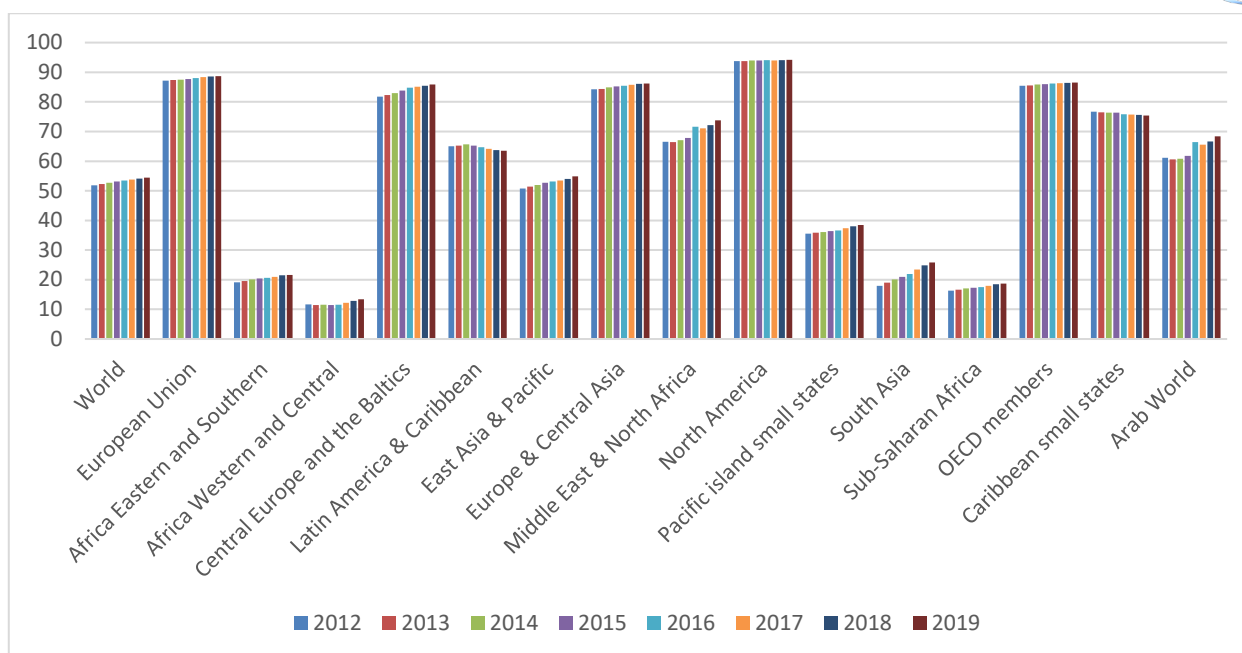
**Figure 4 - The share of self-employed women, (% of female employment), 2012-2019**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

81%, also slightly declining from 2012, followed by Eastern and Southern Africa – 78% in 2019, registering a decline in comparison with 2012, South Asia – 74% in 2019 and Pacific island small states – 62% in 2019. The regions with the lowest share of self-employed women are: North America – 6% in 2019, European Union – 11% in 2019, OECD members – 13,5% in 2019, Europe and Central Asia – 13,8% in 2019, Central Europe and the Baltics – 14% in 2019. The highest declines in the period 2012-2019 in the share of self-employed women were registered in Middle East and North Africa, Arab world countries, South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, Central Europe and Baltic states, Europe and Central Asia, European Union and OECD members. It is to be highlighted that the regions dominated by developing countries register a much higher share of self-employed women in comparison with regions dominated by developed countries, the variation in shares equalling from more than 14 times till 3 times. This is due to the structure of the economies and characteristics of the labour market in the corresponding countries, and lack of opportunities for women in the majority of developing countries where frequently women have to create themselves these opportunities with the support of different specialised international organisations and programmes.





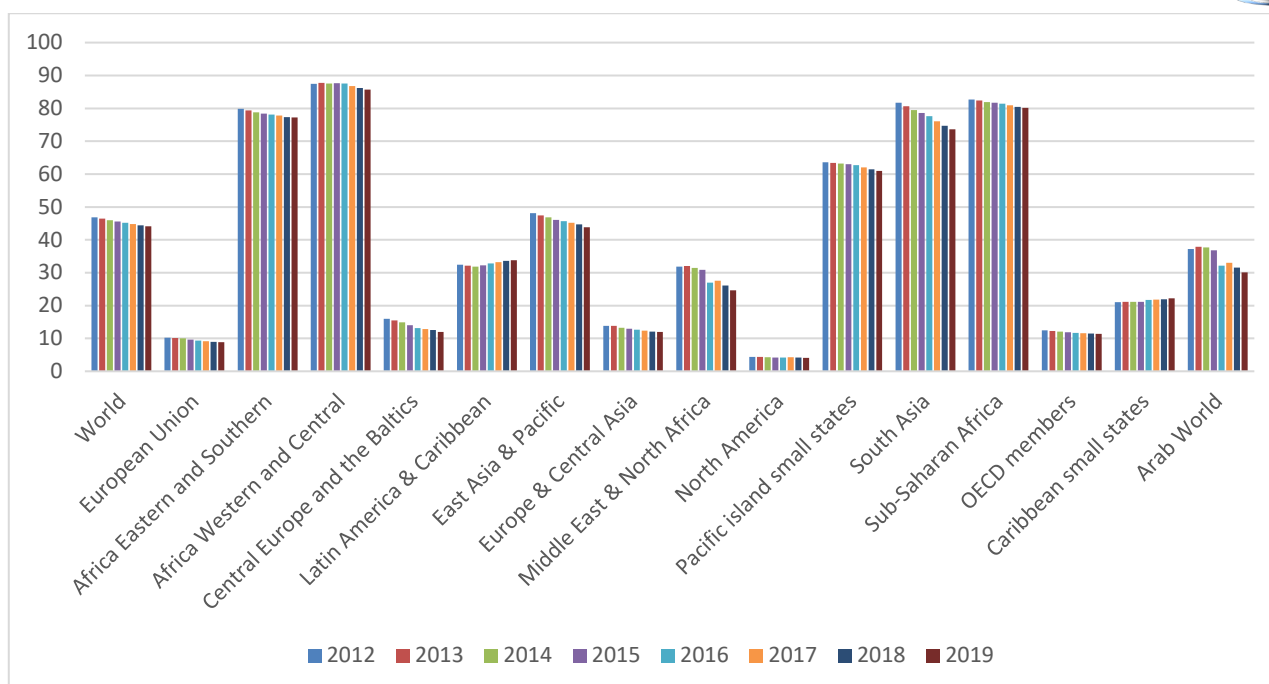
**Figure 5 - Share of wage and salaried workers in total female employment per regions, %, 2012-2019**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

The world average of share of wage and salaried women in total female employment in the period 2012-2019 registered an increase from 52% in 2012 till 54,5% in 2019. The regions with levels above the world average are: North America – 94% in 2019, European Union – 89% in 2019, OECD members – 87% in 2019, Europe and Central Asia and Central Europe and Baltics registered values around 86% in 2019, followed by Caribbean small states – 75% in 2019, Middle East and North Africa – 74% in 2019, Arab world – 78% and East Asia and Pacific with levels equalling the world average – 54% in 2019. On the opposite side, the regions that have the lowest shares of wage and salaried workers in total female employment are: on the last place - Western and Central Africa – 13% in 2019, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa – 19% in 2019, Eastern and Southern Africa – 22% in 2019, South Asia – 25% in 2019. This obviously increases the risk of unstable income of women in the corresponding regions with the share of wage and salaried women below 25% in 2019.

The world average of share of vulnerable employment in total female employment that is represented by contributing family workers and own-account workers registered a declining trend from 2012 till 2019 reaching 44% down by 2% in comparison with 2012. The regions with levels above the world average and correspondingly with the highest share of vulnerable female employment are: Western and Central Africa – 86% in 2019 registering slight decrease from 2012, Sub-Saharan Africa – 80% in 2019 also with a slight decline from 2012, Eastern and Southern Africa – 77% in 2019 similarly registering a decline since 2012, South Asia registered a much more significant decline of the women's vulnerability indicator in the period 2012-2019 reaching the level of



**Figure 6 - Share of vulnerable employment in female employment, evolution by regions in 2012-2019, %**

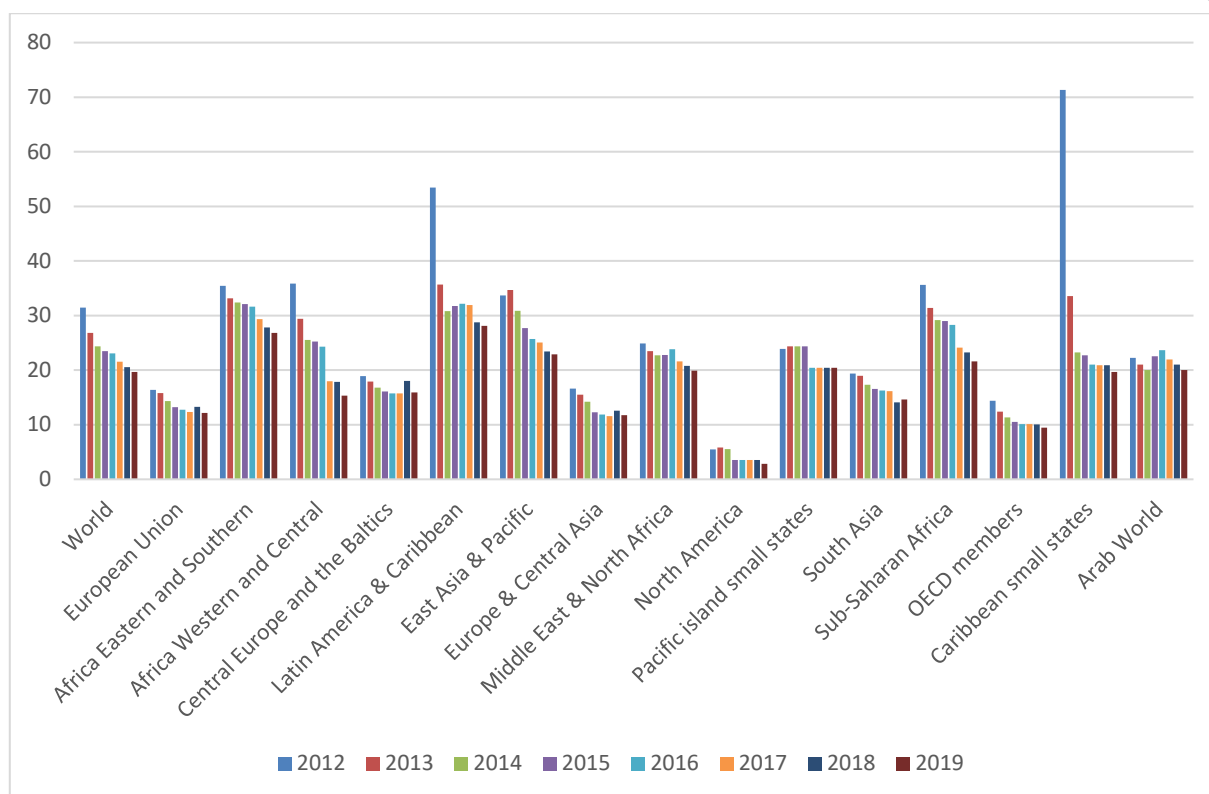
Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

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74%, Pacific island small states registered in 2019 a share of 61% and East Asia and Pacific registered levels similar to the world average of 44% in 2019, following a decrease from 2012. Also, a positive trend was registered in Arab world countries with a significant decline of the share of vulnerable employment in total female employment, that equalled in 2019 30%. The regions that registered the lowest vulnerable employment in total female employment are: North America – 4% in 2019, European Union – 9% in 2019 registering a decline in comparison with 2012, OECD members – 11,4% in 2019, Europe and Central Asia – 12% in 2019, and Central Europe and the Baltics – 12% in 2019.

The average number of days required to start a business by women registered a considerable decline in 2012-2019 from 31,4 days till 19,7 days, that is a 40% decrease. The regions with best indicator, lowest number of days required to start a business by women are: North America that registered a decline in the number of days needed to start a business from 5,5 days till 2,85 in 2019, followed by OECD members that also registered a progress in terms of reducing the number of days required to start a business by women, from 14,3 days in 2012 till 9,5 days in 2019, Europe and Central Asia also registered a decrease of the number of days required to start a business by women from 16,6 days in 2012 till 11,8 days in 2019, European Union also registered a reduction of the number of days required to start a business by women from 16,4 days in 2012 till 12,2 days in 2019. In South Asia the time required to start a business by women in 2019 was of 14,6 days being reduced from 19,4 days required in 2012.



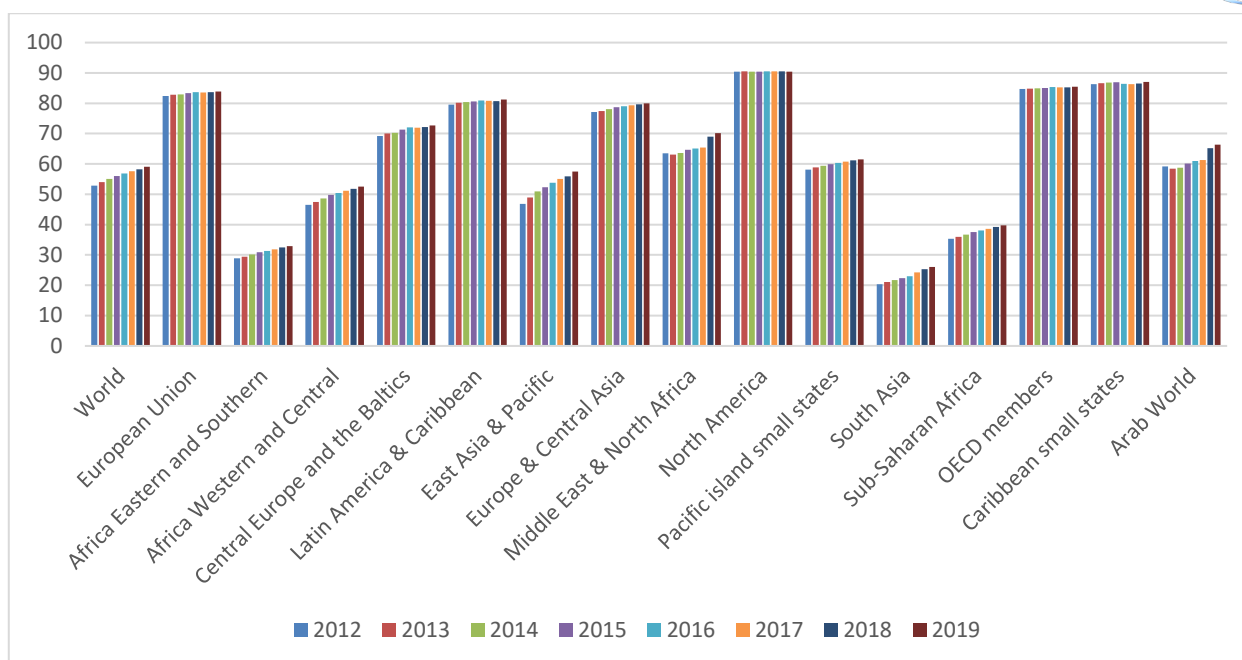


**Figure 7 - Time required to start a business, female (days), 2012-2019**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

On the opposite side, the regions still registering a number of days required to start a business above the world average are: Latin America and Caribbean – 28 days in 2019, down from 53,4 days in 2012, a decrease of around 48%, Eastern and Southern Africa – 27 days in 2019, from 35,5 in 2012, East Asia and Pacific – 23 days in 2019, from 34 days in 2012, Sub-Saharan Africa – 21,6 days in 2019 from 35,6 days in 2012, Pacific island small states – 20,4 days in 2019, from 23,8 days in 2012 and Arab World – 20 days in 2019 from 22,2 days in 2012. The regions that registered the highest reduction of the number of days required to start a business by women were: Caribbean small states - from 71,3 days in 2012 till 19,7 days in 2019, a reduction higher than 73% and Latin America and Caribbean – from 53,4 days in 2012 till 28 days in 2019, by more than 48%. All the regions registered a decrease of number of days required to start a business by women in the period 2012-2019, nevertheless the rhythm of reduction of the time required varies across the regions. The top three regions in terms of shortest time required to start a business maintained the same ranking: North America, OECD members and European Union. Regions with the time required to start a business below the world average are: Europe and Central Asia, South Asia, Western and Central Africa and Central Europe and the Baltics. From the regions dominated by developing states the one that managed to reduce the time required to start a business by women from above the world average in 2012 till below the world average in 2019 was Western and Central Africa.



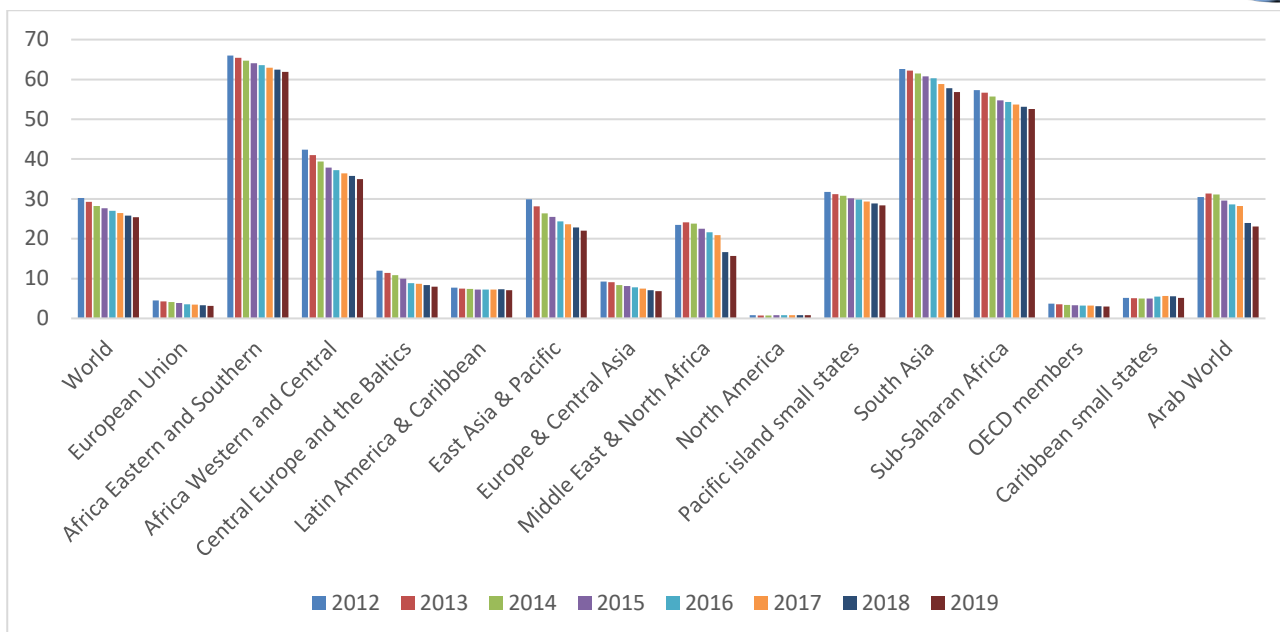
**Figure 8 - Employment in services, female (% of female employment), by regions, 2012-2019**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

In terms share of women employment in services from the total of female employment, there was registered an increase of the world average of the index in 2012-2019 from 52,8% till 59%. The increasing trend of the share of women employed in services was valid for all the regions for the period 2012-2019. The regions with the highest share of women employed in services is North America – 90,4% in 2019, Caribbean small states – 87% in 2019, OECD members – 85,5% in 2019, European Union – 84%, Latin America and Caribbean – 81% in 2019. On the other hand, the regions that registered share of employment is services of women below the world average in 2019 were: South Asia – 26% in 2019 less than half of the world average, Eastern and Southern Africa – 33% in 2019 (with 26% lower than the world average), Sub-Saharan Africa – 40% in 2019 (with 19% less than the world average), Western and Central Africa – 52,5% in 2019, and East Asia and Pacific – 57,5%.

The world average share of women employment in agriculture in total women employment has registered a decline in the period 2012-2019 from 30% till 25,4% correspondingly. The regions that register the lowest share of women employed in agriculture are: North America – 0,78% in 2019 (more than 32 times lower than the world average), OECD members – 2,9% in 2019 (more than 8 times lower than the world average), European Union – 3,2% in 2019 (almost 8 times lower than the world average), Caribbean small states – 5,2% in 2019, Europe and Central Asia – 6,8% in 2019, Latin America and Caribbean – 7% in 2019, Central Europe and the Baltics – 8% in 2019, Middle East and North Africa – 16%, closer to world average are situated East Asia and Pacific – 22% in 2019 and Arab World – 23% in 2019. On the other



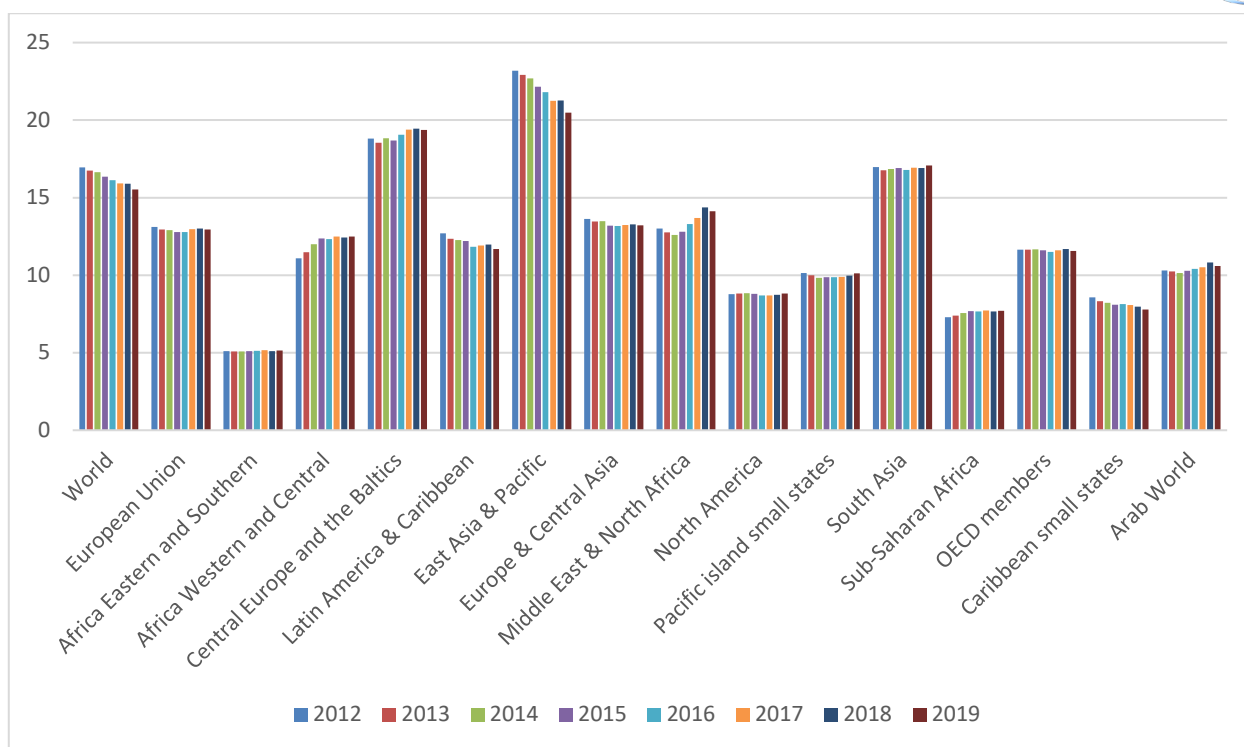
**Figure 9 - Employment in agriculture, female (% of female employment) by regions, 2012-2019**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>

hand regions that have registered higher than world average share of women employment in agriculture are: Eastern and Southern Africa – 62% in 2019 down from 65,5% in 2012, 2,4 times higher than the world average share, South Asia – 57% in 2019 down from 62,6% in 2012, 2,2 times higher than the world average, Sub-Saharan Africa – 52,5% in 2019 down from 57,4% in 2012, 2 times higher than the world average. This reflects the structure of the economy of the countries in these three regions, and high vulnerability and lower income of women employed in agriculture in these countries, due to increased risks, variable and unstable incomes in the agricultural sector overall.

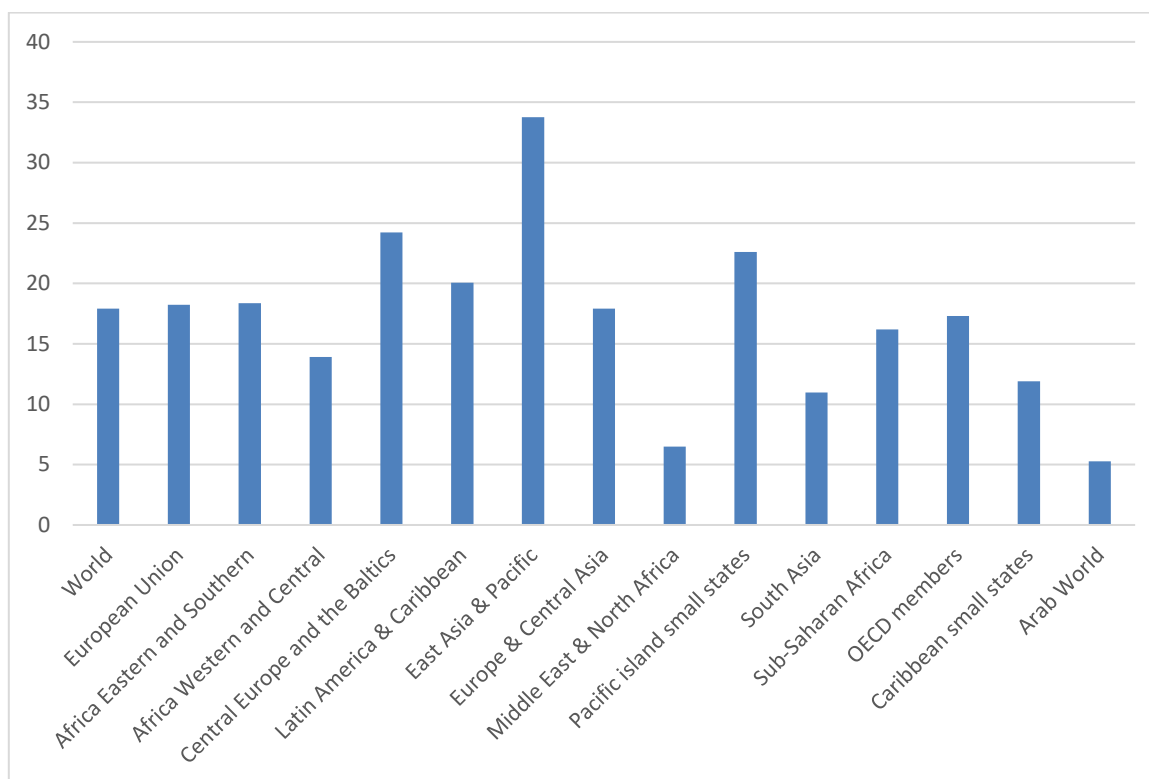
The share of women employment in industry in the total women employment at the world level is below the share of services and agriculture, and has registered a decline in 2019 from 2012, equalling 15,5% in 2019 down from 16,9%. The regions with share of women employment in industry above the world average are: East Asia and Pacific with a share of 20,5% in 2015 down from 23,3% in 2012, Central Europe and Baltics – with 19,4% in 2019 increasing from 18,8% in 2012, and South Asia – with 17% similar to 2012 value. The regions that registered the lowest share of women employment in industry were: Eastern and Southern Africa – 5,1% in 2019 similar to the values from the previous years, Sub-Saharan Africa – 7,7% in 2019, Caribbean small states – 7,8% in 2019, North America – 8,8% in 2019, Pacific island small states – 10,1% in 2019, Arab world – 10,6% in 2019, Latin America and Caribbean – 11,7% in 2019, Western and Central Africa – 12,5% in 2019, European Union – 12,9% in 2019, Europe and Central Asia – 13,2% and Middle East and North Africa – 14,1% in 2019 close to world average.



**Figure 10 - Employment in industry, female (% of female employment) by regions, 2012-2019**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>



**Figure 11 - Firms with female top manager (% of firms), 2021**

Source: elaborated by the author based on the data from

<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS&country=#>



As concerns the share of firms with women top managers for the year 2021 the share at the world level was of 17,9%, the region with the highest share of female top managers is East Asia and Pacific – with 33,8%, followed by Central Europe and the Baltics – 24,2%, Pacific island small states – 22,6%, Latin America and Caribbean – 20%, European Union and Eastern and Southern Africa with levels slightly higher than 18%, Europe and Central Asia – 17,9%, OECD members – 17,3%, Sub-Saharan Africa – 16,2%. The regions with the lowest level of female top managers are: Arab world with 5,3%, Middle East and North Africa – 6,5% and South Asia – 10,9% in 2021.

In novel fintech, the share of women in leadership is even less than 13%, according to firm-level data set across 97 countries. Both as founders and as members of executive boards of fintech firms, the share of women in leadership is even less than in traditional banking, where 25% of board seats in banks and bank supervision agencies are held by women and technology companies. There is considerable regional variation, with the highest shares of fintech companies founded by women in the Western Hemisphere and Asia and Pacific regions and the lowest in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Also, women's digital and technology-related literacy, measured by the share of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, remains low close to 15% globally.<sup>16</sup>

In the period 2020 -2022, the negative impact of the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, the current food and energy price increase, and the significant impact of the climate change have widened even more the existing large gender gaps, affecting women's jobs, incomes, and security to a higher extent than the ones of men.

According to World Economic Forum, it will take more than 135 years to close gender gaps worldwide, an increase of 35 years from about 100 years before the pandemic. At the global level, 64 million women lost their jobs during the pandemic, double in comparison with men, because women are more likely to work in informal, temporary, and part-time jobs, that are most likely to be cut first in crises, and that have lower pay and less social protection.

The data are even more discouraging when it comes to political gender gap, in case of which the share of women with parliamentary seats is 26% and women with ministerial positions at the global level is 22,6%, if the current trajectory will be kept, it is estimated that political gender gap will be closed in 145 years compared to previous estimations of 95 years. The estimations for economic gender gap to be closed is 267 years.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Purva Khera, Sumiko Ogawa, Ratna Sahay, Mahima Vasisht. The Digital Gender Gap. December 2022  
<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2022/12/the-digital-gender-gap-khera-ogawa-sahay-vasisht>  
(accessed on 26 December 2022)

<sup>17</sup> World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report.



## **Conclusion**

A joint global effort to reduce inequalities and provide equal opportunities for women and men, opening up the full potential to participate in economy, will not only benefit women, but could be a significant component of much faster recovery from recent shocks of the global economy and a powerful engine of growth for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy.

Although some progress has been achieved in selected areas when it comes to reduction of gender inequalities for example in the sphere related to enrollment in primary and secondary education, it is still registered significant gender inequality in many areas such as labour force participation, wages, leadership positions and enrollment in tertiary education with significant variation across the regions. For example, the regions with the highest share of vulnerable employment in total female employment was registered in Western and Central Africa (86% in 2019), Sub-Saharan Africa (80% in 2019), Eastern and Southern Africa (77% in 2019) and South Asia (74% in 2019). Moreover, the pandemic crises and the war in Ukraine has further increased the existing gender inequality.

It is required a huge effort, by implementing corresponding national policies to tackle the gender inequality, as some of forms of gender inequality exist in almost all the countries of the world, but obviously there is a great variation of gender inequalities among countries, that require corresponding approach from policy makers, that should take into account the corresponding level of development of the country, what would be the most efficient measures in reducing gender inequalities, and the short and medium term impact, as well as the role of such policies in eliminating the causes of the gender inequalities. The majority of developing countries would also need external support in elaborating and implementing corresponding policies to address gender inequality.