

SESSION 2: Education build on equality and diversity in forestry

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The future of women's employment in peripheral industrial regions

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Extended summary

Peripheral industrial regions represent a specific environment in terms of gender inequality. These areas are defined by a specific economic structure and occupational patterns, with women often classified as 'groups at risk of exclusion'. The economy in such regions has traditionally been concentrated in sectors such as mining, manufacturing and technology, which are predominantly male-dominated (Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives 2019). These long-standing norms continue to shape limited labour markets and reinforce gender stereotypes – for example, men occupying high-skilled positions, while women are relegated to lower-skilled roles. In addition, employment support systems, such as education, training programmes and career planning, often perpetuate a culture of traditional industrial masculinity (European Commission 2023). In extreme cases, this leads to the systematic exclusion of women from the labour market, resulting in male-dominated workforces. As a result, women are often marginalised in local and regional labour markets, particularly in technology-driven industries. Women often find themselves in precarious employment with limited opportunities for career development within the region. This forces many to either commute to larger regional centres or emigrate altogether, contributing to a 'brain drain'. This exclusion not only undermines women's empowerment and well-being, but also reduces regional productivity and exacerbates the core-periphery divide.

The aim of this presentation is to examine the position of women in the labour market in the town of Trbovlje, a former mining and industrial town with around 14,000 inhabitants. Trbovlje is a town with a rich industrial and mining history, but today it faces many structural challenges: high unemployment, public health problems, low income, environmental degradation etc. (Bole et al. 2024). Women, and especially young girls, find it difficult to achieve adequate economic empowerment and fulfilment. We want to show the position of women in the labour market of Trbovlje in two ways. First, we collect and analyse official employment statistics showing structures and trends in different thematic areas (e.g. employment structure, entrepreneurship, wages, managerial positions). Second, we employ ethnographic research to explore women's narratives in Trbovlje to uncover past experiences of older generations and future orientations of girls and (young) women. The results will serve as a first step in identifying women's needs and institutional barriers to creating a more inclusive labour market in the town of Trbovlje.

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