

**ACTIVE AGEING INDEX  
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION  
AND ITS EVOLUTION 2010-2018  
RESULTS REPORT**

**July 2019**



Co-funded by the



## Note

This report is prepared within the framework of the joint project by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

---

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontier or boundaries.

---

This report has been prepared for UNECE and the European Commission. However, it should not be regarded as an official statement of these two organisations' policies, and these organisations cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

The report should be referred to as: UNECE / European Commission (2019) "Active Ageing Index in the European Union and its evolution 2010-2018: Results report", prepared by Yolanda González-Rábago and Antía Domínguez-Rodríguez of the University of the Basque Country (Bilbao), under contract with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva), co-funded by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (Brussels).



CAMPUS OF  
INTERNATIONAL  
EXCELLENCE



Research Group on Social Determinants of Health  
and Demographic Change [www.ehu.es/opik](http://www.ehu.es/opik)

# Table of content

- 1. 2018 ACTIVE AGEING INDEX IN THE EUROPEAN UNION ..... 4**
  - 1.1 Overall AAI ..... 4**
  - 1.2 Employment..... 7**
  - 1.3 Participation in society ..... 8**
  - 1.4 Independent, healthy and secure living ..... 9**
  - 1.5 Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing .....10**
  - 1.6 Gender gap .....11**
  
- 2. ACTIVE AGEING INDEX EVOLUTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION 2010-2018 .....12**
  - 2.1 Overall AAI evolution .....12**
  - 2.2 Employment evolution .....15**
  - 2.3 Participation in society evolution .....18**
  - 2.4 Independent, healthy and secure living evolution .....21**
  - 2.5 Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing evolution.....24**
  - 2.6 Gender gap evolution .....27**

This report is structured in two sections with the analysis, on the one hand, of the situation of the 2018 Active Ageing Index (AAI), and, on the other, of the evolution of the index between 2010 and 2018. Thus, firstly, the results of the AAI in the whole of the 28 European Union countries are presented, describing the overall scores of the AAI and its dimensions in 2018. Secondly, the results of the AAI in time perspective are displayed, examining changes both in overall AAI and each of the dimensions from 2010 to 2018. Moreover, the results of 2018 and its evolution are shown for the whole population and disaggregated by sex, as well as the gender gap analysis in the overall score, the dimensions and its evolution.

All results are comparable among countries and years, as the same data sources were used, and the same calculation criteria were followed. The data sources employed have been Labour Force Survey (LFS), European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), European Social Survey (ESS), Information and Communications Technologies usage by Households and Individuals (ICT Survey), Mortality and Population registers from Eurostat. 2018 AAI is based mainly on data from 2016.

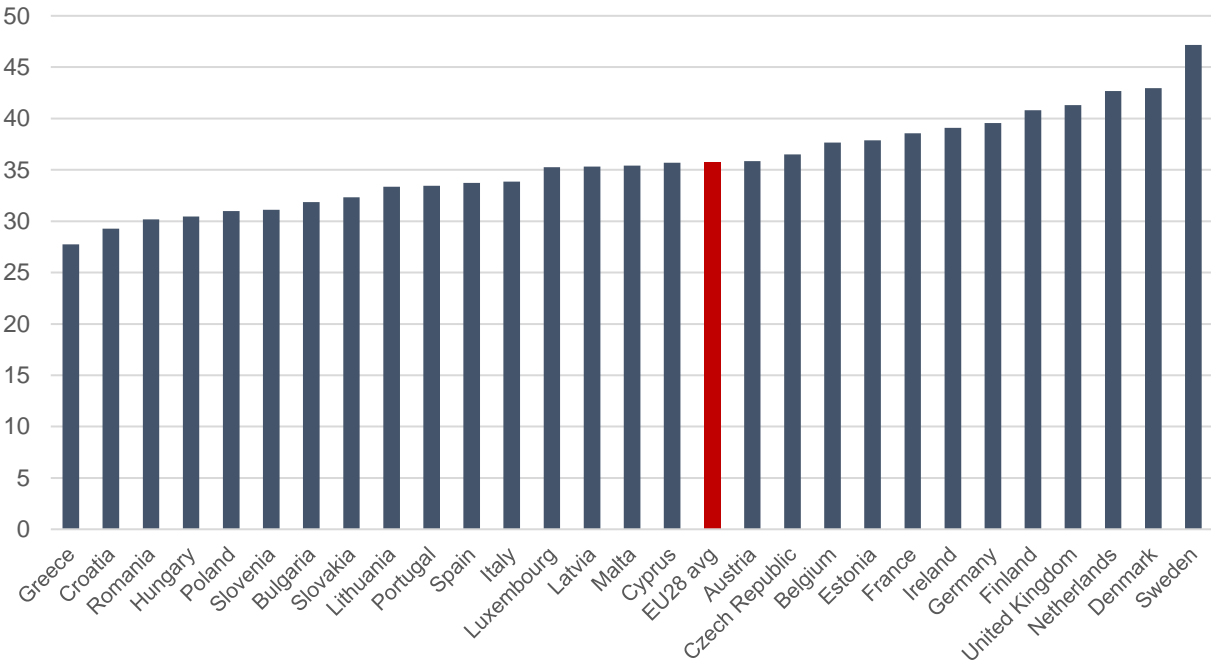
A detailed description of the methodology used, and the geographical and temporal comparability can be found in the report “Active Ageing Index in the European Union: Methodological report”.

# 1. 2018 ACTIVE AGEING INDEX IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## 1.1 Overall AAI

The results of the overall AAI for all the countries of the European Union (EU28) reflect a range of 19.5 points of difference in the index between Greece and Sweden, with values ranging from 27.7 to 47.2 respectively (figure 1). The distribution of EU countries in this range is progressive, with no large leaps. The average score of the EU28 (35.7) is very close to the median of the index (35.4), dividing the countries into two large groups. The advantaged position of Sweden with respect to the rest of the countries stands out, not only being in the lead, but also having an overall value more than 4 points higher than Denmark or Netherlands.

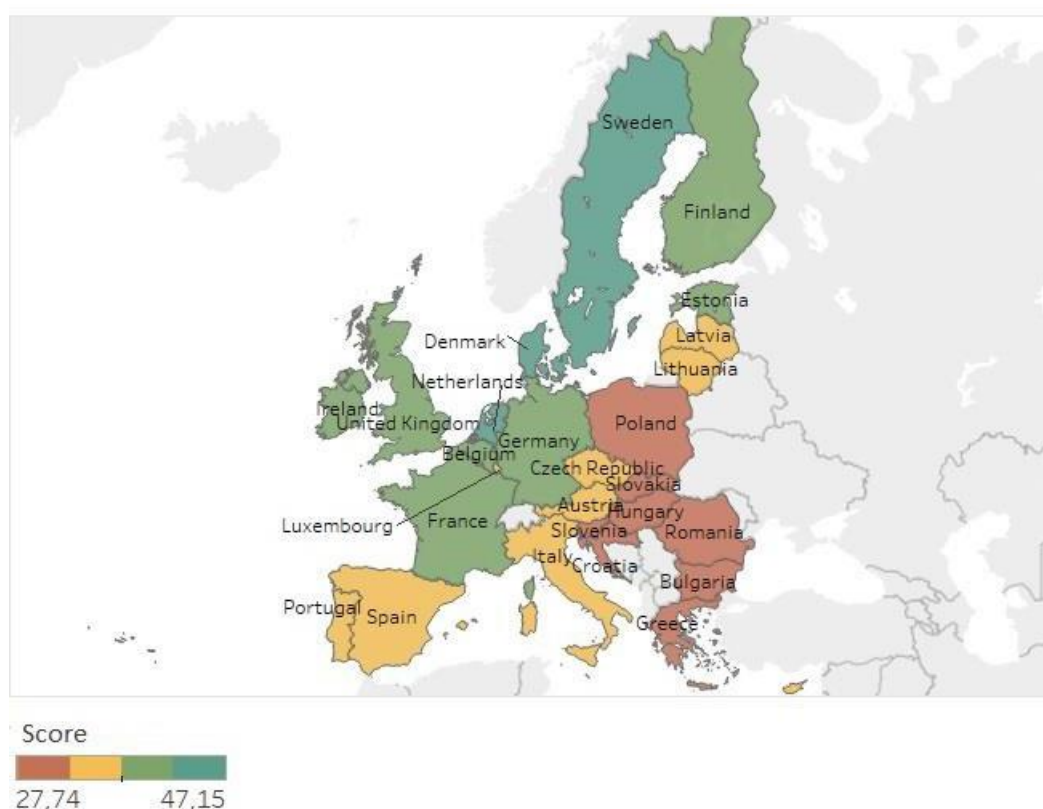
Figure 1. Overall 2018 AAI in EU28 countries and EU28 average.



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

Although distribution of EU28 countries in the overall AAI score is gradual, when dividing the scores into quartiles, the four groups that arise are quite clear and geographically distributed. As shown in the Map 1, the first group with the highest scores includes Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands with more than 42 points; then United Kingdom, Finland, Germany, Ireland, France, Estonia and Belgium form the second group with a score higher than 37 points; the third group is comprised by Czech Republic, Austria, Cyprus, Malta, Latvia, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Lithuania; and finally the last group covers Slovakia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Greece with scores lower than 33 points.

Map 1. Overall 2018 AAI EU28 countries divided into four groups.



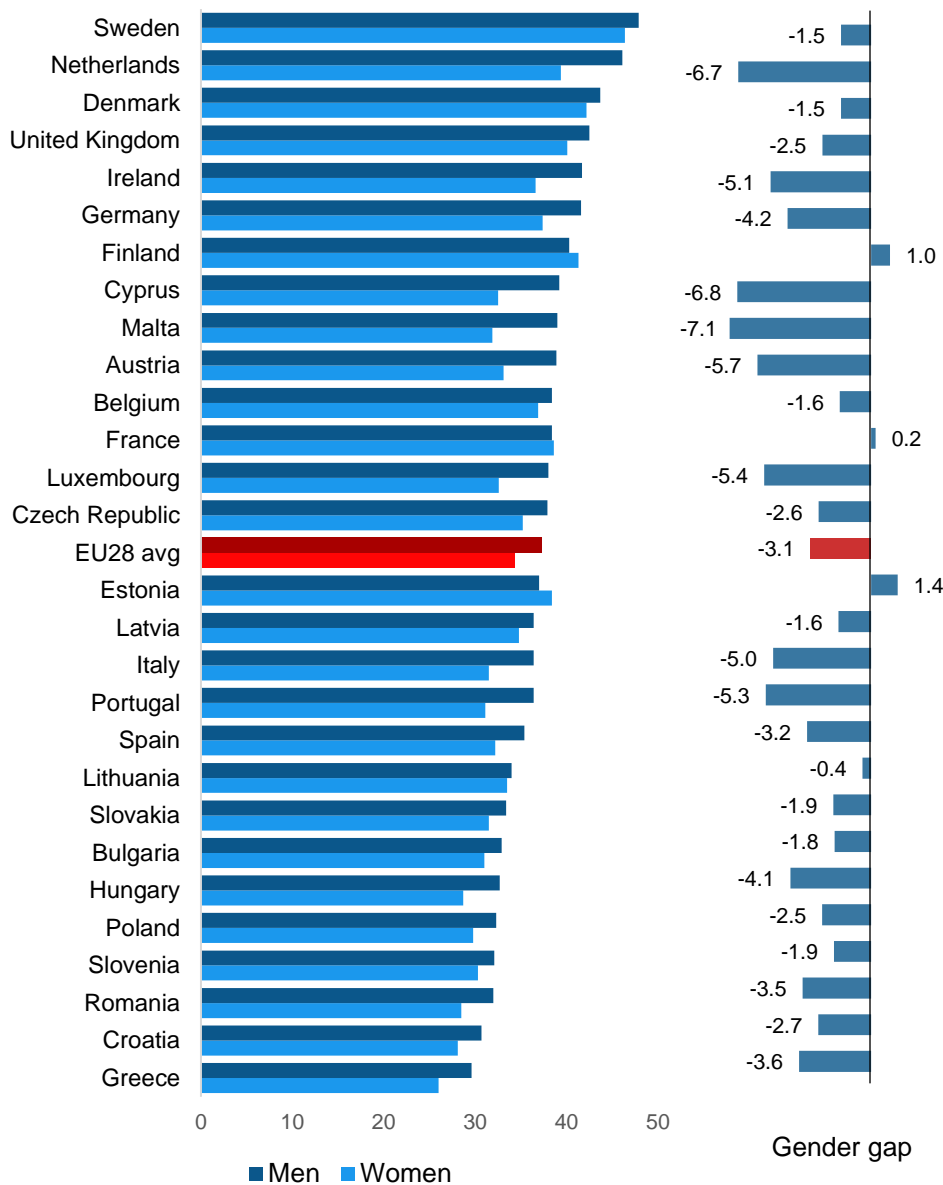
Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

The results of the overall 2018 AAI for men and women show some important differences (figure 2). Although the countries that are located at the extremes are the same, Greece and Sweden, for both men and women, the range is higher among women (20.4). In addition, among the rest of the countries, the ranking is distributed in different ways.

An in-depth gender gap<sup>1</sup> analysis by country shows that, with the exception of Estonia, Finland and France, women have lower index values than men, Malta, Cyprus and Netherlands being the countries with the highest differences. On the contrary, in Estonia and Finland men are in a more disadvantaged position than women. The countries with almost equal index values for men and women are France and Lithuania (figure 2).

<sup>1</sup> Here and afterwards, gender gap means the difference between the AAI results for women and men.

Figure 2. Overall 2018 AAI, men, women and gender gap. (Ordered by men's score)



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and population registers.

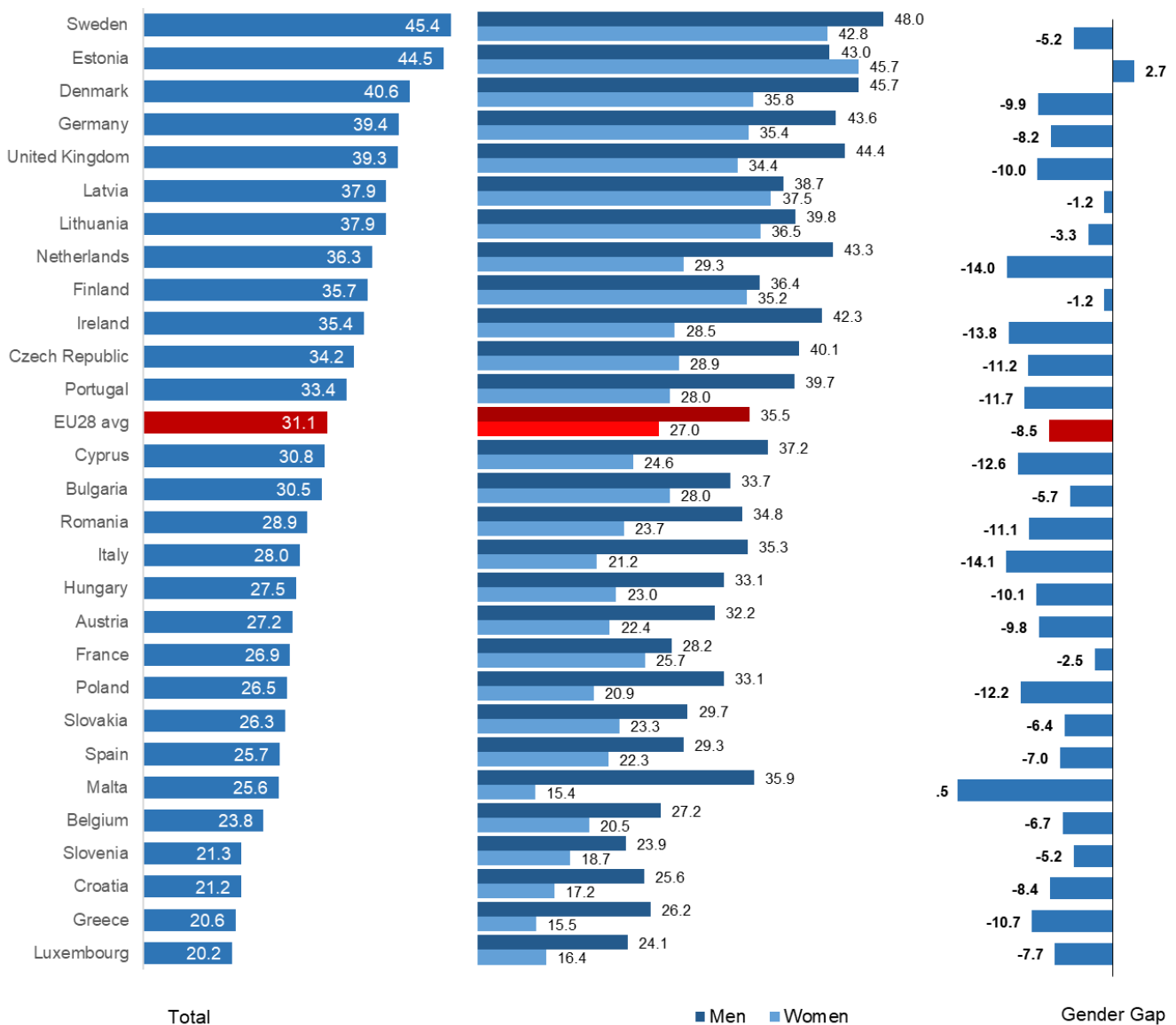
Below, an analysis is carried out for each of the domains that make up the AAI. They can be divided into two groups: those that inform about the experience of active ageing of people aged 55 and older, the first three, and the last one that seeks to capture the capacity and possibility of a healthy and active ageing. The first domain, with 4 indicators, collects the information on economic activity (employment) at different ages. The second, by means of 4 indicators, goes into the social participation, from care to others to participation in voluntary activities or political participation. The third one focuses on independent, healthy and secure living, and is made up of 8 indicators using different age groups as a reference. Finally, the fourth domain refers to the capacity of the population to age in an active manner and is composed of 6 indicators.

## 1.2 Employment

Figure 3 shows the score of the first domain for the whole population, and separately for men and women. Therefore, three large groups of countries can be distinguished: first, countries that stand out for their high values in the domain such as Sweden (45.4) and Estonia (44.5); secondly, a large group of countries with intermediate values, from Denmark with 40.6 to Belgium with 23.8 points. And, finally, a group of countries with the lowest values of the domain, less than half the value of those countries at the top, which is the case of Luxembourg (20.2), Greece (20.6), Croatia (21.2) and Slovenia (21.3). Thus, a EU28 average is rather high — 31.1 points, leaving 16 countries with lower values.

When observing the results by sex, all countries, except Estonia, have higher values among men than among women. However, the gap is very different depending on the country, the difference between women and men being the highest (20.5 points) in Malta, while in Finland it barely reaches 1. Additionally, twelve countries exceed 10 points of gender gap in favour of men (figure 3).

Figure 3. Employment domain scores. Total, men and women and gender gap, 2018.



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS.

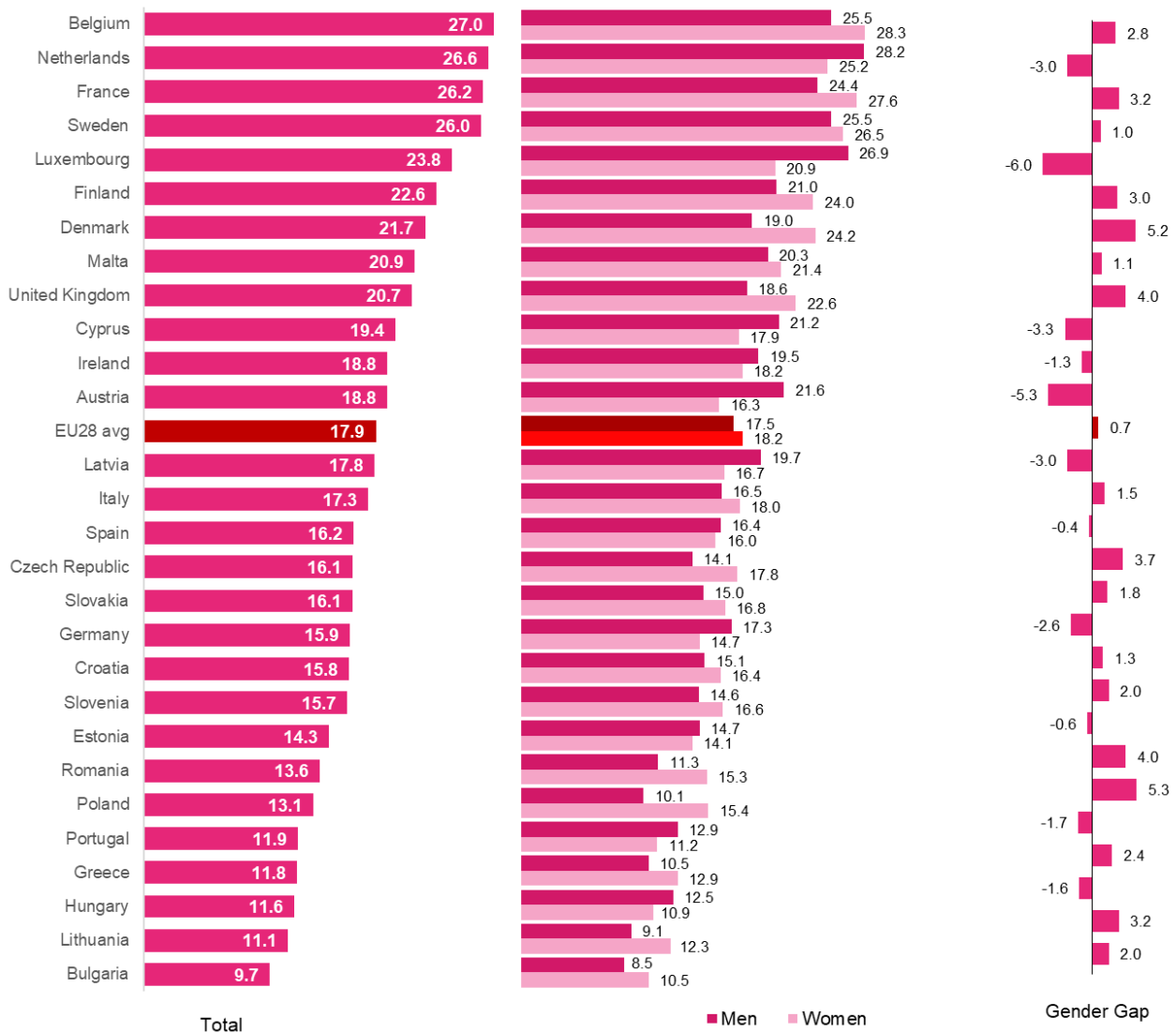


### 1.3 Participation in society

In the second domain, the EU28 average is 17.9 points. Five groups of countries can be defined: those that exceed 26 points, such as Sweden, France, Netherlands or Belgium (country that has 27.0, the maximum value); countries exceeding 17 points, where the EU28 average is found, such as Italy, Latvia, Austria, Ireland, Cyprus, United Kingdom, Malta, Denmark, Finland and Luxembourg; countries with very similar values around 16 points among which are Slovenia, Croatia, Germany, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Spain; countries with low values, below 15 points, including Estonia, Romania, Poland, Portugal, Greece, Hungary and Lithuania; and, finally, Bulgaria with the lowest value (9.7). (figure 4).

When disaggregated by sex, the lowest values for both men and women are those of Bulgaria, but the highest value among men is found in the Netherlands, while for women it remains in Belgium. In addition, scores are higher among women when compared to those men, even in the average of EU28. This leads to a positive gender gap in most countries, indicating the higher relative position of women in some countries such as Denmark, Czech Republic or Poland. On the contrary, in countries such as Luxembourg or Austria, the gender gap in favour of men reaches 6 and 5.3 points, respectively.

Figure 4. Participation in society domain scores. Total, men and women and gender gap, 2018.



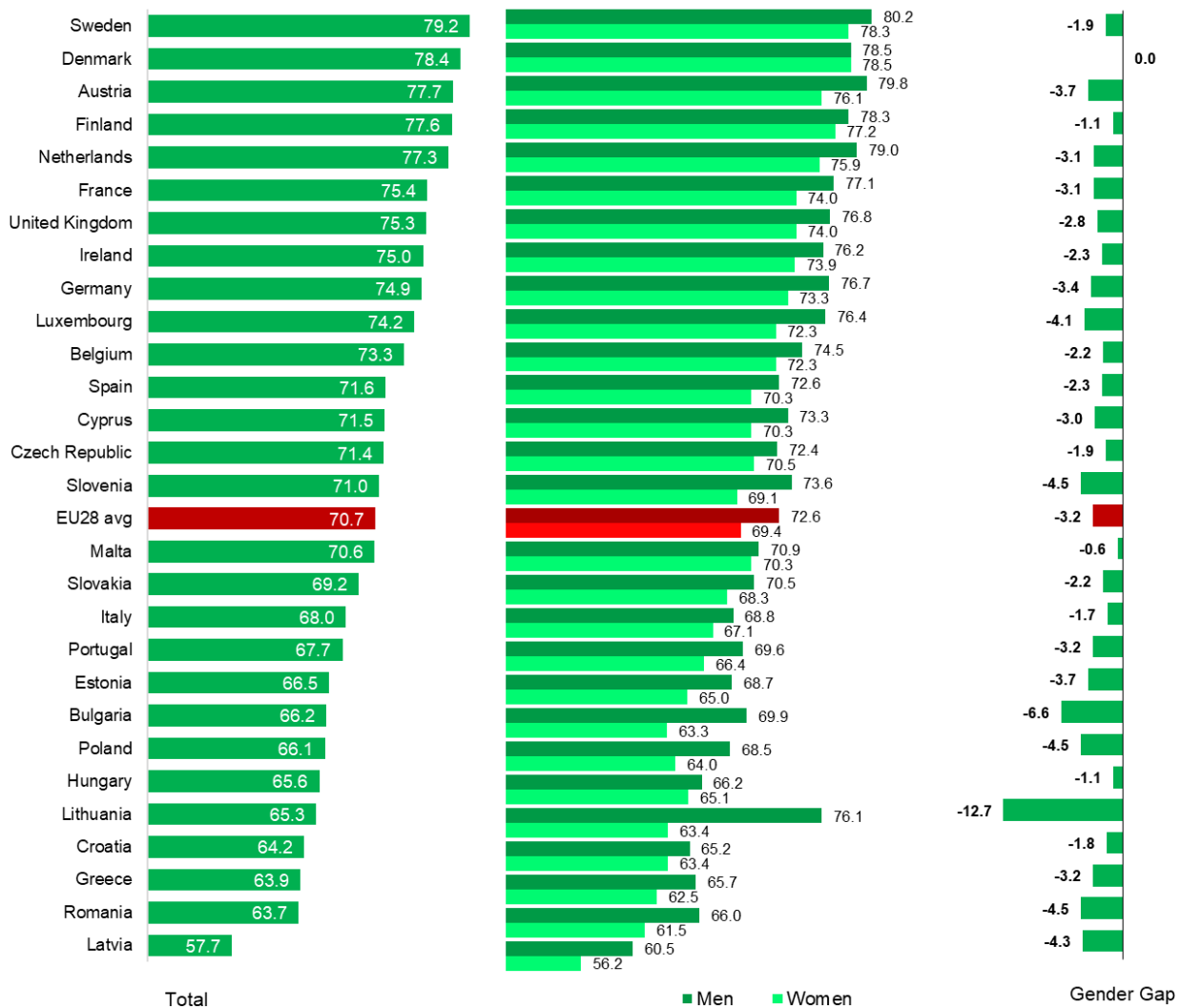
Source: Own elaboration based on EQLS.

### 1.4 Independent, healthy and secure living

The third domain presents values that exceed 63 points in all countries, except for Latvia (57.7). Sweden is the country with the highest value (79.2). Among the other countries, there are five differentiated groups: a first group with high values, from Sweden (79.2) to Netherlands (77.3); a second group, going from France (75.4) to Belgium (73.3); a third group, from Spain (71.6) to Malta (70.6), where the EU28 average is included; a fourth group where the rest of the countries are, from Slovakia (69.2) to Romania (63.7), and finally, Latvia constitutes, with its low value, the fifth group (figure 5).

In this domain in all countries, women have lower scores than men, with Lithuanian men standing out for having over 10 points more than women, and with the exception of Denmark, where the value is similar for men and women. As a result, except for Denmark, a negative gender gap for all countries can be observed. It is worth stressing that in Lithuania and Bulgaria the gender gap is 12.8 and 6.6 respectively in favour of men. Moreover, countries at both ends remain the same among men, but women in Denmark have higher results than women in Sweden, and Latvia stays at the lower end.

Figure 5. Independent living domain scores. Total, men and women and gender gap, 2018.



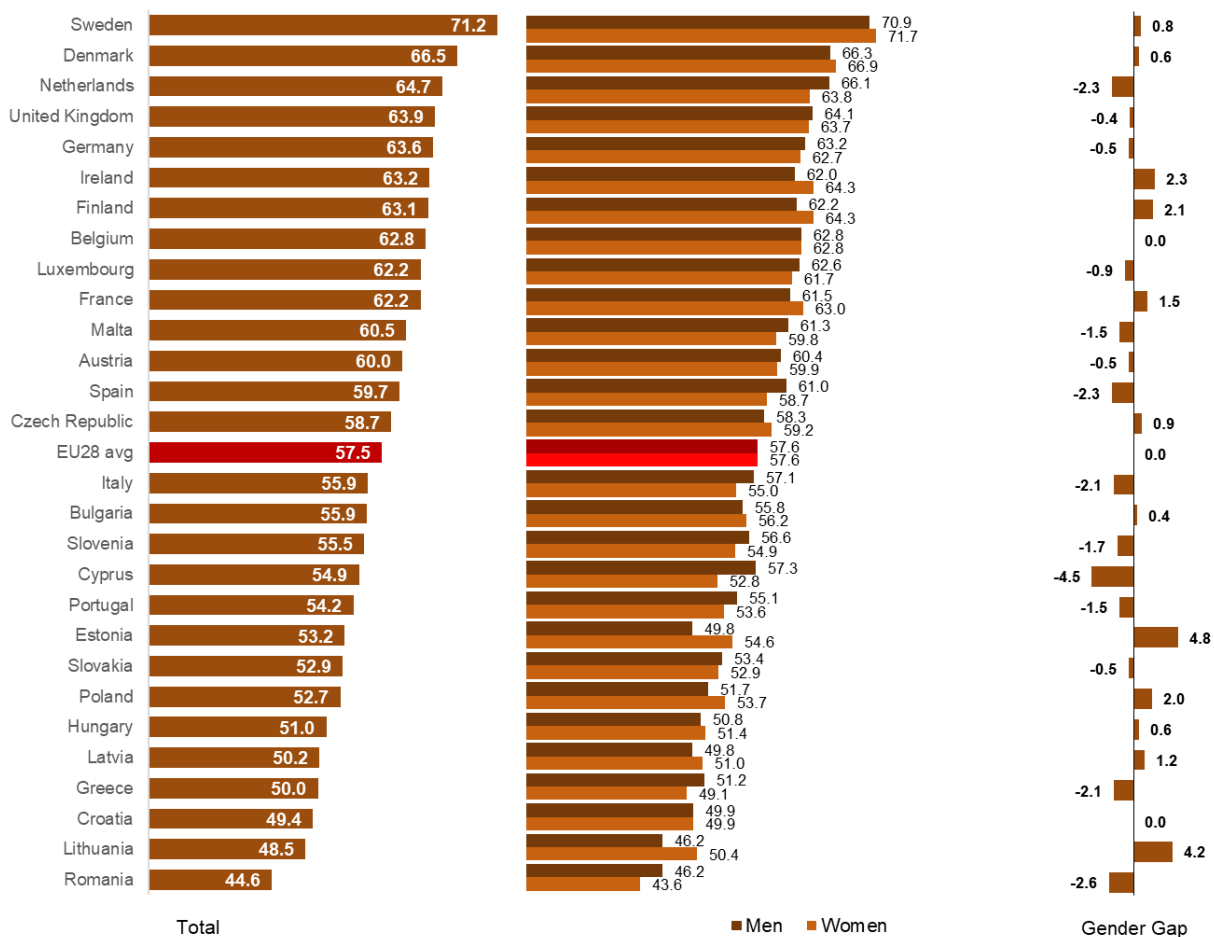
Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC and ESS.

## 1.5 Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing

In the fourth domain, Sweden has the highest value (71.2) and Romania — the lowest value (44.6) (figure 6). In this case, the countries can be divided into two groups: those that are above the European average and those that are below, with a distribution with almost equal average (57.5) and median (57.3).

When assessed by sex, Sweden continues to occupy the highest position among both men and women, while among men the lowest value is in Romania and Lithuania. The differences between domain score of men and that of women are low and even negligible in the EU average and some countries such as Croatia or Belgium. When evaluating the gender gap, the differences between men and women are low in the majority of the countries, but the gap in countries like Cyprus (4.5), Netherlands (2.3) or Spain (2.2) in favour of men stands out. At the other end, countries with higher values for women can be found, such as Estonia with 4.8 or Lithuania with 4.3.

Figure 6. Capacity for active ageing domain scores. Total, men and women and gender gap, 2018.

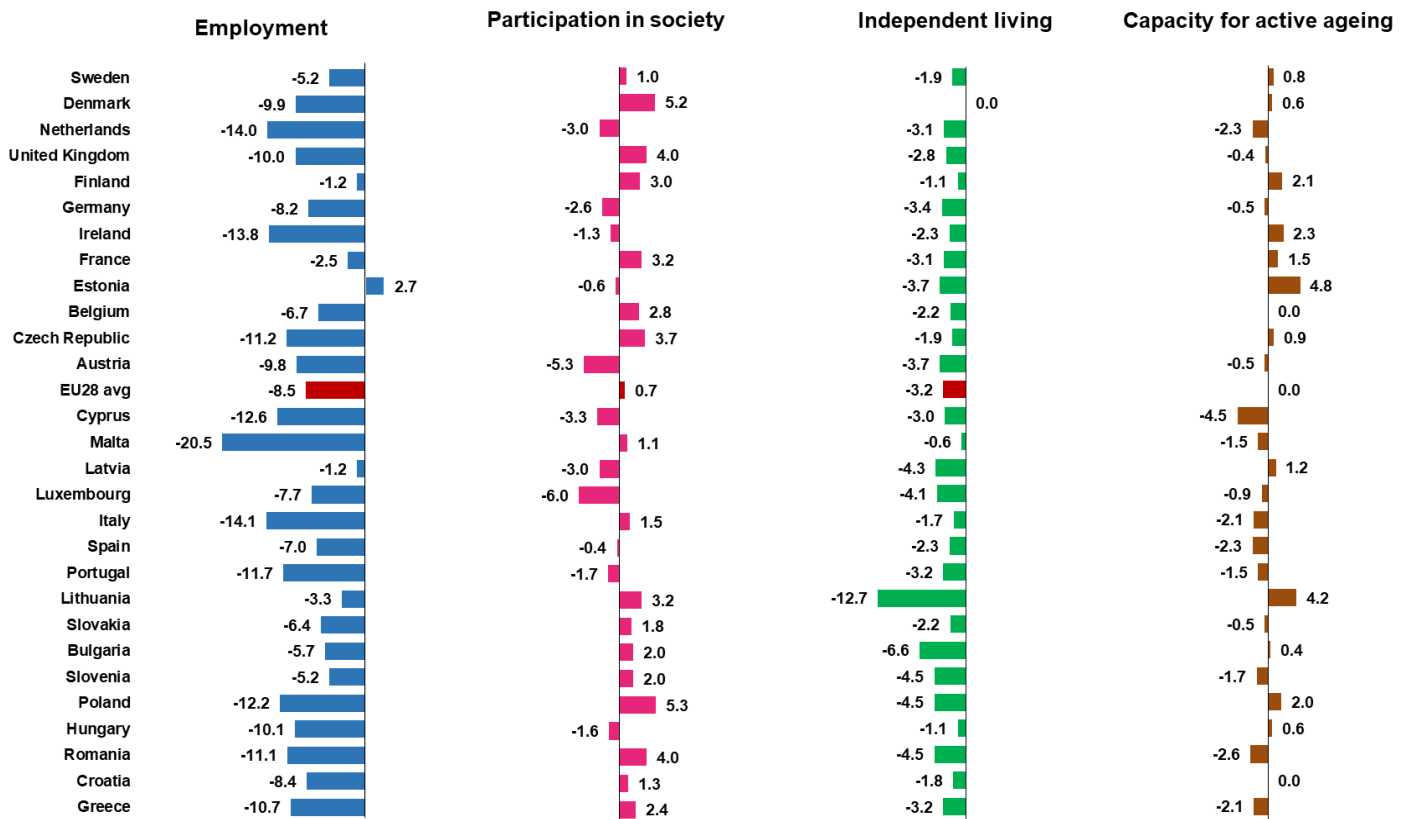


Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

## 1.6 Gender gap

When describing each domain and its differences by sex, a trend of women systematically presenting lower values in most of the countries and domains is clear. Figure 7 shows the gender gap for each domain and country. In general, in the first and third domains, the situation of women is more unfavourable compared to men. It was found that only Estonian women surpass men in the first domain and in Denmark they achieve equality in the third domain. More specifically, it is in the first domain where the most dramatic differences are observed, reaching up to 20 points in the case of Malta. Regarding the third domain, the case of Lithuania with a value of 12.8 of gender gap in favour of men stands out. In the other two domains, second and fourth, countries are distributed between those where women have higher values (the majority in the second domain) and those in which women have lower values (most in the fourth domain), but in general with low differences. The EU28 average follows the trend of the countries in each domain, showing the highest gender gap in favour of men in the first domain, followed by the third domain, and higher values among women in the second domain, and practically equal in the fourth domain.

Figure 7. Gender gap in four 2018 AAI domains.



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

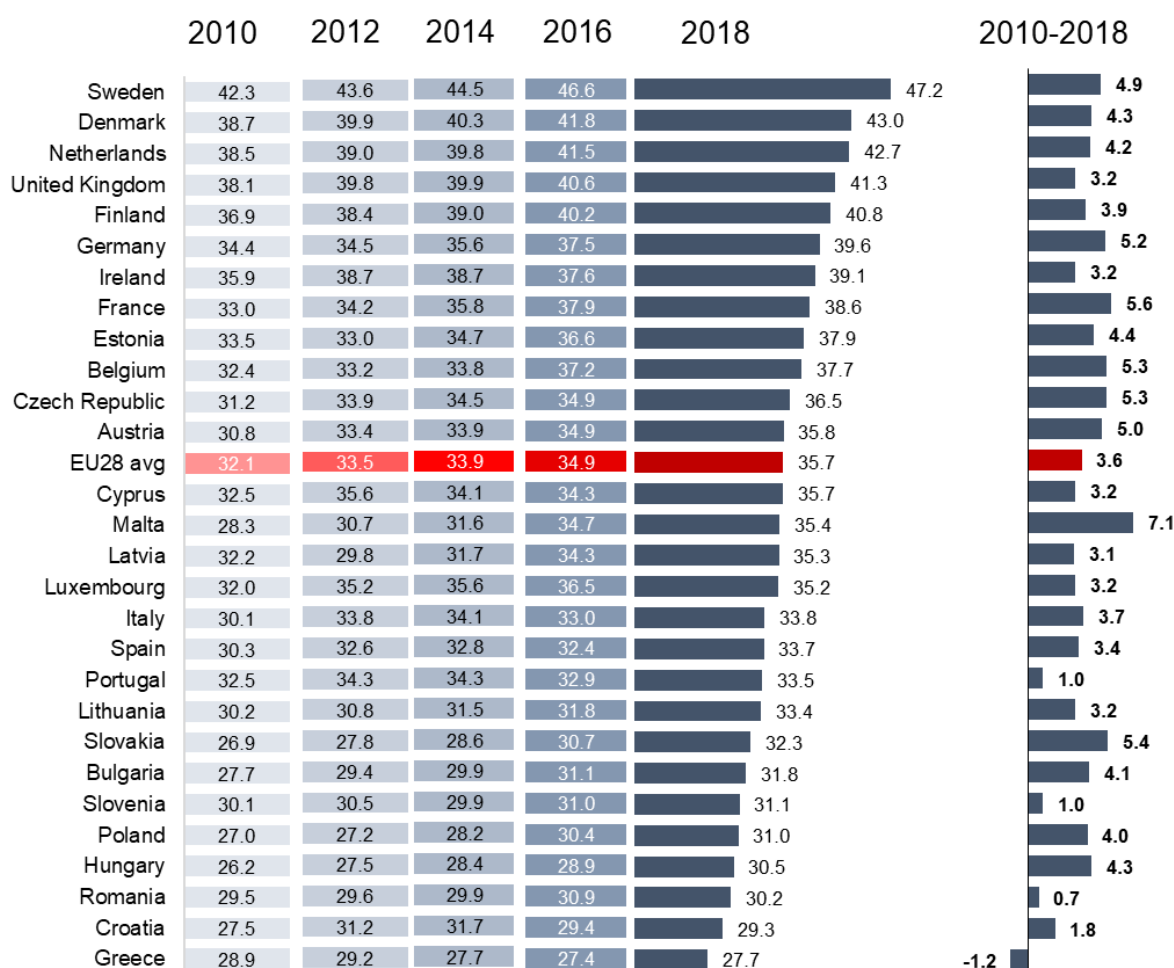
## 2. ACTIVE AGEING INDEX EVOLUTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION 2010-2018

### 2.1 Overall AAI evolution

The evolution of the AAI between 2010 and 2018 shows a general increase for all countries except for Greece (figure 8), where in this period of time the overall score has decreased by 1.2 points. Consequently, with the increasing general trend, the European average has also grown in the period studied. The growth has been moderate, 3.7 points. This is because, although there are half of the EU countries that have seen an increase of more than 4 points (mainly countries of the North and Centre of Europe, but also some of the East, such as Bulgaria or Hungary, and one Southern country — Malta), the other half presents lower values, mainly around 3 points, with Portugal, Slovenia and Romania increases close to 1 point.

On the other hand, even though Sweden is the country with the highest score in all years, Malta is the country undergoing the sharpest increase between 2010 and 2018, with the growth of 7.1 points.

Figure 8. Evolution of the overall AAI 2010-2018. Total population.

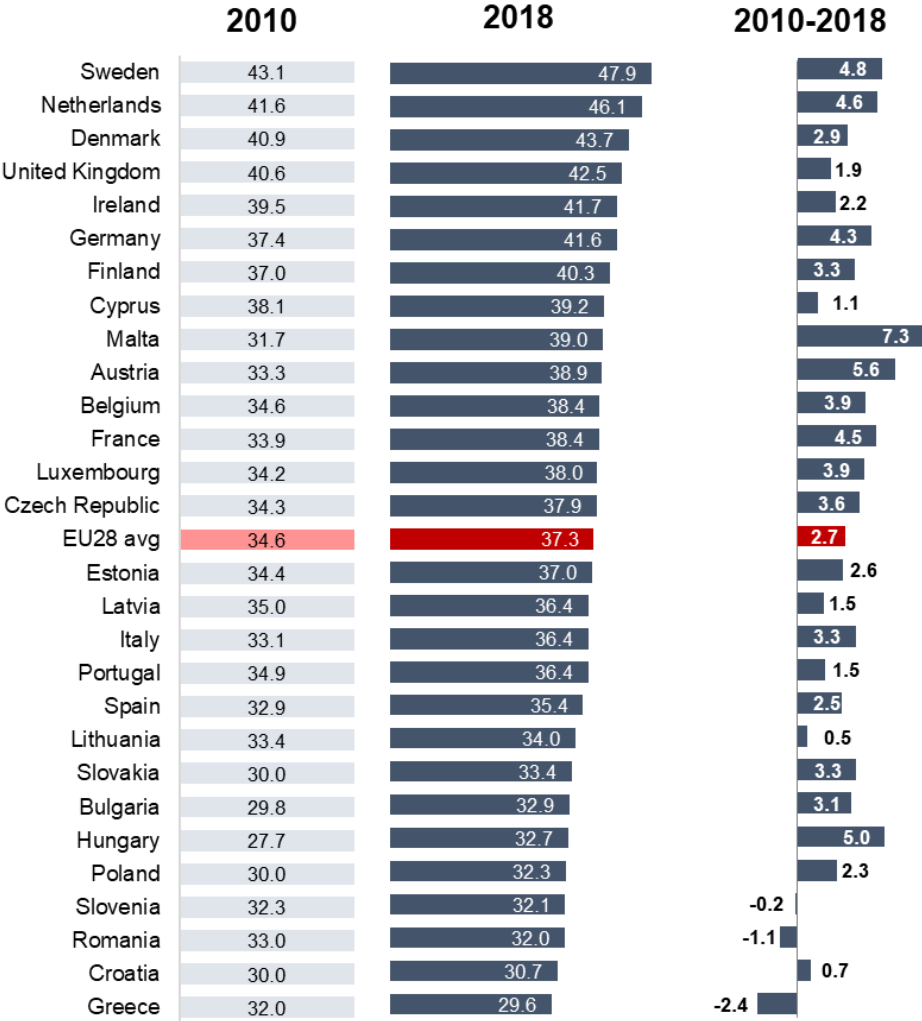


Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

When separated by sex, the increase or decrease in the AAI in the period analysed can be studied to know whether it is due to an increase in values among both sexes or only among one of them. As expected, the increase has been widespread for all countries also by sex, with some exceptions. This is the case of Romania, Slovenia and Greece, where men’s overall AAI score, far from increasing, has decreased, which explains a discreet growth or even the decline observed in Greece. Additionally, in Greece the AAI value for women does not change between 2010 and 2018.

Moreover, regarding men, as in the total, the great increase of the AAI in Malta stands out with a value of 7.3 points. In addition, the increase of around 5 points in countries such as Sweden, Austria or Hungary should be underscored.

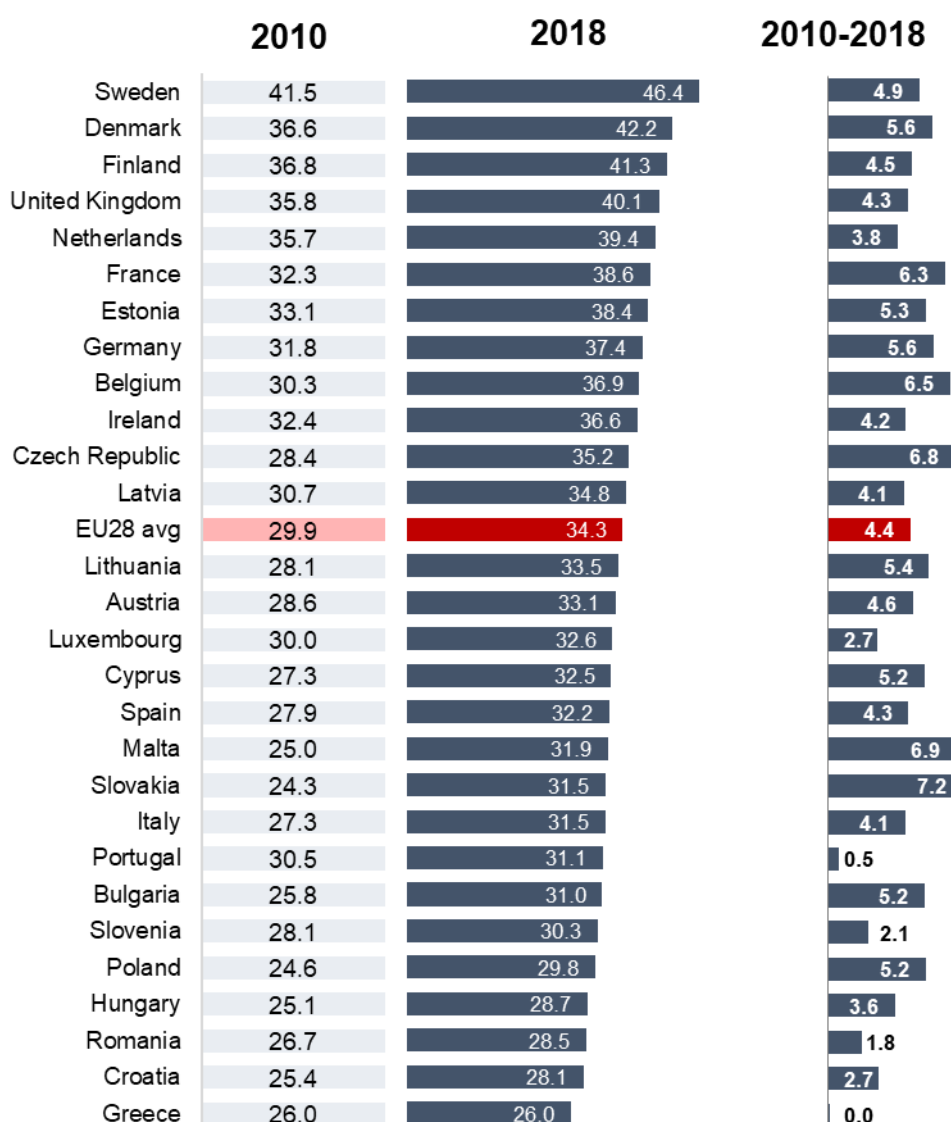
Figure 9. Overall AAI 2010, 2018 and evolution. Men.



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

On the other hand, among women, the increase has occurred in all the countries, save Greece, where there has been no change. This suggests that the increase in the total of the AAI is mainly due to the increase in the index among women. Thus, up to five countries have an increase of more than 6 points: France (6.3), Belgium (6.5), Czech Republic (6.8), Malta (6.9) and Slovakia with the highest value, 7.2.

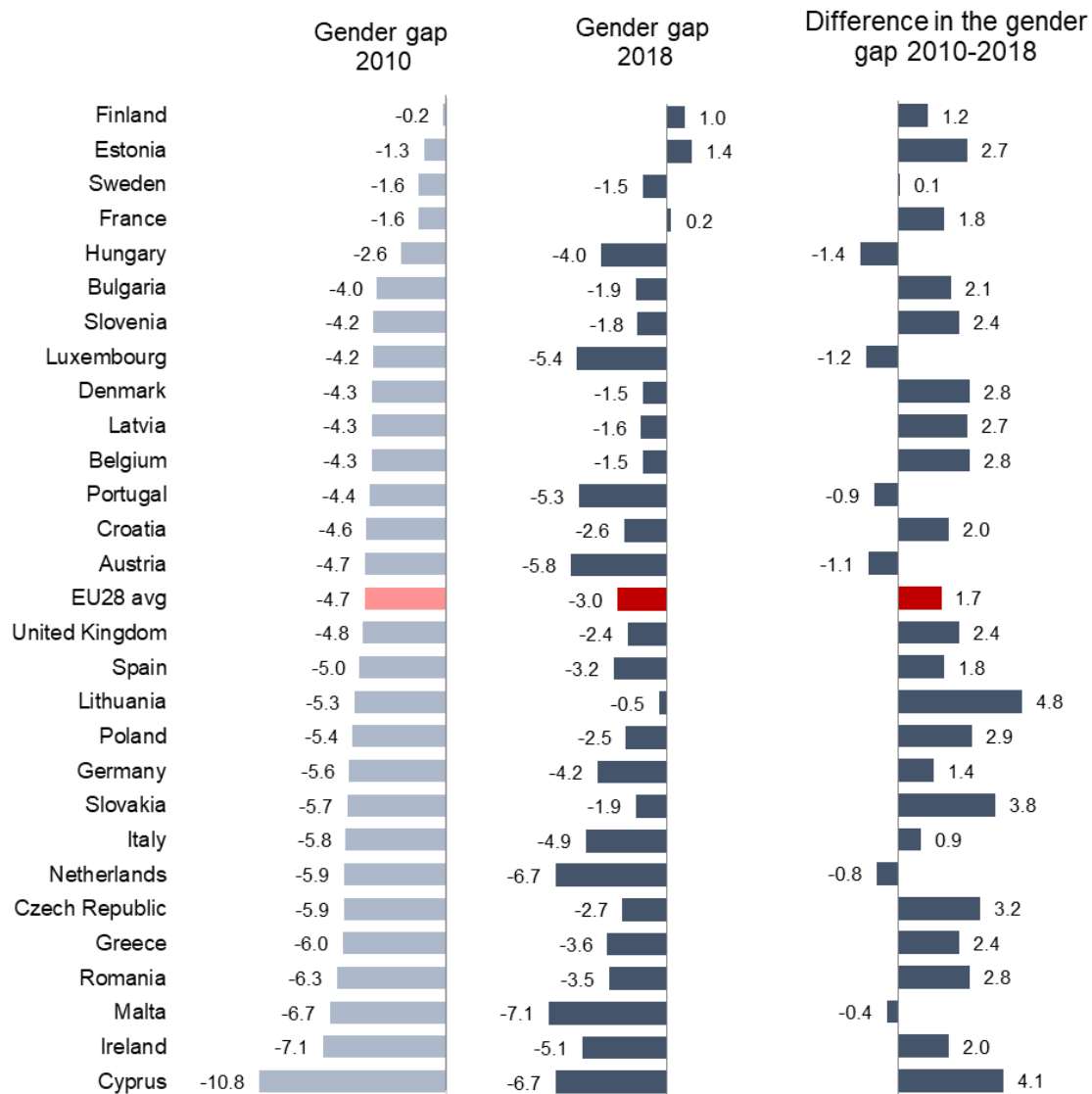
Figure 10. Overall AAI 2010, 2018 and evolution. Women.



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

With regard to gender differences, they tend to decrease in most countries, excluding Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Austria, Netherlands and Malta, which experience an increase in the gender gap in the time interval. The biggest drop, of nearly 5 points, is found in Lithuania, followed by Cyprus with a decrease of 4.1 points. Thus, in 2010 only five countries have a difference between men and women below 4, while in 2018 the number of countries below this value amounts to 19 (considering also the three countries with a gap in favour of women). On the other hand, Cyprus is precisely the country that had the highest gender gap in 2010, 10.8 points; while in 2018 it is replaced by Malta with a value of 7.1. Besides, there have been two countries where the gap in favour of men has been transformed into a gap in favour of women (Finland and Estonia), or an almost equal situation of both gender (France). In 2010, the situation closest to an equality was observed in Finland, and in 2018 in France.

Figure 11. Overall AAI gender gap 2010 and 2018, gender gap difference 2010-2018.



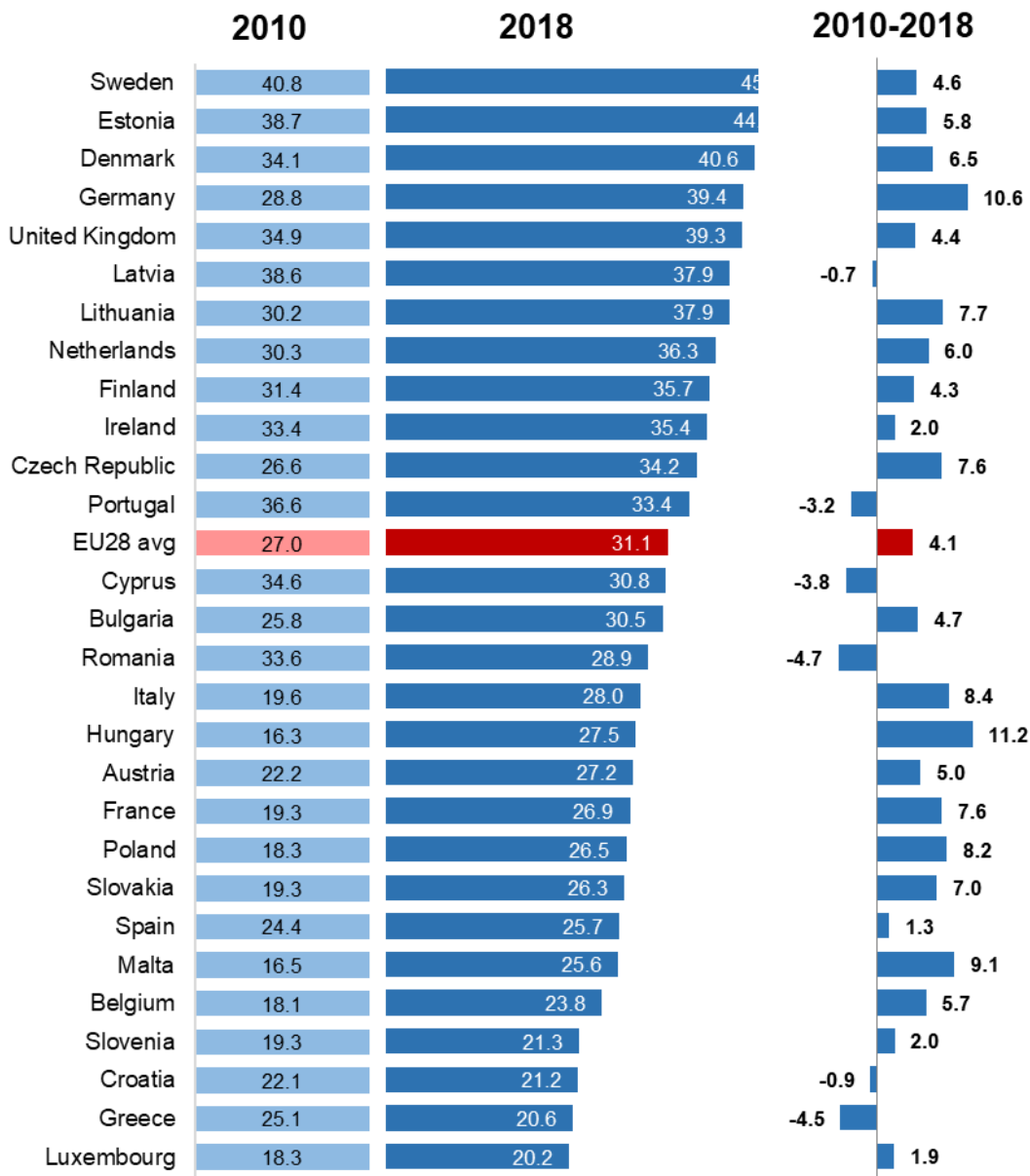
Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

## 2.2 Employment evolution

The evolution of the first domain has a trend towards an increase in all countries, with six exceptions: Latvia, Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia and Romania. On the other hand, Hungary has experienced the largest increase in the domain, 11.3 points. A similar trend is observed in countries such as Germany and Malta, with an increase of 10.6 and 9.1 points, respectively. Therefore, the European average has also experienced an increase of 4.1 points in the value of the domain.



Figure 12. Evolution of the Employment domain 2010-2018.



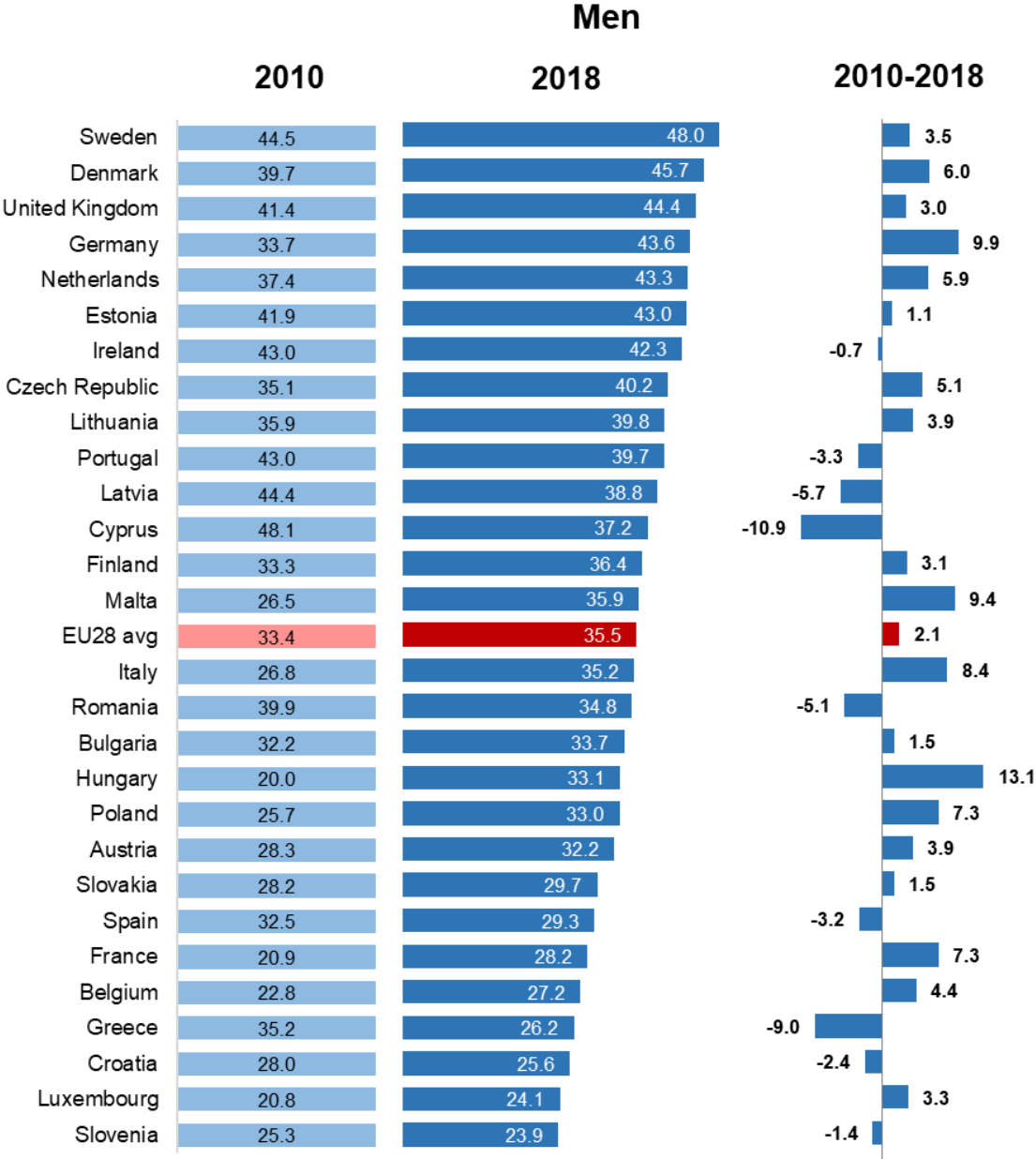
Source: Own elaboration based on LFS.

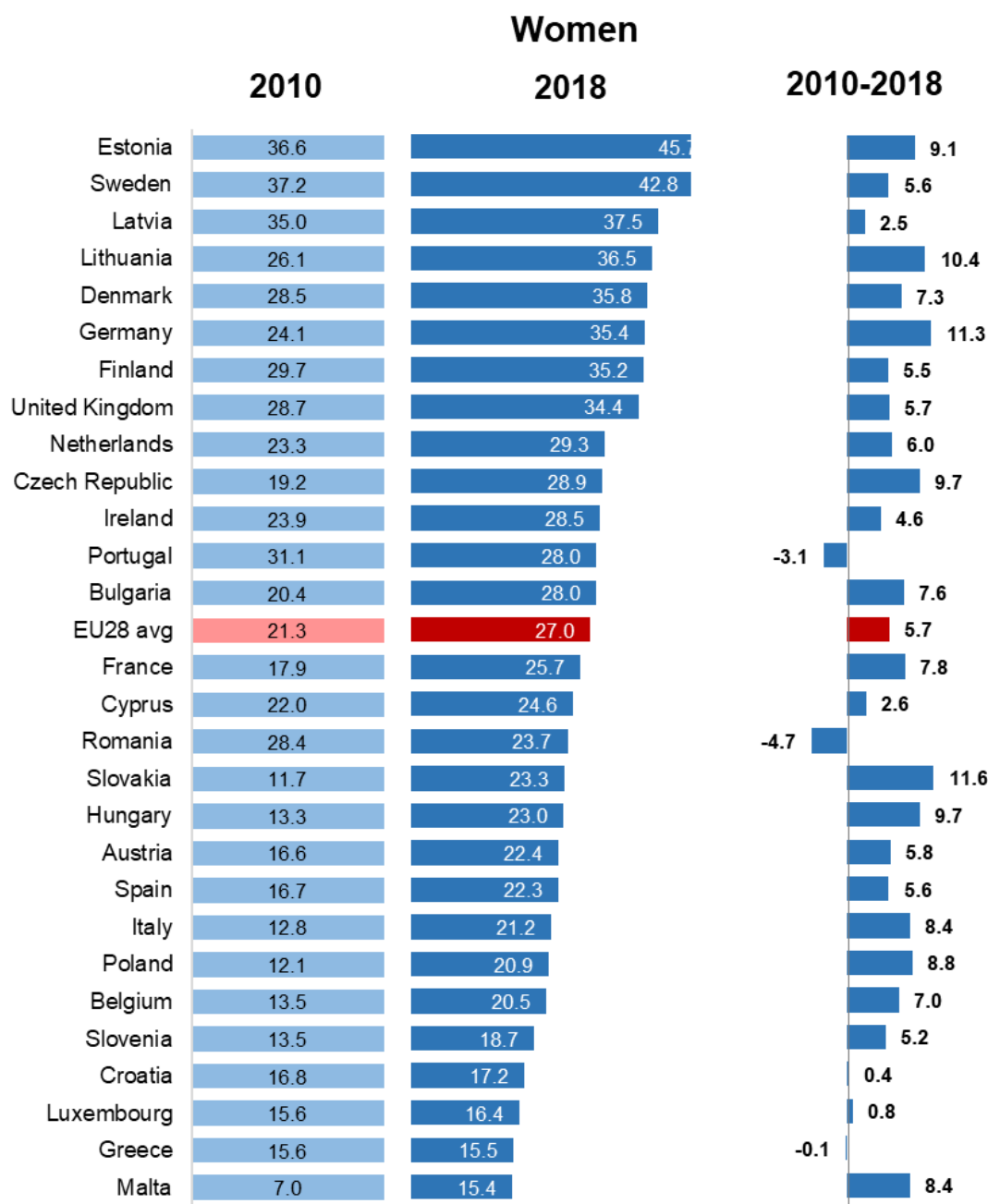
Figure 13 shows the evolution of the domain by sex. In general, there is a greater increase among women than among men. There are 9 countries where the Employment domain value among men decreased between 2010 and 2018. Thus, for men the biggest decrease is observed in Cyprus (10.9), while for women — in Romania (4.7 points). On the other hand, Hungary has seen the highest rise among men (13.0), followed by Germany (9.9) and Malta (9.4). Among women, the highest increase is observed in Slovakia, 11.6 points, followed very closely by Germany (11.3), Lithuania (10.4), Czech Republic (9.8), and Hungary (9.7).

Finally, although the domain value has increased for women in almost all countries, the range of values between the extremes is around 30 points in both 2010 and 2018, while among men it has increased from 19.2 to 24.1 points.

The EU28 average also has grown for both sexes, but to a greater extent for women, by 5.7 points, than for men, by 2.1 points.

Figure 13. Evolution of the Employment domain for men and women, 2010, 2018 and difference.



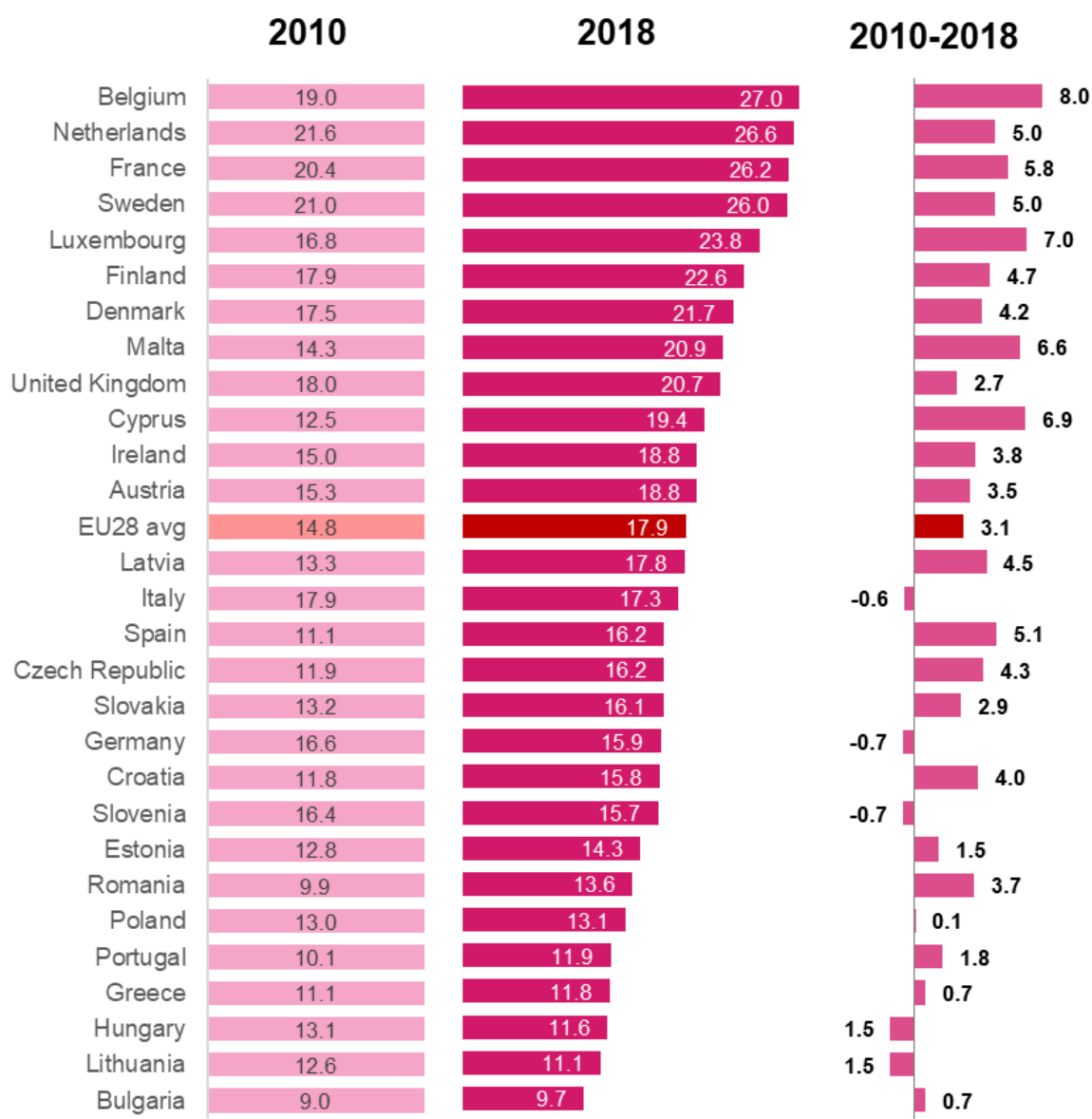


Source: Own elaboration based on LFS.

### 2.3 Participation in society evolution

The second domain also has a tendency towards an increase in the time interval analysed. The biggest increase has been seen in Belgium with a rise of 8 points, followed by Luxembourg with a 7-point increase, and Cyprus and Malta with 6.9 and 6.6, respectively. At the opposite extreme, five countries have seen social participation domain score reduced, although not by much: Lithuania (-1.5), Hungary (-1.5), Slovenia (-0.8), Germany (-0.7) and Italy (-0.6). The EU28 average also experienced an increase of 3.1 points between 2010 and 2018.

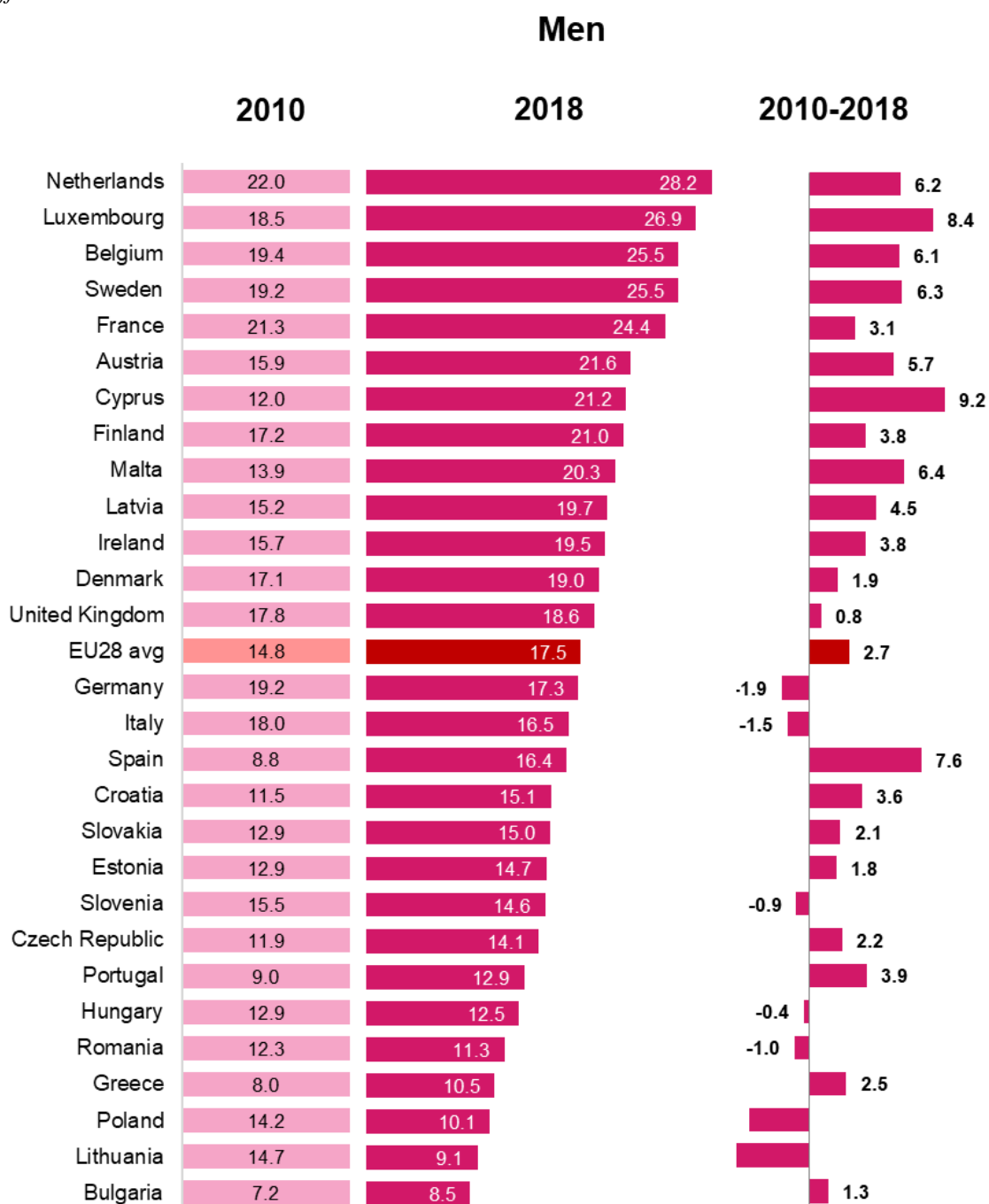
Figure 14. Evolution of the Participation in society domain 2010-2018.



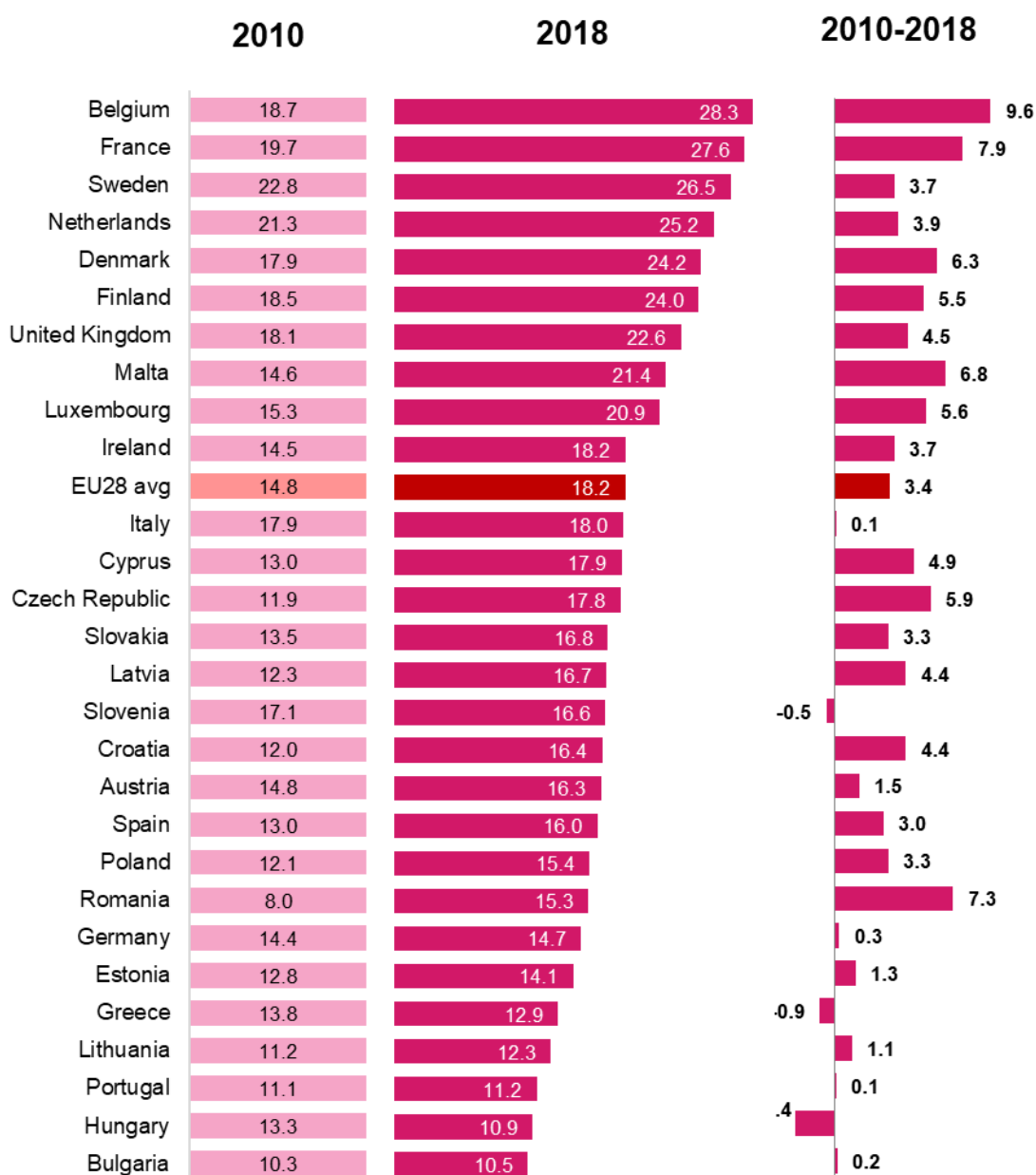
Source: Own elaboration based on EQLS.

When comparing the evolution between men and women, the generalized increase in the analysed interval remains, however, among women, the number of countries decreasing their value between 2010 and 2018 is smaller. Thus, among men, Lithuania have seen a decrease by 5.6 points, followed by Poland with a 4.1 decrease, and by Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Romania with a decrease value between 1 and 2, ending with Hungary with a 0.4-point decrease. In contrast, women have seen a smaller decrease, between 0.5 and 1 point for Slovenia and Greece and 2.3 for Hungary. On the other hand, the largest increase among men has been observed in Cyprus with 9.2, and among women — in Belgium with 9.6. The EU28 average had increased for both men and women, by 2.7 and 5.9, respectively, that is, women have seen an increase twice as high as that among men.

Figure 15. Evolution of the Participation in society domain for men and women, 2010, 2018 and difference.



## Women

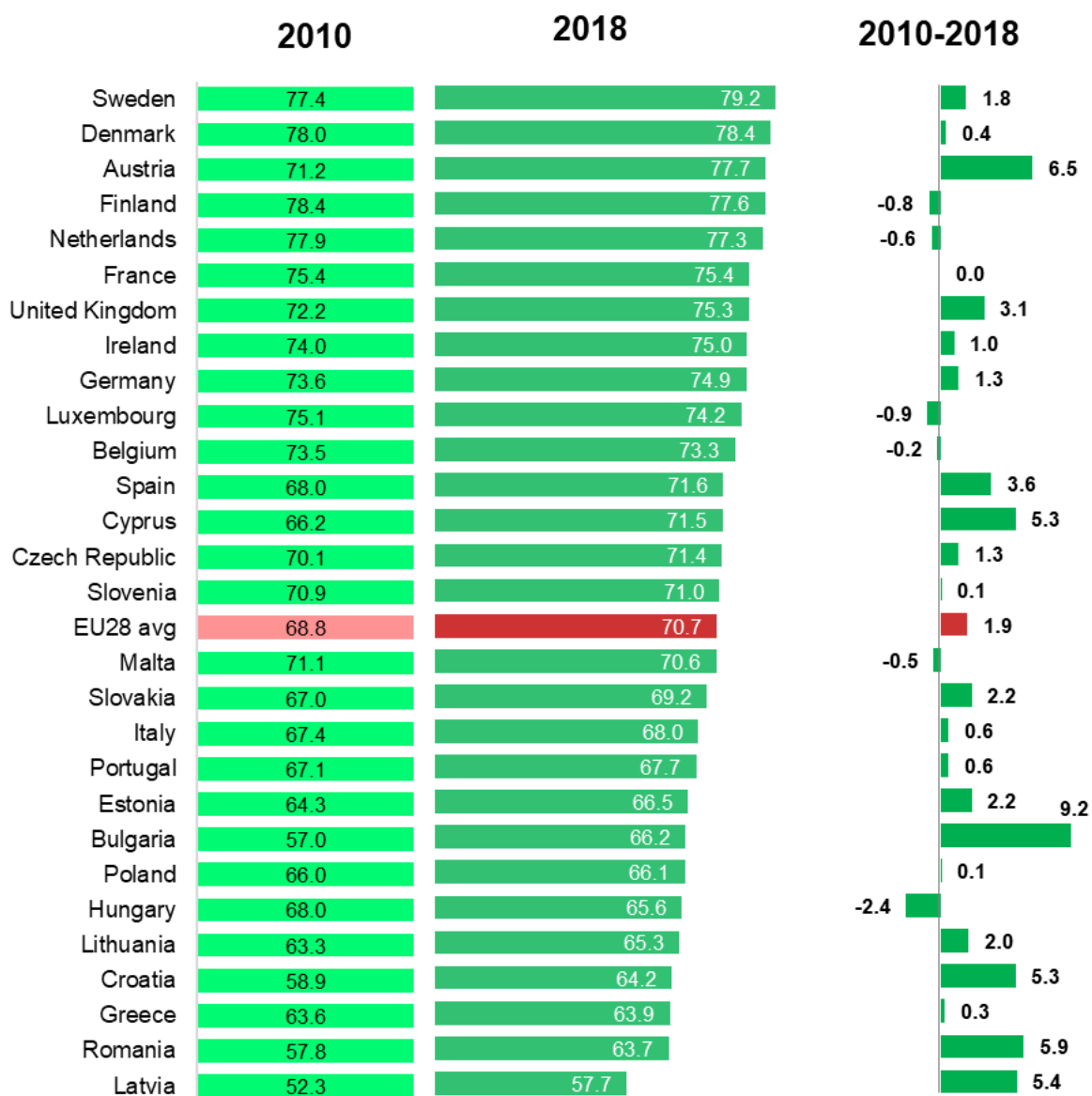


Source: Own elaboration based on EQLS.

### 2.4 Independent, healthy and secure living evolution

In the third domain, there is a trend towards the increase of values in most countries, although in general with low scores. Thus, in six countries the domain value has decreased: Hungary (-2.4), Luxembourg (-0.9), Finland (-0.8), Netherlands (-0.6), Malta (-0.6) and Belgium (-0.2). On the other hand, in Bulgaria there was a 9.1-point growth between 2010 and 2018. The EU28 average has seen an increase of 1.9.

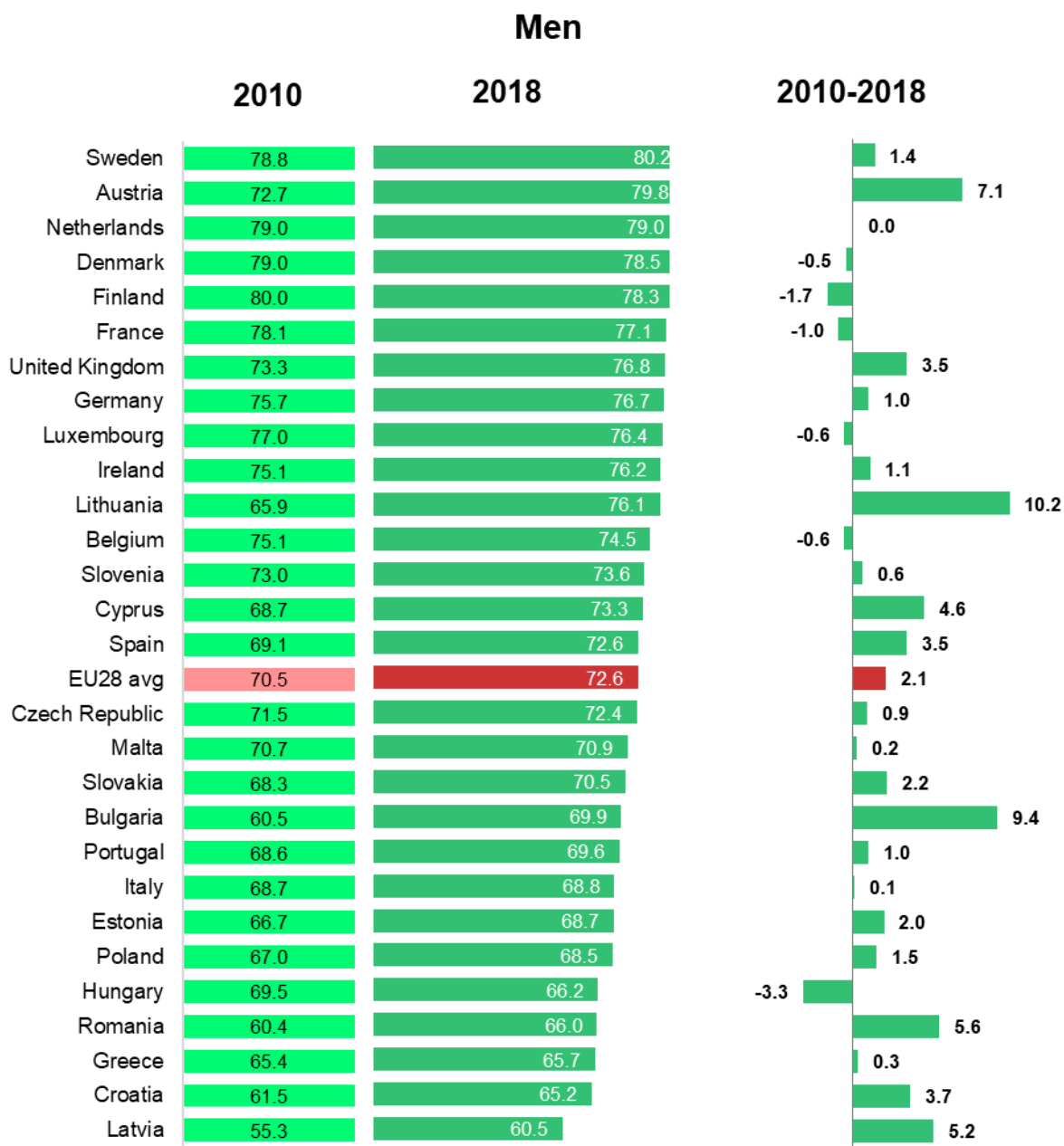
Figure 16. Evolution of the Independent, healthy and secure living domain 2010-2018.



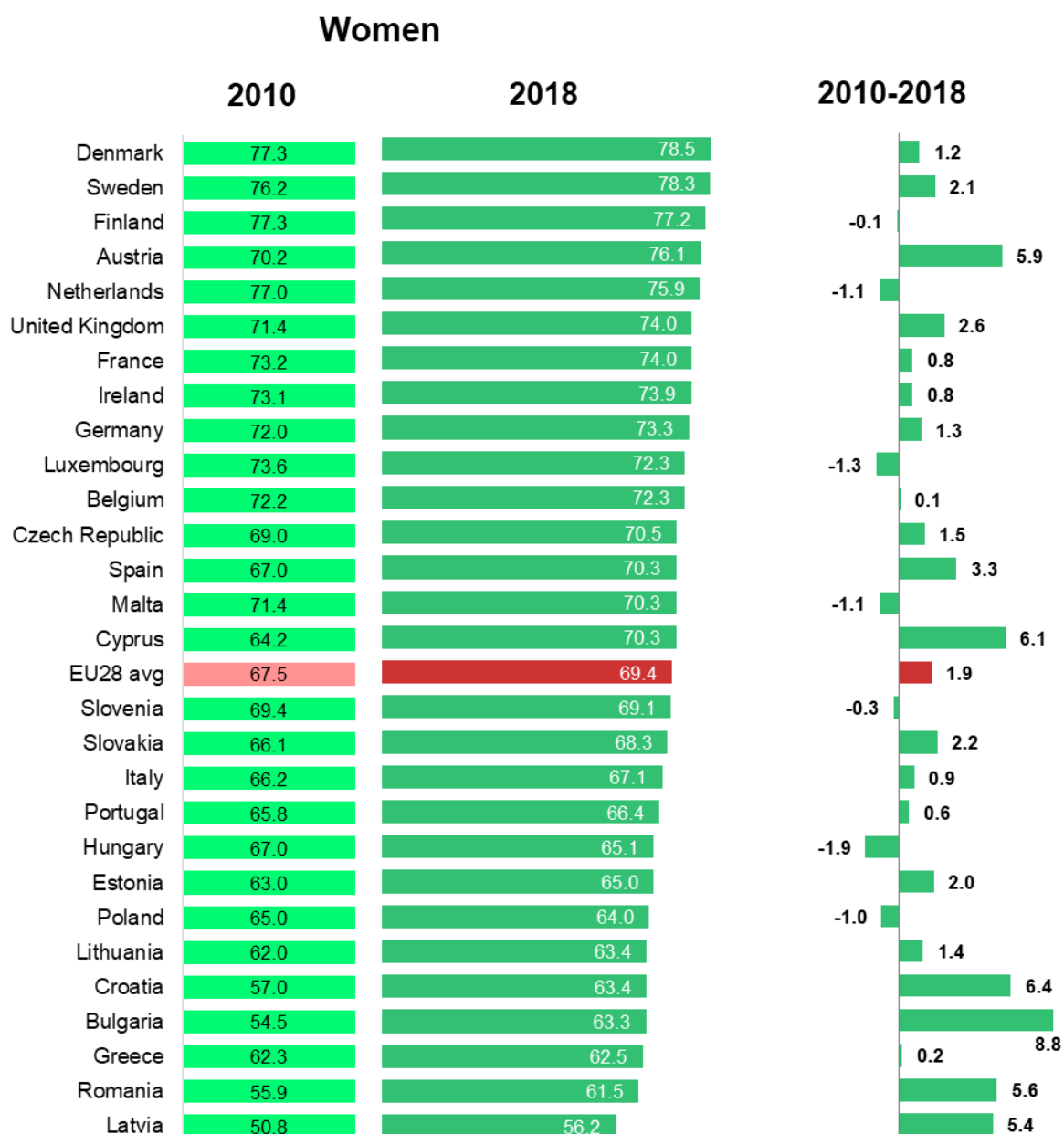
Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC and ESS.

When analysing the evolution of the domain for men and women separately, the trend of increasing values in most countries for both sexes remains. Thus, among men the increase of 10.3 points in Lithuania stands out, followed by Bulgaria with 9.4. Among women, the rise has been more moderate than among men, with Bulgaria taking the lead with an 8.8-point increase, followed by Croatia, 6.5, and Cyprus and Austria with 6.0 points. The average EU28 increase was similar for both sexes: 2.1 among men and 1.9 among women.

Figure 17. Evolution of the Independent, healthy and secure living domain for men and women, 2010, 2018 and difference.





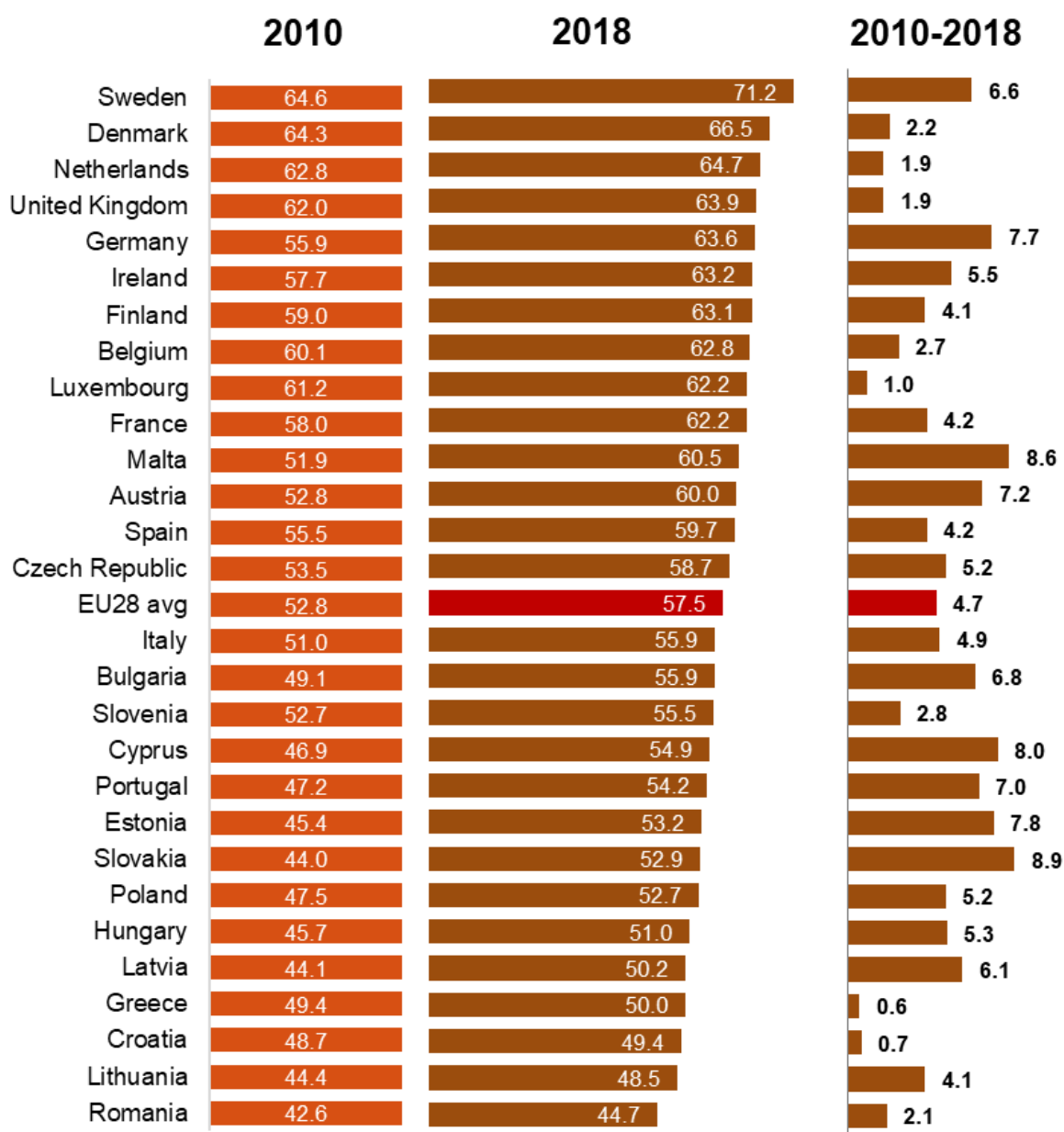


Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC and ESS.

## 2.5 Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing evolution

In the fourth domain, there was a general growth between 2010 and 2018 in all the EU28 countries. Seven countries have seen an increase of more than 7 points: Slovakia (9.0), Malta (8.6), Cyprus (8.0), Estonia (7.8), Germany (7.7), Austria (7.2) and Portugal (7.1). On the other hand, three countries have demonstrated a growth of 1 point or less: Luxembourg (1.0), Croatia (0.7) and Greece (0.6). Therefore, the EU28 average presents an increase of 4.8.

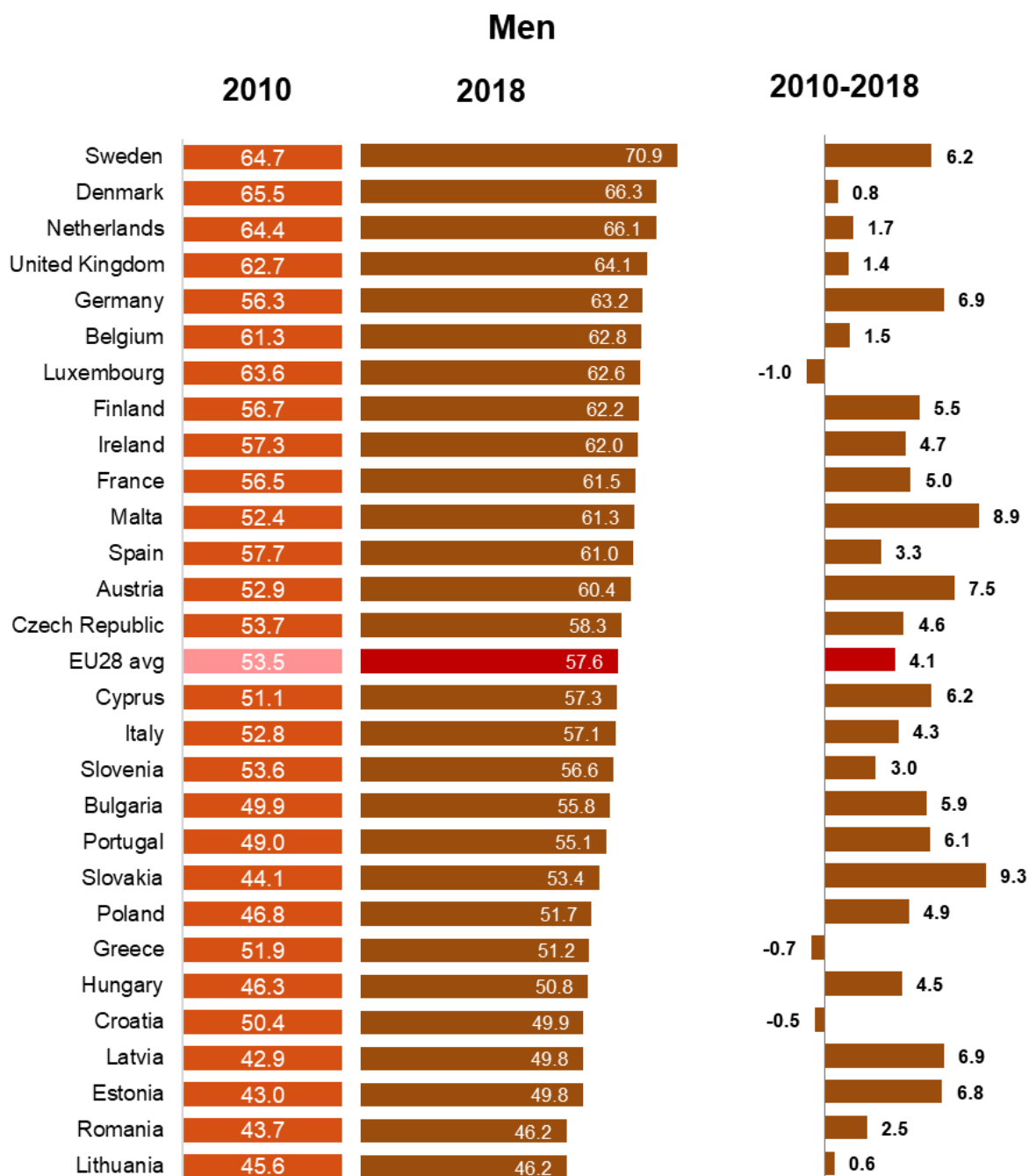
Figure 18. Evolution of the Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing domain 2010- 2018.

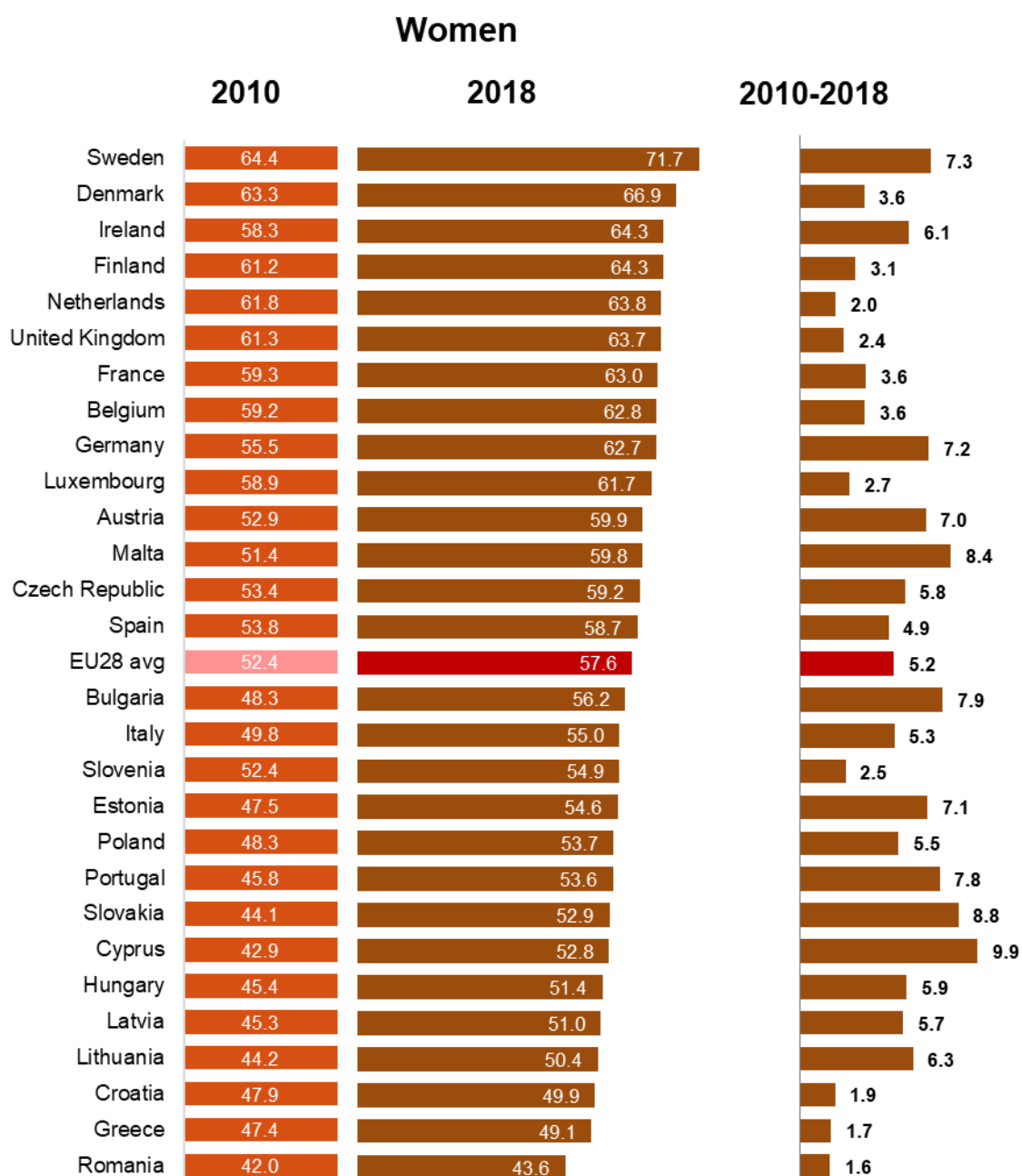


Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

When disaggregated by sex, evolution for men and women is different. Specifically, among men there was a decrease between 2010 and 2018 in three countries: Luxembourg (-1.0), Greece (-0.7) and Croatia (-0.4). At the same time, men saw an increase of 9.3 points in Slovakia and of 8.9 in Malta. On the other hand, women in Cyprus have seen the highest increase of 9.9 points, and in Romania — the lowest of 1.6 points. The EU28 average is higher among women (5.2) than among men (4.2).

Figure 19. Evolution of the Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing domain for men and women, 2010, 2018 and difference.





Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and Population registers.

## 2.6 Gender gap evolution

Finally, Figure 21 shows the gender gap difference between 2010 and 2018 for each of the AAI domains.

In the first domain, that related to paid work, excluding Hungary (3.3), Luxembourg (2.6), Malta (0.9) and Italy (0.1), there is a decrease in the gender gap, while countries like Cyprus (13.5) or Slovakia stand out (10.2). Netherlands, Portugal and Italy are the most stable countries in the time interval analysed.

In the second domain, a greater number of countries have an increase in the gender gap. Spain, has the largest increase in the gender gap (4.5), followed by Cyprus (4.3) and Austria (4.1). On the opposite side, Romania has a decrease of 8.3 points, Poland of 7.4 and Lithuania of 6.7. In this case, Latvia is the most stable country in the interval.

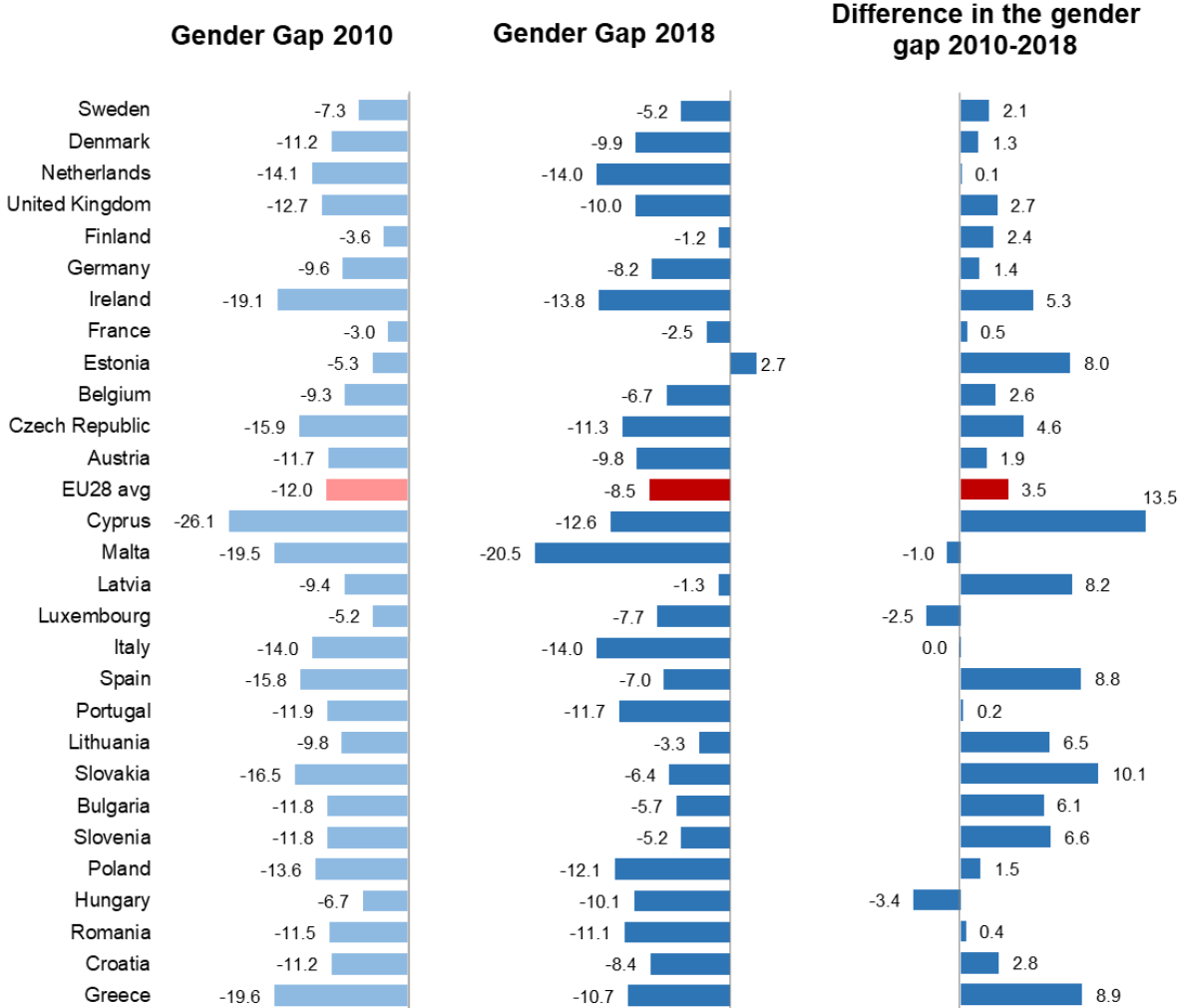
The third domain shows little variation in the gender gap, with changes close to 1 point in almost all countries. However, Lithuania has an increase in the gender gap of nearly 9 points between 2010 and 2018. In addition, four countries are the most stable in the range: Estonia, Slovakia, Romania and Greece.

Finally, in the fourth domain minor changes are also found, with Lithuania being the country with the largest decrease (5.8), and Finland the largest increase, 2.4 points. However, it is noteworthy that, in this domain, although the changes are small, any country maintains a stable gender gap between 2010 and 2018.

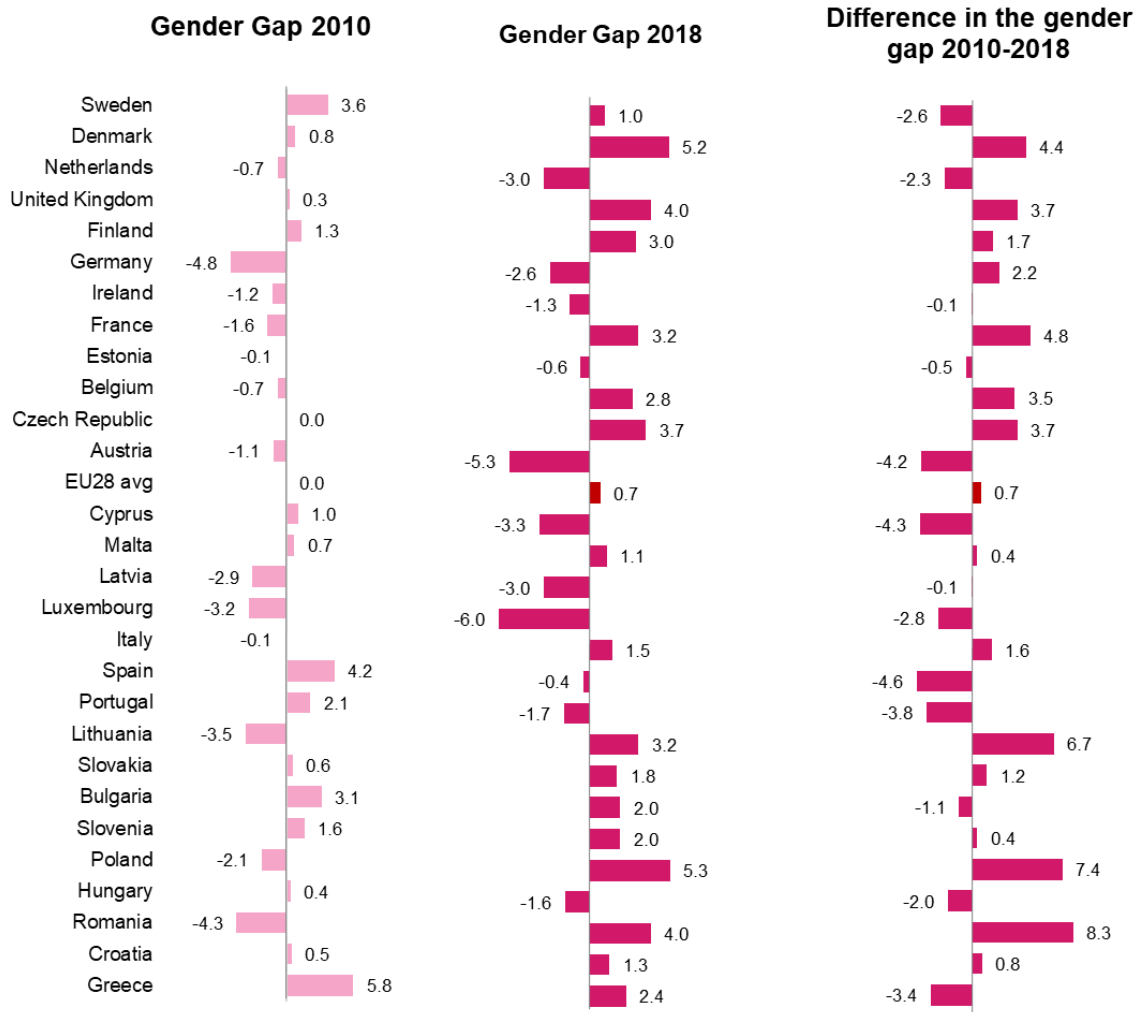
Thus, the evolution of the gender gap in the EU28 average shows a decrease in all domains except in the third, with changes below 1 point in the second and fourth domains and of 3.6 points in the first domain.

Figure 20. Gender gap evolution 2010-2018 by domain.

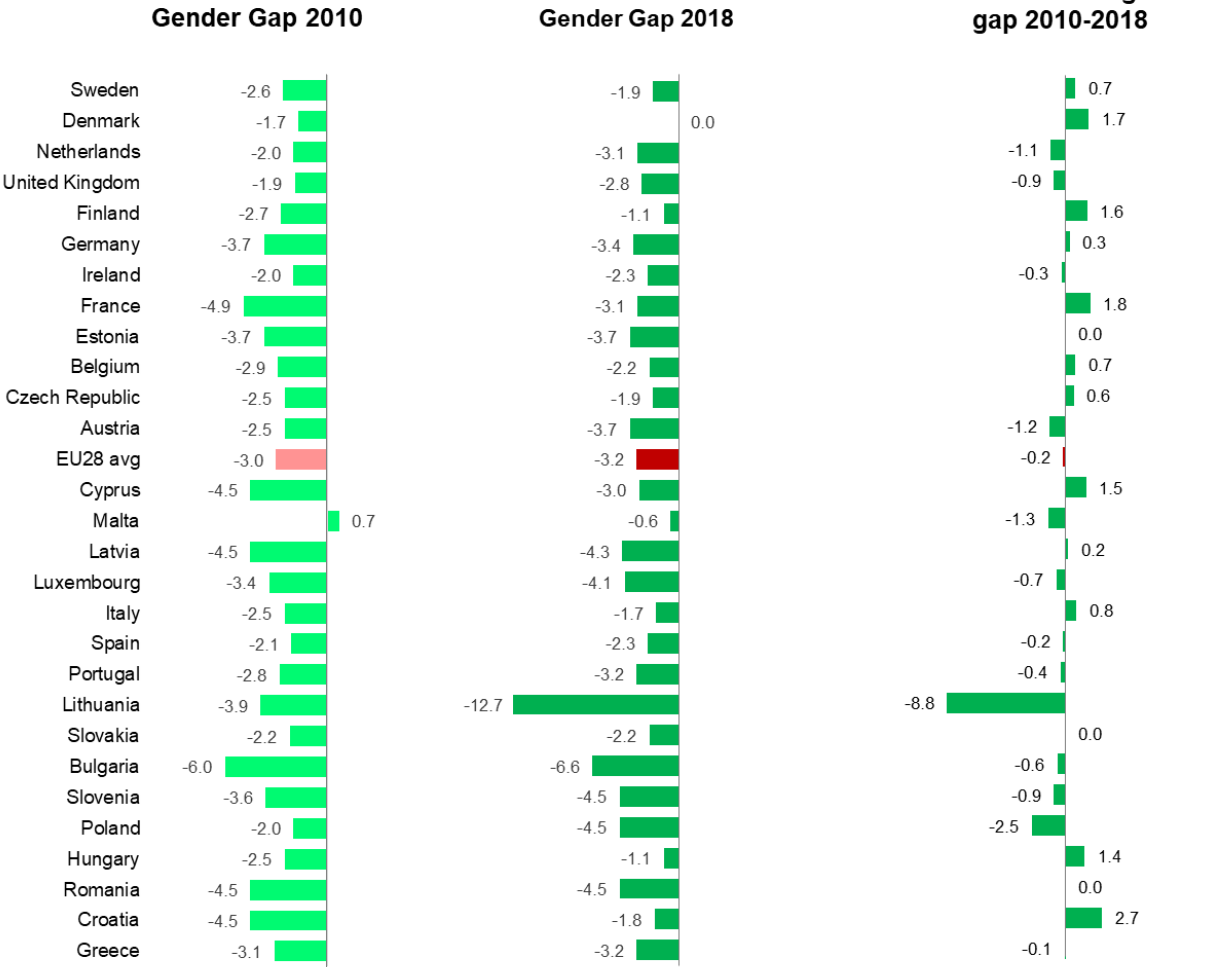
**I. Employment**



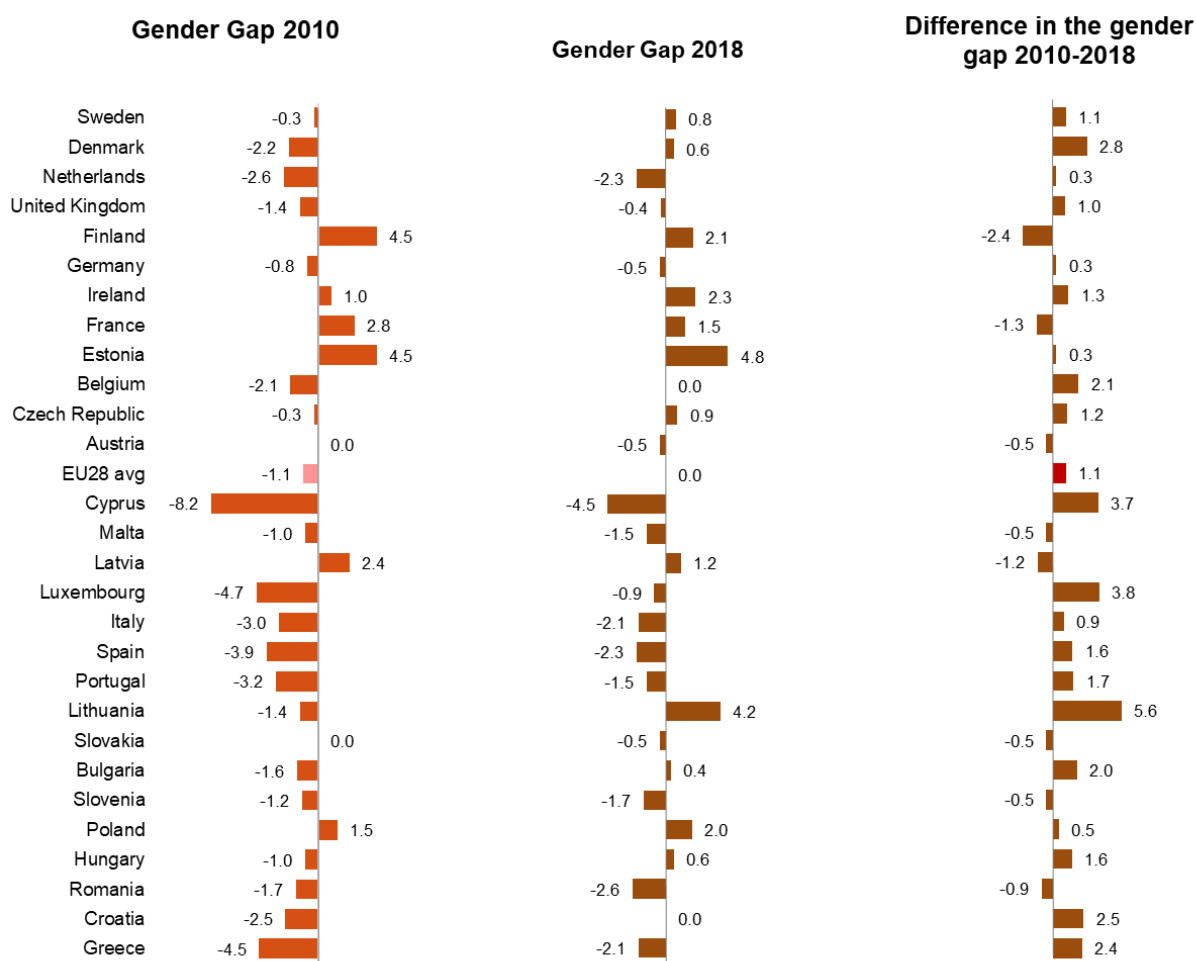
## II. Social participation



### III. Independent, healthy and secure living



#### IV. Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing



Source: Own elaboration based on LFS, EQLS, EU-SILC, ESS, ICT Survey and Mortality and population registers.